

Agricultural Tourism Success: An Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) Approach

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Abstract

The aim of this survey was to identify and prioritize the factors affecting the success of agricultural tourism as one of the specific instances of tourism (NICHE) with an interpretive structural modeling approach. In this research, snowball sampling method was used and the statistical population consisted of 12 tourism experts, including managers of the Cultural Heritage Organization and university professors in the field of agricultural tourism. Factors affecting the success of this industry were extracted from the questionnaire; they were in order of importance and priority. At the highest level, there were the government planning and support for farmers and in the second level, 6 factors were at the same level. At the third level, there were the sustainability of agricultural tourism, the promotion of culture and the culture of local people and tourists. Finally, the fourth level is to prevent the migration of villagers.

Keywords: Niche Tourism, Agricultural Tourism, Interpretive structural Modeling.

1. Introduction

Today, the tourism industry in the world is one of the important sources of income and at the same time one of the effective factors in cultural exchanges between countries and as the most extensive service industry in the world, has a special place (Ahdenjad et al., 2012). In fact, the expansion of economic, health, security and communication infrastructure in the 21st century has made tourism an inevitable reality in human life (Saghaei & Alizadeh, 2013). The increasing development of the tourism industry in different societies indicates the importance of this industry in the global economy. So allocating resources in this area is not a cost, but an investment to gain a competitive advantage (Shafiee Rudposhti et al, 2017). We are also seeing an increase in the global service sector in the 21st century, which is why many countries are persistently developing this sector, which has been termed as a smoke-free industry (Su, 2011). Iran also has many capabilities in this field due to its many advantages in terms of climate diversity, natural attractions, ancient

history and civilization, ancient and religious monuments, architecture, handicrafts, culture and geography (Taghavi & Gholipour, 2009).

In recent decades, new and different types of tourism have been welcomed by a special range of tourists. Types of tourism include bird tourism, wildlife, diving, periodic festivals, spas and mineral springs, harvesting and processing of agricultural products, etc. This style of special tourism is called "Niche Tourism" which is borrowed from the term "Niche Market", which is a special part of the market with specific products and fits the needs of customers. This type of tourism can be broken down into relatively homogeneous parts of market segmentation. The focus of this tourism is on two types; focus on destination and focus on product. "Niche Tourism" does not always include small sectors and sub-sectors, but can be accompanied by a large number of tourists (Alnight, 2011).

Agricultural tourism is a branch of rural tourism in which tourists live with rural families and learn about agricultural activities and living in fields and agricultural areas. In this way, tourists interact with or participate in traditional activities without negatively impacting the ecosystem of the host region. Hosts, on the other hand, earn a living by offering a range of activities and services to tourists while satisfying and relaxing them. In fact, agricultural tourism is a kind of coexistence between the tourism process and agricultural activities in rural areas (Ahdenjad et al., 2012). Agricultural tourism, with careful planning, can attract tourists to rural areas, while increasing income and improving the living standards of residents of these areas, help preserve the fabric of these villages and prevent unnecessary migration of their residents to cities (Ahadnejad et al., 2012).

The research questions are as follows:

What are the factors influencing the success of agricultural tourism (Niche)?

What is the classification and leveling of factors affecting the success of agricultural tourism (Niche)?

What are the possible suggestions and strategies for the success of agricultural tourism (Niche)?

2. Theoretical Framework of Study

First of all, it is worth to describe niche tourism and rural tourism and the relation between these two concepts.

• Niche Tourism

The concept of "Niche Tourism" has emerged in recent years and stands in contrast of "mass tourism" (Robinson and Novelli, 2005). Niche tourism can be defined as the particular natural and anthropogenic resources of a region, to the characteristic lifestyle of the tourists that engage in a specific types of activity and to their social status and their financial resources. The niche tourism market targets a smaller number of tourists compared to mass tourism (BUNGHEZ, 2021). In fact, the process of focusing on marketing resources and efforts in a particular market segment is called "Niche" (Huh and Singh, 2007). Photography, geology, darkness, genealogy, culinary arts, transportation, etc. are considered as some topics of this section (Robinson and Novelli, 2005).

