

Awareness for agro-tourism: The example of Turkey and Azerbaijan

Elnur Allahverdiyev

Baku Business and Cooperation College, Baku 1106, Azerbaijan; aelnur786@gmail.com

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Abstract: Agro-tourism, which combines agriculture with tourism to create income and job opportunities for local communities, is described as a form of tourism that not only contributes to the preservation of the environment and nature but also allows tourists to experience new things and discover local cultures. Awareness or consciousness is the individual's ability to process the information surrounding them. This research compares the awareness of agro-tourism among people in Turkey and Azerbaijan. In this study, which adopts a quantitative perspective, a literature review was first conducted, and based on the relevant literature, a survey form was created to determine awareness. The results indicate that agro-tourism is not sufficiently recognized in both countries. The statistically significant difference observed only in the age variable is essential for increasing awareness and development of agro-tourism among different age groups. This article suggests that residents' and tourists' visitation to rural areas, focusing on marketing activities, can contribute to creating rural awareness. The findings of this study provide essential information for policymakers and the planning of marketing activities.

Keywords: agro-tourism; Azerbaijan; Turkey; awareness

1. Introduction

Tourism is a rapidly growing industry worldwide. This industry, which has an increasing number of alternatives, provides an essential source of income for countries (Sacrovic and Bratic, 2022). One of the alternative forms of tourism is agro-tourism. Azerbaijan and Turkey are geographically well-suited for agro-tourism. For these regions, agro-tourism can be an additional advantage and a source of extra income. One of the most critical aspects of the profitable structure of agro-tourism is awareness. Awareness is defined as knowing one's surroundings (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010), influenced and shaped cognitively by individual experiences and social environmental conditions (Poria et al., 2006). Awareness is a relatively new subject with only a 35-year history; therefore, there needs to be more tourism-related awareness literature (Dutt and Ninov, 2016; Frauman and Norman, 2003, 2004; Lengyel, 2015). Fewer studies have focused on agro-tourism awareness (Agustin and Cucio, 2023; De Villa et al., 2018; Gurbuz et al., 2019; Shembekar, 2017), representing a gap in the literature. While some research has been conducted on tourists, students, and farmers involved in this business, residents still need to be addressed. This research, designed accordingly, aims to examine the public's awareness regarding agro-tourism among the people living in Turkey and Azerbaijan, thus providing a comparative research context. Moreover, agro-tourism awareness will strengthen sustainable tourism, mainly by fostering more environmentally conscious tourism.

It is known that people have different levels of awareness. This perspective also emphasizes the importance of marketing. Identifying the right target audience through marketing communication is necessary for successful marketing efforts (Khartishvili

et al., 2019). Determining the target audience is also linked to demographic characteristics. These characteristics are essential for understanding the target audience. Accordingly, the research questions are formulated as follows: Are residents aware of agro-tourism? Do the awareness levels of residents towards agro-tourism differ according to demographic characteristics?

1.1. Agro-tourism concept

The widespread alternative tourism sector reveals new types of tourism. Rural tourism is one of these types of tourism. Rural tourism is commonly described as a sustainable and responsible tourism type that allows daily involvement in the lives of local communities in rural environments with low population density, predominant agriculture, and different traditional and cultural characteristics (Priatmoko et al., 2023). Being a nature-based tourism model (Sznajder et al., 2009), rural tourism encompasses ecotourism, agro-tourism, and farm tourism activities.

Agro-tourism is an alternative type of tourism that aims to diversify the economy while attempting to alleviate the pressure that the tourism industry exerts on natural resources and significantly consumes nations' resources (Saidmamatov et al., 2020). Activities arising from the collaboration between the agricultural and tourism sectors combine with the concept of sustainability to form the term "agro-tourism." The term "agro" derived from the Greek "daagro" and the Latin "deager," is used in the context of fields, soil, and agricultural science (Sznajder et al., 2009). It is noted that labels such as farm tourism, farm-based tourism, and rural tourism are often used interchangeably with the term agro-tourism (Barbieri and Mshenga, 2008; Phillip et al., 2010; Roberts and Hall, 2001). Agro-tourism symbolizes a style of holiday spent on farms, in villages, or agricultural areas.

The history of agro-tourism, which began to develop in the late 19th century, dates back to the late 1800s when people left towns and visited farms, even if only for a short time, to visit relatives. It became more accessible for people to travel to rural areas after the 1920s. It is believed that the Great Depression and World War II in the 1960s also sparked the first significant interest in rural development. From the 1970s onwards, activities such as horseback riding, petting zoos, and commercial farm tours became popular (Hatch, 2006).

Agro-tourism is described in terms of three fundamental characteristics (Phillip et al., 2010). Firstly, it provides an opportunity to meet human needs by actively participating in the production process, rural family life, and rural community. Secondly, it satisfies cognitive needs within the scope of agricultural production. Thirdly, it offers the opportunity to meet emotional needs by desiring direct contact with animals, plants, and animal products and by noticing the scenery, smells, and sounds associated with the rural atmosphere (Sznajder et al., 2009). Therefore, in agro-tourism, there are things that visitors can see, do, purchase, and consume. It is possible to say that the new agro-tourism encompasses experience, awareness, and satisfaction as its output. It is understood that agricultural tourism typically takes place on a farm or another agricultural environment and generates income or adds value to the area due to regional products (Barbieri and Mahoney, 2009; Ollenburg and Buckley, 2007; Phillip et al., 2010).

