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Orchard Owner's Knowledge Related to the Practices for Developing Agritourism in the Sulaimaniah-Halabja Governorates

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to identify the orchard owner's knowledge related to practices for developing agritourism in the Sulaimaniah-Halabja governorates. The research population consisted of the 1620 Orchard Owners. A random sample of 20% was selected and distributed in the previous government, which was 324 respondents. This research used descriptive design. To achieve this objective, a questionnaire was utilized as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire consists of two parts: the first part includes demographic characteristics of participants; the second part consists of 5 practice fields. Operations for validity and reliability were completed once the research tool was developed and the data was gathered. To analyze this data, frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and distribution as statistical tools were used by SPSS. Research results revealed that most of Orchard's owners in the research areas tend to be middle-aged and mature and also have a higher education level, and the majority of orchard owners' knowledge of practices for developing agritourism is high, and the marketing and promotion field came in first place. The researcher has recommended that orchard owners should engage more in agritourism activities and training courses and workshops in the agritourism field, especially those processes connected to the construction of tourism farms that will help them to increase their knowledge and awareness of the agritourism industry to achieve their goals and target markets. The Ministry of Agriculture and the relevant ministries in the Kurdistan Region should introduce these types of farms for agritourism and play a role in introducing them to tourists.

Keywords: Agritourism practice, Knowledge, Orchard Owners, Farm Tourism, Rural Area.

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INTRODUCTION

Agritourism is an evolving sector that combines tourism and agriculture to provide distinctive rural experiences [1]. As a subsector of tourism and a subtype of rural tourism where a range of farms are used as tourist destinations [2, 3]. As well as Promotes the development of both agriculture and tourism [4]. The worldwide context of agricultural tourism reveals a paradigm shift in the global agriculture industry [5]. Emphasizes the intrinsic aspects of agriculture and makes use of the distinctive qualities of rural and agriculturally rich areas [3]. It offers sustainable tourism and is a great way to preserve our natural resources and culture. Moreover, there are many definitions of the term. Agritourism is a type of tourism that integrates leisure and education with agricultural resources, customs, and activities [6]. According to [7] Agritourism is an important farm diversification method that increases farmers' income and profitability, fosters the growth of rural communities, increases knowledge of sustainability, and protects local history. However, [8] defined it as an activity involving service on agricultural land that offers lodging, food, and opportunity for familiarization in order to augment revenue and improve agricultural operations. Agritourism, a sustainable activity that integrates social, economic, and environmental elements, improves the perceptions of tourism in local people and provides creative solutions for rural regions [8]. Moreover, it makes use of the area's natural beauty, emphasizes farming, and engages the communities around it [10]. It focuses on regional farmers who use agritourism to diversify their resources and make money [11]. The most profitable and quickly expanding recreational activity has attracted numerous visitors seeking to return to their origins [6]. During this rural recreation activity, visitors stay on farms with arable land, orchards, gardens, or fishing facilities, utilizing the amenities and services offered [12]. Similarly, it includes farm structures, leisure spaces, educational initiatives, and agricultural goods, improving the

