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Original Research Article

Identification and Analysis of Factors Related to the Development of Agrotourism-Based Ecolodges Using a Mixed-Methods Approach

(Case Study: Hashmiz Village, Kurdistan Province)

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Abstract | Rural ecolodges are sometimes developed without knowledge of a village's physical, social, cultural, and environmental characteristics and may not suit the local context. Agritourism studies mostly address potentials, socioeconomic effects, and local attitudes; the architectural and environmental requirements of lodgings receive less attention. To identify components that experts, operators, and residents raise for developing agritourism-based ecolodges in the terraced village of Hashmiz, and to describe residents' attitudes toward development. In this mixed-methods study, the qualitative phase comprised 11 semi-structured interviews, conducted until theoretical saturation and analyzed with Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The quantitative phase used a researcher-made questionnaire with 35 items and six constructs, distributed to 300 residents by convenience sampling. Items are not mapped one-to-one to interview codes. Data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and measurement model assessment (partial least squares(. Themes fell into six axes. The most frequent potentials were strawberries and pristine mountain nature; the most frequent barriers were lack of basic infrastructure, suitable roads, and comprehensive tourism training; and the most frequent architectural requirement was fit with the village fabric. Construct means ranged from 3.84 (attitude toward tourists) to 4.60 (attitude toward environmental and cultural conservation) out of 5. Factor loadings ranged from 0.407 to 0.856, and nine items loaded below 0.5; convergent validity warrants caution. Relationships among the thematic axes were not tested statistically, and single-village data cannot be generalized. The findings can inform planning discussions in Hashmiz but offer neither a design model nor evidence of component effectiveness.

Keywords| *Eco-tourism, Agritourism, Sustainable Rural Development, Local Community Participation, Heshmiz Village*

Introduction and Statement of the Problem| In recent decades, rural tourism has attracted attention as a complementary strategy for sustainable development in less developed regions. Within this framework, agritourism is an experience-based, community-oriented approach that combines agricultural activities with tourism and seeks to meet the needs of tourists and host communities at the same time through mutual interaction (Rezvani et al., 2016). It covers a range of tourism forms, including nature-based, cultural, ecotourism, and farm tourism, and it can contribute to local employment, particularly for women and low-income groups, to poverty reduction, to the diversification of farmers' income, and to the preservation of local identity and culture (Alalhesabi & Fattahi Masoum, 2019).

Ecolodges are among the core infrastructures of rural tourism. When the local community takes an active part in establishing them, they can turn a village's natural, agricultural, and cultural assets into a tourist experience while also improving residents' living standards (Yazdanpanah, 2018; Norozei & Fathi, 2018). However,

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a lodge built without an understanding of the village's physical, social, cultural, and environmental context may be incompatible with it. Sustainable rural development, especially when it relies on resident participation and local capacities, can likewise help reduce poverty and strengthen the economic and social resilience of villages (Askari et al., 2018; Fattahi, 2016).

Kurdistan Province has distinctive natural, cultural, and agricultural characteristics and considerable potential for agritourism development. However, development that does not begin with an understanding of the relevant factors may lead to physical, cultural, and environmental damage. Hashmiz Village was selected as the case study because it has kept its terraced spatial structure, is closely tied to agricultural activity, and offers a variety of tourism assets. Its population fell from 1,400 to 1,355 between the 2011 and 2016 censuses. The village economy rests on farming, orchard cultivation, and animal husbandry, and tourism development is one way to strengthen residents' livelihoods. The village's ecolodges are limited in infrastructure, training, and quality of accommodation, and its terraced fabric calls for specific architectural and environmental standards. As a result, decision-makers have no coherent set of local factors to draw on when planning agritourism lodges in Hashmiz. This study identifies and analyzes those factors from the perspectives of experts, local operators, and residents, and addresses four research questions:

1. According to the interviewees, what capacities, requirements, and barriers does Hashmiz have for developing agritourism-based ecolodges, and in what ways can the local community take part?
2. What expectations do the interviewees have of tourists, and which architectural and environmental requirements do they consider necessary for making a lodge compatible with the village's terraced fabric?
3. What are residents' attitudes toward ecotourism development and toward protecting the village's environment and culture, according to the interviewees and based on the questionnaire responses of 300 residents?
4. What pattern do the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire's six constructs show, and how does its measurement model perform in terms of reliability and convergent validity?

A mixed-methods approach was used to answer these questions.

Literature Review

Most Iranian and international studies on agritourism have examined capacities, socioeconomic impacts, local community attitudes, and management requirements. The physical and spatial dimensions, and in particular the architectural requirements of ecolodges in relation to agricultural activities, have received less attention. The present study examines the architectural and environmental requirements of lodges alongside capacities, participation, barriers, and residents' attitudes. Methodologically, it combines semi-structured interviews with a questionnaire so that the views of experts and residents can be set side by side in a single case study. Developing a lodge design model based on these factors falls outside the scope of this article.

Among Iranian studies, Ashoftehpour et al. (2020) showed that tourism development in villages with natural and human attractions increases employment and improves residents' incomes. Norozei & Fathi (2018) point to the high potential of the agricultural sector in Lenjan County and stress the need for training and targeted planning. Rezaei Adriani & Nastaran (2017) identify farmers and natural features as key factors in the success of agritourism. Razzaghi Borkhani & Mohammadi (2018) propose a set of institutional, economic, and educational measures for sustaining agritourism. Heidari et al. (2022) found that weak management and planning have prevented sustainable agritourism from taking hold. Rezvani et al. (2016) name the lack of comprehensive policies, low awareness, and institutional limitations as the main barriers. Yaghoubi Darmian et al. (2015) confirmed that tourism management plays a positive role in agritourism development. Moattar et al. (2018) and Piri & Gilani (2014) underline the need for cultural promotion, infrastructure, local community participation, and marketing planning. Still, most of these studies have given little systematic attention to physical components and to the design of accommodation spaces.

