

## Research Paper

# Assessing the Capacity of Masal Rural Environment for the Development of Agritourism

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## ABSTRACT

Agritourism is a kind of rural tourism that is located in a particular tourism or alternative tourist group. Today, agritourism is considered as a strategy to improve the economic, social and biological conditions of villages in the world. The present paper aims at assessing the capacity of *Masal* rural environment for the development of Agritourism based on 6 indicators: The landscape of natural attractions, the landscape of man-made attractions, tourist capacity, accommodation facilities and amenities, infrastructure facilities and services, and historical-cultural monuments in order to not only evaluate the general status of *Masal* villages in terms of the possibility of making and developing agricultural tourism but also identify the most susceptible areas. The statistical population consists of all rural areas of Township *Masal*. The Township *Masal* has 108 rural spots. Based on sampling in descriptive studies, 20% of the villages, 20 villages, have been identified as samples, depending on the location of the elevation -topography (Plain, foothills and mountains) indices. The Present study is a kind of applied research with a quantitative approach which has been used to analyze the data from multi-factor decision-making models (MADM) with non-predictive methods DEMATEL, ANP, and ANP-DEMATEL. The findings showed that rural areas of *Masal* have a good capacity for agritourism development. However, the foothill regions and the hill-sides are better than the mountainous area.

### Key words:

Capacity measurement, Agritourism, farm tourism, Dematel, Township *Masal*

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## Extended Abstract

### 1. Introduction

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gritourism is a type of rural tourism which is directly related to agricultural activities in rural areas. The current pa-

per generally aims to measure the capacity for agritourism development in *Masal* villages. In this regard, it is attempted to evaluate the villages of Township *Masal* in terms of enjoying natural and human landscapes and landscapes, tourist attractions, recreational facilities, attractions, historical and cultural monuments, and infrastructure facilities and services in order to determine the

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capacity of Agritourism development in each village, and their ranking and spatial dispersion based on the elevation index (topography).

## 2. Methodology

This research is a kind of descriptive-analytical one in term of data collection, information, survey and quantitative approach. The statistical population of this study was 108 rural villages in Township *Masal*, Based on sampling in descriptive studies, 20% of the villages, 20 villages were randomly selected as sample population. In this research, "rural environment" is just studied and it is attempted to determine the environmental dimensions of rural areas of *Masal* country according to 6 indices, including the landscape and natural landscape, sights and human landscape, tourism capacity, recreational facilities, attractions and cultural and cultural activities. Moreover, infrastructure facilities and services are evaluated in order to enable the formation and the development of agritourism. The main instrument for collecting data is a researcher-made questionnaire completed by General villagers. The questionnaire data were encoded in the environment of SPSS and then analyzed in the environment of Excel. Finally, the villages were ranked based on the amount of agritourism development capacity using the ANP-DEMATEL pair comparison technique and MATLAB software.

## 3. Results

According to the research question and the environmental status of the sample villages, the general prospects of *Masal* townships are suitable for agritourism development. The foothills are in the first place, the slopes are in the second place, while the mountainous areas are in the third place. Accordingly, there is the capacity to create and develop agritourism in the villages of *Masal*.

## 4. Discussion

Based on the final weight of the options for the 20 villages studied, it was determined that in terms of agritourism development capacity, the villages located in Foothills and hillside considering the total comments of the tenants and the importance of each indicator, have a good capacity to accept and boost all kinds of rural tourism activities, especially agritourism, as compared to other villages.

## 5. Conclusion

Agritourism is formed as a result of the linkage among several factors. The recognition of these factors is very

effective in planning for the creation and development of this type of rural tourism. Rural areas in the foothills and hillside are the prime in planning and can be accepted by agricultural tourists due to having some necessary components in various types of tourism, such as accommodation and food supply centers, health care and transportation, security and welfare, access, etc.

Rural areas located in mountainous areas, in terms of agritourism attractions, have favorable conditions, although they should be planned due to the specific conditions of the region and the lack of infrastructure and non-permanent residence, seasonally. In fact, it is supposed to meet the needs of specific groups of tourists in the field of agricultural tourism. According to the research question, the general situation of *Masal* villages is appropriate in terms of agritourism development capacity implying that the foothills are ranked first, hillside areas in second place and mountainous areas are ranked third. Therefore, the villages of *Masal* have the capacity to create and develop agricultural tourism.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest