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CONTENTS

Entrepreneurial Intentions of Tourism and Hospitality Graduates: An Application of the Entrepreneurial Event Model ………………………………………………………………………………………………..1

Ricky Yao Nutsugbodo, Daniella Delali Sedegah, Gifty Adobea Duodu, Peace Ankor, Valerie Efua Kwansima Bempong, Sampson Wireko-Gyebi, Anna Arthur-Amissah, Joana Mills Quarshie, Bernadette Ekua Bedua Afful

Psychological Contract Breach, Organizational Identification and Employee Performance: Mediating Role of Prosocial Organizational Behaviour ……………………………………………………………………….23

Elizabeth Kafui Senya, Lolonyo Letsa, Eunice Matey Anakwa, Frederick Owusu Arthur

Is Emotional Connectedness Possible in Tourism? An Examination of Residents' Emotional Attitudes and Behaviour Towards Tourists……………………………………………………………………………….39

Kate Gyasi, Issahaku Adam, Victor Owusu, Prince Kwame Odame, Felix Kwabena Donkor

Examining the Post-COVID-19 Tourism Recovery and Resilience in the Context of the African Tourism Industry……………………………………………………………………………………………………….63

Hamza Khan, Bushra Choudhary, Nusrat Yasmee

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Journal and scope

AJHTM is a peer-reviewed and open-access journal that seeks to;

- publish and disseminate widely, research findings relating to the subjects of Tourism and Hospitality Management on Africa or with implications for Africa.
- promote scholarship and research collaboration among tourism and hospitality academics and professionals on the African continent and beyond.
- help bridge the gap between industry and academia by providing a forum for the exchange of ideas between the two entities.
- Provide an international forum for the discussion of a wide range of applied research relating to tourism and hospitality management in Africa.

Manuscript Length

Research Papers and practitioner papers should not be longer than 10,000 words and not shorter than 4,000. However, reviews should not be longer than 2,000 words and not shorter than 1,000. Additionally, abstracts should not be longer than 150 words.

Manuscript Style & Preparation

Final submissions for publication must conform to the journal's style. Generally, manuscripts must contain the following:

- A suitable title of not more than 14 words.
- An abstract and five (5) keywords
- Text should be written in Times New Roman letters, font size 12, double-spaced and have at least 2.5cm (one-inch margin on all four sides.
- Tables, figures and plates are to be included in the text and must be numbered consecutively (in Arabic numbers). Each table, figure or illustration must have a title.
- The text should be organized under suitable subheadings which must be in initial caps and a font size of 14
- Author(s) have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that their manuscripts are clearly written in acceptable, scholarly English, and contain no factual inaccuracies, libellous statements, spelling mistakes or grammatical errors. Neither the Editorial Board nor the Publisher is responsible for correcting errors of spelling or grammar.

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- First page: title, author(s') name(s), affiliation, full postal address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address. An abstract of not more than 150 words and up to 5 keywords that identify article content.
- Subsequent pages: the paper should begin on the second page and authors should ensure that their names cannot be identified anywhere in the text. These pages should include the main body of the article (including tables, figures and plates); list of references and appendixes should be numbered consecutively.

- Referencing style- references should follow the APA style (7th Edition)

Manuscript submission system:

Manuscripts must be submitted electronically through the online submission system: https://journal.ucc.edu.gh/index.php/ajthm/about/submissions

ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY GRADUATES: AN APPLICATION OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL EVENT MODEL

*Ricky Yao Nutsugbodo[1 *], Daniella Delali Sedegah[2], Gifty Adobea Duodu[3], Peace Ankor[4], Valerie Efua Kwansima Bempong[3], Sampson Wireko-Gyebi[1], Anna Arthur-Amissah [1], Joana Mills Quarshie [1], Bernadette Ekua Bedua Afful [5]*

Abstract

Ghana's unemployment rate now stands at 14.7%, and entrepreneurship is seen as a solution to the growing graduate unemployment problem. This study therefore examines the entrepreneurial intentions of tourism and hospitality (T&H) graduates in Ghana, using data from 941 graduates. Quantitative methodology was employed for this study, and the data collection was done using snowball sampling. Using questionnaires, the data were collected between February and April 2023 from T&H graduates. The partial least-squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to test seven hypotheses. The findings show that propensity to act, innovativeness, self-efficacy, and opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influence graduates' entrepreneurial intentions. However, they do not see entrepreneurship as a feasible career option. To increase the entrepreneurship intentions of T&H graduates, the study recommends, among others, that universities should teach soft skills like opportunity recognition, business development, and problem-solving through mentorship seminars and pitching activities. Also, graduates should be encouraged to form partnerships to access funding from government initiatives like YouStart and National Entrepreneurship and Innovation programmes.

Keywords: perceived feasibility, perceived desirability, propensity to act, innovativeness, self-efficacy, entrepreneurial intentions

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship significantly impacts employment, economic growth, stability, and prosperity in today's world (Gieure et al., 2019). Ghana is grappling with a crisis of graduate unemployment (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2023) and high inflation, leading to a lagging economy (World Bank, 2024). The 2023 Annual Household Income and Expenditure Survey in Ghana revealed an average unemployment rate of 14.7% in the first three quarters of 2023. Ghana signing onto the International Monetary Fund's Extended Credit Facility is expected to freeze government sector employment, and an already lagging economy with dire consequences for the private sector will compel unemployment rates to soar. According to Najafabadi et al. (2016), governments and policymakers face a significant challenge in addressing unemployment issues, which is crucial for maintaining government stability.

Entrepreneurship is a proven solution for resolving unemployment, creating jobs, and promoting inclusiveness and sustainable development (Gieure et al., 2019). Entrepreneurial intentions have been a dominant research topic for decades (Nowiński et al., 2019), leading governments and academic institutions to be increasingly interested in entrepreneurship (Gieure et al., 2019; Vodá & Florea, 2019). The inclusion of entrepreneurship in university curricula has transformed graduates' thinking and reduced uncertainty as they graduate. In Ghana, entrepreneurship has been boosted by the government's introduction of programmes and policies such as the YouStart Initiative, the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (NEIP), and the National Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Policy, among others,

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to boost the entrepreneurial intentions (EIs) of graduates (Ghana Enterprises Agency, 2022; National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme, 2024).

In the past, university graduates had easy access to the job market; however, there are hardly guaranteed paid jobs after school in recent times (Otache et al., 2021). Due to the highly competitive and saturated work market, self-employment (entrepreneurship) is the only remaining best alternative career option (Elsawalhy & Elzek, 2023). Thus, candidates seeking university education are encouraged to choose programmes that facilitate self-employment (Otache et al., 2020). Tourism and hospitality (T&H), which is a good example of a programme that can facilitate self-employment, is highly recommended. T&H programmes are designed to equip students with practical and competency-based skills to help them effectively capitalise on the industry's business opportunities. This suggests that T&H students are being equipped to become entrepreneurs upon graduation. T&H graduates in Ghana can capitalise on profitable business opportunities such as catering, event planning, restaurant operation, and tour operation. Government policies like See, Eat, Wear, and Feel Ghana also offer further entrepreneurial opportunities for T&H graduates.

Despite the vast opportunities in Ghana's T&H industry, graduates lack the motivation to pursue industry jobs (Amissah et al., 2020). This has been exacerbated by the industry's vulnerabilities, as exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This raises doubts about the EI of T&H graduates in Ghana and the kind of support their educational institutions give. Universities are expected to foster the development of EIs in their graduates through mentorship sessions and experiential learning activities. It is therefore imperative to assess the EIs of T&H graduates. Entrepreneurial actions are deliberate and premeditated (Bellò et al., 2018), indicating that EIs can predict behaviour (Fernandes et al., 2018; Sedegah et al., 2024). Entrepreneurship scholars appear to concur that the perceived desirability (PD), innovativeness (IN), and perceived feasibility (PF) of ideas, self-efficacy (SE), and propensity to act (PA) on these entrepreneurial ideas influence EIs (Otache et al., 2020; 2021; Sedegah et al., 2024; Shapero & Sokol, 1982). Studies such as Ayeh et al. (2022), Phuc et al. (2020), ElSaid and Fuentes Fuentes (2019), and Sedegah et al. (2024) have studied the EIs of T&H students and the role of institutional support in shaping their intentions. However, studies on the EIs of T&H graduates have primarily used the Theory of Planned Behaviour, with very few utilising the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM), a gap this research addresses. For instance, whilst Ayeh et al. (2022) and Sedegah et al. (2024) focused on undergraduate students pursuing T&H programmes in Ghana, Phuc et al. 2020 and ElSaid and Fuentes Fuentes (2019) looked at tourism undergraduate students in Vietnam and T&H students in Egypt and Spain, respectively. The study's main objective is to examine the EIs of Ghanaian T&H graduates through the entrepreneurial event model (EEM) lens. Specifically, the study seeks to examine: 1) The effects of perceived feasibility (PF), perceived desirability (PD), propensity to act (PA), innovativeness (IN) and self-efficacy (SE) on the entrepreneurial intentions (EI) of T&H graduates. 2) Effect of support (SU) on the entrepreneurial intentions of T&H graduates. 3) Effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the entrepreneurial intentions of T&H graduates.

The significance of this study is threefold. First, it evaluates the EEM and enriches the literature by reporting empirical findings from T&H graduates. Second, the study also demonstrates that PF, PD, PA, IN, and SE play a significant role in shaping the EIs of T&H students by providing empirical evidence to buttress already available evidence. Including SU and CO in the EEM also makes this study unique. Third, this study makes use of data from T&H graduates, whose academic program is being recommended to students seeking admission to tertiary institutions since it provides prospective students with a broad range of practical and competency skills that can lead its graduates to self-employment (Otache et al., 2020). Also, as T&H graduates question their career prospects in the industry (Üngüren & Kaçmaz, 2022; Wen et al., 2018) and the consequences of COVID-19 on industry businesses and opportunities, studying their EIs is important.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Entrepreneurial Event Model

Shapero and Sokol's (1982) EEM is widely used to explain and predict EIs, despite several other models available for EI assessment (Alferaih, 2022; Otache et al., 2021). The EEM is regarded as an academic and comprehensive model. Proponents of the EEM assumed that for an individual to pursue an entrepreneurial drive, key decisions have to be made for the accomplishment of the desired entrepreneurial activities and goals. This gives an esteem action as desirable and feasible and the tendency to act upon an opportunity (Shapero and Sokol, 1982; Krueger, 1993). The EEM indicates that three dimensions, PD, PF, and PA, influence EIs. To the proponents of this model, PD means how beneficial starting a business is, PF measures confidence to become an entrepreneur, and PA concerns the person's willingness to start a business (Alferaih, 2022; Shapero & Sokol, 1982). It has been argued that EIs are very complex as they are influenced by many factors and the cognitive principles behind intentional behaviours (Laspita et al., 2012; Otache et al., 2021). To buttress this complexity in examining EIs, Krichen and Chaabouni (2021) and Sedegah et al. (2024) argue in their studies on EIs that environmental, social, and cultural factors interact to influence EIs. In the context of this study, it is therefore estimated that PF, PD, PA, IN, SE, SU, and CO have the tendency to influence EIs of T&H graduates (see Figure 1).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hypotheses Formulation

Entrepreneurial intention

EIs refer to an individual's conscious and deliberate decision to engage in entrepreneurial activities. It reflects the willingness and commitment of individuals to start their businesses or pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Several factors can influence entrepreneurial intention, including personal characteristics, social environment, educational background, economic conditions, and cultural values. Research suggests that EI is a key precursor to actual entrepreneurial behaviour. Individuals with high EIs are more likely to take the necessary steps to start a business. Therefore, understanding and fostering entrepreneurial intention and its influencers are crucial for promoting entrepreneurship among T&H graduates. The EEM, one of the theories developed to explain EI, highlights the importance of PD, PF, and PA in shaping EIs. Other factors such as SU, IN and SE have also been identified as key influencers.

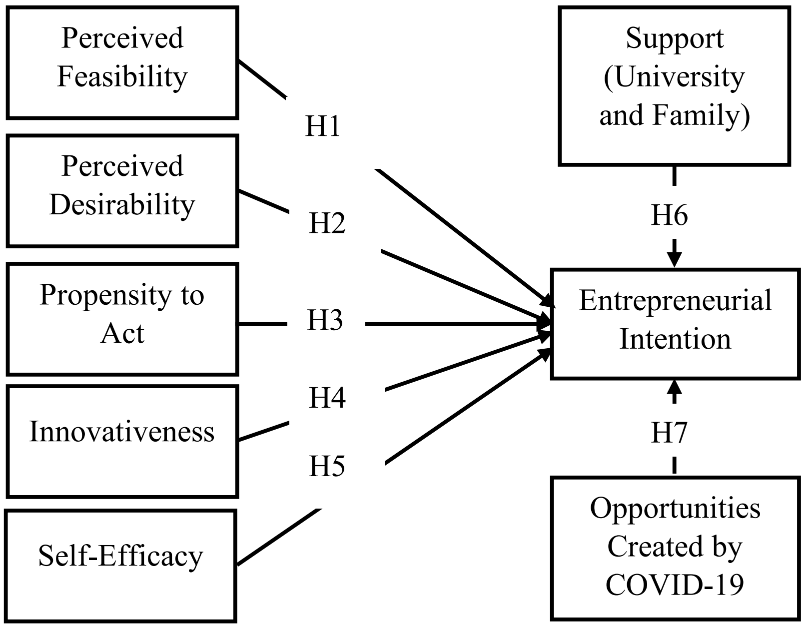

Figure 1: Proposed Model for the Study

Source: Adapted from Alferaih (2022), Krichen and Chaabouni (2021), Shapero and Sokol (1982)

Perceived feasibility and entrepreneurial intention

Several studies have empirically established the significant influence of PF on EIs (Alferaih, 2017; Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). PF refers to an individual's assessment of whether they have the necessary resources, skills, and capabilities to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities successfully. Boukamcha (2015) defines PF as the extent to which a person believes starting a business is feasible. PF also denotes the importance of an individual's confidence in starting a business venture (Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). The confidence to put into practice an idea depends on the resources available that make entrepreneurial ideas feasible, such as capital, education, experience, and social networks. T&H graduates, supposedly after completion of their programme, may have entrepreneurial ideas, have acquired education to know the various prospects available to venture into within the T&H industry, and might have built social networks based on their interactions with lecturers, friends, family, and entrepreneurs. Having these requisite resources can enhance the EIs of T&H graduates. It is therefore hypothesised that:

H1: PF positively and significantly influences EIs.

Perceived desirability and entrepreneurial intention

Researchers have also confirmed the relationship between PD and EIs (Alferaih, 2022; Sharahiley, 2020; Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). Schlaegel and Koenig (2014) conceptualise PD as the aspiration to start a venture, whereas Otache et al. (2021) also define it as the degree to which a person finds business ownership appealing. Krueger (1993; p. 8) earlier described PD as an "individual's effect toward entrepreneurship," that is, how much a person subjectively likes entrepreneurship as a career option. In this case, the perceived benefits, rewards, opportunities, and lifestyle associated with being an entrepreneur are examined. Hence, individuals will see entrepreneurship as desirable if it leads to a desirable outcome and will liberate them from being unemployed to being employed. This study, therefore, seeks to argue that, with T&H graduates having been given the necessary practical skills and competencies, they would find entrepreneurship appealing. If T&H graduates perceive entrepreneurship as highly desirable, they are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards it, express a stronger intention or desire to pursue it as a career option, and become willing to establish T&H businesses. From the foregoing discussion, it is hypothesised:

H2: PD has a positive and significant influence on EIs.

Propensity to act and entrepreneurial intention

Shapero and Sokol (1982), in conceptualising the EEM, propose that the EIs are a derivative of PA. It is fundamental to understanding the transition from mere intention to actual behaviour. PA has been theorised as people's tendency to act at their discretion, reflecting intention (Bui et al., 2020; Shapero & Sokol, 1982). According to Riyanti et al. (2016), PA is a behavioural attribute that facilitates EIs, which reflects the decision to carry out an activity or intention (Shapero & Sokol, 1982), where individuals decide even if the odds are against them. Being an entrepreneur requires one to have a proactive disposition and the willingness to engage in behaviours necessary for starting and running a business. This study seeks to argue that T&H graduates, having been given the required competencies and exposures to industry practices through experiential learning activities, support from their family and peers, and being desirous to succeed, are likely to act on their entrepreneurial ideas to establish T&H businesses. Research has empirically established a significant correlation between PA and EIs (Alferaih, 2022; Krueger et al., 2000). Stating the importance of the relationship between PA and EIs, this research hypothesises that:

H3: PA positively influences EIs.

Innovativeness and entrepreneurial intention

As an important element or antecedent of entrepreneurship, innovation is the process of turning ideas, opportunities, and knowledge into new value through creative thinking (Bellò et al., 2018; Ozaralli & Rivenburgh, 2016). Syed et al. (2020), in their study, concluded that the EIs of prospective entrepreneurs are likely to be reinforced if they are innovative, recognise entrepreneurial opportunities, and act. T&H education inculcates in students' innovativeness and creativity (Tsai et al., 2016), where students can create fresh and practical ideas to meet current and future industry demands. Studies have provided empirical evidence that being innovative is a precursor to developing EIs (Ozaralli & Rivenburgh, 2016). Realising that innovativeness could lead to developing positive EIs towards the creation of a T&H business, the study proposes the hypothesis:

H4: IN has a positive and significant impact on EIs.

Self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention

Research has confirmed that the relationship between SE and EI is crucial in understanding how individuals perceive their ability to engage in entrepreneurial activities successfully and their subsequent intention to do so (Alferiah, 2022; Lee et al., 2011). SE denotes a person's confidence to execute a specific task successfully to attain a desired outcome (Wood & Bandura, 1989). The ability to execute an idea depends on how much time and money are available and the effort an individual will put into implementing the concept. T&H graduates desirous of being entrepreneurs can form a team or collaborate and jointly pull resources together to seek financial assistance. Since they are graduates and are no longer committed to academic work, there is a high probability that they also have time. With the availability of these resources, T&H graduates can also put in some effort to implement their EIs and convert them into businesses. Based on the foregoing discussion, the fifth hypothesis is formulated:

H5: SE has a positive and significant influence on EIs.

Support (university and family) and entrepreneurial intention

Contextual factors, such as family and school support, significantly influence EIs (Arrighetti et al., 2016; Krichen & Chaabouni, 2021). These contextual factors are key in the entrepreneurial decision-making process. For instance, family and close friends' support can encourage graduates to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams (Osorio et al., 2017) by offering information on business opportunities and emotional and financial assistance (Martinez & Aldrich, 2011). In the same vein, educational support is also a significant factor in forming EIs, with studies showing a positive correlation between academic programs and EIs (Passaro et al., 2018). Even though the entrepreneurial competencies of students are developed through studying entrepreneurship courses and participating in mentorship, coaching, and pitching programs, it also boosts the prospective entrepreneurs' confidence in their ideas, encourages creativity, and builds their self-efficacy. In light of these conversations, it is suggested that:

H6: Family and educational support positively and significantly influence EIs.

Opportunities created by COVID-19 and entrepreneurial intention

As Krichen and Chaabouni (2021) argued, COVID-19 and its associated uncertainties have caused individuals to reconsider their EIs. Significant societal and economic changes have significantly impacted people's lifestyles and behaviours (Meahjohn & Persad, 2020). Behavioural changes can either hinder the creation of new businesses or stimulate development by providing new opportunities and innovations (Brown et al., 2020; Hu, 2020; Liñán & Jaén, 2020). This study focuses on the latter by arguing that the pandemic has created several business opportunities for T&H graduates. For instance, opportunities in e-commerce (Guthrie et al., 2021; Bhatti et al., 2020), home food delivery (Kotzab et al., 2024; Pahwa & Jaller, 2023), and drone food delivery (Kim et al., 2021), among others, exist as a result of the pandemic. Krichen and Chaabouni (2021) and Maritz et al. (2020) suggest that entrepreneurship could be crucial in reviving economies, promoting economic development, and creating jobs due to COVID-19's effects. Krichen and Chaabouni (2021), in their research conducted in Tunisia among students, established that the opportunities created by the pandemic had a considerable influence on students' EIs. This study, therefore, hypothesises that:

H7: The opportunities created by COVID-19 positively and significantly influence EIs.

METHODOLOGY

Study Setting

The study was conducted in Ghana, where T&H education is provided at the tertiary level by technical universities (previously known as polytechnics) and traditional universities. Regarding the former, the focus of T&H education is technical and vocational and aimed at giving students practical and competency skills. In contrast, the latter focuses on enhancing students' cognitive, theoretical, and managerial competencies, with less emphasis on practical skills (Adu-Ampong & Mensah, 2021). From the 1980s, when polytechnics started offering Hotel, Catering and Institutional Management programmes to 1996, when the University of Cape Coast began the Bachelor's programme in Tourism, Ghana now has 16 public universities (10 technical universities and six traditional universities) offering T&H education at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

Research Design

Based on the positivist paradigm, the study was rooted in the quantitative approach to research. Consequently, cross-sectional and descriptive research designs were adopted. Based on these approaches adopted, data were gathered at a particular point in time to address the study's objectives and subsequently described or interpreted (Creswell, 2010; Kumar, 2005).

Research Instrument Development

The scale measuring the EEM (Shapero & Sokol, 1982) model and the Alferaih meta-analytic model (Alferaih, 2017) were the building blocks for this study. Thirty-nine measurement items measuring eight constructs were sourced from the entrepreneurship literature (Table 1). These concepts were measured using the five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5). A sample question, such as "I can partner with others to start a business", was used to measure the innovativeness of students. Perceived feasibility, perceived desirability and propensity to act were measured with sample questions such as "I am very certain of success when I start my T&H business", "I would be enthused if I start my own T&H business", and "I would act if there is any opportunity in starting up a T&H business", respectively. Furthermore, "I am confident that I can successfully create new tourism/hospitality businesses", and "I am ready to do anything to be a T&H entrepreneur are sample questions used to measure self-efficacy and EI, respectively. There were questions on the students' socio-demographic characteristics (sex, age and marital status) and the type of tourism and hospitality businesses they intend to establish.

Table 1: Items Drawn from Literature and Modified for this Study

Items	CODE	MT[a]	Source
Perceived feasibility	PF	5 items	Alferaih (2022)
Perceived desirability	PD	3 items	Alferaih (2022)
Propensity to act	PA	4 items	Alferaih (2022)
Innovativeness of students	IN	5 items	Gurel et al. (2010)
Self-efficacy	SE	4 items	Zhao et al. (2005)
Entrepreneurial intentions	EI	6 items	Malebana (2014)
Support	SU	6 items	Arrighetti et al. (2016)
Opportunities Created by COVID-19	CO	6 items	Arrighetti et al. (2016)

[a] = Measurement items
Source: Authors' creation

Sampling, Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers used the snowball sampling procedure to contact some alumni from the selected traditional and technical universities who agreed to share the research link on their alumni class social media (WhatsApp) platforms, since the researchers did not have the email addresses or telephone numbers of these graduates to contact them personally. The inherent challenge of using a qualitative sampling technique in a quantitative study was considered, which served as a significant limitation for this study. The data was collected from T&H graduates from Ghanaian universities using a questionnaire measuring eight constructs using 39 items. Between February and April 2023, an electronic questionnaire designed using Kobo Toolbox was sent to T&H graduates who have completed their mandatory national service and are not employed. Participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. In all, 941 responses were received at the end of the data collection period.

The data from the KoBo Toolbox was exported in the '.xls' format and further exported to SPSS version 21. SPSS was used to analyse the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and the type of T&H businesses they intend to establish. Furthermore, because of its robustness, the PLS-SEM was used to perform the model estimation with structural equation techniques (Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM was preferred as the study's main objective was to predict factors influencing EIs of T&H graduates and not to test or validate a research theory as the CB-SEM seeks to do (Dash & Paul, 2021). Based on the PLS-SEM literature, the measurement model was examined as the first step to evaluate the results, after which the structural model was developed and also assessed (Hair et al., 2019).

RESULTS

Respondent's Profile

The profile of the research participants, as evident in Table 2, shows that 69.7% of them were females, while 30.3% were males. Their average age is 27 years. Specifically, 82.7% of the respondents were between 26 and 30 years. Also, 90% of these respondents are unmarried, with only 10% having married. Figure 2 indicates the T&H business graduates intend to establish. Establishing a restaurant business dominates with 43.7%, followed by the accommodation business (24.5%), pastry/baking (5.7%) and the least car rental business (0.2%)

Table 2: Socio-Demographic Profiles of the Respondents (N=941)

Demographic attributes	Attribute levels	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	285	30.3
	Female	656	69.7
Age (ϰ = 27 years)	< 26	109	11.6
	26-30	778	82.7
	> 30	54	5.7
Marital status	Unmarried	847	90.0
	Married	94	10.0

Source: Authors' creation

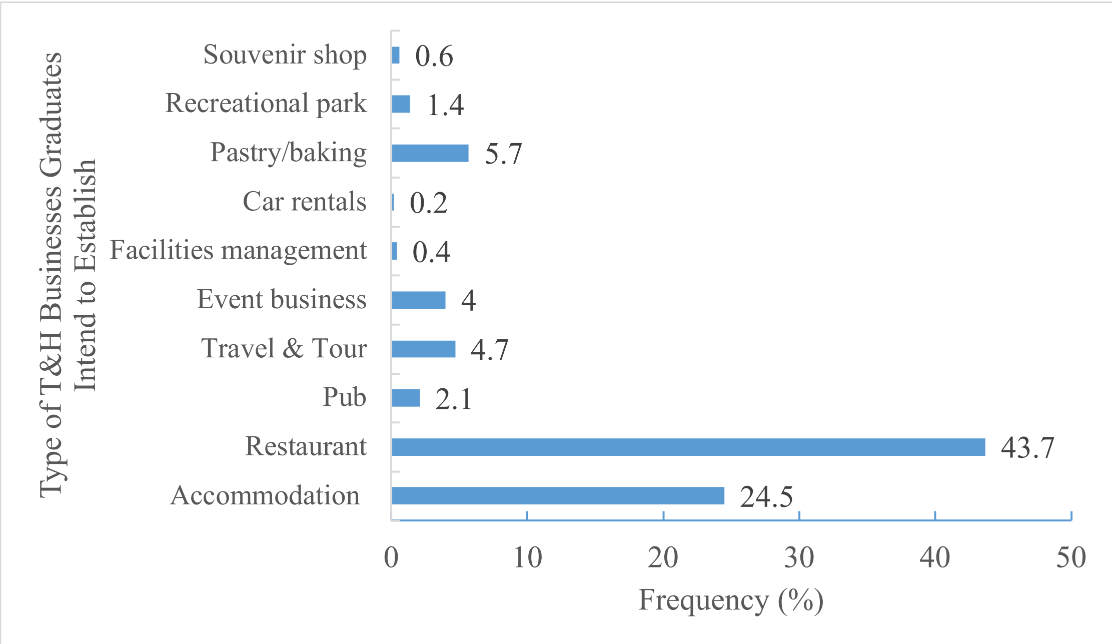

Figure 2: T&H Businesses Graduates Intend to Establish

Source: Authors' creation

Assessing the Convergent and Discriminant Validity of the Measurement Model

In assessing a model's convergent validity, factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and the average variance extracted (AVE) are used (Hair et al., 2017). These indicators (Table 3) met their respective thresholds as factor loadings ≥ 0.70, CR ≥ 0.70, and AVE ≥ 0.50 (Hair et al. 2011), indicating that the convergent validity of the model is grounded. Furthermore, three indicators (Fornell and Larcker criterion, heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio, and cross-loadings) are used to measure a model's discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). The study, however, utilised the HTMT ratio to evaluate discriminant validity (Table 4), as it is considered rigorous and sensitive to other measures (Henseler et al., 2015). Regarding the thresholds, $HTMT\_{value} < 0.85$ is ideal, but $HTMT\_{value} < 0.90$ is also accepted if the constructs are conceptually similar (Benitez et al., 2019). The HTMT results were between 0.183 and

Table 3: Convergent Validity Measures for the Measurement Model

Constructs and items	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Perceived Feasibility (PF)		0.929	0.725
PF1	0.849		
PF2	0.865		
PF3	0.890		
PF4	0.792		
PF5	0.858		
Perceived Desirability (PD)		0.908	0.768
PD1	0.790		
PD2	0.913		
PD3	0.920		
Propensity to Act (PA)		0.953	0.834
PA1	0.877		
PA2	0.923		
PA3	0.925		
PA4	0.927		
Innovativeness (IN)		0.914	0.680
IN1	0.861		
IN2	0.865		
IN3	0.839		
IN4	0.833		
IN5	0.717		
Self-efficacy (SE)		0.947	0.817
SE1	0.896		
SE2	0.913		
SE3	0.915		
SE4	0.890		
Support (US)		0.911	0.631
US1	0.825		
US2	0.804		
US3	0.739		
US4	0.760		
FS1	0.786		
FS2	0.849		
Entrepreneurial Intentions (EI)		0.943	0.735
EI1	0.804		
EI2	0.855		
EI3	0.889		
EI4	0.898		
EI5	0.880		
EI6	0.815		
COVID-19 Opportunities (CO)		0.920	0.658
CO1	0.719		
CO2	0.817		
CO3	0.853		
CO4	0.856		
CO5	0.829		
CO6	0.786		

Source: Authors' creation

Table 4: Discriminant validity measures for the measurement model (Heterotrait-Montrait Ratio)

	Heterotrait-Montrait Ratio							
	PD	PF	IN	SE	PA	EI	SU	CO
PD								
PF	***0.855***							
IN	0.279	0.499						
SE	0.339	0.558	0.801					
PA	0.183	0.395	0.684	0.765				
EI	0.245	0.423	0.758	0.767	0.737			
SU	0.430	0.671	0.620	0.671	0.609	0.592		
CO	0.319	0.492	0.816	0.823	0.764	***0.860***	0.673	

Source: Authors' creation

0.860, meaning the constructs are unrelated and have no multi-collinearity. This means that this study has discriminant validity.