Among international studies, Lan & Kastenholz (2021) stress the need to move away from mass-oriented models and to focus on authentic experiences rooted in local identity. Barbieri et al. (2020) show that human capital and farmers' positive attitudes are key factors in the success of agritourism. Streifeneder (2021) argues that agritourism, when accompanied by supportive policies, can create lasting employment. Bramwell et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of local capacity building and institutional support. Kim et al. (2021) likewise point to the need for integrated planning to make use of natural and cultural assets.

Economic, social, and managerial studies of agritourism are numerous, but the physical and architectural requirements of agritourism lodges have rarely been examined together with the other components. The

present study identifies these components together in the village of Hashmiz. Developing a design model based on them is left to future research.

Theoretical Framework

• Sustainable rural development and the role of tourism

Villages play a fundamental role in production, in the conservation of natural resources, and in the continuity of local cultures. Recent changes, however, such as declining farm profitability and the concentration of capital in cities, have intensified out-migration and weakened the economic base of rural areas (Liang, 2017). In response, sustainable rural development emphasizes a balance among economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions and looks for strategies that preserve local assets while improving livelihoods and quality of life in local communities (Lan & Kastenholz, 2021). Within this framework, rural tourism is proposed as a complementary strategy that, with sound planning and without depleting resources, can create jobs, raise incomes, and strengthen local identity (Guirado et al., 2017). Identifying the factors that influence the development of this type of tourism, across its physical, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions, is a basic precondition for using these assets sustainably (Lane & Kastenholz, 2021).

• Agritourism: concept and outcomes

Agritourism, or farm tourism, is one of the main forms of rural tourism. It takes place on working farms with the direct participation of farmers (Arru et al., 2019), and it presents farming as more than a productive activity, as a cultural, educational, and experiential attraction (Lupi et al., 2017). From a sustainable development perspective, agritourism has several kinds of outcomes. Economically, it provides supplementary income and diversifies the rural economy, which increases household resilience and creates local jobs, particularly for women and young people (Ciolac et al., 2019; Sgroi et al., 2018). Socially and culturally, the presence of tourists helps revive traditions, strengthens place attachment, and builds social capital (Walter et al., 2018). Environmentally, when well managed, it can help protect agricultural landscapes and promote sustainable production patterns (Guirado et al., 2017). Despite these benefits, agritourism development faces obstacles: the lack of clear legal frameworks, weak institutional support, shortage of start-up capital, limited management and marketing skills, inadequate infrastructure (Matyakubov & Defrancesco, 2018), and the seasonality of tourism (Lane et al., 2013). Understanding these challenges alongside the opportunities is a key part of planning successful ecolodges.

• Ecolodges and the factors influencing their development

Ecolodges are the most common form of accommodation in rural tourism in Iran. Managed by families and involving minimal intervention in the environment, they help balance environmental protection, local participation, and an authentic tourist experience (Bhuiyan et al., 2013). Agritourism activities in these lodges rest on three components, "seeing," "doing," and "buying," and each requires suitable spaces for production, processing, education, and sales. Their design should not interfere with the main agricultural function (Colton & Bissix, 2014). These lodges are not only places to stay. They are part of the tourist's lived experience, so they should be located next to or within farmland and keep a visual and functional connection to farming activities.

Successful development of such lodges depends on a set of interrelated factors. Physical factors include the use of vernacular architecture, local materials, human scale, and spatial integration with the village fabric (Ciolac et al., 2019). Social factors include active participation by the local community, social acceptance, and stronger social capital (Walter et al., 2018). Environmental and cultural factors include preserving agricultural landscapes, reviving traditions, and safeguarding local identity. Identifying and analyzing these factors in the specific context of each village provides a basis for planning lodges that respond to tourists' needs while remaining compatible with the community's way of life and livelihoods (Bramwell et al., 2022).

Methodology

• Study area

Kurdistan Province is an agriculture-based province with a distinctive mountain landscape. It is among the country's important tourist destinations and contains 43 tourism target villages. In this study, Hashmiz Village, located in Siruan District and Zhavarud-e Sharqi Rural District (Uraman Zhavarud), was selected as the case. The Uramanat region covers roughly 5,120 square kilometers, including large parts of Kermanshah and Kurdistan provinces in Iran and a part of Iraq (Figs. 1 & 2). The terraced fabric of the villages in this region sets them apart from other parts of Iran and has become one of the main factors attracting tourists.

Hashmiz (Hesh-miz) lies in a mountain valley along the

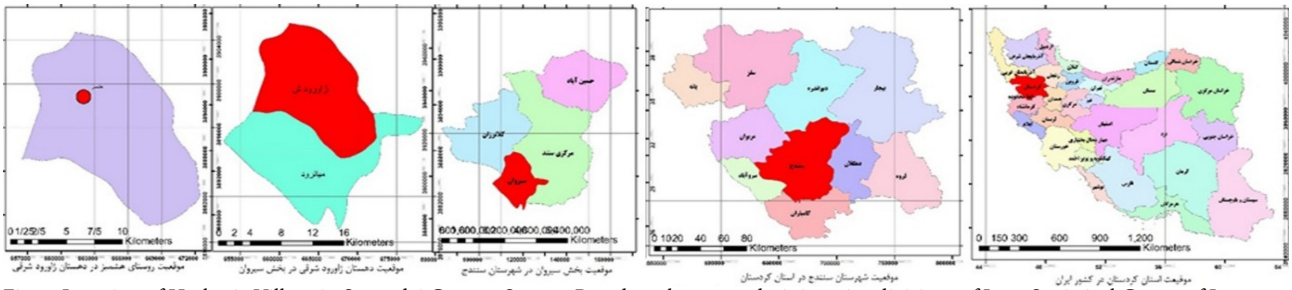


Fig. 1. Location of Hashmiz Village in Sanandaj County. Source: Based on the 2025 administrative divisions of Iran, Statistical Center of Iran.



