Residents' Attitudes Towards Agro-Ecotourism: A Bangladesh Perspective

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Abstract

The drive for sustainable ecotourism emerged from a convergence of issues, including climate change, job creation, ecological balance, and the worldwide focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, taking into consideration the perspectives of the local community, this study has investigated the development of sustainable agro-ecotourism in Bangladesh with an emphasis on flower and fruit gardening. This study utilized social exchange theory since it provides a relevant framework for understanding the dynamics of agro-ecotourism in Bangladesh. This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, initiating with qualitative research to pinpoint factors influencing attitudes toward agro-ecotourism through expert interviews and literature review, followed by quantitative analysis applying structural equation modelling to evaluate the identified indicators in the Bangladeshi context. The findings demonstrated that residents' attitude toward the expansion of sustainable agro-ecotourism are significantly influenced by the four distinct economic, environmental, social, and physical values. The findings provide significant theoretical and managerial insights for academics, managers of agro-ecotourism destinations, and decision-makers in identifying the factors that affect residents' attitude towards agro-ecotourism. This research enhances understanding of sustainable agro-ecotourism destinations within emerging markets, particularly in Bangladesh.

Key Words: Resident attitudes, Agro-ecotourism, Bangladesh.

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1. **Introduction**

In the last 50 years, the increasing trend of mass tourism has been attributed to little concern for the preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage (Aminu et al., 2013). The ever-growing transition from land to industrial, residential and agricultural growth has contributed to unexpected effects of the depletion of habitat and climate changes through the loss of existing biodiversity (Rockström et al., 2013). Moreover, tourism is criticised as part of an ideology that only exploits local communities, whereas businesses primarily gain financially from tourism activities. In this regard, there has been a gradual shift in tourism, where each nation is trying to focus on the conservation of nature and its resources in addition to the advancement of its tourism industry. This is why the concept of sustainability emerged in the field of tourism, which has initiated the progress of certain widely recognised concepts, including ecotourism and agritourism (Choo & Jamal, 2009).

Ecotourism is generally related to tourism and the environment, which involves trips including the observation of wildlife forests, vacations with farming or fishing aspects, rests in environmentally friendly resorts, travel to rural communities or farmlands, and consuming natural commodities (Russell, 2007). Ecotourism seems to be a possible new way of shifting the strategy from large-scale tourism creation towards achieving its environmental and growth targets by offering economic opportunities (Nee & Beckmann, 2011). On the other hand, agritourism is a form of tourism where, beyond the intermediary, visitors can experience the lifestyle and traditions of people living in the communities, and peasants can sell their products and gain profit from tourism. Agritourism empowers a territory's cultural and transformative assets, leading to the viable growth of the rural community, economy and society (Faganel, 2011). New tourism areas have been emerging, most particularly flower and fruit gardening, with the theme of agrotourism (Yuliati, 2018).

Integrating these two concepts, "agro-ecotourism", a new but popular concept has evolved which contains all attributes of ecotourism and agro-tourism, where ecotourism is primarily focused on environmental issues, and agro-tourism is naturally agriculture-based. Agro-ecotourism is designed on the basis of organic farming and ecotourism to offer a valid reason for outdoor activities without damaging nature (Kuo & Chiu, 2006). Agro-ecotourism offers small

and marginal farmers a significant chance to contribute to sustainable, environment-friendly agricultural management (N.-W. Kuo et al., 2006). In order to improve the long-term sustainability of the tourist industry, it seeks to integrate the many environmental issues with the socio-economic growth of different stakeholders in the agriculture sector. To conserve agro-based industries as well as socio-cultural and economic life for new generations, agro-ecotourism can be a responsible tourism mechanism. The current research study will try to identify the prospects of agro-ecotourism in the context of flower and fruit gardening in Bangladesh.

Research studies have revealed the significant impact of green urbanisation on biodiversity and health issues (De Groot et al., 2002; Tratalos et al., 2007). Gardens are considered major components of green urbanisation, which may offer aesthetic environments and pleasant atmospheres for most visitors to relieve their stress as well as improve different cognitive components (Chen et al., 2009; Lehmann, 2010). Recently, in Western cultures, a sharp rise is visible in gardening, where it is seen as a substitute for stress and anxiety as well as potential harm related to lifestyle choices, particularly technological advancement, industrialisation and greater damage to the environment (Bhatti & Church, 2004). Flower gardens can be a crucial part of life, offering possibilities for environmental engagement, self-actualisation, inspiration or quality of life-being (Cameron et al., 2012). Flower gardeners often usually have a strong impact on the structure and maintenance of gardens, and that can be related to other significant psychological factors along with self-esteem, productivity and mental strength (Cameron et al., 2012). On the other hand, fruit gardening can be a potential source of tourism. In different research studies, it is widely mentioned as Horti-tourism, farm tourism, orchard tourism and tourist-orchards (Kuchi & Kabir, 2017; Ohe, 2010; Phelan & Sharpley, 2012; Pitchayadejanant & Nakpathom, 2018). It concludes with visiting the fruit orchards for the purpose of recreation, education, enjoyment, or direct involvement in farming or other operating activities. Fruit gardening can be an agricultural tourism activity that enhances exposure to visitors through travelling and helps farmers incorporate agricultural practices by enhancing farm activities (Ohe, 2010). Tourists can understand what fruit gardening is and can experience the hard work on the ground through active engagement in

farming; farmers, on the other hand, can generate additional income through tourism aside from selling fruit.

