

Impact of Social Media on Eco-Tourism Awareness among Gen-Z in Bangladesh

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Abstract: The research explores the impact of social media on eco-tourism awareness among Gen-Z in developing nations, specifically on Bangladesh. Since Gen-Z people are digital natives, they often use sites like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook as sources for travel knowledge about the environment. With the increasing interest in eco-tourism due to growing environmental consciousness and post-COVID travel patterns, there is still a lack of harmony between awareness and sustainable practices. In this research, quantitative methodology was employed to gather primary data from 200 Gen Z (Convenience Sampling Method) participants via a structured questionnaire. The main variables analyzed were Social Media Engagement (SME), Information Quality (IQ), User-Generated Content (UGC), and Eco-Tourism Awareness (ETA) based on a five-point Likert Scale. Analysis and interpretation were done with statistical tools such as reliability analysis and multiple regressions through SPSS software. The results indicate that social media significantly influences eco-tourism awareness. In terms of predictors, Social Media Engagement proved to be the strongest and most significant determinant of eco-tourism awareness, with Information Quality also having a positive and significant effect. On the other hand, User-Generated Content had a positive yet insignificant effect on eco-tourism awareness, indicating that the mere consumption of content generated by peers may not be credible enough. The research shows that even though Generation Z shows some level of eco-tourism awareness and understands the benefits of eco-tourism, there is a behavior-awareness gap. There could be many reasons why Gen Z is not actively participating in eco-friendly activities despite their awareness. Some of these reasons include convenience, financial limitations, and misinformation. Although the study faces challenges such as convenience sampling and cross-sectional design, it is still helpful for policy makers and tourism practitioners. The findings indicate that information dissemination through social media platforms can play a pivotal role in promoting eco-tourism.

Keywords: Generation-Z, Eco-tourism Awareness, Social Media engagement, User-Generated Content, Travel Contents, Emerging Economy.

Introduction

Social media have proliferated quickly, leading to a significant change in how people perceive the environment and travel arrangements. The most pronounced transformation has been noticed among Generation-Z (Gen-Z) whose were born between 1997 and 2012. They focus on sustainability in their daily routines (Tass & Malik, 2025). Eco-tourism denotes a responsible travel to nature spots in a way that preserves the environment and raises awareness about nature and benefits the communities. It has become increasingly popular because of climate change concerns and the renewed interest in traveling after the pandemic period (Seyfi et al., 2025). Since the generation grew up in the era of digital technologies, young Gen-Z members tend to rely on applications like Instagram, Tiktok, and YouTube for travel inspirations. Social media posts by influencers play a critical role in creating positive attitudes about green travel (Rajput & Gandhi, 2025; Zhao et al., 2024). Studies show that authentic and transparent help Gen-Z members comprehend environmental challenges and establish habits to support environmentally friendly decisions (Peiró-Signes et al., 2025). Furthermore, short videos and sharing of experiences over the Internet increase people's interest in sustainable travel locations (Zhao et al., 2024). However, even though Generation-Z members talk about environmental protection, they are inconsistent in their actions. Such inconsistency is associated either with peer pressure, more comfortable options, or popular trends that have led to the overcrowding of sensitive natural sites (Seyfi et al., 2025). Existing research does not provide an in-depth examination of particular social networks used for environmental purposes and behavioral change processes in developing markets (Rajput & Gandhi, 2025; Seyfi et al., 2025).

This research aims to examine the social media impact on eco-tourism awareness among Generation-Z (Gen-Z), aged 18-29, living in cities from Bangladesh. The present research intends to assess the relation between social media exposure (influencers, user-generated content, and electronic interaction) and eco-tourism awareness that can be measured by reliable scales.

With increasing environmental issues and growing tourism post-pandemic, generation-Z, contributes significantly to eco-tourism awareness with high environmental consciousness and more than three hours of social media use daily, primarily through Instagram and TikTok. Social media promotes more visual trends rather than practical knowledge of ecology, resulting in superficial awareness, particularly among city youth from developing nations. Few studies have investigated the impact of such social media activity on decision-making and the spread of misinformation, resulting in over-popularity of tourist spots, damaging the environment and stakeholders. Surveys conducted quickly in 2025-2026 may enhance eco-tourism results by 20%-30%, preserving natural resources and ensuring job security. However, generalizing the results from the current research to other regions or developing nations and establishing causality from the current study due to cross-

sectional data are challenging tasks. The directions for future research include longitudinal research, regional comparison studies, qualitative analysis in decision-making on eco-tourism.