This situation will likely reveal potential opportunities (Sulmiah et al., 2024). It is stated that these opportunities are economic, socio-cultural, and environmental (Nguyen et al., 2018; Sznajder et al., 2009). According to Lobo et al. (1999), agro-tourism contributes to developing economic activities by increasing demand for local products. In addition, preserving land resources creates new job opportunities and helps farmers increase both their production and income (Jiang, 2022). It is stated that agro-tourism acts as a mediator in local economic diversity, contributes to improving the livelihoods of local people, and reduces poverty (Tiraeyari and Hamzah, 2012). The development of agro-tourism enhances socio-cultural opportunities by preserving rural lifestyles, increasing awareness, maintaining cultural identity and local traditions, and sustaining agricultural production (Barbieri and Mshenga, 2008; Schilling et al., 2012). According to Tiraeyari and Hamzah (2012) and Yang (2012), agro-tourism development provides environmental opportunities by creating awareness and contributing to the preservation of ecosystems and natural resources.

1.2. Agro-tourism in Turkey

Turkey is an intercontinental country located mainly in Anatolia, with a small portion in Thrace, the southeastern extension of the Balkan Peninsula. The country's land area is approximately 780,576 square kilometers. About one-third of Turkey's total area, about 24 million hectares, comprises agricultural land (General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works, 2022).

According to the records for the year 2022 released by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), Turkey's population was announced as 85,279,553 million (TÜİK, 2023b). According to the data published by the World Bank for 2022, 77% of the population lives in urban areas, while 23% live in rural areas (World Bank, 2023). As of 2022, the employment rate of the population is stated to be 47.5%, equivalent to 34 million 334 thousand individuals. Of the employed population, 17.2% (4 million 866 thousand) work in the agricultural sector. Agriculture is known as the second significant sector of the Turkish economy after the service sector (TÜİK, 2023a).

Due to its geographical location and climate, Turkey's regions have essential features in terms of tourism potential. This potential is reflected in the number of tourists visiting the country. Looking back at recent years, in 2018, 46.113 million tourists visited Turkey, followed by 51.747 million in 2019, 15.894 million in 2020, 30.039 million in 2021, and 51.388 million in 2022 (UNWTO, 2023a). Additionally, in the "Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index" published biennially by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Turkey ranked 45th out of 117 countries in the latest edition from 2021, indicating its competitive potential (WEF, 2021).

Due to its geographical features, with three sides surrounded by seas, Turkey has land suitable for producing a wide variety of agricultural products, making it possible to say that Turkey has a high potential for agro-tourism. It is known that the first examples of agro-tourism in Turkey began in the 1980s. During that period, the Tursem Travel Agency organized a tour of villages in the Ordu province of the Black Sea region. The aim was to allow tourists to experience rural life by staying in village houses as members of the families (Ahipaşaoğlu and Çeltek, 2006). Farms in rural areas, especially since 2002, have become increasingly associated with agricultural

tourism (Selvi and Demirer, 2012).

Turkey's most comprehensive agro-tourism project was initiated in 2003 (Civelek et al., 2014). It is stated that the project, which received support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the Small Grants Programme (SGP) between 2003 and 2006 for its development and infrastructure establishment, eventually evolved into a sustainable program (Buğday Ecological Living Support Association, 2024). The project, known as "Agricultural Tourism and Volunteer Knowledge Exchange in Ecological Farms," or TaTuTa for short, joined the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) movement as "WWOOF Turkey" in 2004 and is recognized worldwide by this name today (WWOOF Turkey, 2024). The program's foundation, volunteer knowledge, and experience transfer bring together farmers and businesses engaged in organic farming with knowledgeable, experienced, or interested individuals to facilitate knowledge and experience transfer (Özay, 2022). As a result, individuals embark on a journey where they experience social bonding and gain knowledge based on real experiences in the local area (Buğday Ecological Living Support Association, 2024). Within the scope of the Turkey's Alternative to Uncertainties in Agricultural Technologies (TaTuTa) project, a visitor who wants to be an agricultural tourist selects the farm they want to visit as a "guest" or "volunteer" according to the acceptance periods of each farm. While the farm provides the accommodation and meals of volunteers and no fee is charged, guests who visit the farms as guests spend their holidays by paying a fee to stay in "eco-pension" style accommodation units or "guesthouses" allocated to them on the farm (Selvi and Demirer, 2012). Starting with 25 hosts initially, TaTuTa continues its activities today with 67 hosts in different regions of Turkey (WWOOF Turkey, 2024), supporting rural development and tourism.