• Rural Tourism

Rural Tourism has unclear meaning due to its complexity and lack of general consensus, as only one third of recent related surveys provided an exact meaning for this concept (Rosalina et al., 2021). According to Zielinski et al. (2020), rural tourism can be defined as a small-scale enterprises, characterized by open space, availability of natural and cultural heritage, traditional practices, connections with local families, growth that is slow and organic, local control, and sustainability. The basis of rural tourism is the combination of rural environment, farm activities and special cultures in the village in order to provide entertainment and diversity for tourists and create opportunities for local people to earn more, create employment and familiarity with different cultures and create Communicate with people outside the village. Creating this opportunity without destroying the natural environment is intended (Jumapour and Heidari, 2016). Rural

tourism is a two-way economic trend in rural areas, which in addition to the surplus income it generates for the villagers in the context of the agricultural economy, has also created employment for local residents (Mahmoudi et al., 2013). Rural tourism is a combination of agricultural products, environmentally friendly products, cultural resources and space facilities with different functions such as economic, social, educational, environmental, recreational and medical activities (Hwang, 2015).

- **Agricultural Tourism**

One of the most important activities in rural areas is agriculture, which is defined in many parts of the world today in connection with the tourism sector (Park et al., 2014). Agricultural tourism is in fact one of the types of rural tourism that is different according to its formation environment and is directly related to agriculture in rural areas (Saghaei, 2006; Mahmoudi et al., 2013). Agricultural tourism is a category that farmers or ranchers do on agricultural, horticultural or agricultural business activities with the aim of entertaining and educating visitors. Service activity does not replace productive activity, but complements farmers' incomes and promotes them in the same agricultural lifestyle (Holly and Ellen, 2005).

Today, rural tourism has become one of the leading economic activities. Studies show that there is a positive relationship between rural tourism development, attracting tourists and increasing economic income. Rural tourism can be a good solution for development, generating revenue and increasing employment (Ahdenjad et al., 2012). Given the situation of rural areas and the need for sustainable development, rural tourism can be a good option for rural development. In agro-tourism or agricultural tourism, tourists interact with and participate in traditional agricultural activities without creating a negative impact on the ecosystem of the host regions (Sharifzadeh & Moradnejad, 2002). It seems that Iran and its special capacities for special tourism, considering the diversity of ecology and culture, is capable of exploiting these potentials. Special tourism refers to how the needs of a part of the addressee or a part of the market are met with a specific tourism product (Prabakaran & Pachanatam, 2012). Jomehpour et al. (2016), in his article entitled "The link between tourism and agricultural activities in the direction of environmental sustainability, emphasizing the attitudes of local communities", has studied the existing capacities in villages and planning for tourism, especially in the agricultural sector, which is the main occupation of local communities, and the proper use of these resources will bring environmental sustainability. In this study, the study area is the rural areas of Tiramrud district located near Tonekabon city, which has many capacities related to the agricultural sector and has also been considered by many tourists. The research method in this research is practical in terms of purpose and is based on descriptive-analytical nature. The statistical population of the study consists of farmers of 7 selected villages in the Tiramrud district of the central part of Tonekabon city. The criterion for selecting villages is estimated and based on the researcher's knowledge, and also the Cochran method has been used to select the research sample population (farmers). Vermeziari et al. (2014) in his article entitled Estimating the willingness of citizens to pay for agricultural tourism services and the case study of Qazvin, conducts a study to estimate the potential demand for agricultural tourism services in the community and the factors affecting it. The statistical population included citizens over 18 years old in Qazvin who had referred to agricultural-rural areas at least once last year. The sample size was estimated at 153 people and a total of 180 self-made questionnaires were completed through face-to-face interviews. In this study in order to estimate the willingness to pay, the conditional valuation method and the two-dimensional double selection method were used. In order to investigate the factors affecting the probability of accepting the offered price in exchange for the use of agricultural tourism services, the logit model was considered by the maximum likelihood method. The average willingness to pay per citizen for each visit and benefit from some agricultural tourism services was estimated at 53,400 rials. Given the significance of this amount and since about 80% of the surveyed citizens accepted one of the proposed amounts for tourism services, it can be seen that there is a potentially suitable market for the development of agricultural tourism enterprises. The results showed that the variables of the average number of trips to rural-agricultural places per year,