Model Fit Assessment

The PLS-SEM goodness-of-fit measure, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), was used to assess the model's acceptability. The average magnitude of the difference between the matrix of observed correlations and the correlation matrix implied by the model reflects the SRMR. A good-fit model is deemed to have $SRMR\_{value} < 0.08$ (Henseler & Sarstedt, 2013), and in this study's case, $SRMR\_{value} = 0.050$ (Table 5_footnote) is within the acceptable range.

Assessment of the Structural Model

Before looking at the structural model, each item's variance inflation factor (VIF) was checked to ensure there were no problems with the constructs' full collinearity. Lateral collinearity problems can sometimes slightly throw off the results, even if discriminant validity is achieved, which is why the VIFs need to be inspected (Kock & Lynn, 2012). Inspecting the VIF of the construct items (outer model) and the constructs (inner model) shows that each was within the stringent threshold, $VIF\_{value} < 5$ (Hair et al., 2011).

We checked how much of the model's variance could be explained by the constructs using the adjusted R^2 (Table 5). This gives a more accurate picture of how the variables are related by looking at how all the independent variables affect the regression function. In all, the model explained 67.5% (R^2= 0.675) of the variation in the EI of T&H graduates. The predictive relevance (Q^2 predict), recommended by Geisser (1975) and Stone (1974), was calculated for the model using the PLSpredict procedure in the SMART PLS-SEM 4 (Table 5). The essence of Q^2 emphasises the predictability of the model. It is estimated that $Q^2\_{value} > 0$ is indicative of the predictive validity of the model (Hair et al., 2019). In this study's case, the Q^2 value of the model, 0.671, was above the threshold, suggesting that the model can predict the EI of T&H graduates when all the measurement constructs are considered. Hair et al. (2019) state that $Q^2\_{value} > 0.5$ depicts a large predictive relevance.

Using a re-sampling of 5000, the bootstrapping method was used to estimate the significance of the path coefficients (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 5: Hypothesis Assessment

	Hypothesized path	*β*	*SD*	*t*-statistic	*p*	*Decision*	$f^{2\ b}$	Q^2 predict	R^2 adjusted
H1	PF → EI	-0.023	0.036	0.643	0.520	NS	0.000		
H2	PD → EI	-0.004	0.028	0.157	0.875	NS	0.000		
H3	PA → EI	0.177	0.035	5.098	0.000*	S	0.040		
H4	IN → EI	0.149	0.035	4.285	0.000*	S	0.027		
H5	SE → EI	0.145	0.040	3.592	0.000*	S	0.020		
H6	SU → EI	0.025	0.031	0.784	0.433	NS	0.001		
H7	CO → EI	0.442	0.041	10.770	0.000*	S	0.192		
EI								0.671	0.675

Estimated model fit indices: SRMR = 0.050; NFI = 0.886
Note: *β* = standardized coefficient; *SD* = standard deviation; [b] = effect size of f^2; NS= not supported; S = supported
Source: Authors' creation

The path coefficients and their *p-values* for the hypothesized paths are shown in Table 5, Figure 3. It is apparent from the results that of the seven hypothesised paths, H1, H2, and H6 were not significant. The results show that PA directly and significantly influences EI (H3: β = 0.177; t = 5.098, p < 0.001). Furthermore, IN was seen to have a positive and significant influence on EI (H4: β = 0.149; t = 4.285, p < 0.001). The same can be said of the relationship between SE and EI (H5: β = 0.145; t = 3.592, p < 0.001), likewise of the relationship between CO and EI (H7: β = 0.442; t = 10.770, p < 0.001).

The effect sizes (f^2) of the four significant hypotheses were examined based on Cohen's (1988) criteria (f^2_values of 0.02-0.15, 0.15-0.35, and > 0.35 imply that the effects of the exogenous construct on the endogenous construct are small, medium, and large, respectively). Referring to Table 5, it can be deduced that the EIs of the T&H graduates were marginally affected by CO (f^2 = 0.192), PA (f^2 = 0.040), IN (f^2 = 0.027), and SE (f^2 = 0.020). Students have also seen several opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, its effect on T&H graduates' EI is not surprising.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study sought to examine the influence of PF, PD, and PA on Ghanaian T&H graduates' entrepreneurial intentions from the perspective of the EEM. It further extended the EEM by incorporating IN, SE, SU, and CO as factors influencing EI. Consistent with previous studies (Alferaih, 2022; Krueger et al., 2000), the study results showed a positive and significant relationship between PA and EI (H3). This reflects the critical role of PA concerning EI, which is consistent with the tenets of the EEM (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). Concerning this study, it is obvious that T&H graduates who are currently unemployed will tend to act (Bui et al., 2020) and potentially decide to start a business even if the odds might be against them. Having the requisite competencies during their university days, coupled with exposure to the industry through industrial attachment, it is not surprising that T&H graduates who are currently unemployed will have the propensity to start their businesses. The study also found that IN positively and significantly influences

EI (H4). Though the effect of IN on EI was marginal, it still provides insight as to how unemployed T&H

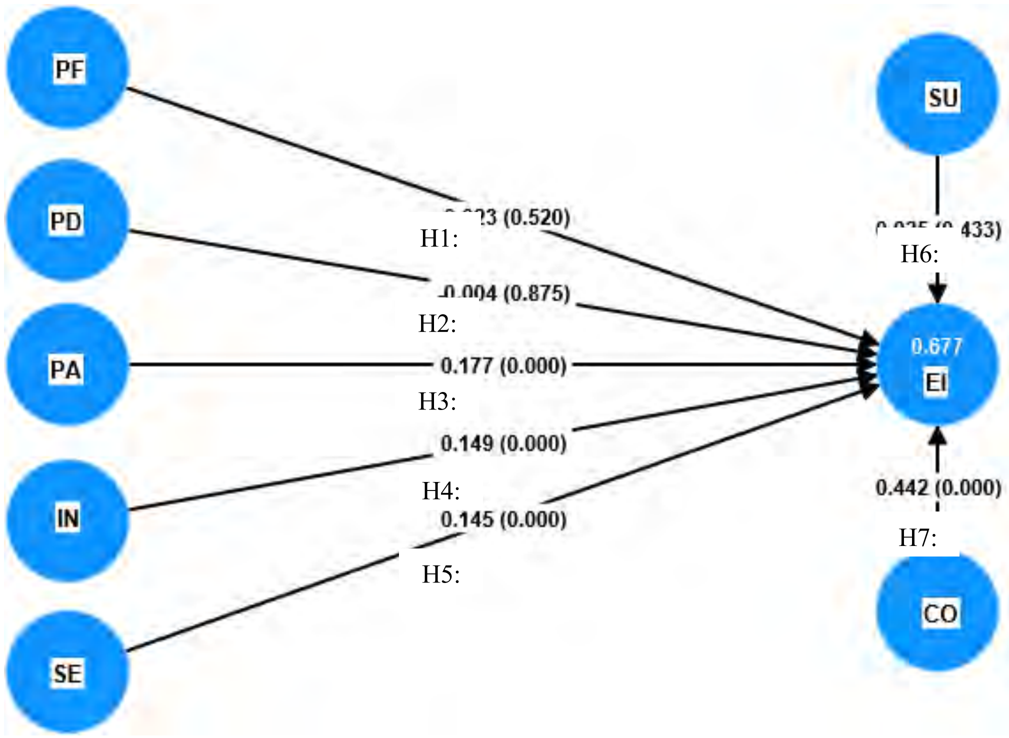

Figure 3: Structural model

Source: Authors' creation

graduates' ability to be innovative could lead them to have the intention of being entrepreneurs (Ozaralli & Rivenburgh, 2016) rather than waiting to be employed by others or the state. T&H education reinforces innovation and creativity and equips students with the elements of creating fresh and practical ideas (Tsai et al., 2016). Students who have undergone such training are likely to generate innovative ideas, which could serve as an antecedent to having the intention to become entrepreneurs, hence the positive correlation between IN and EI. This provides a new theoretical understanding of how the innovativeness of unemployed graduates could lead them to develop EI. Be it as it may, the ability to create a new business is an intentional process emanating from the thoughts and plans of individuals (Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014), a clear indication that the innovativeness of unemployed T&H graduates will influence their intention to start their businesses.

The positive influence of SE on EI (H5) also provides insightful evidence to support the existing relationships between the two constructs. The findings support Alferiah's (2022) and Lee et al.'s (2011) assertions. With the increasing interest in developing entrepreneurship-related courses as well as the promotion of business pitching activities in Ghanaian universities (Nyadu-Addo & Mensah, 2017; Dzisi & Odoom, 2017), the possibility of enhancing graduates' confidence to establish their business ventures is expected. Specific to this study, an unemployed T&H

graduate with the requisite competencies and confidence (self-efficacy) will most likely have the desire to start their own business. Ideally, unemployed graduates who are not committed to pursuing further studies and have a common goal are likely to form teams or partnerships, pull resources together, and form joint ventures or partnerships to pursue their dreams of becoming entrepreneurs. With SE being one of the best predictors of EI (Alferiah, 2022), T&H graduates who have developed their self-confidence are likely to turn their desires into intentions and eventually start a new venture or business.

CO was also found to influence EI (H7) significantly. Research has shown how global economic and health uncertainties have influenced people's EI by creating opportunities (Krichen & Chabouni, 2021). T&H graduates who witnessed the massive effects of the pandemic on enterprises, especially within the hospitality, travel and tourism sectors, will have to relook at their desires to be employed in the industry. Instead, they would rather take advantage of the opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic and develop their businesses. Typical opportunities such as e-commerce, home food delivery, and drone food delivery (Bhatti et al., 2020; Guthrie et al., 2021; Kotzab et al., 2024; Pahwa & Jaller, 2023; Kim et al., 2021) created by the pandemic are opportunities that T&H graduates might take advantage of and become entrepreneurs. Consequently, the opportunities created by the pandemic will serve as an impetus to drive T&H graduates' EI and eventually start their businesses (Brown et al., 2020; Hu, 2020; Liñán & Jaén, 2020).

Even though empirical evidence exists to support H1 (Alferaih, 2017), H2 (Sharahiley, 2020), and H6 (Krichen & Chaabouni, 2021), the study's findings did not support these hypotheses. In the case of H1, it could be assumed that T&H graduates did not have the resources, especially capital, which is a key factor under PF, to pursue their EIs. Consequently, they may not see entrepreneurship as feasible. Similarly, the pandemic led to job cuts and losses. If these graduates have their parents/benefactors suffering from job cuts/losses, they might not be able to receive financial support from them to initiate their EIs. Also, since the respondents are graduates, they may not have established 'personal contact' with their institutions, where, in times of difficulty, they could connect with their institutions and lecturers for advice on their EIs. These scenarios might have resulted in the study failing to accept H6. For H2, empirical evidence suggests that T&H graduates have no intentions to pursue T&H careers after school (Üngüren & Kaçmaz, 2022; Wen et al., 2018). Since this study seeks to ascertain the potential of T&H students' EIs within the T&H industry, the graduates, having witnessed the pandemic's impact on the T&H industry, may not find pursuing entrepreneurial careers in the T&H domain appealing and desirable, thus giving credence to the H2 being rejected.

Theoretical, Practical, and Policy Implications

The study's results have some implications for theory and practice. The study's use of the EEM and other relevant constructs like IN, SE, SU, and CO is considered appropriate and relevant to the entrepreneurial literature. It is also likely the first of its kind to look at graduate EIs in an emerging economy. Secondly, the study collecting data from T&H graduates and assessing their T&H industry-specific EIs is a deviation from the usual studies that have focused on students and assessing their general EIs;

thus, this study brings a new perspective to the T&H entrepreneurial literature. Lastly, the model used here could explain 67.7% of the EIs of T&H graduates, thus making it a meaningful model to understand or assess students/graduates' EIs.

Implications for practice and policy have been necessitated by this study's findings for universities offering T&H programmes. First, this study highlights the importance of making self-employment in the T&H industry more attractive and feasible for students. Graduates should possess relevant skills and competencies such as opportunity recognition, business development skills, and problem-solving skills, which are critical for entrepreneurial success. These skills will strengthen students' entrepreneurial mindsets (Riyanti et al., 2016). Graduates should also be exposed to entrepreneurship seminars and pitching activities while in school, making self-employment a desired career option. The social learning theory (Bandura, 1971) suggests that new behaviours can be learned by observing, imitating, and modelling others. Also, re-developing T&H curricula to emphasise competency and entrepreneurial skills acquisition can enhance students' EIs even after school. This will help students embrace self-employment as a desired career option.