agri-farm sector's financial situation and educating the younger generation [13]. Thus, that promotes farm activities like demonstrations, tours, and training, attracting tourists to engage in farming activities and understand the farmers' produce value [2]. Therefore, Agritourism promotes economic benefits and an awareness of local customs by fusing agricultural techniques with the region's cultural history, increasing farm income and diversification [14]. Agritourism, typically referred to as "farm tourism," is becoming increasingly important for rural development [3]. As a form of agritourism, orchard tourism connects various tourism services with the agricultural production of fruits [15]. Many farmers struggle with sustainability and farm management because they lack the requisite expertise. Fruit producers have lost money as a result of poor earnings and a dwindling position in agriculture. As a result, some farmers have started marketing their orchards as tourist destinations, a practice known as orchard tourism. Local jobs and revenue for the community can be created by this new source of employment and money [16]. The expansion of agritourism requires both management and the development of human resources [17]. Numerous elements, such as the operator's expertise and experience, affect how well agritourism operations perform [18]. In addition, farmers must learn more about farm management and planning [19]. Since modern farm operators are important industry participants and human resources are critical to the management and advancement of the tourist sector, it is imperative that their knowledge and skills be developed in order to propel agritourism forward [20]. Knowledge is essential for business development and a community's creative potential. Knowledge management raises service standards and encourages efficiency in the agritourism sector [21]. Thus, gaining a deeper understanding of farmers' knowledge and learning processes is a crucial goal in the shift to more sustainable practices, necessitating a more complete understanding of farmers' knowledge and knowledge practices. Understanding farmers' knowledge practices and how they integrate various knowledge sources is becoming more and more crucial [22]. The techniques themselves, farm characteristics, interactions between them, and their temporal and spatial spillover effects are some of the factors that influence how effective these practices are to adopt [23]. The Kurdistan Region, Rich in land for agriculture, is ideally situated for farm tourism. Essential efforts in physical qualities, product development, education, training, management, entrepreneurship, marketing, customer relations, and government backing are crucial to maximizing this potential and combating low agricultural yields. To support the growth and sustainability of the agritourism sector, stakeholders must receive Continuous knowledge, education, and skill development [14]. In spite of A scarcity of studies about assessing orchard owners' knowledge of agricultural tourism as a key factor in developing agricultural tourism. Since farmers' insufficient knowledge, expertise, and training in the tourism industry; their restricted marketing outlets and connections; and their lack of experience managing a tourism business caused by orchard owners' lack of knowledge and understanding of the practices are barriers to agritourism development, acquiring new agritourism management skills is essential [17]. To bridge this knowledge gap, this Research will investigate and measure the orchard owners' knowledge related to the practices for developing agritourism in the Sulaimaniah-Halabja Governorates.

Research Questions

1. What are the demographic characteristics of orchard Owner's in Sulaimaniah and Halabja Governorates in the KRI?
2. What is the orchard owner's knowledge related to the Practices for developing agritourism in Sulaimaniah-Halabja Governorates in the KRI in general?
3. What is the orchard owner's knowledge related to the following fields of practices for developing agritourism in Sulaimaniah-Halabja Governorates in the KRI (Agritourism Product Development, Infrastructure Improvement, Promotion and Marketing, Agriculture Resource Development, Environment Protection)?

Research Objectives

1. Describing the demographic characteristics of orchard Owner's in the research area.
2. Identifying the orchard owner's knowledge related to the Practices for developing agritourism in the research area from their point of view in general.
3. Identify and arrange practices Fields for developing agritourism according to the orchard owner's knowledge in the research area from their point of view.

Materials and Method

Research Methodology: The research methodology provides researchers with a path to complete the data collection Process, analysis, and interpretation process [24]. The objective is to obtain further information regarding a situation, population, or phenomena. [25]. This research adopted a descriptive research design and utilized a quantitative method to explore orchard owners' knowledge of practices for developing agritourism.

Research Area: Some of the villages surrounding the tourist destination in the district and sub-district connected to the Sulaimaniah-Halabja governorates of the KRI. It was chosen as area research because it has its own orchard farms and rich arable land, especially those orchard farms that are appropriate for implementing growth methods for

agritourism.

Research Population and Sample: The population Research is an orchard owner, who was (1620) in the Sulaimaniah-Halabja governorates. The Krejcie and Morgan Table was utilized to choose the research sample that depends on the geographic place. The sample size was chosen after a simple random selection of 20%, and 324 orchard owners from the Sulaimaniah and Halabja governorates in the Kurdistan area were represented. as shown in table 1.

Table1. Distribution of Respondent's by Geographical area

Governorates	Districts	No. of Villages	No. of Sample
Sulaimaniah	Center	4	5
	Chamchamal	1	2
	Qaradagh	7	9
	Darbandikhan	2	3
	Kalar	2	3
	Khanaqin	1	1
	Kifri	3	5
	Penjwen	6	13
	Said - Sadiq	15	40
	Dukan	25	28
	Hajiawa	4	4
Halabja	Ranya	9	9
	Mawat	9	12
	Sharbazher	17	28
	Sirwan	28	81
	Khurmali	21	68
	Biyara	6	13
Total		161	324