household dimension and virtual variables, having a car and place of birth, had a significant effect on the probability of accepting the offered prices as the willingness to pay for agricultural tourism services on citizens. Piri et al. (2014), in an article entitled Agrotourism (Agricultural Tourism) A New Horizon in Agricultural-Architectural Tourism, tried to achieve the need to create a suitable space for agricultural tourism in Iran, through studying the keywords and finding similar patterns in the field of agricultural tourism, since Iran should be able to generate significant revenue from the tourism industry due to its climatic conditions and several-thousand-year civilization. Amin (2014), in a research article entitled Agricultural tourism (tea tourism priority), states; one of the investment priorities in Gilan province with the focus on tourism and agriculture is defined in the form of tea tourism. Gilan and Mazandaran provinces are one of the most unique tea tourism hubs in the country due to their geographical location and natural and human characteristics. Tea tourism has an undeniable impact on all cultural, social, economic and environmental aspects of tea-rich regions.

Dubios (2017), in his article entitled Farm Tourist: Vague Image, introduces agricultural tourism as a way to compensate for the decline in farm income that has problems attracting tourists. This article seeks to better understand agricultural tourism based on evidence in Wallonia (Belgium) and Luxembourg. It studies four factors 1) Farmers who have developed agrotourism experiences. 2) Advertising organizations 3) Tourists who have participated in agricultural tourism activities and 4) tourists who have not participated. The study is a combined method based on data collected through 1148 questionnaires for tourists and 65 interviews with farmers and representatives of advertising tourism organizations. The results indicate that there is a heterogeneity between the sector images with respect to the concept of agricultural tourism and its development. Agricultural tourism is a vague concept between reality and stakeholder expectations, although there are opportunities to target the benefits of a particular tourism segment. Agricultural-educational tourism is a substitute for mass tourism for areas where the latter one cannot be organized. Agricultural activities for students considering the field of agriculture will contain: full understanding of general agricultural performance, raising awareness for healthy food, developing healthy eating habits, learning how to produce and market agricultural products, and first-hand experience throughout the years of future agricultural activities.

Chen (2016) examines this in his article: How Taiwan Can Create a Niche in the Asian Tourism Industry. Cruise is a significant trend in Europe and the United States. In recent years, however, it has gradually gained popularity among tourists in Asia, indicating great potential. Taiwan is strategically located in Asia and is an ideal place to develop maritime tourism. In this study, the fuzzy-Delphi and fuzzy IPE approaches are used. Naido and Sharpley (2016) in another article entitled: Local Attitudes, the Relative Role of Territorial Tourism and Agricultural Tourism in the Welfare of the Mauritius Community, considering that little attention has been paid to the welfare of islanders in general and the nature of tourism development in particular. Island tourism, often manifested in the development of resort-based territory, is a form of tourism that is often criticized for its limited public interest. As a result, alternative methods such as agricultural tourism are increasingly being proposed as a means of improving the development and welfare of the community. However, the relative benefits of agricultural and territorial tourism in the field of island tourism have not been explored. In this article, this gap is considered. According to a survey in Mauritius, it compares the perceptions of local people about the impact of agricultural and territorial tourism on welfare. The results show that both types of tourism development have both a positive and a negative role on public welfare, although territorial tourism has fewer positive results. On the one hand, territorial tourism offers valuable cultural opportunities but harms the environment, limits entrepreneurship and benefits the local elite, and on the other hand, agricultural tourism, although not well established in Mauritius, socially promotes cultural fields of community while supporting entrepreneurship. Ann Wright (2015), another study entitled 'Creating a room for oneself': French women farmers, agricultural tourism and pursuing their

empowerment, examines how women use farm tourism as a tool for empowerment in the context of family farming. Qualitative data from the Agricultural Tourism Network of women farmers in the south of France suggest that farm tourism empowers women to develop individual empowerment strategies. Farm tourism gives women the opportunity to create a physical space for individual independence and creativity where they can pursue their personal goals and overcome social isolation, in this way, they enhance the empowerment process. Although the empowerment process is not without challenges, this study demonstrates how the persistence of a patriarchal culture by agricultural ideology can complicate the process. This study shows that farm tourism allows women to build independent goals that can lead to empowerment to the extent that they are acceptable to men and prevent male-led farming activities.