Literature Review

Social media channels have emerged like never before and have revolutionized the entire tourism industry. Social media is now used by tourists for research, information about destinations, personal experiences, and bookings (Islam, 2021; Hysa et al., 2021; Al Fajar & Erlangga, 2025; Wang & Iahad, 2025). This includes Instagram with its picturesque images, TikTok for fast travel tips, YouTube for deeper information, Facebook communities, and Twitter for discussions and real-time conversations.

On the other hand, eco-tourism has emerged as the most valuable player of sustainable tourism, encouraging eco-friendly travel practices that reduce environmental impact, conserve biological diversity, respect the culture of local communities, and create positive community spirit (Bašan et al., 2025; Saltik, 2025; Seyfi et al., 2025; Marlina et al., 2026). In this study, awareness of eco-tourism includes cognitive knowledge, affective appeal, and behavioral intention related to eco-friendly trips, green travel, and environmentally friendly destinations.

The Generation Z group, which comprises individuals born during the middle 1990s and the early 2010s, stands out as the key player in this scenario. Being actual digital natives, they are always online, highly sensitive to environmental matters, engage in values-based buying practices, and pursue authentic, sustainable escapades (Wang & Iahad, 2025; Salinero et al., 2025; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2024; Chang et al., 2024; Kubíková & Rudý, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2025; Popşa, 2024). The previous literature links concepts like eco-awareness, place sensitivity, destination images, and eco-behaviors during tourism activities (Abdullah et al., 2019; Ashraf et al., 2020; Cheng & Wu, 2015; Chiu et al., 2014; Cheung & Li, 2019). In addition, social influence and trends have an effect on decision-making (Boto-García & Baños-Pino, 2022).

Nonetheless, few insights exist regarding the exact mechanism through which social media triggers eco-tourism consciousness among members of Generation Z coming from countries like Bangladesh, which represents an emerging economy with unique digital dimensions (Tarannum, 2020; Al Amin et al., 2025; Haque et al., 2021; Nowreen & Hossain, 2021; Tasnim et al. 2020)

Social Media Engagement and Eco-Tourism Awareness

Social media engagement refers to the interactive activities by which users engage with tourism-related material. These include spending time on the platform, frequency of use, likes, shares, comments, following sustainable profiles, and participating in campaigns. Engagement thus functions as an important external factor that continues to expose users to environmental messages, peer experiences,

and pro-sustainability appeals, creating both cognitive and affective awareness about eco-tourism.

There is ample empirical support for this mechanism. Fero and Silalahi (2025), for instance, show that Gen Z consumers spend 2-3 hours per day on their social media platforms where they actively post about environmentally conscious tours and participate in short videos, thus creating a collective consciousness towards eco-tourism among youths. Similarly, Setiawan and Azizah (2024) and Al Fajar and Erlangga (2025) use structural equation modeling to prove that social media engagement on highly visual sites such as Instagram and Tiktok positively influences destination image and travel intentions for marine eco-tourism.

According to Bui and Pham (2025), Popşa (2024), and Kubíková and Rudý (2024), the total social media communication, which is the combination of these indicators, positively affects sustainable travel intention. Moreover, according to Nhung and Phuong (2025), the digital engagement can foster consumers' emotional ties to the eco-friendly tourism products, whereas Wang and Iahad (2025) found that the Gen-Z's are mainly driven by digital interactivity and storytelling based on sustainability awareness.

From the quantitative perspective, the positive relationships between digital interaction and more efficient search behavior, preferred destinations, and cognitive processes related to traveling were found by Dela et al. (2024) and Nowreen and Hossain (2021). The specific role of Instagram in the context of increasing environmental attraction awareness was found by Suryana et al. (2024), whereas YouTube was effective in promoting cultural activities. According to Sanjaya et al. (2024) and Tasnim et al. (2020), digital green marketing campaigns are positively related to pro-environmental behavior.