Fig. 2. Study area. Source: Authors, based on on-site photography and a Google Earth image, 2025.

thalweg. Because land is scarce and residents prefer to settle on the slopes overlooking the orchards, the village has a dense, terraced fabric. The slope of the village land is between 10 and 30 percent, and its difficult topography has produced a distinctive architecture closely tied to the local climate and culture. In this interlocked fabric, the roof of one house serves as the courtyard, passage, and neighborhood center for the houses above it, and access is provided by narrow, parallel stairways (Molanaei & Soleimani, 2016). The village has a temperate mountain climate with cold winters and mild summers. Numerous springs, well-watered valleys, green orchards, and rich vegetation, including medicinal plants, strengthen its natural appeal for tourists. The village economy rests on farming, orchard cultivation, and animal husbandry, and women take an active part in these activities. Its cultural attractions include the Nowruz celebrations and the "Hezar Daf" ceremony, one of the most impressive daf-playing ceremonies in Kurdistan. Local people speak Hawrami Kurdish, the living dialect closest to the Avestan language Ghaffari Gilandeh & Hashemi Masoumabad (2021). The population fell from 1,400 people (402 households) in 2011 to 1,355 people (384 households) in 2016, which points to out-migration and a gradual weakening of the village's economic base. Alongside these assets, Hashmiz faces serious challenges. Falling farm income has led to excessive cultivation and damage to

natural resources, and economic pressure has caused environmental protection standards to be neglected. This conflict between economic pressure and the need for conservation makes it all the more important to identify the factors that influence the sustainable development of agritourism-based ecolodges in the village. Informed development that relies on local capacities can both provide residents with a lasting source of income and prevent further damage to the village's natural and cultural environment.

Methods

• Research design

This study identifies and describes the factors related to the development of agritourism-based ecolodges in Hashmiz Village (Kurdistan Province). The topic is multidimensional and covers physical, social, cultural, and environmental aspects, so a mixed-methods (qualitative-quantitative) approach was used. Identifying the factors required qualitative exploration from the perspective of experts and operators, while measuring the attitudes and willingness of the local community called for a quantitative instrument. The study is applied in purpose, descriptive-analytical in nature, and cross-sectional in time. The article reports two sets of results that should not be treated as the same thing: six "thematic axes" obtained from the analysis of the interviews, and six "questionnaire constructs" measured in the quantitative phase.

• Qualitative phase

The qualitative phase was exploratory and was used to identify the concepts, requirements, and factors related to the development of these lodges. Participants were selected purposively on the basis of expertise, practical experience, familiarity with rural tourism and agritourism, and the ability to offer an analytical perspective. Of the 11 participants, 3 were university experts, 7 were ecotourism practitioners, and 1 was a livestock farmer. Eight were men, and 3 were women. Three were under 25 years old, 5 were between 26 and 35, and 3 were over 36. One held a high school diploma or an associate degree, 7 held a bachelor's degree, 2 held a master's degree, and 1 held a doctorate. Seven had less than 5 years of work experience, 3 had 6 to 10 years, and 1 had more than 10 years.

The interviews were semi-structured and conducted face-to-face, and the interview guide was developed from the study objectives and the literature review. After the purpose of the study was explained and informed consent was obtained, the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each interview was transcribed and coded before the next one was conducted, and interviewing continued until further interviews added no new codes or themes to the set. In total, 11 interviews were conducted. The transcripts were analyzed in MAXQDA using the thematic analysis method of Braun and Clarke (2006), in six steps: familiarization with the data, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report. The frequency of each code equals the total number of times it was coded across all interviews (SUM in MAXQDA). It does not show how many interviewees raised the code.

• Quantitative phase

Residents' attitudes and willingness toward agritourism development and ecolodges in Hashmiz were measured with a researcher-made questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The items were developed from the literature review and the interview guide's topics (capacities, participation, barriers, architectural requirements, and tourists' expectations), and five university professors reviewed their face validity. The final questionnaire has 35 items and six constructs: attitude toward protecting the environment and culture, perception of the village's readiness and capacity, expected outcomes of tourism, attitude toward infrastructure development, willingness to participate in tourism services, and attitude toward tourists.

The statistical population was the village's residents (1,355 people in the 2016 census), and a sample size of 300 was determined from the Morgan table. Convenience sampling was used, and questionnaires were distributed to residents who were available and willing to take part while the researcher was in the village. Of the 300 respondents, 94 percent were men and 6 percent were women. In terms of education, 61 percent had a diploma or less, 37 percent a bachelor's degree, and 2 percent a master's degree or higher. By age, 29. 7 percent were under 25, 46. 3 percent were between 26 and 35, and 24 percent were over 36. In terms of occupation, 52 percent were self-employed, 17 percent were orchardists, and 11 percent were farmers. The data were entered into SPSS (version 27) and analyzed with descriptive statistics, and the measurement model was assessed by partial least squares in SmartPLS. In evaluating the measurement model, construct reliability was examined with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), and convergent validity with factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). The acceptance threshold was 0. 7 for alpha and CR and 0. 5 for AVE. Factor loadings of 0. 7 and above were considered desirable,

and lower loadings were interpreted with caution. This article reports only descriptive statistics and the results of the measurement model. The structural model was not fitted.

• Linking the qualitative and quantitative phases

The questionnaire was not derived directly from the interview codes. The items were developed on the basis of the literature review and the topics of the interview guide. Accordingly, there is no one-to-one mapping between the qualitative codes and the questionnaire items, and the six qualitative thematic axes are not identical to the six quantitative constructs. In the qualitative strand, the axis "residents' attitudes" rests on interviewees' accounts of how residents feel, whereas the quantitative constructs measure attitudes on the basis of residents' own direct responses. The findings of the two strands were brought together only at the interpretation stage: the qualitative themes provided the interpretive framework, and the quantitative results provided a statistical description of residents' attitudes. Accordingly, the integration of the two strands is descriptive and interpretive, and this study did not statistically test the relationship between the qualitative and quantitative findings.