Second, from the study's findings, PF and PD were insignificant in predicting T&H graduates' EIs. These findings have implications for the government. These findings imply that T&H graduates disregard entrepreneurship as a feasible and desirable career option. One key reason is the excessive taxes imposed on T&H businesses. For instance, it is estimated that the government of Ghana has imposed about 20 taxes on T&H businesses (Business and Financial Times, 2021; Citinewsroom, 2023). In this regard, the government has a role to play in providing entrepreneurship-friendly policies and an enabling business environment that would make owning a T&H business more attractive and enticing.

Third, SU was also not significant in this study's case, contrary to several studies' findings (Arrighetti et al., 2016; Krichen & Chaabouni, 2021). The implication of this arises when graduates do not get support from benefactors and their universities. In the case of not having support from their institutions after school, it is proposed that institutions strengthen their relationship with alumni, conduct tracer studies to determine how their alumni are faring after graduating, and offer them support where necessary. Through this, academic advisors and career counsellors can offer targeted recommendations to these graduates to explore and pursue entrepreneurial career professions. In terms of not having financial support from their benefactors since the pandemic has had consequences for family finances, it is also recommended that students form partnerships and access funding support from the government through the YouStart Initiative and NEIP programmes. Alternatively, these graduates can take advantage of the Kosmos Innovation Centre's entrepreneurial challenge programme and win grants to start businesses in the food value chain (Kosmos Innovation Centre, 2024).

Last but not least, the study's findings provide valuable insights for stakeholders in the T&H industry to create initiatives such as establishing incubation units to encourage entrepreneurship among graduates. The initiatives may comprise networking, mentorship, and funding opportunities. Policymakers can leverage findings from our study to formulate regulations and policies that boost entrepreneurship in the T&H industry.

Limitations and Areas for Future Study

Like all research, this study has some limitations. First, using snowball sampling in a quantitative study was a challenge; thus, the study's findings must be generalised cautiously. Secondly, the male population (5.8%) was a limitation, which prevented the study from examining the gender dimensions. Therefore, future studies should use purposive sampling to target more males and explore the gender dimensions of T&H graduates' EIs. Thirdly, the study made use of graduates from public universities; thus, generalisations of this finding could be problematic.

Future research should include T&H graduates from private universities to conduct a comparative analysis of their EIs. Furthermore, this study did not consider contextual factors such as cultural dynamics and family history, which significantly impact EIs; therefore, future studies can examine how cultural variations or backgrounds and family history among the T&H graduates can determine their EIs. Further studies can also be conducted to examine how unemployed graduates respond to entrepreneurship as an alternative to their career choices. Lastly, future studies can be done by including entrepreneurial behaviour in the model, as EIs do not always predict, in reality, entrepreneurial behaviours.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT BREACH, ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: MEDIATING ROLE OF PROSOCIAL ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract
This study draws on psychological contract and social exchange theories to examine how prosocial organisational behaviour mediates the impact of psychological contract breach (PCB) on employee performance within the hospitality sector in Accra Metropolis, Ghana. A quantitative research approach was adopted, utilising a survey design to collect data from a sample of 84 hotel employees. The data were analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM) with SmartPLS software to test the proposed research model. The findings indicate that prosocial behaviour significantly enhances employee performance, while psychological contract breach has a negative but non-significant effect on performance. Additionally, prosocial behaviour partially mediates the positive relationship between organisational identification and employee performance among hotel employees in Ghana. The study recommends that hotel management in Ghana should focus on promoting organisational identification by fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace culture. These measures can contribute to creating a supportive work environment that enhances employee performance.

Keywords: psychological contract, employee performance, organisational behaviour, contract breach, hotels

BACKGROUND

Understanding the connection between psychological contracts, organisational identity, and employee performance is critical in the fast-paced hotel business for sustaining high levels of service quality and employee satisfaction. Psychological contracts, or unwritten mutual expectations between employees and employers, are important in determining employees' attitudes and behaviours. A good psychological contract increases organisational engagement and lowers scepticism among hotel personnel (Gharib & Khairy, 2019). In contrast, violations of psychological contracts can have negative consequences, such as decreased job satisfaction, poorer work engagement, and greater turnover intentions (Abdalla et al., 2021; Ampofo, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted challenges in the hospitality industry, emphasising the significance of preserving trust and decreasing emotional weariness among personnel (Abdalla et al., 2021). Despite these challenges, work-life balance and leadership behaviours have been demonstrated to reduce the negative effects of psychological contract breaches, improving employee performance and prosocial behaviour (Jiang et al., 2020; Kaya & Karatepe, 2020). Prosocial organisational behaviour, which includes behaviours aimed at benefiting others inside the organisation, emerges as a key mediator in the link between psychological contract violations and employee performance. Empirical research indicates that prosocial behaviour can mitigate the negative consequences of contract breaches by encouraging greater levels of work performance and organisational citizenship behaviours (Fatoki, 2019; Shao & Peng, 2022).

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Furthermore, organisational identification, in which employees align their self-concept with their organisation's identity, has a significant effect on their engagement in prosocial behaviours, hence improving hotel performance and sustainability initiatives (Peng et al., 2020).

The relationship between psychological contracts, organisational identity, and employee performance is intricate and diverse. According to research, violations in the psychological contract have a detrimental influence on life satisfaction and engagement, resulting in lower pro-environmental behaviours and organisational commitment. However, strong organisational identity can help to mitigate these negative consequences, promoting a resilient and devoted staff (Khairy et al., 2019; Tufan & Wendt, 2019).

Understanding these dynamics is critical for hotel managers looking to improve staff performance and organisational effectiveness. Hotels can enhance employee satisfaction, performance, and overall organisational success by cultivating a healthy organisational culture, assuring psychological contract fulfilment, and encouraging prosocial behaviours.

Despite considerable research on the dynamics of psychological contracts, organisational identity, and employee performance in the hotel business, major gaps and inconsistencies remain. Previous research has found that breaches of psychological contracts lead to decreased work satisfaction, poorer engagement, and higher turnover intentions (Ampofo, 2020; Abdalla et al., 2021). However, there is limited knowledge of the processes by which prosocial organisational behaviour mediates these interactions, particularly in the hotel industry.

Research has demonstrated that prosocial behaviours can mitigate the negative effects of psychological contract violations, hence improving employee performance (Fatoki, 2019; Shao & Peng, 2022). Nonetheless, the specific role of prosocial organisational behaviour as a mediator between psychological contract violations, organisational identity, and employee performance is underexplored. While some research show that organisational identification has a positive impact on prosocial behaviours and overall performance (Peng et al., 2020), others indicate that psychological contract breaches can significantly impair these advantages (Karatepe et al., 2020; Ampofo et al., 2022).

Furthermore, there are discrepancies in the findings regarding the effect of psychological contract breaches on employee performance. For example, while some research suggests that breaches reduce life satisfaction and engagement (Karatepe et al., 2020; Ampofo et al., 2022), others suggest that strong organisational identification can mitigate these negative effects (Tufan & Wendt, 2020; Zeineldin, 2019). These inconsistent findings underscore a significant gap in understanding how prosocial behaviour influences the relationship between psychological contract breaches, organisational identity, and employee performance.

This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the mediating effect of prosocial organisational behaviour in the relationship between psychological contract breaches, organisational identity, and employee performance in the hotel sector. By investigating these relationships, this study aims to better understand the factors that drive employee performance and propose ways to improve organisational success in the hospitality sector.

Therefore, this study aims to examine whether prosocial behaviour mediates the effect of psychological contract breach and organisational identification on employee performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The social exchange theory gives a framework for understanding psychological contracts. Blau (1964) differentiates between social and economic exchanges, stating that social exchanges include undefined responsibilities, whereas economic transactions entail obligations that are more typically tangible. Priceless and long-lasting social patterns emerge through social trade interactions. Employees' personal values, according to this idea, affect the results of relationships with peers and employers. Scholars expanded these ideas and categorised social and economic interactions as transactional and relational contracts in the framework of the psychological contract. Transactional contracts, on the other hand, are based on extrinsic variables and focus on concrete, mostly monetary considerations, for a certain length of time—they are clear, static, and limited in scope (Rousseau, 1990). Relational contracts, on the other hand, are based on indefiniteness, dynamism, and extended aims, and they focus on intrinsic elements such as status and recognition, the opportunity for creativity, employment stability, work-life balance, good work ethics, and career progression (Rousseau, 1990).

The social exchange theory (SET) provides a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of psychological contracts within organisations, particularly in the context of employee behaviour and performance. At its core, social exchange theory posits that social behaviour is the result of an exchange process aimed at maximising benefits and minimising costs. This perspective is particularly relevant to the subject matter, which involves exploring how prosocial behaviour (PSB) and psychological contract breaches (PCB) impact employee performance. By applying social exchange theory, the study can explore how employees' perceptions of fairness and reciprocity in their psychological contracts motivate their prosocial behaviours and overall performance.

Psychological Contract Breach and Employee Performance

When an employee feels the employer has not, or is not fulfilling their) part of the engagement contract, the employee is likely to be demotivated and be less committed to work, hence reducing performance. This is supported by numerous studies (Bari et al., 2020; Opolot et al., 2020; Peng et al., 2021; Zacher & Rudolph, 2021).

H1: PCB has a negative effect on EMP_PERF

Organisational Identification and Employee Performance

When an employee identifies with his or her workplace, organisational membership becomes a component of his or her self-concept. Instead of an external force tying the personnel and the company, such inclusion creates a natural sense of we-ness (Meyer, Becker, & Van Dick, 2006). Organisational identification has been demonstrated to have a substantial impact on work attitudes (such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and desire to leave) and behavioural outcomes (such as in-role and extra-role performance) in empirical studies (Riketta, 2005). Organisational identification has a positive effect on employee performance (Efraty & Wolfe, 1988; Liu et al., 2011; Tuna, 2018).

H2: OID has a positive effect on EMP_PERF

Prosocial Organisational Behaviour and Employee Performance

Numerous studies have shown that prosocial behaviour (PSB) impacts employee performance within organisations (Baruch et al., 2004; Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Yaakobi & Weisberg, 2020). PSB encompasses a range of voluntary actions that employees undertake to benefit others and support the organisation beyond their formal job requirements. These behaviours include cooperating with co-workers, suggesting ways to improve the organisation, and speaking favourably about the organisation to outsiders. These patterns of behaviour are particularly interesting in that they are necessary for organisational survival through enhanced employee performance (Baruch et al., 2004).

The influence of PSB on employee performance is particularly significant because these behaviours often fill gaps that formal policies and procedures cannot address. This cooperation enhances overall team performance and encourages knowledge sharing, which can lead to innovation and improved processes. The necessity of PSB for organisational survival is evident in its impact on the quality of work relationships and employee morale. When employees consistently engage in helpful behaviours and actively contribute to the organisation's well-being, they reinforce a culture of reciprocity and trust (Qin & Men, 2023). This, in turn, cultivates a resilient workforce capable of navigating challenges and sustaining high levels of performance.

H3: PSB has a positive effect on EMP_PERF

Psychological Contract Breach and Prosocial Organisational Behaviour

Several studies established the negative link between PCB and PSB (Coyle-Shapfro, 2002; Griep et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021; Morsch & Dijk, 2020). Employees who perceive breaches of their psychological contracts may react by decreasing both their in-role and extra-role behaviours. One assumes that the employees who experience PCB in the hotels under investigation should reduce their voluntary helping behaviours toward their colleagues and the organisation. Thus, the fourth hypothesis proposes a direct negative relationship between PCB and PSB.

H_4: PCB has a negative effect on PSB.

Organisational Identification and Prosocial Organisational Behaviour

Studies over the years have found that organisational identification positively affects prosocial organisational behaviour (Contreras-Pacheco et al., 2021; Lee, 1999). Employees with a sense of belongingness to the hotels and a sense of oneness with the hotels are more likely to provide help to other employees and the organisation. The fifth hypothesis is thus formulated as

H5: OID has a positive effect on PSB

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. This design was deemed appropriate because in surveys, the researcher is an outsider, which increases reliability and eliminates subjectivity. The study area covered by this research is the Accra Metropolis. The sample size was calculated using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula, based on which a sample of 132 employees across eight hotels in

Accra was targeted. The study, however, achieved a sample size of 84 (i.e. 63.6% response rate). It is important to note that while this sample size is relatively small, it can still be considered sufficient for a quantitative study employing Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), as SEM can accommodate smaller sample sizes if the model is simple and the indicators are robust. The sampling technique used for administering the questionnaire was convenience sampling, where participants were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate.

The data for this study were collected through primary sources with the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised two sections. The first section contained questions regarding the demographic data, while in the second section, the respondents were asked to express their perceptions regarding the study variables (employee performance, psychological contract breach, prosocial organisational behaviour, and organisational identification). Participants were requested to provide their responses on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from '1' (strongly disagree) to '5' (strongly agree) on all items under study. The psychological contract construct's sample questions were adapted from the research of Freese and Schalk (2008), while the prosocial organisational behaviour construct was drawn from the research of Fabio and Gori (2020). While the employee performance construct items were taken from Griffin et al. (2003), the organisational identity construct was inferred from Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher (2020).

The data collected was processed using SmartPLS software and analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM). According to Hox and Bechger (1998), SEM combines complex path models with latent variables (factors) in the same study. It is a robust technique that is used in studies with unobserved constructs, such as those under consideration in this study (Sander & Teh, 2014). That is, it provides the avenue to measure unobservable variables with identifiable indicators. The method utilises the features of factor analysis and multiple regressions that help examine the relationship between endogenous and exogenous variables (Bagozzi & Fornell, 1982; Gefen et al., 2000; Hair et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2017). This helps reduce first-generation statistical tool challenges that include the examination of only one single relationship at a single point in time (Gefen et al. 2000; Hair et al. 2010). Structural equation modelling permits the extension of longitudinal data within a single framework to conform to a study's conceptual framework and hypotheses (Preacher et al. 2008; Gunzler et al. 2013). Furthermore, it enables the combination of categorical, discrete, and continuous variables. The rule is that the observed variables may be categorical or discrete, but the latent variables must be continuous (Civelek 2018).