Prepared tools and Data Collection: Questionnaire was utilized as a tool for collecting data in this research. The questionnaire is among numerous crucial instruments to gathering information, data, and facts to fulfill Research objectives since Compared to other methods of data collection, it provides more objective data [26]. It's designed to align with the research purpose and to find the necessary basic information, which includes of 2 parts: The first parts contained of some respondents' demographic characteristics variables (Age, Education Level, Marital Status, Number of Family Members, Fields of Work Practice, Experience in Horticulture Field/ Year, participation in Training Course, Type of Farm Holding, Orchard farm size/dunum, Livelihoods Status, Exposure to agritourism Information Sources). The second part consists of information about five fields of practice, which were composed of items test to determine the orchard Owner's knowledge regarding practices to develop agritourism. these items were distributed on five fields of practice, including (Agritourism Product Development, Infrastructure Improvement, Promotion and Marketing, Agriculture Resource Development, and Environment Protection) of the knowledge of the practices by orchard owners to develop Agritourism. Operations for validity and reliability were completed once the research tool was developed. The validity of an instrument is determined by its capacity to measure what it is intended to measure [27]. Therefore, based on the opinions of experts and specialists in agribusiness, tourism, Agriculture, management, Rural Development, geography, economics, and administration, the validity (content and face) of the questionnaire were conducted, and They were instructed to either add or eliminate questionnaire items. Reliability is considered acceptable and satisfactory when it reaches a value of 0.70 or higher. [28] indicating that the scale produces comparable results when used again on the same subjects under the same conditions and after some time. In order to confirm the items validity, on 11Nov. 2024, a pre-test of the questionnaire was carried out on a sample of 30 orchard owners in the Pishdar sub-district. The split-half method was used to measure reliability using the Kuder-Richardson equation, which reached a value of (0.89). As a result, the questionnaire was characterized by excellent validity and reliability. This investigation using an altered version of the study questionnaire concerning the knowledge of practices for developing agritourism. Participants were asked to rate each item's test on the practices fields of this scale, which assesses orchard owners' knowledge of modern agritourism development practices. Additionally, data was gathered from the respondents on 27 Feb 2025. SPSS version25 software was used to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics (such as weighted mean, frequency, and percentage) were used to assess orchard owners' knowledge of practices to develop agritourism [29].

Result And Discussion

1. Identify Demographic Characteristics of the Orchard Owner's:

Based on the research result, majority of orchard Owner's at the Research areas were between the ages of 39 to 56 years old, indicating that most of the participants who responded were still in their working years, by their active ages, they are in a better position to carry out their farming tasks with greater ease. In term of education, out of total respondent's 60.80 % had Inter mediate School and above. Most are married about 90.1 with 2 to 6 family members. It implies that the majority of those who participated had moderately sized households. Furthermore, The Work Practice Fields of a majority of orchard owners 95.4 are Breeding with production, and 56.5 % of respondents had a few years' Experience. And most of them about 73.3% are non- participated in training course, meanwhile, a small rate of them participated, that the number of training courses ranging from 1 to 3 and above. They own of orchard farmland about %85.5 of them and Majority of the respondents have 2 to 8 dunums, with a medium level of Their livelihood. With the regards to the orchard owner's exposure agritourism information source, although most of the respondents 56.8% were they had moderate exposure to agritourism information source. As showed in table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of the Respondent's by demographic characteristics

Demographics	Category	F.	%
Age	Low (21-38)	80	24.7
	Medium (39-56)	126	38.9
	High (57) more than	118	36.4
Education Level	Illiterate	31	9.6
	Read and write	46	14.2
	Primary School	50	15.4
	Inter mediate School and above	197	60.80
Marital Status	Single	32	9.9
	Married	292	90.1
Number of Family Members	2 -6 /pers.	200	61.7
	7 – 11 /pers.	117	36.1
	12 – 16 /pers.	7	2.2
Fields of Work Practice	Breeding with production	309	95.4
	All of tourist and Agri-farm management	15	4.6
Experience in Horticulture Field/ Year	2 -21 / Y	183	56.5
	22-41 /Y	98	30.2
	42 and more / Y	43	13.3
Participate in Training Course	Non participate	237	73.3
	One course	39	11.7
	Two courses	32	9.8
	Three course and above	16	5.2
Type of Farm Holding	Ownership	277	85.5
	Partnership	47	14.5
Orchard farm Size/ dunums	2 -8 /dun.	297	91.7
	9 – 15 /dun.	24	7.4
	16 and more /dun.	3	0.9
Livelihoods Status	Low	1	0.3
	Medium	230	71.0
	Good	93	28.7
Exposure to Information Sources	Low	104	32.1
	Medium	184	56.8
	High	36	11.1
Total		324	100%

2. Identifying the orchard owner's knowledge related to Practices for developing Agritourism in the Research area from their point of view in general:

Orchard owner's knowledge of the fields of practices for developing agritourism in general was measured by adding up the numerical values obtained by the respondents from their correct answers to the entire test items. The respondents were classified according to their knowledge in the fields into three categories depend on the category

range and length, the highest numerical value for the knowledge in the all fields was (100) degree, while the (4) degree is lowest numerical value. As showed in table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of respondent's according to their knowledge related Practices.