Casvanto, (2015), in an article entitled Land Sustainability for Agricultural Tourism through the Approach to Agriculture, Tourism, Beautification and amenity (ATBA), mentions that agrotourism is an extension of human needs, which is dedicated to the terms of sustainability, appropriateness, beautification and comfort. Therefore, the research has evaluated this activity using a four-dimensional method, namely agriculture, tourism, beautification, amenity (ATBA). This means that the development of the landscape promotes sustainable agricultural resources, which are appropriate to tourism activities, beautiful regarding environment and comfortable for tourists.

The spatial approach is designed by combining the value of the landscape element through Landsat satellite imagery. The purpose of this study is to design an optimal land management scenario from four aspects with the ATBA approach. The final ATBA coverage results were performed at four levels, for example: 3.33 high (14.5%), medium 12.657 (54.7%), low 5.946 (25.7%) and none 1180 (5.1%). Prabhakaran and Panchantam (2014) in their article titled Niche (Special) Tourism Products of India, examines the position of special tourism in India with a critical perspective. This article identifies new and different ideas for the development of tourism products and then focuses on the different forms and situations of Indian tourism products. The benefits of this work are for the academic community, which is to introduce the consumer's insight into a particular tourism, and to understand the purpose of the challenges facing the particular tourism cycle. Ultimately, the practical benefits to the industry include a greater understanding of positioning and targeting of their products. In other words, their research focuses primarily on specific tourism products, including cruise, medicine, and film. In Iran, despite the availability of special capacities for special tourism, its usability is not used. This research intends to use the interpretive structural modeling approach to determine the 12 factors affecting the success of agricultural tourism as the main goal and then as a side goal of the research to prioritize and grade the model factors and the impact of each on the success of agricultural tourism.

3. Method

The method of scientific research is a regular search process to determine an indefinite situation (Danaeifar et al., 2012). Researches are divided into three categories in terms of purposes (Naghavi, 2013):

- Fundamental researches
- Applied researches
- Developmental researches

Accordingly, the present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-survey in terms of data collection. The purpose of applied research is to develop applied knowledge in a specific field. In this study, first, through library studies, including the study of books, articles and various dissertations related to agricultural tourism and Internet sites, the key factors in the development of agricultural tourism have been identified. And these factors were provided to tourism experts through an initial questionnaire to confirm its content validity, then in the next step, using the extracted dimensions, an interpretive structural modeling

questionnaire () was designed to be distributed among the experts of the statistical community. The research hypotheses were examined and the data and information were analyzed according to the information obtained from the questionnaire. In the last stage, using the interpretive structural modeling approach, the factors affecting the success of agricultural tourism were prioritized and modeling was performed based on the data. At the end of the research, based on the built model, solutions and suggestions for the development of agricultural tourism are presented. The statistical population of this study includes tourism experts including managers of the Cultural Heritage Organization and university professors who have at least 5 years of experience and management in the field of agricultural tourism. For example, there are a number of people in the society whose traits are similar to the traits of the society and represent the society and have homogeneity with the people of the society (Delavar, 1997, p. 109). The number of samples in this study is 12 people who were first selected by purposive sampling method and then the sample size was increased by snowball sampling. Data collection methods are divided into two categories, library method and field method. In this research, library method was used to collect information. Interpretive structural modeling has been used to analyze the data. In this model, the relationship between variables is determined. In fact, the job of interpretive structural modeling is to structure the elements to determine the conceptual relationship between dimensions. In other words, it is a tool by which nodes can overcome the complexity between the elements.