Measurement Model Assessment

Reliability refers to consistency, while validity refers to accuracy (whether the items are actually measuring the constructs or what they are intended to measure). The Partial Least Squares reliability test in SEM uses two methods, namely Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's Alpha measures the lower limit of a construct's reliability value, while composite reliability measures the actual value of a construct's reliability. Composite Reliability measures the actual reliability value, with an acceptable threshold of >0.7, though values >0.6 are also acceptable (Suprapto et al., 2020). Using Cronbach's

Alpha, the rule of thumb for decision-making according to Manerikar and Manerikar (2015) is as follows: $\alpha < 0.5$ is unacceptable; $0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$ is poor; $0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$ is acceptable; $0.7 \leq \alpha \leq 0.9$ is good; and $\alpha > 0.9$ is excellent.

There are two types of validity- convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent Validity is measured by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). According to Suprapto et al. (2020), the minimum recommended AVE is 0.5. Hair et al. (2010) also asserted that AVE values less than 0.5 are acceptable as long as the composite reliability is higher than 0.6.

Discriminant Validity, on the other hand, measures differentiation in the constructs and how different the constructs are from each other. This can be established by three methods: the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, Cross Loadings, or Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio. In this study, the Fornell-Larcker criterion is applied and supported by the HTMT ratio. The Fornell-Larcker criterion requires that the square root of AVE for each construct exceed the correlation between constructs, while HTMT values should not exceed 0.85 (Ab Hamid et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015).

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model explains how the variables are related to each other (Hox & Bechger, 1999; Tempelaar et al., 2007). This is done by determining the path coefficients through bootstrapping. Bootstrapping, with 5,000 resamples, was employed to test the significance of the path coefficients, as this procedure provides a robust estimate of the stability of the results. The bootstrapping approach allows for testing both the direct and indirect effects within the SEM framework, ensuring that the results are statistically sound and consistent with the study's conceptual model.

RESULTS

The respondents' demographic profile presented in Table 1 reveals that the majority of the participants in this study were female (90%, n=76), aged below 50 (98%, n=82), with at least an HND qualification (98%). The majority (57%) were also permanent employees who had been in engagement with their organisations for more than a year (79%, n=66).

Assessment of Measurement Model

This section seeks to check the quality of the measures by testing for the reliability and validity of the constructs. The model results are shown in Figure 1. The results show that all the factors report a loading greater than 0.5 as desired (Akgül, 2019; Jennex, 2019; Salvendy & Smith, 2009).

Reliability

The results in Table 2, therefore, mean that all PCB and PSB had good reliability, while EMP_PERF and OID had excellent reliability. Further, the composite reliability values are all greater than 0.7, which implies high internal consistency for the constructs.

Table 1: Respondents' Profile

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	8	10%
	Female	76	90%
	Total	84	100%
Age group	Below 30	8	10%
	31-40	74	88%
	Over 50	2	2%
	Total	84	100%
Highest level of Education	NVTI	2	2%
	HND	76	91%
	Bachelors	4	5%
	Masters	2	2%
	Total	84	100%
Type of Employment	Permanent	48	57%
	Temporary (Casual)	10	12%
	Fixed Term (Contract)	16	19%
	Attachment	10	12%
	Total	84	100%
Years in employment relationship	Less than 1	18	21%
	1-5	58	69%
	6-10	4	5%
	Over 10	4	5%
	Total	84	100%

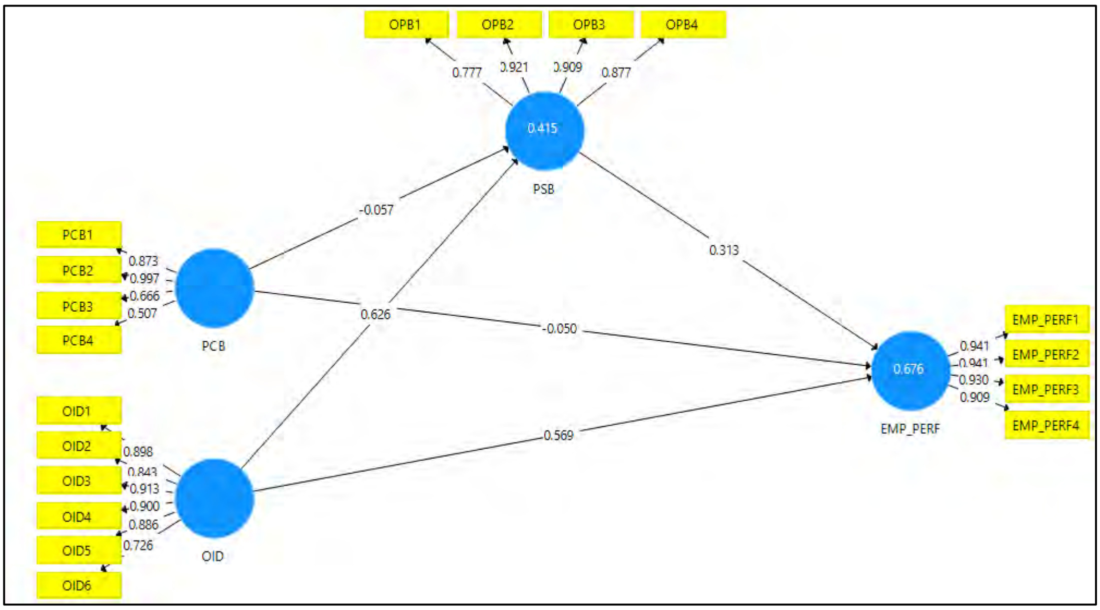

Figure 1: Factor Loadings

Table 2: Results for Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Rho A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
EMP_PERF	0.948	0.949	0.963	0.866
OID	0.931	0.943	0.946	0.745
PCB	0.897	3.682	0.857	0.614
PSB	0.896	0.919	0.927	0.762

Source: Data Analysis Results from Smart PLS (2024)

Validity

Table 3 presents the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) for Discriminant validity. To establish discriminant validity, all ratios should be less than 0.85, the threshold for discriminant validity (Ab Hamid et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015). The results in Table 3 show that all the constructs reported an AVE greater than 0.5.

Table 3: HTMT Results for Discriminant Validity

	EMP_PERF	OID	PCB	PSB
EMP_PERF				
OID	0.825			
PCB	0.159	0.189		
PSB	0.738	0.677	0.152	

Source: Data Analysis Results from Smart PLS (2024)

Structural Model Assessment

The total effect results are presented in Table 4. The path coefficient results in Table 4 show that OID has a positive (0.569) significant effect on EMP_PERF, and PCB has a negative (0.050) but insignificant effect (p-value of 0.579) on EMP_PERF. PSB also has a positive (0.313) significant effect on EMP_PERF

Table 4: Total Effect Results for Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
OID -> EMP_PERF	0.569	0.564	0.096	5.914	0.000
PCB -> EMP_PERF	-0.050	-0.018	0.090	0.556	0.579
PSB -> EMP_PERF	0.313	0.315	0.102	3.060	0.002

Source: Data Analysis Results from Smart PLS (2024)

Model Assessment with PSB as a Mediating Factor

Table 5 shows that the indirect effect of OID on EMP_PERF through PSB is positive and significant (0.000) with a coefficient of 0.196. However, Psychological Contract Breach (PCB) has a weak negative indirect effect on Employee Performance through PSB, with a coefficient of -0.018, indicating a negligible impact. This means that PSB partially mediates the effect of OID on EMP_PERF, but does not mediate the effect of PCB on EMP_PERF.

Table 5: Indirect Effect Results for Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
OID -> PSB->EMP_PERF	0.196	0.197	0.083	2.349	0.000
PCB -> PSB->EMP_PERF	-0.018	-0.009	0.033	0.542	0.588

Source: Data Analysis Results from Smart PLS (2024)

DISCUSSION

The results from the study provide insights, addressing the study's hypothesis (H1-H5). Per the findings, Hypothesis 1 should be rejected as it indicates a negative effect of PCB on Employee Performance. The findings proved that Psychological contract breach (PCB) has no significant effect on employee performance (EMP_PERF). This suggests that the occurrence of perceived breaches in the psychological contract may not substantially influence the performance of employees. This finding does not reflect the results of Eckerd et al. (2013), which suggested that psychological contract breaches significantly impacted the performance of workers.

The findings support Hypothesis 2, which proposed a positive effect of OID on Employee Performance. The analysis shows that OID has a significant and strong positive impact on EMP_PERF. This indicates that employees who identify more closely with their organisation tend to perform better, possibly because a strong sense of belonging and alignment with organisational values motivates them to contribute more effectively to organisational goals. The findings of this study are similar to that of He et al. (2014), which indicated high employee engagement and performance as a result of strong employee organisational identification.

The findings of this study also supported Hypothesis 3, which suggested a positive relationship between PSB and Employee Performance. PSB has a significant positive effect on EMP_PERF, although the effect is weaker than that of OID. This indicates that employees who engage in prosocial behaviours, such as helping colleagues or going beyond their formal job requirements, are likely to perform better. Such behaviours can contribute to a more collaborative and productive work environment, thereby enhancing overall performance. This finding confirms the conclusions of existing studies (Frazier & Tupper, 2018; Yaakobi & Weisberg, 2020). These studies highlighted that cooperating with co-workers, suggesting ways to improve the organisation, and speaking favourably about the organisation to outsiders, impact employee performance within organisations.

Hypothesis 4 was not supported by the results of the study. The Hypothesis proposed a negative effect of PCB on PSB. However, PCB does not have a significant indirect effect on Employee Performance through PSB. This indicates that breaches in the psychological contract do not meaningfully reduce prosocial behaviour or indirectly influence employee performance through this pathway. This further suggests that the presence of psychological contract breaches does not necessarily diminish employees' willingness to engage in prosocial behaviours. This finding contrasts with the findings of Bal, Chiaburu and Diaz (2011), which indicated that psychological contract breach influences employees' feelings and behaviour. However, the finding of Ugwu (2013) is similar to the finding of this study. While Bal, Chiaburu, and Diaz (2011) found that such breaches significantly affect employee attitudes and behaviours in a European context, Ugwu's (2013) findings in Nigeria, similar to this study's findings in Ghana, indicate that employees in some African contexts may be more resilient to psychological contract breaches, possibly due to cultural norms of communalism and social support that buffer the negative effects. This points to the need for further cross-cultural research to understand the variability in responses to psychological contract breaches across different settings.

The findings reveal that OID significantly influences Employee Performance indirectly through PSB, supporting Hypothesis 5 (H5), which proposed a positive effect of OID on PSB. The mediation analysis suggests that higher levels of OID enhance PSB, which in turn boosts Employee Performance. This indicates that when employees identify strongly with their organisation, they are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviours, which further contribute to improved performance outcomes. The study findings do not refute the findings of Bolino and Grant (2016), which suggested that employees value the success and well-being of their colleagues and are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviour for better performance outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationships between Organisational Identification (OID), Psychological Contract Breach (PCB), Prosocial Behaviour (PSB), and Employee Performance (EMP_PERF). The results confirm that OID has a significant positive impact on employee performance, both directly and indirectly through PSB, suggesting that fostering a strong sense of organisational identification can enhance prosocial behaviours and improve performance outcomes. Additionally, PSB is shown to be a crucial factor in boosting employee performance, reinforcing the importance of encouraging prosocial actions within the workplace.

Contrary to expectations, PCB does not significantly affect Employee Performance, either directly or indirectly through PSB, indicating that perceived breaches in the psychological contract do not necessarily diminish prosocial behaviour or employee performance. This finding contrasts with some previous studies conducted in Western contexts, where PCB was found to influence employee attitudes and behaviours. The results align more closely with studies conducted in African settings, suggesting that cultural and contextual factors in Ghana may moderate employees' responses to psychological contract breaches.

Overall, the study highlights the significance of organisational identification and prosocial behaviour as key drivers of employee performance. It also suggests that while psychological contract breaches may not drastically impact performance in certain cultural contexts, organisations should still strive to maintain fair and transparent practices to prevent potential negative outcomes. Further research should explore how cultural differences influence the effects of psychological contract breaches across various contexts to develop more comprehensive organisational strategies.

The significant positive effect of OID on employee performance suggests that organisations should invest in initiatives that strengthen employees' sense of belonging and identification with the company. This could include promoting a shared vision, building a strong organisational culture, and ensuring that employees see their values reflected in the company's mission. Given the significant impact of PSB on employee performance, management should create an environment that encourages and rewards prosocial actions, such as teamwork, helping behaviours, and volunteering. Such initiatives can foster a more collaborative and supportive work atmosphere, leading to better performance outcomes.

The findings also suggest that the impact of PCB may vary across cultural contexts, pointing to the need for a more nuanced understanding of psychological contract theory. This study adds to the body of literature by showing that cultural and contextual factors may buffer the effects of PCB on employee behaviour, thus challenging some established assumptions in the field.

Limitations of the Study

The sample size of 84 employees, while sufficient for the analysis, limits the generalizability of the findings. The results may not fully represent all employees in the hospitality industry or other sectors in Ghana. Also, the study was conducted in Accra, Ghana, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other regions or countries. Cultural factors unique to Ghana might influence the results, and further research in different contexts would be necessary to confirm the findings. There is also the potential for response Bias as the data were collected using self-reported questionnaires, there is a possibility of response bias. Employees may have provided socially desirable responses rather than accurately reflecting their true behaviours and perceptions.

In view of these limitations, it is recommended that future research should compare how cultural and contextual factors influence the relationships between OID, PCB, PSB, and employee performance across diverse settings, given the different findings in Western and African contexts regarding the impact of PCB. Also, to establish causality and understand the long-term effects of OID, PCB, and PSB on employee performance, future studies should adopt a longitudinal design. This would provide insights into how these factors evolve and their sustained impact on performance. Lastly, further research could investigate other potential mediators or moderators, such as job satisfaction, organisational support, or resilience, to better understand the mechanisms through which OID and PCB affect employee performance.

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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).