Category	F.	%	Arithmetic Mean	Not
Low (4 - 36)	13	4	24.08	$\bar{x} = 68.47$ St. D.= 0.570
Medium (37 - 69)	161	49.7	55.43	
High (70-100)	150	46.3	86.31	
Total	324		100	

In table (3), the result showed that the majority of orchard owners have a middle tend to high of knowledge of practices to develop agritourism. It means the orchard owners knowledge ranked first in the medium category, and high ranked second. This indicates that orchard owners in the Research area generally have a good knowledge of agritourism. Although, most of the orchard owners were indirectly involved in agritourism, some of them did not conduct any agritourism activities and had little knowledge about agritourism. However, Orchard owners need to conduct training courses to raise awareness and increase their knowledge and interest in agritourism and practices related to its development, this is because new knowledge is constantly emerging and evolving, and new information emerges every day. They need to adapt to the demands of reality and tourists in the present era.

3. Identify and arrange the Fields of practices for developing agritourism according to knowledge of orchard owners in research area from their point of view:

The result showed that the orchard owner's knowledge of the fields of practices to develop Agritourism based on the obtained knowledge Score according to the fields of practices; by utilizing the law of range and the length of categories was classified into three (low, medium and high) categories. That showed, the highest knowledge of the respondents in the fields of practices to develop Agritourism was between (20-21) degrees, and the lowest numerical value of a knowledge scale whose degrees was (under 6), as illustrate in the table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of respondent's according to the knowledge regarding fields of practices.

Practice	Category	F.	%	$\bar{x}$	Weight percent%	Rank
Agritourism Product Development	Low (6 and under)	51	15.74	11.99	59.95	5
	Medium (7-13)	130	40.12			
	High (14- 20)	143	44.14			
Infrastructure Improvement	Low (7 and under)	53	16.36	14.04	66.86	4
	Medium (8-15)	115	35.49			
	High (16) More	156	48.15			
Promotion and Marketing	Low (7 and under)	26	8.02	14.83	70.62	1
	Medium (8-15)	137	42.28			
	High (16) More	161	49.70			
Agriculture Resource Development	Low (6 and under)	33	10.19	12.42	69	3
	Medium (7 – 13)	146	45.06			
	High (14) More	145	44.75			
Environment Protection	Low (6 and under)	9	2.78	13.91	69.55	2
	Medium (7-13)	125	38.58			
	High (14-20)	190	58.64			
Total		324			100	

Table (4) Showed that the most of participants have high knowledge of agritourism product development practice, about 44.14% that belong to the high category, ranging from 14 to 20 degrees. The result indicated that the orchard owners' knowledge of Agritourism Product Development practices for developing Agritourism in the Research area is high to medium, around 84.26%. It falls in the last rank of knowledge about practice fields with Weight percent (59.95) and Arithmetic mean (11.99) degree. The reason may be due to orchard owners having a good level of knowledge or long practical experience in horticulture, which helps them understand new practices such as agritourism. For the field of Infrastructure Improvement, results indicate that the majority of respondents have high knowledge of this practices field for developing Agritourism about (48.15%) falls within the high category. And the result revealed that the knowledge of Infrastructure Improvement practices for developing Agritourism by orchard owners in the Research area is high to medium, around 83.64%. Perhaps this is due to the orchard owners having an