Bangladesh has a plethora of diverse natural habitats, including old archaeological sites, green tropical rainforests with perennial hills, and a rich cultural heritage that represents ethnic diversity (Islam & Nath, 2014; Mondal, 2017). The Bangladeshi tourism sector promoting cultural, archaeological and ecotourism amenities has unquestionably tremendous potential and future prospects both at home and abroad. Nevertheless, the sector as a whole has become unsustainable and ineffective due to various factors, including substandard preservation of popular visitor attractions, limited amenities, inadequate funding, less involvement of local governments, and improper marketing objectives (Mondal, 2017). Very few studies have tried to examine and evaluate the environmental consequences of ecotourism (Breuste & Jayathunga, 2010; Noriega et al., 2020) and agritourism (Bhatta & Ohe, 2019; Vogt, 2013). However, no previous studies have been conducted to evaluate tourist's attention towards agro-ecotourism in the context of Bangladesh. Given that earlier research has demonstrated the importance of fostering the interrelations between agriculture, tourism, and the environment to maximise their influence on the overall economy (Knowd, 2006; Torres & Momsen, 2011), it is essential to embark on agro-ecotourism. Therefore, this study attempts to fill that gap in tourism research through assessing the attitudes of residents regarding agro-ecotourism focusing on flower and fruit gardening within the context of a developing nation. Social exchange theory has been considered for this study since it provides a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of agro-ecotourism in the context of Bangladesh. This theory posits that social interactions and relationships are based on the principles of reciprocity and exchange of resources, where individuals seek to maximise rewards and minimise costs within their interactions (Bierstedt & Blau, 1965; Homans, 1958). In the context of agro-ecotourism, local communities and farmers engage in the provision of authentic agricultural experiences and environmental resources, while tourists contribute economically and culturally through their visitations. By applying social exchange theory to the study of agro-ecotourism in Bangladesh, researchers can gain insights into the motivations, attitudes, and behaviours of local residents

and tourists, thereby contributing to the sustainable growth of the tourism industry while preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the region.

This study contributes to the current literature by investigating the impact of values on local residents' attitudes toward agro-ecotourism through an examination of a sample of South and Southeast Asian agro-business firms operating within the agricultural sector. As a riverine country, Bangladesh can be a potential hub of agro-based ecotourism and environmentally sustainable tourism way, which can create a positive impact on the socio-cultural and economic existences of the country since there has been a growing interest among a large number of young generations in agro-business to engage in agro-business.

This study enhances the literature on sustainable development and tourism by examining the potential of agro-ecotourism in advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly within the context of Bangladesh, a developing country. This perspective emphasises the capacity of agro-ecotourism initiatives to promote various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as alleviating poverty (SDG 1), ensuring health and well-being (SDG 3), considering economic growth and employment (SDG 8), reducing inequalities (SDG 10), ensuring responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), considering climate action (SDG 13), life on land (SDG 15), and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17)(UN, 2015).

2. Literature Review

Agri-eco tourism

Recently, the agricultural sector is experiencing significant economic, social, and environmental transformations, including food safety, quality standards, changing customer preferences, climate change, and intensive farming(Arsel & Büscher, 2012; Crespi-Vallbona & Plana-Farran, 2023). Hence, the growth of agro-based tourism has surged in recent decades, driven by the downturn in the agricultural sector and the necessity for producers to seek alternative income streams(Khairabadi et al., 2020; Saroinsong, 2020). Click or tap here to enter text.Agri-eco tourism integrates agri-tourism with eco-tourism(Gonzales, 2024), combining agricultural practices with environmental protection to provide a sustainaClick or tap here to enter text.ble tourism experience. In

contrast to conventional agri-tourism, which aims to draw people to operational agricultural farms(Zhou & Chen, 2023), agri-eco tourism prioritises engagement with agricultural environments and dedication to natural resource preservation, in accordance with eco-tourism objectives. It allows tourists to engage in activities like agriculture, harvesting, and environment conservation, simultaneously fostering economic advantages for rural communities(Mohammed et al., 2024). Agri-eco tourism seeks to promote sustainable development in rural regions by simultaneously benefiting agricultural and environmental protection. Earlier, scholars have employed different terms including orchard tourism (Pitchayadejanant & Nakpathom, 2018), horti-tourism (Mohammed et al., 2024) in relation to agri-tourism, very few studies considered fruits orchard and flower garden. In this study, fruits and flowers have been chosen due to their capability to make the landscapes more attractive, thereby actively transform and improve tourism in specific regions, promote recreational pursuits in rural areas, and market local tourism, particularly to attract urban residents (Darmawan et al., 2018; Popescu, 2018).