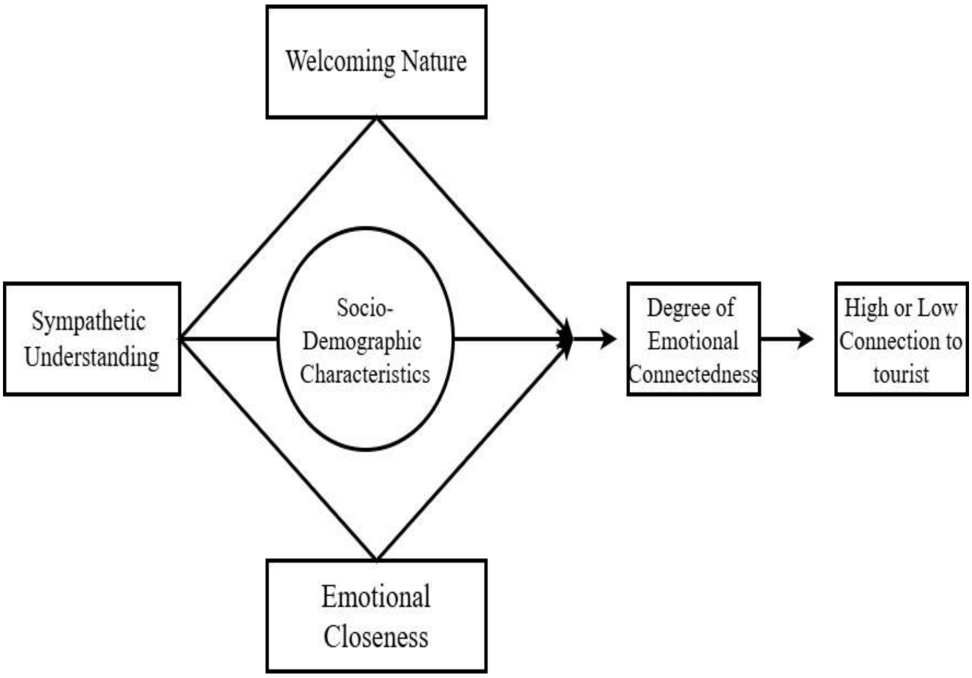

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

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.

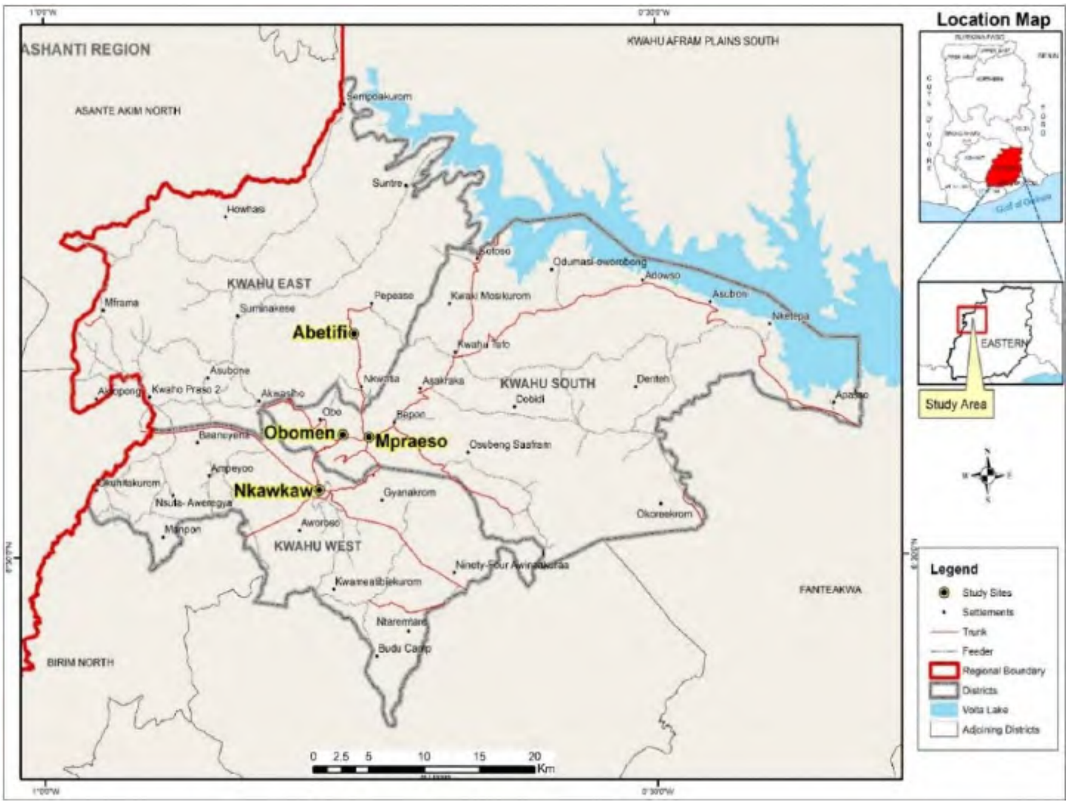

Figure 2: Study Area

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 nth 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 (%)
Sex		
Male	313	55.0
Female	256	45.0
Age		
18-39	297	52.2
40-59	206	36.2
60+	66	11.6
Education Attainment		
No **formal education	32	5.6
Basic	132	23.2
Senior High School	176	30.9
Tertiary	229	40.3
Religion		
Christian	501	88.1
Islam	41	7.1
Traditional	25	4.4
No religion	2	0.4
Marital Status		
Never married	212	37.3
Married	309	54.3
Ever married	48	8.4
Household Size		
1-4	358	62.9
5-9	201	35.3
10+	10	1.8
Income Level		
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
Indigene Status		
Indigene	508	89.3
Non-indigene	61	10.7
Community		
Nkawkaw	129	22.7
Mpraeso	162	28.5
Abetifi	98	17.2
Obomen	180	31.6
Years living in the community		
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
Total	690	100

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 help 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).

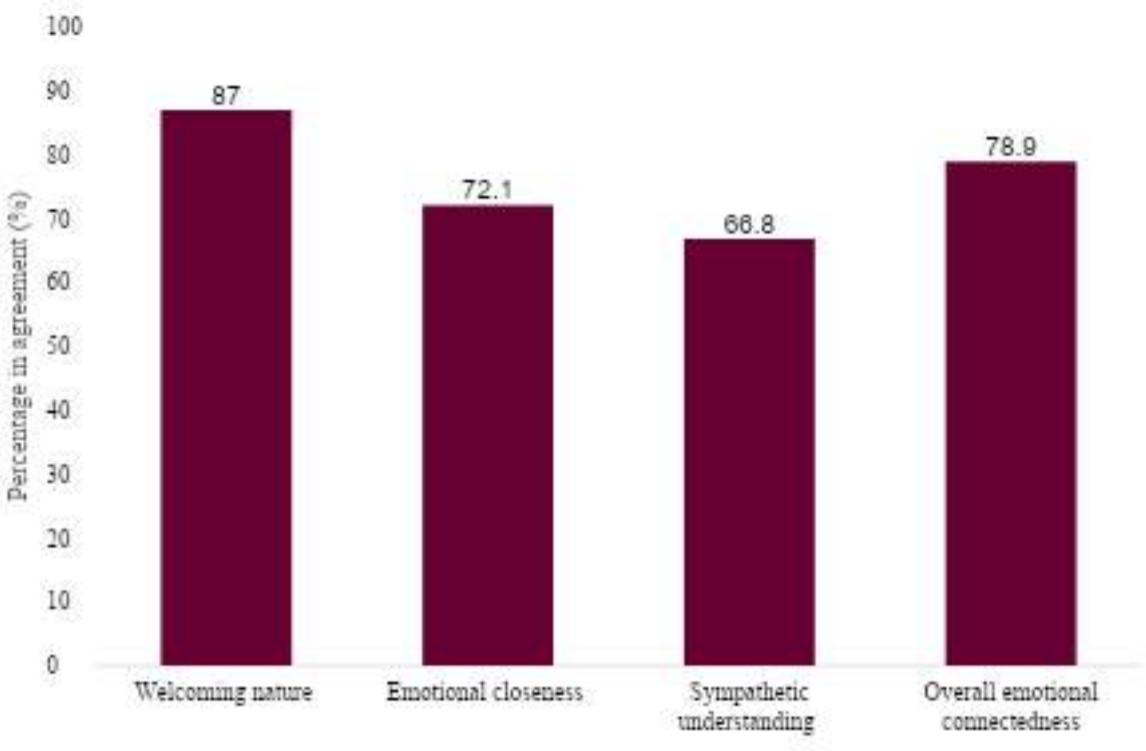

Figure 3: Distribution of Residents' Emotional Connectedness to Tourists.

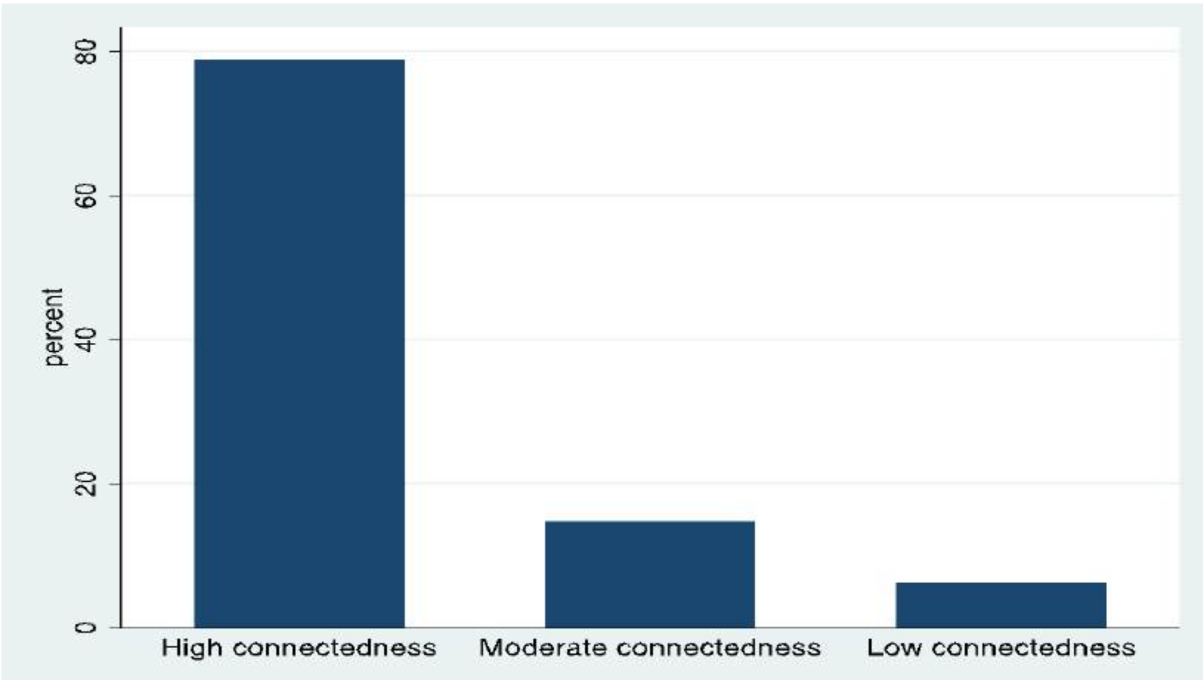

Figure 4: Level of Residents' Emotional Connectedness with Tourists

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 emotionally attached to nearly 90% of respondents between the ages of 18 and 39. These are young people who are energetic and lively, who are interested in tourism and frequently interact with travellers. These individuals serve as organisers, guides, food vendors, sales agents, and in a variety of other capacities, which serve to strengthen the emotional relationship between tourists. Some locals are tourists' buddies, and they derive personal 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.

Table 3: Residents' Emotional Connectedness to Tourists by Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Socio-demographic characteristics	Emotional Connectedness					
	N	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	χ^2	P-value
Sex						
Male	313	79.6	15.3	5.1		
Female	256	78.1	14.1	7.8	1.8	0.404
Total	569	78.9	14.8	6.3		
Age						
18-39	297	89.6	9.1	1.4		
40-59	206	66.5	21.4	12.1	47.2***	0.000
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		
Basic	132	75.0	17.4	7.6		
Secondary	176	84.1	10.2	5.7	15.3**	0.018
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		
Islam	41	68.3	4.9	26.8		
Traditional	25	52.0	20.0	28.0	58.7***	0.000
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		
Married	309	73.8	16.5	9.7	25.3***	0.000
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		
5-9	201	71.6	15.4	12.9	24.9***	0.000
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					
	N	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	χ^2	P-value
Less than GHC 100	37	78.4	10.8	10.8		
GHC 101-500	198	81.8	11.6	6.6		
GHC 501-1000	136	76.5	16.9	6.6	6.4	0.602
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						
Nkawkaw	129	76.0	14.7	9.3	5.7	0.452
Mpraeso/Obomen	162	80.9	13.6	5.6		
Abetifi	98	74.5	20.4	5.1		
Obomen	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 Abenoja'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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EXAMINING THE POST-COVID-19 TOURISM RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AFRICAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply disrupted the global tourism and hospitality sectors, with African nations particularly affected due to their dependency on tourism as a critical economic driver. Despite the sector's importance, limited research exists on the recovery and resilience of African tourism during the pandemic. Understanding these dynamics is vital to addressing the challenges and capitalising on opportunities this crisis presents. This study critically examines the recovery and resilience strategies in the post-pandemic context of the African tourism industry. By integrating insights from literature and case studies, it identifies sectoral challenges, including economic vulnerabilities, policy gaps, and structural inefficiencies. It also explores adaptive, innovative, and sustainable approaches to recovery, underscoring the need for inclusive growth and resilience-focused planning. The findings offer actionable recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders, advocating multi-level strategies that prioritise sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation to guide Africa's tourism sector toward a robust recovery.

Keywords: recovery; resilience; African tourism industry, sustainable practices; COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the deadly disease coronavirus has caused significant economic losses and generated global health and financial catastrophes (Anderson et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has radically transformed the global economic landscape, with substantial implications for developing and developed nations (Dube & Nhamo, 2024). Travel restrictions and social distancing caused unprecedented failures in some industries, while others adapted to digital platforms to survive (Mehrolia et al., 2020). Tourism is an industry that relies heavily on tourist mobility to remain viable. Therefore, this industry is ranked as one of the most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Fotiadis et al., 2021; Xiong et al., 2020). The pandemic caused disruptions in tourism businesses, leading to increased health concerns among potential travellers (Rahman et al., 2021), particularly those with pre-existing health disorders (Gansevoort & Hilbrands, 2020).

As a result of the pandemic, the world has witnessed a reduction of 2.7 billion international tourist arrivals from 2020 to 2022 (UNWTO, 2024). The governments of numerous nations diligently created and executed a variety of recovery plans and initiatives to revitalise the tourism sector and assist in its recovery process, in addition to removing travel restrictions, relaxing lockdowns, and reopening businesses (Jones, 2022; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). Many African countries rely heavily on tourism to support their economies (Bama & Nyikana, 2021). The economic contributions of tourism to African nations like South Africa, Mauritius, and Seychelles were substantial before the COVID-19 pandemic (Muzekenyi et al., 2018; Sarpong et al., 2020). In 2022, Africa witnessed a 49.9% decline in international tourist arrivals compared to the same period in 2019. The decline was approximately 48% in the North African region, whilst sub-Saharan Africa experienced a reduction of 50.7% (UNWTO, 2022).