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4. Results

4.1 Adapting the Achievement Matrix (Final Access Matrix)

Once the initial achievement matrix has been obtained, its internal consistency must be established. For example, if variable 1 leads to variable 2 and variable 2 leads to variable 3, variable 1 must also lead to variable 3, and if this is not the case in the achievement matrix, the matrix must be modified and the missing relationships must be replaced. In this study, the first method was used. Therefore, six identified inconsistencies (marked with an *) were corrected after expert confirmation, as shown in Table (1):

Table1. Structurally Adapted Matrix of Internal Relationships (Structural Self-Interaction Matrix) Factors Affecting the Success of Niche Tourism (Agriculture)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sustainability of agricultural tourism	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Program planning and support state farmers	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Identifying and marketing activities related to agricultural tourism	3	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Agricultural tourism services and facilities	4	1	0	1*	1	1	1	1	1	1
Promotion of the culture of the locals and tourists	5	1*	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Easy access to farms and strengthening communication	6	1	0	1	1*	1	1	1	1	1
Job opportunities and empowerment of women farmers	7	1	0	1*	1*	1	1*	1	1	1
Tourist Attractions	8	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Preventing the migration of villagers	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Educational-recreational visits	10	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

4.2 Final Achievement Matrix of Factors Affecting Niche Tourism (Agriculture)

After the formation of initial access matrix, the final access matrix is formed by including transferability in the relationships of the variables. The transferability of conceptual relationships between variables is a basic assumption in interpretive structural modeling. Transferability indicates that if variable A affects variable

B and variable B affects variable C, A also affects C. In this step, all the secondary relationships between the variables were investigated and the final matrix was obtained according to Table 2 respectively. In this matrix, influence and the degree of dependence of each variable is obtained. The degree of dependence of a variable is also obtained from the sum of the variables from which it is affected and the variable itself.

Table 2. Final Achievement Matrix of Factors Affecting the Success of Niche Tourism (Agriculture)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Influence
1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
3	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
4	1	0	1*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
5	1*	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8
6	1	0	1	1*	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
7	1	0	1*	1*	1	1*	1	1	1	1	9
8	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
10	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
Degree of dependence	9	1	9	9	9	9	9	8	10	7	

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To determine the level and priority of variables, the reachable set and the initial set (prerequisite) for each variable are determined (Mandal & Deshmukh, 1994). The reachable (output) set of each variable includes the variables that can be reached through this variable and the initial (input) set includes the variables through which this variable can be reached. This is done using the achievement matrix. After determining the sets of reachable and initial for each variable, common elements in the set of reachable and initial for each variable are identified. After determining the initial and reachable sets and common elements, it is time to determine the level of variables (factors). In the first table, the variable has the highest level that its set of achievement and common elements are exactly the same. After determining this variable or variables, they are removed from the table and with the remaining variables, the following tables are formed to determine the level of other factors. In the second table, as in the first table, the variable or variables of the second level are specified and this continues until the level of all variables is determined. In the present study, during 4 stages, the level determination of obstacles has been done, which are described in the following tables:

Table3. The First Stage of the First Level Determination of Criteria in the Hierarchy of Interpretive Structural Modeling

Criteria	reachable set	initial set	common elements	Level
1. Sustainability of agricultural tourism	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8	
2. Government planning and support for farmers	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	2	2	
3. Identifying and marketing activities related to agricultural tourism	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	
4. Agricultural tourism services and facilities	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	
5. Promoting the culture of local people and tourists	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8	
6. Easy access to farms and strengthening communication	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	
7. Job opportunities and empowerment of women farmers	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	
8. Tourist attractions and attractiveness of farm tourism services	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	

Criteria	reachable set	initial set	common elements	Level
9. Preventing the migration of villagers	9	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	9	1
10. Educational visits	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	2,3,4,5,6,6,7,8,10	3,4,6,7,8,10	

Table4. The Second Stage of the Second Level Determination of Criteria in the Hierarchy of Interpretive Structural Modeling