Further insights specific to Bangladesh support these findings. Social media content was found to affect destination choices among Gen Z respondents, according to studies by Al Amin et al. (2025) and Nguyen et al. (2025). It was also found that engagement leads to intrinsic motivation for sustainable tourism by Ahmed et al. (2025) and Shuvo and Ahmed (2025). Engagement is known to increase the level of knowledge about biodiversity and eco-attractions due to eWOM campaigns among the Gen Z community. Such studies were conducted by Deshani et al. (2025), Purnomo et al. (2025), and Rahman and Mia (2025). A larger body of research related to Gen Z individuals also proves this finding. The hypothesis stated:

H₁: *Social media engagement has a positive and significant impact on eco-tourism awareness among Generation-Z.*

Information Quality and Eco-Tourism Awareness

Information quality refers to the accuracy, relevance, use value, timeliness, comprehensiveness, and credibility of information from social media. Information

quality helps facilitate cognitive processes, minimize uncertainty, and enhance the rational and emotional comprehension of eco-tourism principles by tourists.

Empirical studies emphasize the significance of information quality. Bui & Pham (2025) revealed that information quality was a crucial positive predictor of Gen Z's sustainable tourism behavior, and Mohanan & Shekhar (2025) reported that information sharing on social media impacts green tourism intentions through environmental awareness. Also, Shang et al. (2021) established that quality information publicity on social media leads to positive destination perception and indirect visitation intentions.

Quality of content is equally important. Ghaly & Ghaly (2023) found that credible information and influencer endorsement had a strong effect on Gen Z's intention to visit sustainable destinations. Sarwari (2025) related sustainable business practices communicated using credible content to brand loyalty, and Rajput & Gandhi (2025) maintained that authentic content from influencers had more influence on attitudes and sustainable intentions compared to misleading narratives.

In Bangladesh, Tarannum (2020) found that affective and symbolic perception of quality information affects attitude and brand value, with a clear focus on eco-tourism conservation. Haque et al. (2021) found that quality social media information increases environmental consciousness and place attachment and eventually leads to environment-friendly behavior. Rahman & Mia (2025) and Tasnim et al. (2020) have further stressed that credibility and accuracy of information affect eWOM and sustainability consciousness in tourism. Methodological robustness, often supported by SEM, consistently corroborates the findings. Eventually, according to Chang et al. (2024) and Shuvo & Ahmed (2025), information quality is a critical linkage, fueling the eco-travel aspirations and value perceptions of Gen Z. The hypothesis stated:

H₂: *Information quality on social media has a positive and significant impact on eco-tourism awareness among Generation-Z.*

User-Generated Content and Eco-Tourism Awareness

User generated content posted by peers, reviews, photos, videos, and influencer stories—are deemed more believable and relatable compared to marketers' produced content and hence have immense influence on raising awareness about ecotourism. According to Al Fajar and Erlangga (2025), UGC is a crucial factor in forming tourists' perceptions of destinations at all travel stages. Sultan et al. (2021) used SEM (n=506) to explore the role of UGC in Bangladeshi coastal tourism and found that both cognitive and affective UGC create environmental concerns and responsibility. Furthermore, Haque et al. (2021) using S-O-R model proved that UGC indirectly increases environmentally responsible behaviors through raised awareness and place attachment. Credible UGC and influencer content was directly connected with Gen-Z's visit intentions by Ghaly and Ghaly (2023). Meanwhile, Chowdhury et al. (2023) demonstrated the role of UGC in biodiversity education.

Studies conducted by Nowreen and Hossain (2021), Tarannum (2020), Rahman and Mia (2025), Tasnim et al. (2020) and Deshani et al. (2025), which have been specifically conducted in relation to the situation in Bangladesh, all provide evidence of the impact of UGC on the motivation, loyalty, and conservation behavior of tourists. Lastly, general research conducted by Luongo et al. (2024), Chang et al. (2024), Schönherr and Pikkemaat (2024), Salinero et al. (2025), Sharma et al. (2025), Kędziora (2024), Sailesh (2025). The hypothesis stated:

H₃: *User-generated content on social media has a positive and significant impact on eco-tourism awareness among Generation-Z.*

Research Gap

Despite the existence of concrete evidence linking these constructs together along with their connection to eco-tourism outcomes, there are still notable research gaps. First of all, most of the current studies only consider each of the mentioned constructs independently or focus on behavior and intentions, completely missing out on eco-tourism awareness as an intermediary construct (Salinero et al., 2025; Seyfi et al., 2025; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2024). Secondly, integrated models including all of them, especially concerning Gen-Z, are not widely presented (Wang & Iahad, 2025; Rajput & Gandhi, 2025). There is some research specific to Bangladesh, however, it fails to account for the uniqueness of the local context both culturally and technologically (Haque et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2025).