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South Africa's tourist arrivals dropped 77.9% from 2019 to 2021, with a partial recovery in 2022, but that was still 44.3% below pre-pandemic levels. In contrast, other African nations saw an 11.9% rise in Q4 2023 compared to Q4 2019 (Statistics South Africa, 2024). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, most African countries depended on international tourism, which was seen to be more profitable than domestic tourism (Emmy et al., 2023). South Africa's national parks have a significant economic impact because they rely on international visitors (Souza et al., 2021). However, this scenario changed after the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to put the tourism industry on a path to recovery and, more importantly, to increase its resilience to future disturbances, a shift was made to domestic tourism (Yeh, 2021; Nyikana & Bama, 2023). The African tourism industry has faced severe difficulties because of its heavy reliance on international tourists and tourism-related revenue (Rogerson & Baum, 2021).

Despite tourism's vital role in African economies, limited research exists on recovery and resilience strategies by tourism businesses in Africa after the COVID-19 pandemic. This study focuses on how tourism businesses sustain in this tough time and what strategies they implemented to recover from this pandemic. This study seeks to answer the following research question: What resilience and recovery strategies have the African tourism industry adopted post COVID-19 pandemic? This study addresses this gap by examining the recovery journey of African tourism in the post-pandemic era, highlighting localised challenges and successful strategies. It emphasises the need for sustainable, inclusive, and innovative approaches, offering insights for policymakers and stakeholders. A review of existing literature using the Scopus database provides a foundation for developing a robust framework to guide future research. The above discussion highlights the need to examine the post-COVID-19 tourism recovery and resilience in the context of the African Tourism Industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature review (SLR) is a reliable, systematic, and repeatable method for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data from previous studies related to a specific research question (Santos et al., 2022). This study adopts a systematic and meticulous strategy to explain the resilience strategies adopted by the African tourism industry. The SLR followed established guidelines and protocols to ensure methodological diligence, transparency, and consistency throughout the research process (Waquar et al., 2024). SLRs help identify recurring themes for a subject by systematically analysing the literature. The key objective of this study is to identify themes of resilience in the post-pandemic era within the African tourism industry.

This SLR adopts the PRISMA approach (Figure 1) to ensure a transparent and rigorous research process. Systematic literature reviews widely utilise the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology, which provides an orderly and organised framework for documenting the review process (Salim et al., 2024). PRISMA minimises bias and enhances assessment process transparency, strengthening the credibility and relevance of the review's findings (Moher et al., 2009). This systematic methodology strengthens the accuracy and reliability of the evaluation, enhancing its academic value accordingly (Moher et al., 2009; Sujood et al., 2023). The Scopus database is the key source for discovering relevant articles due to its comprehensive coverage of scholarly literature (Mishra et al., 2024). The title, abstract, and keywords were utilised in the article search, combined with the Boolean operators "OR" and "AND" to ensure comprehensive inclusion of all relevant records.

The search was performed using the keywords "COVID-19" OR "pandemic" OR "coronavirus" OR "SARS-CoV-2" AND "tourism" OR "travel" OR "hospitality industry" AND "recovery" OR "revival" OR "resilience" OR "sustainability" AND "Africa" OR "African continent" OR "Sub-Saharan Africa"

According to Santos et al. (2022) and Mishra et al. (2024), inclusion and exclusion criteria are critical in systematic reviews. Table 1 outlines these criteria.

Table 1: Screening Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Justification
Article focusing on tourism resilience strategies post-pandemic in the African continent	Article not focusing on tourism resilience strategies post-pandemic and not relating to the African continent.	Beyond the study's scope
Scopus indexed	Other databases like Web of Science, JSTOR and PubMed	Scopus is known for its comprehensive collection of high-quality scientific publications acknowledged by scholars and its wide-ranging subject coverage
Peer-reviewed, publicly available full-text articles	Opinion articles, book chapters, editorials, and books are not subject to peer review. The exclusion criteria further include conference proceedings and research notes.	Peer review is a process that ensures the accuracy and trustworthiness of research findings.
English language	Other language	English has become the dominant language for sharing scientific research.
Article mainly discussing resilience strategies of tourism industries	Article not discussing resilience strategies by tourism industries	Narrowing down the focus

Source: (Based on Mishra et al., 2024; Santos et al., 2022)

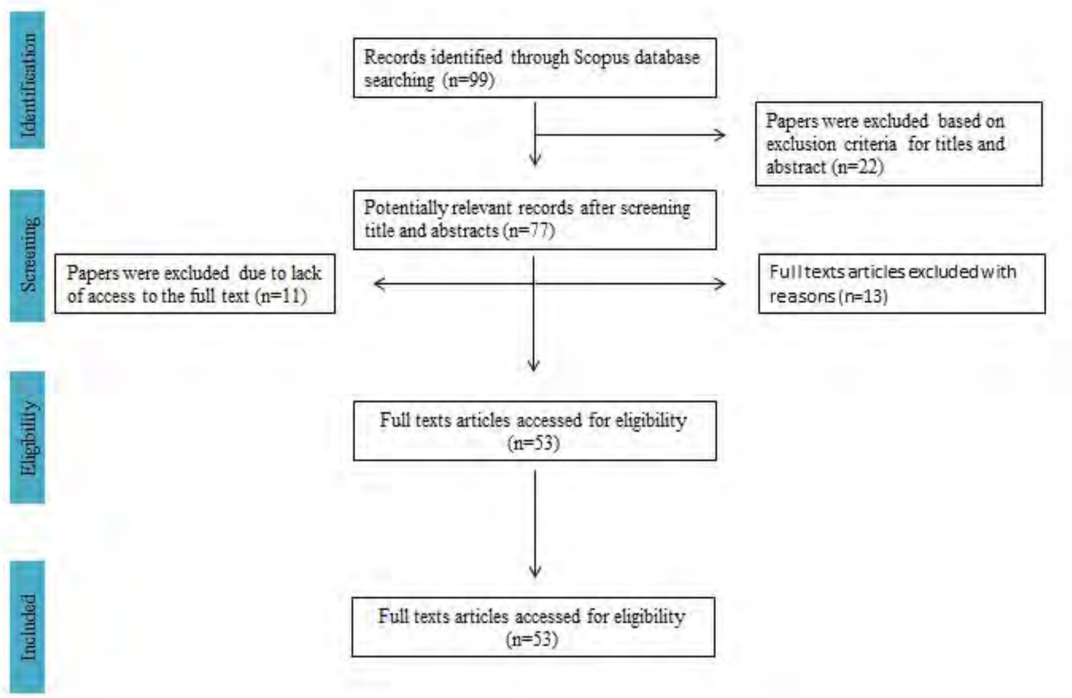

Figure 1:PRISMA Approach

FINDINGS

Recovery and Resilience Strategies for the African Tourism Industry

Domestic tourism is one of the significant themes emerging in the literature as a resilience strategy in the African tourism industry. African tourism also depends on nature-based tourism (NBT), so the resilience strategies of NBT destinations were also studied, and MICE, another critical sector, was evaluated. Lastly, the study sheds light on stakeholder resilience strategies.

Domestic tourism

Recent research systematically indicates a clear trend of growing interest and support for domestic tourism post-pandemic. Domestic tourism significantly contributes to the economic impact of the tourism sector. Many studies indicated that before COVID-19, African tourism mainly depended on international tourism; there was a lack of support for domestic tourism (Chakrabarti & Ekblom, 2024; Mandina & Preez, 2022). Most industries heavily depend on international tourism; however, domestic tourism has gained equal importance after the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, domestic tourism is anticipated to be a source of optimism for the tourism industry (Mandina & Preez, 2022).

As a brand, Africa has always been linked to poverty, underdevelopment, jeopardy, and disease, among other miseries. Although many South Africans have limited disposable income, the study by Gounden et al. (2024) shows that people are still willing to spend on travel and participate in tourism activities. According to Adinolfi and Skotoyi (2023), national and local governments must prioritise domestic tourism by implementing tax holidays, discounted tariffs, reduced value-added tax, and sales promotions like discounted travel and accommodation packages designed to increase demand among domestic tourists. Understanding domestic travellers' evolving preferences and requirements is crucial for stakeholders in the tourism sector to address emerging and continually shifting trends and opportunities effectively (Mandina & Preez, 2022).

Many destinations implemented domestic tourism as a recovery strategy (Chakrabarti & Ekblom, 2024; Nyikana & Bama, 2023; Shereni, 2023). In view of this, Adinolfi and Skotoyi (2023) suggest that the South African government and the private sector must prioritise this growing industry by implementing policies and strategies that enhance and promote access to domestic tourism. Strategic marketing efforts, coupled with tailored incentives and packages, will be vital in harnessing the potential for domestic travel and addressing the latent demand within the sector (Bob & Gounden, 2024). A focused marketing mix must be implemented to cater to domestic, regional, and international tourism markets (Dube, 2021).

Guesthouses must improve cash flow, optimise expenses, swiftly adjust to pandemic-related changes, and strengthen their reputations through creative marketing that aligns with the "new normal" (Sucheran, 2021). Seyitoğlu and Ivanov (2020) suggest using robots in service delivery within hospitality environments to maintain physical separation and improve tourist and hospitality employees' safety perceptions. All hospitality stakeholders must cooperate to alleviate the pandemic's effects and formulate short-, medium-, and long-term recovery strategies (Sucheran, 2021).

Murima and Shereni (2023) examine Namibian stakeholders' views on domestic tourism resurgence during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that Namibia, like many others in the developing world, suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted international tourism. A survey by Chakrabarti & Ekblom (2024) on the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association in Kenya revealed that although domestic tourism provided crucial funding to conservancies, most stakeholders thought it could be more financially viable for the long term. A study on Limpopo by Dube and Nhamo (2024) highlights the industry's need to financially plan for calamities like COVID-19. Despite limited governmental support and considerable obstacles, such as inconsistent utility services, high inflation, and a global economic recession, the sector demonstrated resilience, experiencing relatively few business closures (Dube & Nhamo, 2024).

Following COVID-19, the African tourism sector is experiencing the rise of new tourism ideas that are constantly attracting tourists. Drive tourism has emerged as a crucial strategy for revitalising global tourism, especially in South Africa, where the COVID-19 lockdown has made it an acceptable and attractive choice for tourists (Hattingh, 2022). Most road trip tourists in post-COVID-19 South Africa are young, consistent with the country's predominantly black population and the target markets specified in the National Tourism Sector Strategy and Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy (Adinolfi & Skotoyi, 2023). The significance of local innovation and effective governance is seen in the critical role of place-based responses for the resilience and recovery of small-town tourism destinations, especially in coastal regions (Rogerson, 2023).

Numerous challenges arise when prioritising domestic tourism over international tourism, including limited local awareness of tourism initiatives, an unfavourable pricing structure, barriers rooted in colonial history, and structural weaknesses in stakeholder collaboration (Murima & Shereni, 2023). Implementing the COVID-19 assistance fund was often chaotic and marked by vague policies. Racial-based aid distribution proved insensitive, underscoring the need for the government to promote social cohesion and belonging more efficiently (Dube & Nhamo, 2024). Table 2 outlines major studies discussing domestic tourism resilience strategies.

Table 2: Domestic Tourism

Author	Objective	Methodology	Sample Size	Findings
Lekgau et al. (2021)	To examine the potential of virtual tourism in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic	Quantitative	110	Virtual tourism can improve the tourist experience at a destination, but it cannot replace traditional tourism. This study advocates for integrating virtual tourism elements as supplementary features to tourism attractions.
Adinolfi & Skotoyi, (2023)	To explore the demographic characteristics of domestic road trip tourists and their travel behaviour	Quantitative	297 Tourists	The respondents, particularly the young, reflect the majority Black population of South Africa, a significant target market mentioned in the National Tourism Sector Strategy and Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy.
Hattingh (2022)	To examine the importance of Drive tourism post-pandemic in SA	Qualitative	SLR	Drive tourism is expected to be the most effective means of reviving tourism businesses worldwide, including South Africa's struggling industry.
Booyens et al., (2022)	To investigate the business management responses of small tourism firms to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and restrictions in South Africa.	Qualitative	75 Interviews	Government support to facilitate recovery has been inadequate, and small and microenterprises have few viable mechanisms to mitigate the crisis's effects.

Source: Authors

Nature-based tourism

Nature-based tourism boosts many countries' GDPs, including South Africa's, and supports local livelihoods (Gounden et al., 2024). Africa's natural reserves and conservation areas are globally recognised, with several designated as World Heritage Sites. South Africa's nature-based tourism was projected to be the driver of the sector during the COVID-19 pandemic due to its safety and cleanliness features (Mandina & Preez, 2022). Nature-based tourism and outdoor activities have experienced substantial growth in prominence, with South Africa providing well-established nature-based tourism products, such as Coastal and Marine Tourism (CMT) destinations (Bob & Gounden, 2024). Table 3 outlines major resilience strategies in NBT.

Table 3: Nature-Based Tourism

Author	Objective	Methodology	Sample Size	Findings
Ranke et al. (2023)	To study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Tanzanian national park.	Qualitative	-	The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need to rapidly diversify income portfolios to finance national park management in Africa, especially in Tanzania, and critically reduce future reliance on tourism money to conserve national parks.
Vermeulen-Miltz et al. (2023)	To examine the impacts of COVID-19 on coastal tourism in Nelson Mandela Bay (NMB), South Africa	Quantitative	System Dynamic Modelling (SDM)	The findings highlight the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration in facilitating informed decision-making for sustainable tourism recovery.
Mabibibi et al. (2021)	To examine how Kruger National Park (KNP) assists the host communities in meeting the SDG goals and targets.	Qualitative	30 Interviews	Findings reveal that Kruger National Park has assisted communities in meeting at least 15 out of the 17 SDGs
Gounden et al. (2024)	To study the impacts that COVID-19 has on businesses and livelihoods in smaller towns.	Quantitative	140 Sample	The DSPIR (drivers, pressure, state, impacts, and responses) framework, in particular, demonstrates how a structured approach can be used to assess the complex and multidimensional relationships between nature-based tourism (and businesses in particular) and changing socio-economic conditions.
Barker & Rodway-Dyer (2023)	To explore the role of virtual wildlife safaris in conservation during the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential long-term benefits of virtual nature-based tourism (VNBT) for conservation.	Qualitative	10 In-depth Interviews	Virtual safaris and virtual conservation experiences (VCEs) can provide a viable and potentially valuable alternative to in-person safaris. They have the potential to support conservation goals by increasing engagement with wildlife, building awareness about conservation issues, and supporting local economies with reduced environmental impact.