Criteria	reachable set	initial set	common elements	Level
1. Sustainability of agricultural tourism	1,3,4,5,6,7,8	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8	<u>2</u>
2. Government planning and support for farmers	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	2	2	
3. Identifying and marketing activities related to agricultural tourism	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	
4. Agricultural tourism services and facilities	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	
5. Promoting the culture of local people and tourists	1,3,4,5,6,7,8	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8	<u>2</u>
6. Easy access to farms and strengthening communication	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	
7. Job opportunities and empowerment of women farmers	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	
8. Tourist attractions and attractiveness of farm tourism services	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	
10. Educational visits	1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10	3,4,6,7,8,10	

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Table5. The Third Stage of the Third Level Determination of Criteria in the Hierarchy of Interpretive Structural Modeling

Criteria	reachable set	initial set	common elements	Level
2. Government planning and support for farmers	2,10	2	2	
3. Identifying and marketing activities related to agricultural tourism	10	2,10	10	<u>3</u>
4. Agricultural tourism services and facilities	10	2,10	10	<u>3</u>
6. Easy access to farms and strengthening communication	10	2,10	10	<u>3</u>
7. Job opportunities and empowerment of women farmers	10	2,10	10	<u>3</u>
8. Tourist attractions and attractiveness of farm tourism services	10	2,10	10	<u>3</u>
9. Educational visits	10	2,10	10	<u>3</u>

Table 6. The Fourth Stage of the Fourth Level Determination of Criteria in the Hierarchy of Interpretive Structural Modeling

Criteria	reachable set	initial set	common elements	Level
2. Government planning and support for farmers	2	2	2	<u>4</u>

According to the tables related to determining the level of effective factors on the success of Niche (agricultural) tourism, it can be seen that factor 9 is at the highest level. On the other hand, factor 2 is at the lowest level, which can be said that this factor acts as the foundation stone of the model and special attention should be paid to it. Despite the frequent use of interpretive structural modeling in recent years, this method has weaknesses that can critique the validity and accuracy of this model. The most important critique of this modeling can be considered the special emphasis on the use of expert opinions. This modeling is not able to show the direction and amount of influence of its constituent elements and shows any brief and partial relationship between its components as a direct relationship. The lack of a specific indicator for model processing, the complexity of model construction and the increase in the rate of incompatibility in the face of the multiplicity of components are other important weaknesses of this modeling. Due to this issue, in the present study, the ISM method has been used for leveling and the relationship between the indicators has been determined based on the background review and then these relationships have been approved by the experts. Based on this, the model is made as shown in Figure 1. In this study, the factors are at 4 levels.

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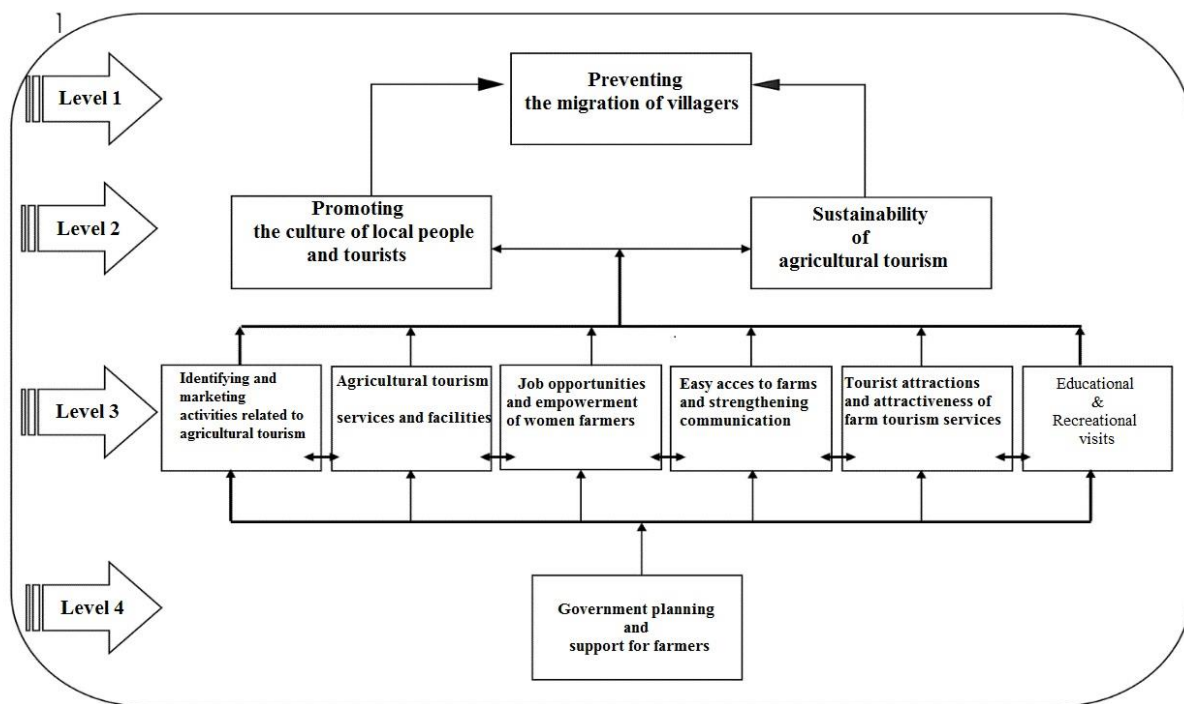