Conceptual Framework

Based on the review of the previous literature, a theoretical framework has been devised to explore the impact of social media use on Gen-Z's eco-tourism awareness and environmental tourism intention. This theoretical framework posits that information quality and user-generated content on social media enhance eco-tourism awareness.

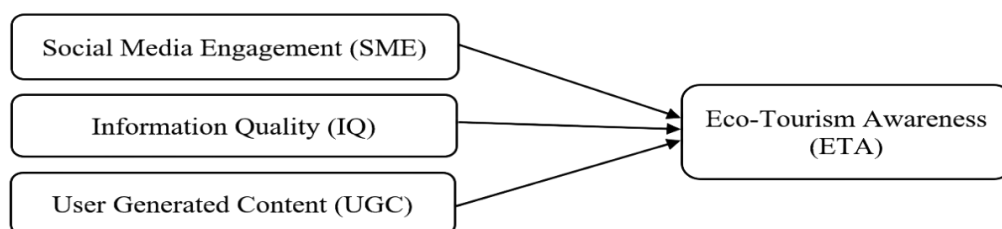


Figure 1: Conceptual framework (Source: Author's Work)

Methodology of the Study

Research Design

The research applies quantitative method to examine the impact of social media on the awareness of Gen-Z individuals regarding eco-tourism. The application of the quantitative methodology is justified in light of the need to empirically measure

relations between the variables of interest. Quantitative research allows for an objective assessment of social media consumption patterns and awareness of eco-tourism through empirical measurements. In addition, using a scientific research methodology allows for the identification of important relations between the frequency of social media use and its effect on the subject under examination.

Population and Sample

The target population is Generation-Z people (born between 1997 and 2012), who are actively involved in the consumption of travel-related posts on social media. The sample size of the research is 200. Convenience sampling was utilized because of the inaccessibility of the population and due to the fact that Gen-Z's use social networking sites and academia websites. The purpose of this research is exploratory, focusing on understanding how social media influence awareness about eco-tourism. Therefore, the need to make any generalization about the entire population is absent, allowing for the utilization of convenience sampling.

Data Collection Instruments

Data was collected using a questionnaire through Google Forms, which is structured and self-administrative. The questionnaire includes:

Section A: Demographic information like age, gender, educational background, and social media usage behavior.

Section B: Measuring variables such as engagement styles, types of content that people see on their social media profiles, perception of credibility of eco-tourism information and awareness levels.

Measurement scales have been adapted from various scholarly literature of tourism and sustainability, but keeping Generation Z and their behavior in mind, who belong to Bangladesh.

Construct	Number of Items
Social Media Engagement (SME)	7
Information Quality (IQ)	5
User-Generated Content (UGC)	5
Eco-Tourism Awareness (ETA)	6

Table-1: Measurement items for the study.

Data Analysis Techniques

Statistical software IBM SPSS version 23 will be used for the data analysis process to guarantee its precision and consistency. For descriptive statistics, demographic information and social media usage patterns are described, while inferential statistical approaches, such as multiple regression analysis and reliability analysis, will be applied to examine the relationship between social media factors and eco-tourism awareness.

Reliability analysis will be applied to check the internal consistency of measurement scales, while validity checks will be implemented to prove construct adequacy.