• Ethical considerations

The questionnaires were anonymous. The purpose and procedures of the study were explained before the interviews and before the questionnaire was administered, participation was voluntary, and participants' information was kept confidential.

Results

The results are presented in two parts. The qualitative part, based on thematic analysis of 11 semi-structured interviews, organizes the factors influencing ecolodge development into six axes: capacities, forms of local community participation, barriers to development, tourists' expectations, architectural requirements and environmental sustainability, and residents' attitudes. These axes are categories of themes, and the relationships among them were not tested. Tourists'

Table 1. Final thematic analysis table of the village's capacities. Source: Authors.

Final theme	Code	Frequency	Interview excerpt
Natural and ecological capacities	Good climate	5	Interviewee 4: The very clean, pure climate and healthy nature are among the village's main attractions.
	Pristine nature	7	Interviewee 1: Being the last village on the road is why Hashmiz's nature has stayed pristine.
	Mountainous setting	7	Interviewee 4: Pristine mountain nature and green landscapes are among the region's key features.
	Mineral springs and rivers	5	Interviewee 2: The mineral springs and rivers can be important natural attractions for tourists.
	Medicinal plants	1	Interviewee 4: Medicinal plants like thyme and borage are among the region's assets.
	Inverted tulips of Vazhgun	1	Interviewee 1: The mountains covered with inverted tulips in spring are an attraction in themselves.
Agricultural capacities	Strawberry hub	8	Interviewee 1: The farmers worked to get Hashmiz the title of the province's strawberry hub.
	Organic vegetables and fruits	6	Interviewee 3: Local products like organic fruits and vegetables are attractive to tourists.
	Walnut	6	Interviewee 4: Walnuts are one of the village's signature products and can draw tourists.
	Honey	4	Interviewee 2: Products like natural honey can be very attractive to tourists.
	Grape	3	Interviewee 4: Grape is one of the products suited to the region's conditions.
Physical and historical identity	Traditional village architecture	1	Interviewee 1: The village's traditional architecture and the shape of the houses add to Hashmiz's beauty.
	Terraced fabric	3	Interviewee 9: The terraced houses and the old fabric of the village are worth seeing for tourists.
Cultural and social capacities	Handicrafts (kilim and jajim)	1	Interviewee 4: Handicrafts like kilim and jajim can still be found in the region.
	Hospitality and host culture	3	Interviewee 4: The hospitality of Hashmiz's people is one of the village's main features.

expectations are reported from the interviewees' point of view, because tourists themselves were not interviewed. The quantitative part reports the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire constructs and the evaluation of the measurement model.

• Capacities of hashmiz village for ecolodge development

The thematic analysis shows that Hashmiz has diverse natural, agricultural, and cultural capacities that can support agritourism-based ecolodge development. These capacities were organized into four main themes (Table 1):

Natural and ecological capacities received the most emphasis in the interviews. "Pristine, untouched nature" and "mountain landscapes" (each with a frequency of 7) were the most frequent codes in this theme. Interviewee 1 attributed this condition to the village's position at the end of the road: "Being the last village on the road is why Hashmiz's nature has stayed pristine." "Favorable climate" and "springs and natural water sources" (each with a frequency of 5) are also among the codes of this theme. Among agricultural capacities, "strawberries as the village's signature product" (frequency 8) is the most frequent code. The other products are walnuts (6), organic vegetables and fruits (6), natural honey (4), and grapes (3).

Physical and historical identity is represented by two codes, "terraced fabric" (frequency 3) and "traditional village architecture" (frequency 1). These codes were less frequent than the natural and agricultural ones. The distinction of this fabric from other villages in the region rests on the researchers' description in the Methods section and does not come from the interview codes. Cultural and social capacities include handicrafts (kilim and jajim weaving), medicinal plants, and a culture of hospitality. They form the final layer of the tourist experience and turn Hashmiz from a purely scenic destination into an experience-oriented one.

• Forms of local community participation in ecolodge development

The interviewees listed a range of forms of local community participation in ecolodge development, which were organized into five themes (Table 2). Some of these are current participation, and some are suggestions or potential from the interviewee's point of view (for example, "people can..."). The table does not

Table 2. Thematic analysis of forms of local community participation in ecotourism development. Source: Authors.

Theme	Code	Frequency	Interview excerpt
Service and hosting participation	Providing accommodation services	4	Interviewee 5: People can earn direct income by providing accommodation services.
	Providing transport services with traditional means	1	Interviewee 1: Providing transport services with traditional means.
Guidance and promotional participation	Working as a local tour leader	2	Interviewee 4: Tour guides should be locals who introduce the region and the village's surroundings to tourists.
	Introducing and promoting the village	3	Interviewee 9: Making the village better known to people.
Economic participation	Selling local products and handicrafts	3	Interviewee 5: Selling local products and handicrafts raises household income.
	Selling local foods	2	Interviewee 1: Taking part in preparing and distributing local foods.
Educational and experience-based participation	Teaching traditional farming and animal husbandry to guests	4	Interviewee 1: Teaching guests traditional farming and livestock skills.
	Offering experience-based tours	4	Interviewee 7: Tourists can take part in the farms and pick the produce themselves.
	Taking part in workshops and training courses	2	Interviewee 4: One-day workshops where tourists can come and learn.
	Familiarity with the local ecosystem	1	Interviewee 1: Getting to know the local ecosystem and the region's natural environment.
Cultural and ritual participation	Hosting local festivals	6	Interviewee 4: Holding festivals of local farm products and foods.
	Holding handicraft workshops	4	Interviewee 1: Holding handicraft workshops.
	Performing local music and dance	3	Interviewee 2: I can perform for tourists as a local singer.
	Storytelling and native legends	1	Interviewee 1: Telling stories and native folktales.

distinguish between these two categories; therefore, the codes should not be read as a report of residents' actual participation. Under "service and hosting participation," "providing accommodation services" has the highest frequency (4), and "transport with traditional means" was raised once. Under "guidance and promotional participation," "introducing and promoting the village" (frequency 3) and "working as a local tour leader" (frequency 2) appear. Under "economic participation," "selling local products and handicrafts" (frequency 3) and "selling local foods" (frequency 2) are the main forms. Under "educational and experience-based participation," "teaching traditional farming and animal husbandry to guests" and "offering experience-based tours" each have a frequency of 4. Under "cultural and ritual participation," "hosting local festivals" has the highest frequency, at 6.

• Barriers to ecolodge development

The barriers were organized into six themes (Table 3). Infrastructural and physical barriers rank highest, with "lack of basic infrastructure" (frequency 9), "lack of a suitable road" (8), "poor quality of existing lodges" (5), and "inadequate sanitary facilities" (4). Under educational barriers, "lack of comprehensive tourism training" (7) was raised. Institutional and managerial barriers include "lack of official support for reviving the village fabric" (3), "weak marketing and promotion of the village" (3), and "an unsuitable guide plan" (2). "Out-migration of villagers" (3) falls under social and demographic barriers. "Inadequate sewage systems" and "pollution of rivers with sewage" (1 each) belong to environmental barriers, and "destruction of historical attractions" (1) belongs to physical-cultural barriers. Codes with a frequency of 1 to 3 should be interpreted with caution.

• Tourists' expectations of the ecolodge experience

The interviewees described tourists' expectations in four themes (Table 4). Under the theme of ensuring welfare and basic comfort, the codes are "internet" (frequency 6), "standard sanitary service" and "creating a calm and safe space" (5 each), and "providing basic welfare amenities" (2). The local food experience theme has only one code, "local foods," with a frequency of 8, which is the most frequent code in this axis. Under the participatory experience theme, there are "opportunity to take part in cultural activities" (3) and "going to orchards and picking produce" (1). Under the theme of introducing and narrating culture, there are "local

Table 3. Thematic analysis of barriers to ecolodge development. Source: Authors.

Theme	Code	Frequency	Interview excerpt
Infrastructural and physical barriers	Lack of basic infrastructure	9	Interviewee 4: "There is no suitable infrastructure, including lodging and basic services."
	Lack of a suitable road	8	Interviewee 1: "Not having a suitable road is one of the main barriers to development."
	Poor quality of existing lodges	5	Interviewee 2: "We need better-quality ecolodge accommodation."
	Inadequate sanitary facilities	4	Interviewee 2: "Suitable sanitary facilities are not available for tourists."
	Transport problems	2	Interviewee 3: "Transport problems are one of the barriers to tourism development in the village."
Educational and empowerment barriers	Lack of comprehensive tourism training	7	Interviewee 1: "There is no comprehensive training on tourism and dealing with tourists."
Institutional and managerial barriers	Lack of official support for reviving the village fabric	3	Interviewee 1: "The relevant offices are unwilling to preserve and revive the village fabric."
	Weak marketing and promotion of the village	3	Interviewee 2: "There is weakness in marketing and promoting the village."
	Unsuitable guide plan (Hadi plan)	2	Interviewee 1: "The unsuitable Hadi plan has damaged the village fabric."
Environmental and sustainability barriers	Inadequate sewage systems	1	Interviewee 1: "Inadequate sewage disposal is one of the village's main problems."
	Pollution of rivers with sewage	1	Interviewee 1: "The rivers are being polluted with household sewage."
Social and demographic barriers	Out-migration of villagers	3	Interviewee 1: "Villagers are migrating to nearby towns to earn a living."
Physical-cultural barriers	Destruction of historical attractions	1	Interviewee 1: "The village's historical attractions are being destroyed."

guide" (3), "introducing the region's tourist attractions" (1), and "introducing the customs and rituals of the village's people" (1). These expectations are the interviewees' views, and tourists themselves were not asked.

• Environmental sustainability and architectural requirements

The interviewees raised the requirements of environmental sustainability and of vernacular architecture in connection with each other (Tables 5 & 6). In the environmental sustainability dimension, "pollution reduction" and "water management" (frequency 5 each) and "conservation of natural resources" and "renewable resources" (4 each) have the highest frequencies. In the architectural dimension, four themes were extracted. The first is physical continuity with vernacular architecture, which includes "fit of the lodge with the village's architecture" (frequency 7) and "use of terraced design" (2). The second is the reflection of local culture and way of life (6). The third is the use of local materials such as mud brick, wood, and stone (6), together with handicraft decoration (1). The fourth is harmony of the building's color and volume with the natural landscape (2).

• Local community attitudes toward ecolodge development

The interviewees, who were experts and local operators, described residents' attitudes in four themes (Table 7). The economic attitude theme was the most frequent, with "increase in product sales" (frequency 9), "creation

Table 4. Thematic analysis of tourists' expectations of the ecolodge experience. Source: Authors.