Social Exchange theory (SET)

Social exchange theory (SET) is commonly adopted in research to understand local community gains, perceptions, and commitment towards development by developing a conceptual structure to recognize the social exchange mechanism amongst individuals or groups (Kanwal et al., 2020). According to Bellotti et al. (Bellotti et al., 2015), SET is considered "the formation of transaction relationships and motivations to engage in exchanges in a network of actors, given variations in the power of actors, the value of resources, costs, and unpredictability of outcomes from exchanges" (p.1087). It is a conceptual framework commonly utilized for describing the favorable and unfavorable attitudes of the local community and visitors in any exchange relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Pagliara et al., 2020). According to this concept, individuals who have an optimistic mindset would be inspired to promote sustainable development through tourism (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). Therefore, utilizing this theory in the current study, perceptions of concerned stakeholders can be identified, which will eventually help in determining the prospects of agro-ecotourism.

As a theoretical framework, social exchange theory (SET) has been employed in a significant number of attitude research to explain the determinants and consequences of individuals 's attitudes (Hadinejad et al., 2019; Wei et al., 2021). Moreover, SET has also been successfully considered to evaluate community and individual attitudes and support for tourism (Wang et al., 2023; Ward & Berno, 2011). Due to its efficacy in evaluating attitudes and support for tourism at the individual and community levels, Social Exchange Theory (SET) was selected as the research's guiding framework. While alternative frameworks like Social Identity Theory (Agyeiwaah et al., 2023), Social Cognitive Theory (Preko et al., 2023)and Social comparison Theory (Liu et al., 2024) provide valuable insights into perception dynamics, Social Exchange Theory (SET) is distinguished as one of the most widely utilised and validated theories in tourism research (Durga Prasad et al., 2023; Tang, 2014). In the tourism setting, SET typically comprises benefits and costs as well as an exchange mechanism (Bierstedt & Blau, 1965; Homans, 1958). The notion of exchange mechanism in the theory of social exchange is considered to be the primary concept of perceived value from the perspective of behavioral standpoint (Tsaur et al., 2021). Using the consumption-value theory, (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) classified customer perceived value into four dimensions: economic, functional, social, and emotional. Again, (Rashid, 2020) opined that benefits and costs are broken down into three categories in several research studies: economic, social/cultural, and environmental values. On the other hand, the social exchange theory proposed by Ekeh (1974) and Turner (1974) is employed to assess perceived value, emphasizing a four-level platform of value: economic value, social value, physical value, and technological value. Therefore, perceived value, based on the multidimensional approach, is the combination of multiple attributes of value, each of which has distinct effects in diverse situations (Sheth et al., 1991). Based on the aforementioned research, the current study employed economic, social, environmental, and physical values as four reflective key facets of values to evaluate people's attitudes towards the growth of agro-ecotourism.

Attitude

The term "attitude" refers to an individual's opinion on something or their preference for or opposition to a certain course of action (Ajzen & Fishbein,

1977; Millar & Baloglu, 2011). Attitude, as defined by Amstrong and Kotler (2009), comprises an individual's positive or negative assessments, feelings, and dispositions toward an entity or subject. Attitude toward tourism is defined as the psychological propensity of a local community to evaluate positively the outcomes of tourism development (Lwoga, 2019). Social exchange theory has been extensively applied in the tourism context to explore residents' attitudes towards tourism and its various dimensions, including economic, environmental, social, and physical values. In the context of tourism, residents' attitudes are influenced by the perceived economic, environmental, social, and physical values associated with tourism (Hadinejad et al., 2019). The willingness of residents to engage in exchange relationships is affected by various factors such as tourism dependence, gender, and education (Muler Gonzalez et al., 2018). Consumers' attitudes have a significant influence in predicting whether or not they would make a purchase of environmentally friendly products or services, according to research by Maichum et al. (Maichum et al., 2016). In agri-tourism, prior studies have emphasised that the engagement of farmers is shaped by their perceptions of its economic, social, and environmental benefits(Obeidat, 2022). Therefore, understanding residents' attitude towards agritourism may encourage more involvement in rural area development, which in turn promotes sustainable tourism and benefits the community as a whole (Ammirato et al., 2020).

Economic Value and Attitude

The term "economic value" refers to the overall assessment of a product or service's functionality based on the consumer's knowledge of the related costs as well as benefits (Zeithaml, 1988). Accordingly, (Gassenheimer et al., 1998) identified economic value as the harmony between perceived benefits and perceived costs. From the earlier studies, it is evident that economic value has a significant relationship with attitude (J. J. Yang & Ahn, 2020). Tourism might have a crucial role in creating economic value by driving a tourism renaissance that might directly help local communities (Mach & Ponting, 2021). In the context of economic value, the social exchange theory has been associated with residents' support for tourism development when it has positive economic impacts on the host community. This suggests that the perceived economic benefits are positively related to support for tourism development, aligning with

the principles of social exchange theory(Assiouras et al., 2019; Y. Chen et al., 2020). Although agritourism has the potential to serve as a significant economic catalyst for rural development, with agritourism activities contributing to the expansion of farms and the range of activities available in rural areas(Jęczmyk et al., 2015), scholars suggest for additional research about the economic success of agritourism and its impact on rural areas(Choo & Park, 2022). Taking into the above consideration, the following hypothesis might be put forward:

H1: Economic value is significantly related to residents' attitudes towards agro-ecotourism.