Analysis and Results

Demographic Analysis

Majority of the respondents belong to the age category of 18-22 years (54%) followed by 22-26 years (45.5%). The male gender prevails with 71% while female gender has 29%. In education terms, 78.5% of the respondents are either studying for or holding Honors degree, 21% are HSC and one is Masters. In social media usage, 64% spends more than 3 hours per day with 42% being between 3-5 hours. In travel frequency, 49% takes 1-2 journeys per year, 22.5% takes no trip and 14.5% takes more than 3 times. In motivation, nature/eco-tourism accounts for 29.5%, adventure 29.5%, relaxation 29% and culture 12%. In Bangladesh, Facebook leads travel content (48%), then YouTube (23%) and Instagram (18.5%). Finally, the sample comprises predominantly young, educated Gen-Z's who make extensive use of social media and travel moderately, though their balanced travel motives indicate that lack of knowledge about eco-tourism is an issue.

SL No.	Demographic Determinants	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Age	Below 18	1	0.5
		18-22	108	54.0
		22-26	91	45.5
		Total	200	100.0
2	Gender	Male	142	71.0
		Female	58	29.0
		Total	200	100.0
3	Educational Background	HSC	42	21.0
		Honor's	157	78.5
		Master's	1	0.5
		Total	200	100.0
4	Daily Hours Spent on Social Media	Less than 1 Hour	5	2.5
		1-3 Hours	51	25.5
		3-5 Hours	84	42.0
		5-7 Hours	44	22.0
		More than 7 Hours	16	8.0
		Total	200	100.0
5	Frequency of Travel in the Past Years	None	45	22.5
		1-2 Trips	98	49.0
		2-3 Trips	28	14.0

		More than 3 Trips	29	14.5
		Total	200	100.0
6	Travel Motivation	Relaxation	58	29.0
		Nature/Eco Based	59	29.5
		Adventure	59	29.5
		Cultural Experience	24	12.0
		Total	200	100.0
7	Familiarity with Eco-tourism	Not at All	45	22.5
		Slightly	49	24.5
		Moderately	68	34.0
		Very	21	10.5
		Extremely	17	8.5
		Total	200	100.0
8	Platforms Used for Travel Content	Facebook	96	48.0
		YouTube	46	23.0
		Twitter	3	1.5
		Instagram	37	18.5
		TikTok	7	3.5
		Others	11	5.5
		Total	200	100.0

Table-2: Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Determinants.

Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

The results of reliability analyses indicate high internal consistency of the social media effect measure. Cronbach's alpha is 0.746 (standardized alpha 0.751), which exceeds the benchmark level of 0.70. The mean value of inter-item correlation (0.151) indicates strong connections between the items without duplication. The average value of the scale scores (63.00) and their standard deviation (6.076) suggests moderate variability. In comparison, reliability of the variable of Eco-Tourism Awareness is moderate (alpha is 0.581 (0.583 standardized < 0.70)), although the mean value of inter-item correlations (0.189) is rather decent. Average scale score is 22.75, its standard deviation is 2.673. While Eco-Tourism Awareness has moderate reliability (sufficient for exploratory research), Social Media Influence has high reliability. Both can be used for analysis, although the development of Eco-Tourism Awareness will improve reliability in the future.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No of Items
Social Media Influence	0.746	0.751	17
Eco-Tourism Awareness	0.581	0.583	6

Table-3: Results of Reliability Statistics.

Measures	Mean	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	Value of F	No of Items
Item Variances	.647	.437	1.873	.013	5.142	17
Inter-Item Correlations	.151	.431	-20.264	.008		17

Table-4: Summary of Item Statistics for Social Media Influence.

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
63.0000	36.915	6.07574	17

Table-5: Summary of Scale Statistics for Social Media Influence.

Measures	Mean	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variance	Value of F	No of Items
Item Variances	.614	.158	1.289	.004	8.511	6
Inter-Item Correlations	.189	.304	4.490	.007		6

Table-6: Summary of Item Statistics for Eco-Tourism Awareness.

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
22.7450	7.146	2.67314	6

Table-7: Summary of Scale Statistics for Eco-Tourism Awareness.