Theme	Code	Frequency	Interview excerpt
Ensuring tourists' welfare and basic comfort	Standard sanitary service	5	"Cleanliness and standard sanitary service are very important." (Interviewee 10)
	Internet	6	"Even in the village, tourists want internet." (Interviewee 6)
	Creating a calm and safe space	5	"They want a calm and safe place to rest." (Interviewee 4)
	Providing basic welfare amenities	2	"Basic amenities must be provided." (Interviewee 5)
Local food experience as part of the stay's identity	Local foods	8	"Tourists mostly look for local food." (Interviewee 1)
Participatory and active experience of village life	Going to orchards and picking produce	1	"They like to go to the orchard and pick the produce themselves." (Interviewee 2)
	Opportunity to take part in cultural activities	3	"Taking part in ceremonies and cultural activities is attractive to them." (Interviewee 1)
Introducing, interpreting, and narrating local culture and attractions	Introducing the region's tourist attractions	1	"They should introduce the region's sights." (Interviewee 9)
	Introducing the customs and rituals of the village's people	1	"Tourists want to learn about the village's customs and rituals." (Interviewee 1)
	Local guide for getting to know the village	3	"A local guide helps a lot in getting to know the village." (Interviewee 8)

Table 5. Thematic analysis of environmental sustainability requirements in ecolodge development. Source: Authors.

Theme	Code	Frequency	Interview excerpt
Environmental protection and sustainability	Pollution reduction	5	Interviewee 11: "Reducing pollution and waste management are necessary."
	Conservation of natural resources	4	Interviewee 1: "Conserving natural resources and reducing pressure on the environment."
	Protection of biodiversity	1	Interviewee 6: "The region's biodiversity must be preserved."
Sustainable design and construction rooted in the local context	Water management	5	Interviewee 11: "Water recycling and optimal use."
	Renewable resources	4	Interviewee 4: "Using solar energy for the lodges."
	Sustainable green design	4	Interviewee 1: "Green design suited to the climate."
Human empowerment and social participation	Educating guests and staff	2	Interviewee 1: "Teaching tourists to behave responsibly."
	Collaboration with local communities	1	Interviewee 6: "The cooperation of the local community is a condition of sustainable development."

Table 6. Thematic analysis of the key features and requirements of ecolodges with an emphasis on local identity. Source: Authors.

Theme	Code	Frequency	Interview excerpt
Physical continuity of the lodge with vernacular architecture and the village's spatial pattern	Fit of the lodge with the village's architecture	7	Interviewee 1: "The lodge should be in harmony with the village fabric."
	Use of terraced design	2	Interviewee 10: "Terraced houses are one of the village's main architectural features."
Reflection of local culture, customs, and way of life in the lodge's architecture	Fit of the lodge with the village's culture	6	Interviewee 1: "The lodge's space should show the local culture."
	Conventional dress	2	Interviewee 3: "Respecting local custom and dress is important in the lodge."
Use of local materials and vernacular elements in shaping and decorating the space	Local materials (brick, wood, stone)	6	Interviewee 1: "Using brick, wood, and stone preserves the building's identity."
	Decoration with handicrafts	1	Interviewee 2: "Decorating with handicrafts conveys a sense of the local."
Harmony with the natural and environmental landscape	Harmony of the building's color and volume with nature	2	Interviewee 4: "The building's color and volume should be in harmony with the surrounding nature."

Table 7. Thematic analysis of residents' attitudes toward ecolodge development. Source: Authors.

Final theme	Code	Frequency	Interview excerpt
Positive, livelihood-centered economic attitude	Increase in product sales	9	Interviewee 5: "Sales of local products have gone up a lot."
	Creation of local jobs	8	Interviewee 7: "It has created jobs for the village's young people."
	Increase in household income	7	Interviewee 10: "Households' incomes have improved."
	Reduced out-migration	1	Interviewee 8: "The motivation to stay in the village has grown."
Improved quality of life and social welfare	Improved quality of life	5	Interviewee 2: "Our quality of life has improved."
	Improved village amenities	2	Interviewee 3: "The village's amenities have improved."
Cultural interaction and broadened mental horizons	Improved view of other cultures	3	Interviewee 2: "My view of other cultures has become more open."
	Exchange of communication and cultural relations	3	Interviewee 1: "Good cultural relationships have formed."
	Influence of tourists' opinions on improvement	1	Interviewee 1: "We use tourists' opinions to improve."
Individual and social empowerment	Improved hosting skills	2	Interviewee 5: "Our hosting skills have improved."
	Improved social standing	1	Interviewee 9: "We have become more social."

of local jobs" (8), and "increase in household income" (7). "Improved quality of life" (5), "cultural interaction" (3), and "improved hosting skills" (2) followed. In the quantitative part, the means of the six questionnaire constructs ranged from 3. 84 to 4. 60 out of 5 (Table 9). The highest mean belonged to attitude toward protecting the environment and culture (4.60), and the lowest to attitude toward tourists and their presence (3.84). (The factor loadings of the 35 items are presented in Table 8).

• Quantitative Findings: Descriptive Statistics and Measurement Model Evaluation

The descriptive statistics show that the mean of all six constructs is above the midpoint of the scale (3) (Table 9). The highest mean belongs to attitude toward protecting the environment and culture (4.60, SD = 0.29), followed by perception of the village's readiness and capacity (4.44, SD = 0.48). Attitude toward infrastructure development has a mean of 4. 38 (SD = 0.32), expected outcomes of tourism 4. 36 (SD = 0.56), and willingness to participate 4. 31 (SD = 0.51). The lowest mean belongs to attitude toward tourists and their presence (3.84, SD = 0.57). The measurement model comprises six constructs and 35 items. The factor loadings of the items are reported

Table 8. Factor loadings of the items in the measurement model. Source: Authors, output of SPSS and SmartPLS.