Environmental Value and Attitude

The term "economic value" represents the attitudes and motivations that drive individuals to pursue economic benefit (Papista & Krystallis, 2013). The economic value of tourism relates to investment returns on consumption as well as how visitors perceive and evaluate their trip expenditures (Jiang & Hong, 2021; Xu et al., 2021). According to (Zeng & Li, 2021), economic value is the key to obtaining high experiential value in tourism destinations, particularly the competitive value for money, time and effort in order to enhance the level of tourist satisfaction. Existing literature implies that perceived value might be viewed as a multifaceted term widely used in ecotourism, where environmental value has been found to be one of the most significant elements (Bie & Xu, 2018; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Environmental value is considered one of the major factors of individual attitude predictors towards pro-environmental behavioral intention(Q. Li & Wu, 2020). The following hypothesis may be postulated in light of the discussion:

H2: Environmental value is significantly related to residents' attitudes towards agro-ecotourism.

Social value and attitude

In tourism, the social value may be determined by the willingness of potential consumers to pay for its product or services it provides (Shaken et al., 2020). Social value of tourism incorporates all positive outcomes and benefits that can contribute to sustainable economic growth, wellness, quality of life, and

empowerment in the local society that occur through tourism development(Chim-Miki et al., 2024). Regardless of the abundance of literature on the topic of tourism, social value has not been fully applied in the pursuit of environmental sustainability, and only a small number of local communities acknowledge its significance (Li et al., 2022).The relationship between attitude and social value within the context of social exchange theory has been a subject of interest in tourism research, as many researchers have shown that residents' attitudes towards tourism are shaped by their perceptions of the social value derived from tourism(Gu & Zhu, 2023; Zhang et al., 2020). Social exchange theory posits that people engage in interactions with others driven by their planned outcomes of reciprocity and the exchange of resources(Gu & Zhu, 2023). In terms of social value, the theory has been utilised to examine the determinants of consumers' participation in the sharing economy, highlighting its applicability in understanding the social dimensions of value creation and exchange within the hospitality and tourism context (Davlembayeva et al., 2020). Based on the discussion, the following hypothesis can be proposed,

H3: Social value is significantly related to residents' attitudes towards agro-ecotourism.

Physical value and attitude

The physical value of tourism has been highlighted in different ways by independent scholars. According to (Yan et al., 2017), physical values include mobility, accommodation, culinary, information and guiding services, parking and shopping amenities. Again, physical values are usually regarded as physical aspects of tourism, which include the physical infrastructures and the landscape of the area(Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2014). The relationship between attitude and physical value within the framework of social exchange theory has been a subject of interest in tourism research (Fan et al., 2019). Additionally, the social exchange theory has been associated with the concept of physical sustainability in tourism, emphasizing the need to consider the physical implications of tourism activities and their impact on local environments. This underscores the significance of physical value in shaping residents' attitudes towards tourism and the broader sustainability of tourism destinations (J. Wang et al., 2023). Considering the aformentioned discussion, the current study proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: Physical value is significantly related to residents' attitudes towards agro-ecotourism.

On the basis of the proposed hypotheses, the research framework is outlined (Fig.1).

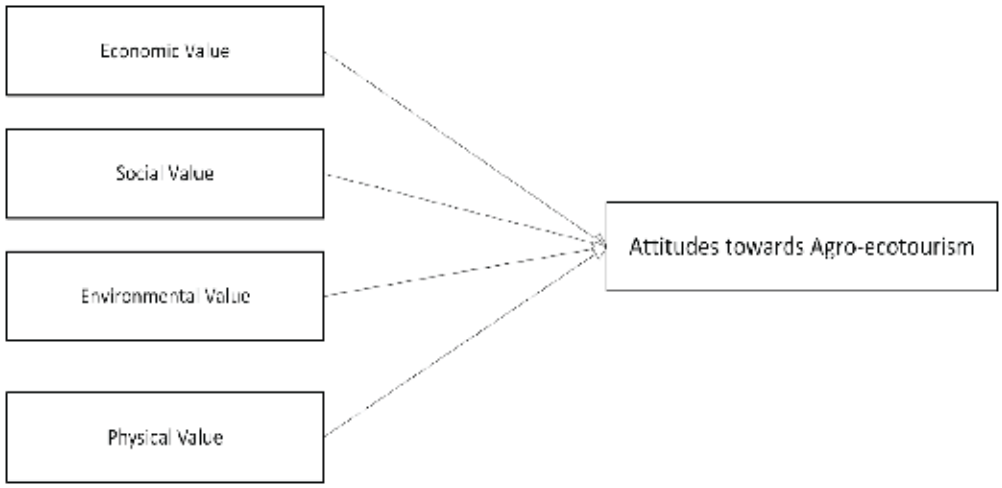

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

The current study adopted a mixed method approach- inductive and deductive, as suggested to establish the indicators measuring the attitude towards agro-ecotourism. The integration of the inductive and deductive approaches in this mixed method study can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem, as the qualitative insights can inform the quantitative phase, and the quantitative findings can help validate or refine the qualitative arguments(Gelo et al., 2008; Hyde, 2000). The utilization of mixed methods, incorporating qualitative research through Delphi methods with follow-up quantitative surveys through exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modelling, significantly enriches the relevance and quality of respondent opinion by letting them to provide well-informed answer choices, improving the overall research findings (Brannen, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2017) (Figure 2).