awareness and good knowledge about agritourism infrastructure. In the field of promotion and marketing, the result showed that the highest ratio of the participants (49.70%) is in the high category ranging from 16 and more. The result indicated that the knowledge of promotion and marketing practices for developing Agritourism by orchard Owner's in the Research area is high to medium, around 91.98% of all respondents. It came in the first rank of practices fields with Weight percent (70.62) and Arithmetic mean (14.83) degree. Growing consumer interest in local farm production makes it a sensible marketing response for orchard owners, who can also take advantage of declining farmland resources and other business climate issues. Likewise, in the Agriculture Resource Development practice field the highest ratio of the participants was within a category of medium about (45.06%), followed by the high category with 44.75% of respondents. which means that most of the respondents described their knowledge as (medium tend to high) in Agriculture Resource Development practice field. Finally, for the last practice field, the result showed that the highest ratio of the orchard Owners is (58.64%) falls within the high category ranged from 14 to 20. The finding indicate that the majority of orchard owners have good on knowledge of Environment Protection practices to developing Agritourism. The result cleared that the knowledge of Environment Protection practices for developing Agritourism by orchard Owner's in the Research area is high tend to medium, around 97.22%. It came in the second rank of practices fields. Perhaps this is due to the orchard owners with a good knowledge have a basic understanding of the resources available for agritourism development, which may enable them to implement some best practices in agritourism. This knowledge can help them identify opportunities for integrating tourism into their farming operations.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, following is concluded.:

1. Regarding the demographic characteristics of orchard owners:

- Most of Orchard's Owners in the research areas tend to be middle-aged and mature.
- Most of respondents also had a higher education level, and Respondents with higher education levels are more effective in problem-solving and have greater knowledge and interest in agritourism practices, indicating that educated orchard owners are better equipped to develop this field.

- We also conclude that a large proportion of them have moderate exposure to information sources for developing agritourism. The more respondents are exposed to agritourism development information sources, the higher their knowledge and the more positive the impact on knowledge level.

2. Orchard Owners knowledge increased; this increase of knowledge among orchard owners leads to the scientific and effective applying of agritourism practices in the Sulaimaniah-Halabja governorates of the KRI.

3. It also indicates that marketing and promoting practice within the farm was a priority in terms of practices and information and that efforts were made to applying it. However, practices related to developing tourism products ranked last in terms of knowledge level and affected the marketing of products offered to tourists within the farms in the Research area.

Recommendation

1. Opening of training courses and workshops in the field of agritourism development, especially those processes related to the construction of tourism farms by Agricultural extension Directorate with the assistance of NGOs in the KRI.

2. The Ministry of Agriculture and the relevant ministries in the KRI should introduce these types of farms for agritourism and play a role in introducing them to tourists.

3. The Ministry of Higher Education and agricultural scientific institutions should work to develop a plan to encourage farmer/orchard owners to convert them into agritourism farms in order to increase the income of orchard Owner's.

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معرفة أصحاب البساتين بممارسات تطوير السياحة الزراعية في محافظتي السليمانية وحلبجة

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الخلاصة

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحديد مستوى معرفة أصحاب البساتين بممارسات تطوير السياحة الزراعية في محافظتي السليمانية وحلبجة. شمل مجتمع البحث 1620 صاحب بساتين. تم اختيار عينة عشوائية بنسبة 20% من المشاركين، بلغ عددهم 324 مستجيباً. اعتمد البحث المنهج الوصفي، واستخدم الاستبيان كأداة لجمع البيانات. يتكون الاستبيان من جزأين: الأول يتضمن الخصائص الديموغرافية للمشاركين، والثاني يتناول خمسة مجالات عملية. تم التحقق من صحة وموثوقية الاستبيان بعد تطويره وجمع البيانات. ولتحليل البيانات، تم استخدام التكرار والنسبة المئوية والمتوسط المرجح والتوزيع كأدوات إحصائية باستخدام برنامج SPSS. أظهرت نتائج البحث أن غالبية أصحاب البساتين لديهم معرفة جيدة بممارسات تطوير السياحة الزراعية، وكان مجال التسويق والترويج هو المجال الأكثر شيوعاً. أوصى الباحث بضرورة انخراط أصحاب البساتين بشكل أكبر في أنشطة السياحة الزراعية والدورات التدريبية وورش العمل في هذا المجال، لا سيما تلك المتعلقة بإنشاء المزارع السياحية، مما يساهم في تعزيز معارفهم وفهمهم لقطاع السياحة الزراعية لتحقيق أهدافهم والوصول إلى الأسواق المستهدفة. كما أوصى الباحث وزارة الزراعة والوزارات المعنية في إقليم كردستان بتعريف السياح بهذا النوع من المزارع لأغراض السياحة الزراعية، والمساهمة في تعريفهم بها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ممارسات السياحة الزراعية، المعرفة، أصحاب البساتين، المناطق الريفية.