Dimension	No.	Item	Factor loading
Residents' attitude toward tourists	1	Tourists' presence increases the village's dynamism and vitality.	0.425
	2	The arrival of tourists is not a threat to our local culture.	0.426
	3	Tourists' behavior is compatible with the village's customs and culture.	0.441
	4	Tourists' presence does not reduce the village's security.	0.617
	5	I prefer that tourists take part in the village's daily activities.	0.519
	6	I would like tourists to become familiar with the culture and way of life of Hashmiz's people.	0.534
Willingness to participate in tourism services	7	I take part in providing accommodation services to tourists.	0.467
	8	I am willing to offer local foods to tourists.	0.674
	9	I am ready to sell handicrafts or local products.	0.856
	10	I would like to accompany tourists in orchards and farmland.	0.654
	11	I am ready to take part in cultural programs.	0.762
	12	I would like to teach tourists traditional farming skills.	0.475
	13	I carry out advertising and information work to promote the village.	0.550
Attitude toward infrastructure development	14	Tourism development requires improved sanitary facilities.	0.576
	15	Building new ecolodges is necessary.	0.667
	16	Suitable roads and transport increase tourism.	0.596
	17	People's participation in developing infrastructure is more effective than relying on the government.	0.577
	18	Environmental protection is very important for tourism development.	0.441
	19	Preserving traditional architecture in building lodges helps attract tourists.	0.560
	20	Using local materials in building lodges is important to me.	0.407
Expected outcomes of tourism	21	Ecolodge development increases household income.	0.416
	22	Tourism can create jobs for the village's young people.	0.606
	23	Out-migration decreases with tourism development.	0.567
	24	Tourists' presence raises the quality of life in the village.	0.502
	25	Tourism strengthens a spirit of cooperation among residents.	0.486
	26	Contact with tourists increases respect for different cultures.	0.546
	27	Tourism development improves the village's public amenities.	0.563
Village capacities for tourism	28	Hashmiz has sufficient natural and agricultural capacity for ecolodge development.	0.838
	29	The village's cultural and historical attractions are suitable for attracting tourists.	0.814
	30	Orchards, farmland, and local products attract many tourists.	0.773
	31	The village's traditional, terraced architecture is attractive to tourists.	0.724
Attitude toward protecting the environment and culture	32	Tourism development must go together with protecting natural resources.	0.809
	33	Tourists' presence must not damage the rivers, soil, and orchards.	0.803
	34	Tourists' use of village spaces must go together with respect for local culture.	0.727
	35	Educating tourists about the environment and appropriate behavior is necessary.	0.673

in Table 8, and the reliability indices of the constructs, including Cronbach's alpha, are reported in the next table. Cronbach's alpha of the constructs ranges from 0.809 to 0.911, composite reliability (CR) from 0.832 to 0.929, and average variance extracted (AVE) from 0.577 to 0.741 (Table 10). All three indices exceed the common thresholds (0. 7 for reliability and 0. 5 for AVE) in every construct.

Discussion

This section compares the findings with the literature. The data are limited to one village, 11 interviews, and 300 respondents, and generalizing them to other villages requires a comparative study.

• First: Hashmiz's capacities

The interviewees listed Hashmiz's capacities in four groups: natural, agricultural, physical-historical, and cultural-social. The most frequent codes belong to agricultural capacities (strawberries, frequency 8) and natural capacities (pristine nature and mountain scenery, frequency 7). "Terraced fabric" and "hospitality" each have a frequency of 3. The variety of these capacities is consistent with the findings of Lan & Kastenholz (2021) on the competitive advantage of multifaceted destinations. The ideas that the terraced architecture arose from the topography, the agriculture from the climate, and the host culture from the agricultural economy rest on the description of the region in the Methods section and were not tested in this study's data. For this reason, choosing the elements that define Hashmiz's brand should rely on more data, including tourists' views.

• Second: The gap between capacity and hosting ability

According to the interviewees, Hashmiz's tourism capacities come with barriers concentrated mostly in infrastructure (frequency 9), roads (8), training (7), and the quality of existing lodges (5). This pattern is consistent with the report of Matyakubov & Defrancesco (2018) on the role of infrastructure and institutional support in rural agritourism development. These barriers may reinforce one another. For example, weak infrastructure may reduce tourist arrivals, and the resulting loss of income may limit investment. This chain was not examined in the present data and is a hypothesis for later studies.

• Third: forms of local community participation

The interviewees described participation in five forms: service, promotional, economic, educational, and cultural. In the questionnaire, residents' willingness to participate in tourism activities and services also had a mean of 4.31 (SD = 0.51) (Table 9). The two sets of data point in the same direction, but stated willingness is not the same as current participation. Because some of the interview codes are interviewees' capacities or suggestions and were not separated from current participation, no conclusion can be drawn from them about the depth or institutionalization of residents' participation. The formal structure of participation and residents' share in managing the lodges were not examined in this study. Hajipour et al (2024) reported the absence of formal participation mechanisms, and examining this in Hashmiz requires a separate study.

• Fourth: tourists' expectations and architectural requirements

The expectations the interviewees listed for tourists (a local food experience, a participatory experience in village activities, and a narrative of local culture) point in the same direction as the vernacular architectural requirements, namely fit with the village's fabric and culture and the use of local materials. This alignment came from placing the two sets of codes side by side. Tourists' expectations were not asked of tourists themselves, and features such

Table 9. Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire constructs (300 respondents). Source: Authors, output of SPSS and SmartPLS.

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Attitude toward protecting the environment and culture	4.6000	0.28819	3.50	5.00
Perception of the village's readiness and capacity	4.4425	0.48323	2.75	5.00
Attitude toward infrastructure development and village readiness	4.3786	0.32000	3.57	5.00
Expected outcomes of tourism	4.3638	0.56375	1.86	5.00
Willingness to participate in tourism activities and services	4.3067	0.51022	1.22	5.00
Attitude toward tourists and their presence in the village	3.8411	0.56919	2.17	5.00

Table 10. Reliability and convergent validity of the constructs. Source: Authors, output of SPSS and SmartPLS.