Qualitative phase:

In the qualitative phase, the study developed construct based on literature review and Delphi method. Initially, the determinants were identified by extensive literature research examining scholarly publications, conference papers, industry reports, and other relevant resources. From the review of the literature on agro-ecotourism, items representing economic, social, environmental, and physical values, as well as attitudes towards agro-ecotourism, were formulated in accordance with an in-depth evaluation of the earlier studies (Andereck et al., 2005; Gursoy et al., 2002; Jurowski et al., 1997; Nicholas et al., 2009; Y. Wang & Pfister, 2008; Yim, 2021). Consequently, the Delphi method has been considered to assess the perception of residents towards agro-ecotourism. The Delphi method has been chosen due to its wide adoption as a group decision-making method that enables a variety of perspectives to be expressed without significant influence from any particular participant(Firth et al., 2019). Later a semi-structured interview with fifteen experts were conducted where experts were selected through a "purposive sampling" approach. The panel of experts was chosen from stakeholders' experience in the subject to be evaluated, and they were asked to give a consensus opinion on that subject along with the potential usage of every proposed indicator. The information obtained provided a prospective overview of the agri-eco tourism market in Bangladesh. Following the feedback and suggestions from the qualitative phase, the initially identified constructs undergo additional modification and refinement through quantitative analysis. The collected data has been analysed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), followed by structural equation modelling (SEM).

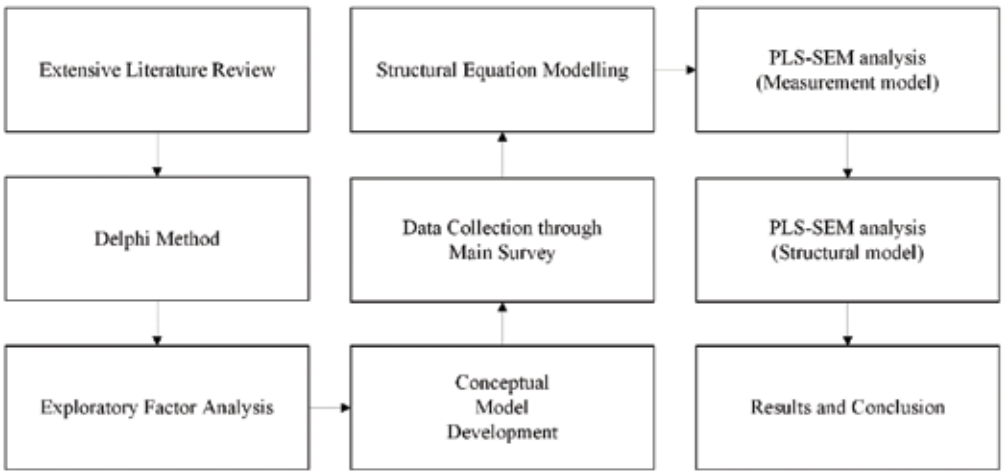

Figure 2: Research Design

Quantitative Phase

Exploratory factor analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted, where principal component analysis was utilised for extraction, and the varimax rotation method was applied to enhance interpretability (Schreiber, 2021). The primary function of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is to identify underlying constructs and interconnections among observed variables, that offer a deeper understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing attitude towards agro-ecotourism (Waqar et al., 2023).

Structural Equation Modelling

In the current study, SMART-PLS 3.2.7 was utilised to analyse data using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). PLS-SEM, known for its superior forecasting capabilities compared to covariance-based SEM was employed to evaluate both the measurement and structural models (Hair et al., 2017). The SEM approach provides a strong foundation for thorough model validation, assuring that the conclusions are built on solid statistical analysis, fostering great trust in the reliability and validity of our findings (Hassan et al., 2015; López-Lemus, 2024).

Measures

The questionnaire-based survey employed a Likert scale to gather data on the conceptualisation based on previous research, with experts providing their opinions on the validity and importance of possible indicators (Chang, 2022).

In order to assess the attitude towards agro-ecotourism, economic, social, environmental, and physical values values have been measured using the items developed by (Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2014; Chen & Chen, 2010) . Attitude towards agro-ecotourism items were adopted from (Erul et al., 2020).

Sample Respondents and data collection

The survey was conducted both onsite and online. In the case of onsite data collection, local residents who had an interest or awareness about agritourism and having awareness about about environmental issues have been taken as respondents considering the demographic profiles including age, gender, education level, socio-economic position etc from different parts of Bangladesh. For online data, information was collected through Google Forms. Convenience sampling has been taken into consideration since it may help detect correlations between different phenomena and capture the existence of a certain behavioural trait within a sample (Etikan, 2016). Out of the 400 respondents, 287 residents completed the questionnaire, seems adequate for generating significant data for analysis (Tabachnick et al., 2013).