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression was performed to find out if the variables Social Media Engagement (SME), Information Quality (IQ), and User-Generated Content (UGC) affect Eco-Tourism Awareness (ETA) for Bangladeshi Gen Z. This model proves statistically significant, $F(3, 196) = 17.57, p < .001$, accounting for 21.2% of ETA variance ($R^2 = .212, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .200$). The Regression equation is provided below:

$$ETA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SME + \beta_2 IQ + \beta_3 UGC + \epsilon$$

The highest beta coefficient for prediction is found for SME ($B = 0.315, \beta = 0.297, p < .001$) meaning that if there is a unit increase in SME, ETA increases by 0.315 units. IQ positively affects ETA ($B = 0.149, \beta = 0.155, p = .035$), whereas UGC has a positive but insignificant influence on ETA ($B = 0.110, \beta = 0.119, p = .122$). The findings fit into the suggested framework with the focus on SME as the key predictor over UGC. All assumptions were met, hence reliable results.

Predictor	Coefficient	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	95% CL Lower	95% CL Upper
Constant	1.652	0.297	-	5.569	<0.001	1.066	2.237
Social Media Engagement (SME)	0.315	0.078	0.297	4.061	<0.001	0.162	0.468
Information Quality (IQ)	0.149	0.070	0.155	2.127	0.035	0.011	0.286
User-Generated Content (UGC)	0.110	0.071	0.119	1.555	0.122	-0.030	0.250

Table-8: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

Discussions:

This finding indicates that the young Gen-Z participants, who are mostly well-educated and technologically advanced, fit very well in exploring their level of eco-tourism awareness using social media in developing countries such as Bangladesh. Though their travel activities have been infrequent due to economic or post-COVID-19 pandemic reasons, their highly active engagement with travel-related social media content proves that mediated experience influences eco-tourism awareness more than personal experience. Therefore, social media usage is crucial in predicting eco-tourism awareness levels.

It is evident from the results that Facebook and YouTube play a critical role in influencing people to become aware of eco-tourism through social media activities in Bangladesh. Based on the weighted mean score, there is a slight tendency among participants towards eco-tourism and social media-based environmental protection initiatives. With respect to psychometric validation, the reliability test reveals that the Social Media Influence construct is reliable based on the Cronbach's Alpha value, which surpasses the suggested threshold. However, the Eco-Tourism Awareness construct has moderately high reliability, which falls short of the standard criterion. Nevertheless, the construct is adequate for an exploratory study.

Regression analysis confirms empirical evidence about the existence of such relationships between various variables. It accounts for a significant portion of variance in eco-tourism awareness, which proves that the influence of social media variables is important. Interestingly, Social Media Engagement (SME) was found to have the strongest impact on perceptions. This indicates that actively engaging with tourism-related material, such as liking, sharing, and commenting on posts, was more impactful on awareness compared to passive exposure. Similarly, Information Quality (IQ) had a positive effect, indicating that information is an important variable to account for, especially in the context of Gen Z travelers. Lastly, User-Generated Content (UGC) was found to have a positive but insignificant relationship. All regression assumptions were satisfied.

There are several limitations in this study. Firstly, convenience sampling would limit the applicability of the findings beyond the digitally active members of Generation-Z within Bangladesh. Secondly, the use of cross-sectional design would limit any causal inference. Thirdly, low reliability due to limited number of measures and diverse exposures might be evident in assessing information quality and user-generated content. There might also be the presence of social desirability bias since data is based on self-reporting. Further research would have to employ probability sampling as well as longitudinal techniques to assess temporal change. The comparison of different countries would help determine cultural and economic impacts.

The study extends social media in eco-tourism to emerging markets and Gen-Z individuals who will become future tourists. In practical terms, Bangladeshi tourism authorities need to focus on interactive campaigns and high-quality images rather than just UGC. For future research, mediators like trust or eco-tourism attitudes can be considered.

Conclusion

The research has tried to explore how social media affects the level of awareness and environment friendly tourist behavior among Generation-Z's in Bangladesh. It has been observed that Social Media Engagement and Information Quality have a significant influence on the level of awareness, emphasizing the necessity of credible information and user interaction on social media platforms. On the other hand, the effect of User Generated Content on awareness has proved insignificant, perhaps due to their lack of depth and credibility. Awareness plays a mediating role between digital engagement and behavior towards eco-tourism. However, there exists an intention-behavior gap due to economic and practical constraints. From a pragmatic perspective, it is advisable for the policymakers, government authorities, and marketers of tourism industry in Bangladesh to focus on creating credible and engaging eco-content to explain the advantages of eco-tourism and to provide cost-effective means of green traveling in order to turn awareness into practice.

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