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	AVE
Attitude toward tourists and their presence in the village	0.809	0.832	0.621
Willingness to participate in tourism activities and services	0.845	0.850	0.577
Attitude toward infrastructure development and village readiness	0.911	0.929	0.701
Expected outcomes of tourism	0.853	0.888	0.692
Perception of the village's readiness and capacity	0.880	0.892	0.741
Attitude toward protecting the environment and culture	0.857	0.885	0.739

as the multifunctional roof did not come up in the interviews but were taken from the description of the region (Molanaei & Soleimani, 2016). Authenticity is an important dimension of experience-centered tourism and can shape tourists' impressions of a destination and their evaluation of the trip experience. In agritourism, authenticity, interaction with the host, learning, and place-related characteristics are considered the main dimensions of the tourist experience (Martinus et al., 2024). Accordingly, identifying the vernacular architectural features that relate to tourists' expectations requires a tourist survey and a physical analysis of the rural environment.

• Fifth: residents' attitudes

The interviewees described residents' attitudes as livelihood-centered: increased product sales (frequency 9), job creation (8), and increased income (7), while "reduced out-migration" was raised only once. In the questionnaire, the mean of each of the six constructs was at least 3.84, and the highest mean belonged to attitude toward protecting the environment and culture (4.60, SD = 0.29). Attitude toward tourists and their presence had the lowest score (3.84, SD = 0.57). The high means may reflect a ceiling effect or a tendency toward socially desirable responses.

Rasoolimanesh et al. (2020) showed that residents' support for tourism depends on their perception of its outcomes. Whether the attitudes of Hashmiz's residents would change under unequal distribution of benefits, cultural conflict, or damage to the environment was not examined in this study's data and is a topic for later studies.

Conclusion

Using 11 semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire with 300 respondents, this study examined the factors related to the development of agritourism-based ecolodges in Hashmiz. The qualitative and quantitative findings were analyzed as two separate sets and were placed side by side only at the interpretation stage. The statistical relationship between them was therefore not tested.

• hematic axes (qualitative part)

The thematic analysis grouped the codes into six axes: capacities, forms of local community participation, barriers to development, tourists' expectations (from the interviewees' point of view), architectural requirements and environmental sustainability, and residents' attitudes (from the interviewees' point of view). The frequency of each code is the total number of times it was coded across all interviews and does not show the number of interviewees. Among capacities, strawberries (8) and pristine nature and mountain scenery (7) had the highest frequencies. The terraced fabric and hospitality were coded only three times, and whether they set Hashmiz apart requires more data. Among barriers, lack of basic infrastructure (9), lack of a suitable road (8), lack of comprehensive tourism training (7), and poor quality of existing lodges (5) ranked highest. Among architectural requirements, fit of the lodge with the village fabric (7), fit with the village's culture (6), and local materials (6) had the highest frequencies, as did pollution reduction and water management (5 each) among environmental requirements. Tourists' expectations were not asked of tourists and reflect only the interviewees' views. Some of the participation codes are also suggestions or potential and were not separated from current participation.

• Questionnaire constructs (quantitative part)

The mean of each of the six constructs was above the midpoint of the scale (3): attitude toward protecting the environment and culture, 4. 60 (SD = 0.29); perception of the village's readiness and capacity, 4. 44 (SD = 0.48); attitude toward infrastructure development, 4. 38 (SD = 0.32); expected outcomes of tourism, 4. 36 (SD = 0.56); willingness to participate, 4. 31 (SD = 0.51); and attitude toward tourists, 3. 84 (SD = 0.57). The high means may reflect a ceiling effect or a tendency toward socially desirable responding. Ninety-four percent of respondents were men and sampling was by convenience, so these means do not reflect the views of all residents.

• Measurement model

The factor loadings of the 35 items ranged from 0.407 to 0.856. Nine items had loadings below 0. 5 (items 1 to 3, 7, 12, 18, 20, 21, and 25), 17 items were between 0. 5 and 0.7, and 9 items were 0.^{7} or higher. The high-loading items are mostly in two constructs: perception of the village's capacity and attitude toward protecting the environment and culture. The indices reported for all six constructs exceed the common thresholds (alpha and composite reliability above 0.7, average variance extracted above 0.5). Even so, the number of low-loading items in four constructs (attitude toward tourists, willingness to participate, attitude toward infrastructure development, and expected outcomes) means that the convergent validity of these constructs should be interpreted with caution. Items 18 to 22 (environmental protection, traditional architecture, local materials, household income, and jobs for young people) also differ in content from the

title "attitude toward infrastructure development," and their arrangement needs review. Discriminant validity is not reported in this article.

• **Limitations and scope of the findings**

This study is descriptive and relies on a measurement model. The relationships among the axes and constructs were not tested, so no conclusion can be drawn about which factor affects the development of lodges. "Reduced out-migration" was coded only once as a residents' attitude, and "out-migration of villagers" three times as a barrier. These data are not enough to draw conclusions about the effect of tourism on migration. A chain such as "weak infrastructure, fewer tourists, lower income" is a hypothesis for future research and was not examined in these data. The formal structure of residents' participation and their share in managing the lodges were also not examined. The data come from one village, 11 interviews, and 300 respondents, so generalizing the findings to other villages calls for caution.

Recommendations

These recommendations are the authors' judgment based on the barriers and requirements raised, and they have not been tested empirically. The lack of infrastructure, roads, sanitary facilities, and a suitable sewage system, which were among the most frequent barriers, is the first issue to take up with local officials. Given the frequency of "lack of comprehensive tourism training" (7), training programs for residents could be considered. If a new lodge is built or an existing one is renovated, the interviewees' architectural requirements (fit with the village fabric, local materials, terraced design) could be a starting point for design criteria, provided they are checked against design research and building regulations. Strawberries, the most frequent agricultural capacity, could be the focus of agritourism experiences, but tourist demand should be surveyed first. The weakness of marketing and promotion of the village (3) is also worth attention in planning. Future studies could compare Hashmiz with other villages in Uramanat, survey tourists directly, use a more gender-balanced sample drawn by random sampling, revise the low-loading items, report discriminant validity, and test a structural model. Migration and formal mechanisms for residents' participation are topics for separate studies.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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