Demographic	**Variables**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender	Male	197	68.64
	Female	90	31.36
	Total	287	100
Age	20–30	127	44.25
	30–40	84	29.27
	40–50	47	16.38
	50+	29	10.10
	Total	287	100
Education	SSC and below	43	14.98
	HSC and above SSC	38	13.24
	Bachelor	109	37.98
	Master	89	31.01
	PhD	8	2.79
	Total	287	100
Profession	Student	72	25.09

	Services	87	30.31
	Business	74	25.78
	Homemakers	54	18.82
	Total	287	100

Table 1 The demographic characteristics of the participants

4. Results and Analysis

PLS-SEM has been selected for this investigation because it is considered the preferred option and involves the incorporation of an existing theory (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010). Furthermore, one of the critical characteristics of SmartPLS is 1) the concurrent analysis of the statistical parameters of the measurement model, including the reliability and validity of the measures used to evaluate the model components, along with 2) the calculation of the structural model's components including the degree of the path relationships between the predictors (Al-Gahtani, 2016). The results of the measurement model's psychological characteristics and structural model parameters' estimations are presented in the following paragraphs of this paper.

Measurement Model

To successfully assess the measurement model, validity, including convergent as well as discriminant validity, construct reliability, cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability has been calculated (CR). From the table-3, it is evident that all of the item loadings were more than 0.7, except for item ENV3, which had an outer loading of 0.678, which indicates strong indicator reliability. Therefore, the item was kept since eliminating it wouldn't have improved composite reliability. Furthermore, according to the findings, Cronbach's alpha values are found greater than the required threshold of 0.6, falling between 0.627 and 0.830. In addition, the data in Table 3 also show that the composite reliability values are higher than the threshold value of 0.7, within the interval of 0.800–0.886. If the Average Variation Explained (AVE) of a construct is more than 0.5, then the construct accounted for about 50% of the total measurement variance. All AVE values were found more than the suggested threshold (>0.50), signifying robust convergent validity of the corresponding constructs' items.

Constructs	Variables	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Economic Value (ECV)	ECV1	0.793	0.83	0.84	0.886	0.66
	ECV2	0.834				
	ECV3	0.801				
	ECV4	0.822				
Social Value (SCV)	SCV1	0.719	0.809	0.814	0.875	0.638
	SCV2	0.862				
	SCV3	0.813				
	SCV4	0.794				
Environmental Value (ENV)	ENV1	0.785	0.627	0.64	0.8	0.573
	ENV2	0.801				
	ENV3	0.678				
Physical Value (PHV)	PHV1	0.823	0.757	0.762	0.86	0.672
	PHV2	0.801				
	PHV3	0.835				
Attitude (ATT)	ATT1	0.766	0.797	0.799	0.867	0.621
	ATT2	0.806				
	ATT3	0.824				
	ATT4	0.754				

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity

In order to assess discriminant validity, three metrics were utilised. Initially, cross-loadings were evaluated, leading to the conclusion that construct loadings for the study were larger than rest of the constructs. Second, the specified HTMT values were calculated, with all values being less than 0.90. the behavioural intention had the highest HTMT score, 0.845. Thirdly, according to Fornell and Larcker's criterion, the square root of each item's AVE was greater than its correlation with other variables (Table 4), suggesting that discriminant validity was attained. Finally, all values of VIF stay in between 1.000 and 5.000, showing that multicollinearity caused no significant risks. The SCV2 had the highest VIF value, 2.117.

	ECO	SOC	ENV	PHV	ATT
ECV					
SCV	0.437				
ENV	0.537	0.849			
PHV	0.516	0.508	0.694		
ATT	0.685	0.615	0.749	0.648	

Table 3: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	ECO	SOC	ENV	PHV	ATT
ECV	0.813				
SCV	0.363	0.799			
ENV	0.391	0.608	0.757		
PHV	0.422	0.400	0.476	0.820	
ATT	0.576	0.503	0.537	0.510	0.788

Table 4: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Structural Model

Multiple tests, including evaluating path coefficients as well as their significance through bootstrapping, were incorporated into the structural model, where 5000 subsamples were used in the bootstrapping. ECV (β=0.352, p = 0.000, t-value=6.278), PHV (β=0.197, p = 0.002, t-value=3.077), ENV (β=0.199, p = 0.005, t-value=2.813), and SCV (β=0.176, p = 0.02, t-

value=2.321) were all significantly related to ATT, as shown in Table. Consequently, H1, H2, H3, and H4 were confirmed.

	Path Coefficients	SD	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
ECV -> ATT	0.352	0.056	6.278	0.000	Supported
ENV -> ATT	0.199	0.071	2.813	0.005	Supported
PHV -> ATT	0.197	0.064	3.077	0.002	Supported
SCV -> ATT	0.176	0.076	2.321	0.020	Supported

Table 5: Path Analysis

The structural model has been evaluated utilising two conditions: the explanatory power of the model, R^2, along with the determination coefficient, along with the value and significance of the path coefficients, which are the estimated path relationships that correspond to the standardised betas in a regression analysis (Duarte & Raposo, 2010). The R^2 value ranges between 0 and 1, where a higher value implies greater accuracy. According to Cohen (2013), R^2 is considered small if it ranges between 0.02 and 0.13, medium between 0.13 and 0.25 and large at 0.26 and above. The R^2 for attitude is 0.498, implying that 49.8 per cent of the variance in attitude can be described by EXV, ENV, PHV and SCV.