Source: Authors

Ranke et al. (2023) suggested that local governments, national park administrations, and the global community should seek external financing to reduce dependence on international nature-based tourism to conserve national parks and biodiversity. The tourism industry is acknowledged for tackling socio-economic development issues such as unemployment, education, and poverty (Mabibibi et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of seeking additional revenue sources for the Kenya Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (Chakrabarti & Ekblom, 2024). The MMWCA is not the only organisation that may benefit from these lessons; other African conservancies can also benefit from them.

According to Ranke et al. (2023), "Several non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), as well as international organisations such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), have directly supported protected areas. Also, private funds such as the Grumeti and Friedkin Conservation Fund have invested in local development and supported local development in communities surrounding protected areas." A positive outcome of the pandemic was the influx of donations from unexpected sources (Chakrabarti & Ekblom, 2024). Nature-based tourism (NBT) in Africa has the potential to improve its sustainability and resilience by incorporating virtual tourism into its strategies (Barker & Rodway-Dyer, 2022).

MICE

In the post-COVID-19 period, the MICE industry is considered a significant driver for rebuilding the global economy (Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2022). South Africa, a prominent MICE destination in Sub-Saharan Africa, enjoys widespread recognition as a viable worldwide destination (Weru & Njoroge, 2021). Many stakeholders in sports event tourism have begun to provide virtual or hybrid events, which may significantly enhance traditional events in the future (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2021). The African MICE industry experiences challenges as the media frequently highlights concerns such as stringent visa regulations, political volatility, and criminality; yet, events like South Africa's World Cup highlight the region's capacity for enhancing its image and hosting global events (Mandina & Preez, 2022).

In South Africa, sports event tourism has benefited the economy, environment, society, politics, infrastructure, urban development, and sports, all of which have helped achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2024). Virtual and hybrid MICE events aided the continued survival of the MICE sector during COVID-19, generating substantial revenue opportunities for stakeholders (Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2022). The study also highlights a need to improve engagement and interaction among virtual attendees to ensure these events fully achieve their intended goals. Another research by Lekgau & Tichaawa (2021a) examined the strategies used by South Africa's MICE sector in response to COVID-19, revealing adaptive approaches such as reducing operational costs and postponing rather than cancelling events. Evolving tourism policies and strategies focus on crisis management, improved technological integration, and capacity assistance as critical components for fostering resilience in MICE tourism recovery from present and future pandemics (Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2021b).

Sport tourists' behaviour has shifted, with a growing demand for engaging, high-quality experiences throughout each event stage (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2023). In reaction to the pandemic, stakeholders created a sophisticated interaction mechanism to safeguard communication and develop sustainable support frameworks (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2024). They also examined contracts that safeguard against unwanted financial losses. Despite increased stakeholder engagement, cooperation between the public and private sectors remained restricted, highlighting the need for government support to improve the resilience of sport event tourism in South Africa for future recovery (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2024). A study by Verkerk (2022) found that, despite virtual reality (VR) offering many advantages for tourism, it also brings considerable challenges. Currently, the tourism industry in South Africa cannot be successfully recovered by VR due to critical barriers, including the digital divide, insufficient digital infrastructure, and limited accessibility (Verkerk, 2022). Table 4 outlines major resilience strategies by MICE

Table 4: MICE Themes

Author	Objective	Methodology	Sample Size	Findings
Du Preez & Kruger (2022)	To examine music event tourism as a potential motivator for domestic tourism post-pandemic	Quantitative	350 Sample	The study identifies two distinct tourist segments: avid explorers and experienced tourists in specific areas. These groups differ in their goals and experiences, but both contribute to the sustainability of this niche.
Lekgau & Tichaawa (2021a)	To examine the adaptive responses employed by the MICE sector of South Africa	Qualitative	19 Interviews	The MICE sector has previously implemented operational techniques such as postponements instead of cancellations, alterations in business strategy, and venue-specific reactions.
Verkerk (2022)	To examine whether virtual reality might revitalise tourism in South Africa following the COVID-19 pandemic.	Mixed-Methods		The study's findings indicated that virtual reality provides many benefits to tourism but simultaneously presents a risk to the sector. However, the study concludes that VR is currently unable to revive the tourism industry in South Africa due to several significant challenges.

Table 4 continued

Lekgau & Tichaawa (2022)	The research explores the use of virtual and hybrid events in enhancing the resilience of MICE Events in SA.	Mixed-methods		The findings indicate that virtual events have become an essential instrument for boosting the resilience of MICE events during crises, and hybrid events are anticipated to become a significant component of MICE offers in the future.
Daniels & Tichaawa (2024)	To determine how South African sport tourism stakeholders responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, look at sustainable pathways to building a resilient sport event tourism sector.	Qualitative	28 Interviews	The study recommends stakeholder participation and the formulation of policies to promote sustainable practices and management. Additionally, it highlights the necessity of appropriate policies to guide stakeholders through the recovery process and mitigate long-term negative consequences.

Source: Authors

Stakeholders' Strategies

The economic repercussions of the COVID-19 epidemic have rendered many individuals financially restricted and afraid to take risks (Bob & Gounden, 2024). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) recognised South Africa as one of the 15 nations most negatively impacted by the near-complete shutdown of the international travel sector during the pandemic (Moodley & Naidoo, 2022). Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs), which represent approximately 80% of licensed tourism-related businesses worldwide, experienced significant adverse effects due to the crises (Ramukumba, 2023). The failure of these SMMEs caused substantial difficulties for individuals in vulnerable areas dependent on tourism for their livelihoods (Ramukumba, 2023). The pandemic has severely impacted small tourism-related businesses, particularly microenterprises. Low-skilled women from low-income, primarily black African populations are facing the most significant difficulties due to inadequate government assistance and declining businesses (Booyens et al., 2022).

After the COVID-19 pandemic, travel agencies implemented several recovery strategies, including price reductions, acquiring funds via loans, improving employee multitasking skills, and imposing temporary firm closures (Mbuyane et al., 2024). While government support was extended to many tourism businesses across Africa, the distribution and uptake of these funds fell short of expectations, leaving many tourist guides vulnerable (Mbatha et al., 2021). Consequently, numerous guides turned to personal survival strategies, such as liquidating assets, securing or refinancing loans, cutting back on individual expenses, and seeking additional employment to supplement their income (Mbatha et al., 2021). People's concerns were about the pandemic, and government reports' delusions, inconsistencies, and trustworthiness (Bama & Nyikana, 2021). Many travel and tourism enterprises got governmental aid, allowing them to reduce their operational costs.

In South Africa, mountain guides employed reskilling and upskilling tactics, and improved promotion and marketing proved beneficial in their recovery; however, government assistance for these guides could have been minimal or nonexistent (Heath, 2023). A proactive risk management plan should be implemented at the organisational level (e.g., for tourist guides) and across the broader industry to increase resilience and reduce the impact of future tourism crises (Mbatha et al., 2021). Fourie et al. (2024) found that in Cape Town, South Africa, informal traders prioritised survival during an epidemic by selling personal assets and using savings; nevertheless, many also aimed to expand their enterprises and train others, indicating a growth-oriented and sustainable mindset.

Tourism's significance in the South African economy and potential contribution to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals allow the sector to influence policies that facilitate SMME development, encourage pro-poor tourism in rural regions, and advance ecological restoration (Lewis et al., 2021). Small tourism agencies must reassess their situation and adopt synergies and collaborations with larger companies offering economies of scale (Moodley & Naidoo, 2022).

Encouraging stakeholder participation and integrated planning is crucial for developing a sustainable domestic tourist offering (Murima & Shereni, 2023). Bama & Abrahams (2023) found that, while COVID-19-related restrictions significantly impacted all edu-tourism businesses, social media, virtual tours, phone apps, computer-based technology, and VR/AR could help the industry recover. A study by Mandina and Preez (2022) examined travellers' perceived risk for visiting Africa and Zimbabwe and found that travel risk perceptions are country-specific. The AU High-Level Task Force (AU-HLTF) acts as the new governing mechanism and a crucial strategic stakeholder group (Ayiine-Etigo & Amankwah-Amoah, 2021). A close look at tourism governance within the main frameworks of the AU-HLTF, the Yamoussoukro Decision, and the African single air transport market, along with their connections to regional aviation and tourism development, shows that governance is constantly changing (Ayiine-Etigo & Amankwah-Amoah, 2021). COVID-19 gives us a chance to think deeply about this change.

Government Initiatives

The South African government has enacted several programs to aid the tourism sector, encompassing financial assistance, regulatory relief, and promotional support (Viljoen & Maphosho, 2023). The government significantly contributed to the survival of stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry by deferring tax payments and implementing stimulus packages (Mbatha et al., 2021). The South African government launched programs such as the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and Pay As You Earn (PAYE). However, several small enterprises still need more awareness and resources to implement these programs. SA Tourism implemented the

Tourism Relief Fund (TRF), the Tourist Guides Fund, and the Tourism Recovery Plan to provide relief for tourism and hospitality businesses (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2021). The Tourism Sector Recovery Plan (TSRP) encouraged collaboration between the government and the private sector to facilitate the long-term recovery of the tourism sector (Viljoen & Maphosho, 2023).

Domestic leisure travel in South Africa faces two significant obstacles: an imbalance between travel services and the leisure culture of the majority (Black) population, and the financial effects of COVID-19, which lowered incomes for many (Adinolfi et al., 2021). The introduction of travel stokvels and related savings and payment methods could have a crucial role in sustaining the South African tourism economy (Adinolfi et al., 2021). The government must implement measures like flexible payment methods, economic encouragement, targeted funding, sustainable investments, assistance for the most affected sectors, and reskilling initiatives to preserve the African tourism sector (Krüger & Meyer, 2021). The SARIMA model (Chipumuro & Chikobvu, 2022) and the ARIMA model (Chipumuro et al., 2024) were used to forecast future tourist arrivals for SA.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study was conducted based on the SLR on post-COVID-19 tourism recoveries and resilience in the context of the African Tourism Industry. It investigates recovery and resilience strategies in the COVID-19 pandemic. The research reveals that the African tourism industry has encountered numerous obstacles as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but there are prospects for resilience and recovery. The findings shed light on key themes central to the sector's revival: domestic tourism, nature-based tourism (NBT), the MICE sector, and stakeholder strategies. A key theme is the shift towards domestic tourism, which governments and stakeholders emphasise as necessary to compensate for the decline in international tourist arrivals. Countries such as South Africa, for example, have policies in place to develop and market domestic tourism, recognising the potential within local populations. This shift is consistent with global trends emphasising the importance of domestic tourism as a foundation for post-pandemic recovery. There were different policies and strategies adopted by the South African government in order to promote domestic tourism (Adinolfi & Skotoyi, 2023) to fix the impacts caused by the shutdown of the tourism industry during the pandemic.

Another identified key theme was NBT. The pandemic has resulted in people understanding the need for sustainable tourist practices that prioritise environmental conservation while meeting the economic demands of people relying on these sectors. It was suggested that Africa's nature-based tourism (NBT) has the potential to increase its sustainability and resilience by incorporating virtual tourism into its strategy (Barker & Rodway-Dyer, 2022). Virtual platforms have arisen as methods for conservation and audience engagement while minimising the environmental impact of traditional tourism.

Following the pandemic, the function of MICE tourism has been redefined. It plays a vital role in global economic recovery following COVID-19 (Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2022), with South Africa developing as a key MICE destination in Sub-Saharan Africa (Weru & Njoroge, 2021). Hybrid and virtual events have proven effective in ensuring business continuity while also presenting opportunities for innovation. However, the MICE industry continues to face fundamental issues, including infrastructure constraints and inconsistent stakeholder participation. Addressing these shortcomings could help the sector grow and contribute significantly to regional economies. The COVID-19 response strategies in South Africa's MICE sector included cost reductions and event postponements, and post-pandemic resilience calls for policies focusing on crisis management, technology, and capacity building (Lekgau & Tichaawa, 2021b). Sport tourists now expect high-quality, engaging experiences (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2023), and stakeholders have developed frameworks to maintain communication and support during crises (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2024). Despite increasing participation, public-private collaboration remains limited, indicating the need for greater government support to drive the recovery of sport event tourism in South Africa (Daniels & Tichaawa, 2024). However, the potential of virtual reality (VR) in tourism is constrained by the digital divide, poor infrastructure, and limited accessibility, which pose challenges for revitalising South Africa's tourism industry (Verkerk, 2022).

Finally, the pandemic has prompted stakeholder responses, such as reskilling and upskilling workers and implementing tailored recovery programs. However, variations in government assistance underscore the importance of inclusive policies that enable equitable resource distribution across tourism firms of various sizes. Collaborative frameworks that include public and private sector activities are critical for long-term resilience.

Limitations and Future Research Agenda

Every study meets certain limitations that establish the foundation for future investigation initiatives, and this study is no exception. This SLR was mainly conducted to evaluate resilience strategies in the African tourism industry post-pandemic and based on only the Scopus database, as it provides access to a large database of high-quality journals. In this study, the researcher included only articles, excluding conference papers and book chapters to ensure the robustness of the review. This study reviewed only English-language papers. Additionally, this study exclusively examined full-text papers that were publicly accessible.

Finally, this study undertook a comprehensive review of the existing literature and found that major industries implemented different resilience strategies based on their capability. While the majority of the research on resilience strategies has concentrated on South Africa, there is a necessity to investigate resilience practices in other parts of the African continent to develop more comprehensive, region-specific approaches to crisis management in tourism. A mixed-methods study is recommended to understand resilience by tourism stakeholders. Stakeholder theory can be used in future research to analyse how partnerships between governments, private sectors, and communities influence long-term tourism recovery. Also, the studies can be done on what collaborative models are most effective for fostering resilience among African tourism stakeholders after a pandemic.

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