Figure1. The Final Model of Agricultural Tourism Success

In MICMAC analysis, the factors affecting the success of niche (tourism) tourism are divided into four levels according to the power of influence and guidance of each factor in other factors and the degree of dependence of each factor on other factors (based on the final achievement matrix):

- ❖ Independent variables or level of independence (autonomy): Factors that have the least dependence and influence on other factors (these variables are almost separated from the system because they have weak connections with the system).
- ❖ Dependent variables: Factors that are highly dependent on other factors.

- ❖ Linking variables: Factors that have a two-way relationship with other factors.
- ❖ Key independent variables (level of influence): Factors that have a significant impact and influence on another factor.

According to Table (7), this division shows that factor number 2 is a key variable, factor number 9 is a dependent variable, and factors 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 are among the linking variables.

Table 7. Classification of Factors Affecting the Success of Niche Tourism (Agriculture)

Power of guidance	10	2								
	9		Independent variables (key)				10		3,4,6,7	
	8						Linking variables		8	1,5
	7									
	6									
	5									
	4		Independent variables						The dependent variables	
	3									
	2									
	1									9
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Degree of dependence									

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5. Conclusion

These days, agricultural tourism has emerged as one of the most important branches of tourism that leads to economic development, in both in developing and developed countries, and has gained special importance. Attracting international investment is the cornerstone of tourism development. The revenue from this industry brings high added value to the national economy of any country, which is why many countries consider this expanding industry as the main source of income, a basis for employment, private sector growth and strengthening of economic infrastructure. In particular, developing countries and societies that do not benefit from other forms of economic development and do not play a significant role in global trade have turned to the tourism industry and paid more attention to it. Factors affecting the success of this industry were extracted after a survey of experts, which is as follows. 1- Sustainability of agricultural tourism, 2- Government planning and support for farmers, 3- Identification and marketing of activities related to agricultural tourism, 4- Agricultural tourism services and facilities (accommodation, welfare, law enforcement, recreation), 5- Promoting the culture of local people and tourists, 6- Easy access to farms and strengthening communication, 7- Job opportunities and empowerment of women farmers, 8- Tourist attractions (cultural, indigenous, historical, anthropological, natural) and attractiveness of farm tourism services, 9- Preventing the migration of villagers and 10 recreational-educational visits (working on the farm and preparing local food).