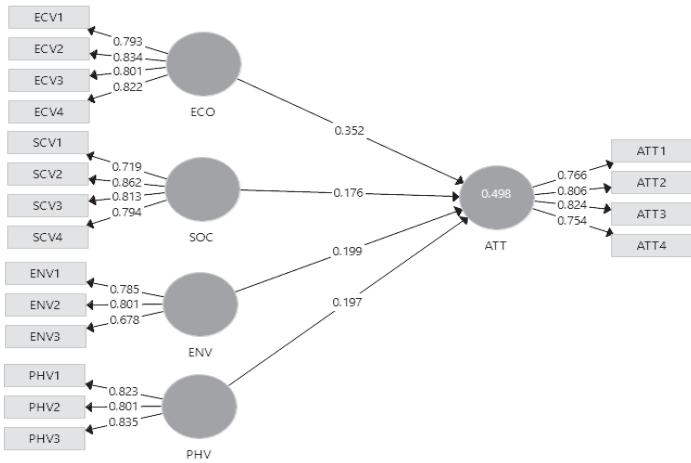

Figure 3: Path Analysis

Furthermore, the influence of each exogenous construct on the underlying endogenous constructs might also be investigated by estimating the effect size (f^2) of the predictor variables (Cohen J., 1988). Consequently, there are three primary criteria for evaluation, which are 0.02 (low), 0.15 (middle), and 0.35 (large). The results of this study indicate that economic value ($f^2 = 0.188$) has a medium effect size. In contrast, environmental value ($f^2 = 0.044$), physical value ($f^2 = 0.054$) and social value ($f^2 = 0.037$) had a minimal effect. The f^2 values of all exogenous constructions are shown in Table 5.

Hypothesis	f^2	Effect size
ECO -> ATT	0.188	Medium effect
ENV -> ATT	0.044	Small effect
PHV -> ATT	0.054	Small effect
SOC -> ATT	0.037	Small effect

Table 6. Predictive relevance.

Eventually, the value of Q^2 was evaluated. Q^2 indicates the predictive relevance of the model for the specific factor results from a sample (Hair et al., 2014). A Q^2 value larger than zero is acceptable and indicates a considerable level of predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2014). According to (Geisser, 1974) and (Stone, 1974), for a model to have predictive relevance, the value of Q^2 should be larger than zero. The blindfolding method was used to derive the cross-validated redundancy values of the construct as a measure of Q^2. Table 7 reveals that the Q^2 value for ATT was 0.292, indicating that the predictive validity of ATT and BI is satisfactory. The results for R^2, f^2, and Q^2 suggest that the underpinning model has a significant level of predictive relevance as well as explanatory power.

Common Method Bias (CMB) is an important issue in survey-based research that actually measures the amount of covariance between the estimated components (Schwarz et al., 2017). Smart PLS-SEM detects CMB utilising a rigorous collinearity assessment technique. The presence of a VIF larger than 3.30 is suggested as an indicator of collinearity, as well as influenced by common method bias(Kock, 2015). Consequently, from a complete collinearity analysis, all VIFs for ECV, SCV, ENV, PHV and ATT are less than 3.3, resulting in the model free of common method bias (see Table 7).

Variables	ATT
ATT	
ECV	1.313
SCV	1.658
ENV	1.805
PHV	1.432

Table 7: Common method bias

5. Discussion

The first hypothesis suggests a significant relationship between economic value and residents' attitudes towards agro-ecotourism. Economic factors play a pivotal role in influencing attitudes, as residents often weigh the economic benefits associated with agro-ecotourism. Previous research indicates that communities are more likely to support tourism initiatives that promise economic gains (Buckley, 2023; Molina-Collado et al., 2022; Nicholas et al., 2009). For instance, the potential for job creation, increased local business revenues, and overall economic growth can positively influence residents' perceptions and attitudes towards agro-ecotourism. The second hypothesis suggests a significant connection between environmental value and residents' attitudes towards agro-ecotourism. As environmental concerns gain prominence globally, residents increasingly value sustainable and ecologically responsible tourism practices. If agro-ecotourism is alligned with environmentally friendly practices, residents will show more favourable attitudes (Yang, 2012). The conservation of local ecosystems, biodiversity, and sustainable agricultural practices could significantly contribute to residents' perceptions of agro-ecotourism (Weyland et al., 2021). The third hypothesis suggests a significant relationship between social value and residents' attitudes towards agro-ecotourism. Social factors, such as community engagement, cultural preservation, and social cohesion, can significantly impact residents' perceptions (Axon, 2020; J. Li et al., 2020). Agro-ecotourism initiatives promoting community engagement observe local cultures, and contribute to social well-being are likely to garner more positive attitudes from residents. The last hypothesis proposes a significant connection between physical value and residents' attitudes towards agro-ecotourism. The physical aspects of the

tourism experience, including the aesthetic appeal of agricultural landscapes, the quality of infrastructure, and overall accessibility, can influence residents' attitudes. Well-maintained and visually appealing agro-ecotourism sites are more likely to generate positive attitudes among residents.

6. Implications

This study holds significant implications for both theoretical understanding and practical applications within the realm of agro-ecotourism. For tourism-focused organisations, the findings serve as a valuable guide to enhance the social benefits of urban tourists while mitigating the negative social impacts associated with tourism. The establishment of a robust framework for future research on consumer interest in agro-ecotourism is particularly noteworthy, providing a foundation for in-depth exploration in subsequent studies. From a theoretical standpoint, the study underscores the nuanced interplay of economic, environmental, social, and physical dimensions in shaping residents' attitudes towards agro-ecotourism. This enriches the existing body of knowledge by providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing attitudes in this context. The identified dimensions offer researchers a solid foundation for future investigations, encouraging a more holistic and integrative approach to studying residents' attitudes in similar settings.

From the managerial perspective, this study has suggested potential guidance for agro-ecotourism stakeholders particularly who are involved in policy and strategic decision-making. Recognising the significance of economic, environmental, social, and physical values allows the particular stakeholders involved in decision-making to tailor strategies that go beyond mere economic benefits. The study will also encourage them to align their initiatives with these values to foster positive relationships with local residents, ensuring continuous support and success for agro-ecotourism ventures. In essence, this study serves as a valuable resource for both researchers seeking not only to expand theoretical frameworks and but also help practitioners aiming to enhance the effectiveness of agro-ecotourism initiatives. Policymakers, including those in tourism organisations, can benefit from a deeper understanding of local citizens' perceptions towards agro-ecotourism, facilitating informed decision-making. By investigating into different values related to the prospects of agriculture and

ecotourism, this research contributes to a holistic comprehension of the agro-ecotourism.

7. Conclusion

The comprehensive findings of these research endeavours offer a wide range of perspectives on the economic, environmental, social, and physical factors which influence the attitudes of local residents towards agro-ecotourism. Furthermore, the existing body of literature sheds light on the capacity of agro-ecotourism to enhance the social trust, well-being, and satisfaction of local residents, in addition to its broader implications for regional economies and the empowerment of communities. Despite this, certain limitations in the current body of research must be duly acknowledged. Further research is warranted to explore the complex nature of particular contexts that might impact the attitudes of local residents, taking into account regional differences and cultural variables. Furthermore, conducting an investigation into the attitudes of local inhabitants and the long-term consequences of agro-ecotourism across different time periods would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding. In addition, further research could examine the potential moderating influence of demographic factors on established relationships, thereby providing a more specific view. Furthermore, further investigation is required to enhance and broaden the scope of these findings. Developing practical frameworks for incorporating economic, environmental, social, and physical values into the preparation and handling of agro-ecotourism initiatives should be the focus of future research. This may entail an examination of novel approaches to community involvement and an evaluation of the enduring viability of agro-ecotourism initiatives. Furthermore, conducting a comparative analysis encompassing a range of regions may reveal significant insights regarding the applicability of strategies and the extent to which they can be generalised to different contexts.

In summary, this study contributes to the collective knowledge regarding the complex dynamics between economic, environmental, social, and physical values that influence the perspectives of local inhabitants regarding agro-ecotourism. However, it is critical to acknowledge the constraints of the research and suggest possible avenues for future investigation. These factors

are of the utmost importance in order to enhance theoretical frameworks, guide the formulation of practical strategies, and promote the sustainable development of agro-ecotourism endeavours. The aforementioned insights and prospective avenues make valuable contributions to the continuous dialogue within the discipline and are consequential for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers.

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sAppendix: Questionnaire

Constructs	Item	Source
Economic Value	1. Agro-ecotourism will give economic benefits to local people 2. Agro-ecotourism will give economic benefits to small businesses 3. Agro-ecotourism will create more jobs for your community 4. Agro-ecotourism will attract more investment to your community	(Abdollahzadeh & Sharifzadeh, 2014; Chen & Chen, 2010)
Social Value	1. Agro-ecotourism will encourage residents' participation in cultural activities 2. Agro-ecotourism will lead to more understanding of local heritage 3. Agro-ecotourism will lead to a balanced local community development	

	4. Agro-ecotourism will increase local cultural identity	
Environmental Value	1. Agro-ecotourism will foster environmental conservation 2. Agro-ecotourism will raise more awareness of protection for heritage resources 3. Agro-ecotourism will increase local recreational facilities and resources	
Physical Value	1. Agro-ecotourism increase in the value of property owned by locals 2. Agro-ecotourism increase investments in modern infrastructures (hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops campsites, parking lots) 3. Agro-ecotourism increase investments in basic rural infrastructures (road, sanitation, water supply, health centers)	
Attitude towards agro-ecotourism	1. I support agro-ecotourism and want to see it remain important. 2. I believe that agro-ecotourism should be actively encouraged. 3. I support new agro-ecotourism facilities that will attract new visitors.	(Erul et al., 2020).