The results of this research in terms of people component are similar to the research results of Barghi et al. (2012), Badri et al. (2014) and Ghadiri Masoom et al. (2013), in terms of location component with Navood (1998) and Hosseini Golkoooh and Habibi (2014) And in terms of planning and management component, it is similar to Rahmani Sariast et al. (2014) research. The most important components in tourism marketing

are; as expressed by Barghi et al. (2012) promotion, people and product, Nawood (1998) place, Badri et al. (2014) people and promotion, Ghadiri Masoum et al. (2013) promotion, people and product, Hosseini Golkoo and Habibi (2014) Price, promotion, place and product, Rahmani Sariast et al. (2014) planning and management, production and advertising. The result of this analysis was a model for the success of agricultural tourism in 4 levels, which is shown in Figure 2. It is suggested that organizations related to agricultural tourism pay attention to the factor of planning and government support to farmers, which is the cornerstone of the success of agricultural tourism in the community, and make investments in this area. It is suggested that the authorities plan strategic support plans to support farmers. It is recommended that organizations related to agricultural tourism, in order to support farmers, establish regulatory rules for planning in this field and follow these programs on an ongoing basis. It is suggested that organizations related to agricultural tourism pay attention to financial support for farmers and make investments in this area. This support can be done by providing appropriate banking facilities to farmers. It is suggested that organizations related to agricultural tourism consider the fact that these protections can be provided by enacting laws to protect farmers, such as tax exemptions or tax rebates or other protection laws.

11

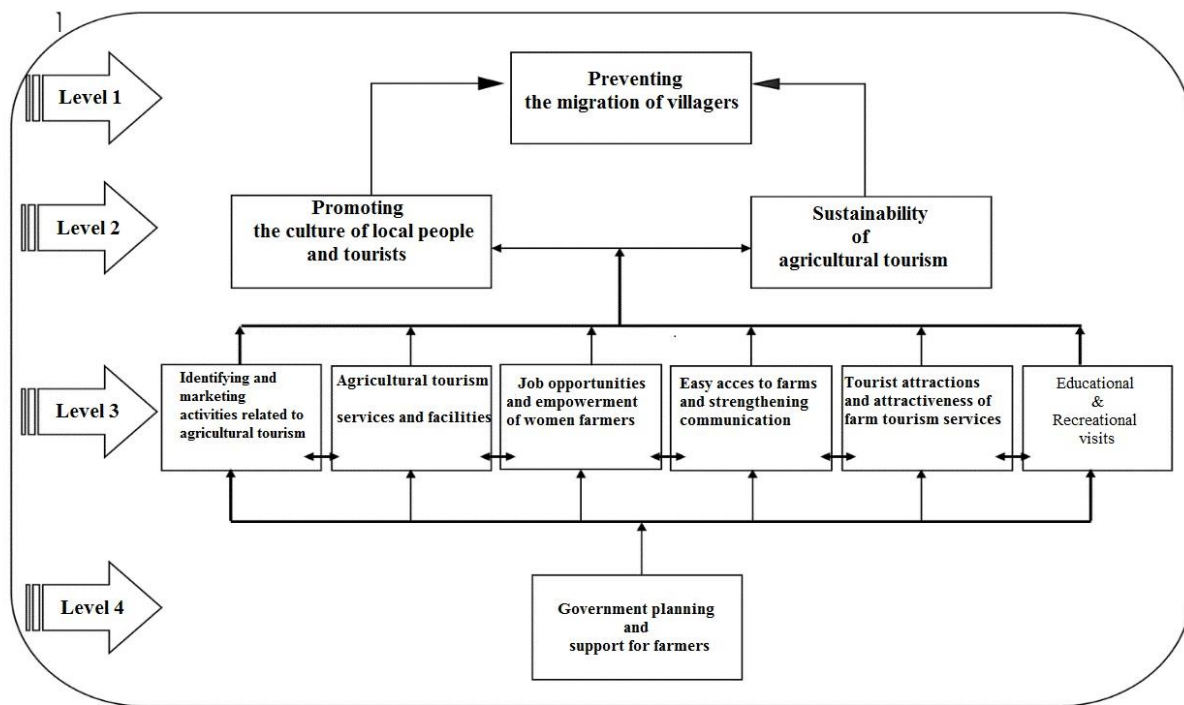


Figure 2. The Final Model of Agricultural Tourism Success

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