It is known that there are many farms and facilities in Turkey today that host agro-tourism activities, which are not part of various projects and the Bugday Ecological Living Support Association. Among these, there are two registered rural tourism areas. Birgi (İzmir-Ödemiş) was selected as the best tourism village among the "Best Tourism Villages" chosen by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 2022, while Anıtlı (Mardin-Midyat) and Cumalıkızık (Bursa-Yıldırım) were selected to participate in the "Best Tourism Village Development Program" (UNWTO, 2022). In 2023, Şirince (İzmir-Selçuk) was among the best tourism villages, while Kaleüçağız (Antalya-Demre) and Kemaliye (Erzincan) were among the villages participating in the "Best Tourism Village Development Program" (UNWTO, 2023b).

1.3. Agro-tourism in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan is located between the Greater and Lesser Caucasus Mountains, serving as a transit point in the Caucasus region. One of its most significant features is its position along historical trade routes. The country's land area covers 86,600 square kilometers (the Republic of Azerbaijan Country Report, 2016). About 12% of this land is surrounded by forests, 4.6% is submerged under water, 55.2% is agricultural land, and 28.2% consists of other types of land. Azerbaijan experiences

nine of eleven worldwide climate types (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Turkey, 2023).

According to the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as of 2023, Azerbaijan's population is reported to be 10,127.1 million. Based on the published data for 2023, 54.6% of the population (5527.2) resides in urban areas, while 45.4% (4599.4) lives in rural areas. Of the employed population of 5194.4 million, 48.6% (2525.9) work in rural settlements (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2023b). According to the 2022 data, 36% of the employed population works in the agriculture sector, which has the lowest average nominal wage in the country (Huseyn, 2023). Agriculture is recognized as the second significant sector in the Azerbaijani economy after oil (Republic of Azerbaijan Country Report, 2016).

“The Republic of Azerbaijan” and the “Strategic Roadmap for the Production and Processing of Agricultural Products in the Republic of Azerbaijan,” adopted in 2016, emphasize the direct development of rural tourism (Huseyn, 2023). Additionally, in the State Program for Socio-Economic Development for 2019–2023, support is provided for developing tourism types in regions and enhancing the quality of services offered in the tourism sector. Furthermore, efforts are directed toward developing alternative tourism types, such as rural tourism, ethnic tourism, ecological tourism, and winter tourism. The program also envisages conducting necessary activities to support entrepreneurs engaged in rural tourism activities through providing credits and grants (Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin Fərmanı, 2019). It can be said that the latest state program places even more emphasis on rural tourism.

It is stated in the “Socio-Economic Development Strategy for the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2022–2026,” adopted in 2022, that focusing on rural areas will establish a balance of development between villages and cities. This is expected to significantly reduce the disparity in living standards between urban and rural areas. The strategy highlights the creation of tourism infrastructure suitable for the concept of “village holidays” in villages with tourism potential, the implementation of plans to evaluate the tourism potential of rural areas, conducting infrastructure works related to tourism in 8 villages, and planning for an increase of nearly 20% in the number of houses rented to guests in villages (Qüdrətli Dövlət Və Yüksək Rifah Cəmiyyəti, 2022).

It is stated that in addition to its geographical location and climate, Azerbaijan also has essential characteristics regarding its region's historical and cultural areas for tourism potential (Gaziyev and Boyacıoğlu, 2021). However, despite the country's tourism potential, statistics reflect that it is not effectively utilized. Without going too far back, in 2018, there were 2850 tourists; in 2019, there were 3170; in 2020, there were 796; in 2021, there were 792; and in 2022, the number of tourists visiting the country was determined to be 1602.3 (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2023a; UNWTO, 2023a). In addition, in the “Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index” published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) every two years, most recently in 2021, Azerbaijan ranked 63rd out of 117 countries, indicating improvement in Azerbaijan's competitiveness potential (WEF, 2021).

During the January 2024 meeting within the scope of the “From City to Village” project, a presentation was given to organize eight agricultural tours focusing on farms. These tours aim to develop agritourism by incorporating not only the potentials of the farms and the services they offer but also national cuisines, guidance, and the cultural

heritage of the regions, thus creating an alternative sales channel (Azərbaycan Respublikasının Kənd Təsərrüfatı Nazirliyi, 2024). It is evident that in a country where tourism is still developing, rural (agro) tourism development is a highly prioritized issue.

1.4. Agro-tourism awareness

Human beings are guided by the experiences they encounter throughout their lives. Some individuals undergo these experiences with awareness. It is alleged that awareness is associated with a state of consciousness. In this context, awareness is defined as being conscious of a subject, a phenomenon, an event, an action, a situation, or one's inner world and noticing it (Marton and Booth, 2013). Awareness, which enables the active processing of relevant and significant information by focusing on knowledge (Frauman and Norman, 2004), is also seen as an essential factor shaping perception (Sayers, 2006). In other words, awareness is also defined as the discovery of new differences (Langer and Moldoveanu, 2000) or knowing one's surroundings (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010). Awareness is cognitively influenced and shaped by individual experiences and social environmental conditions (Poria et al., 2006), thus raising consciousness. It is noted that individuals have different levels of awareness and that various stimuli, including personal experiences with people, places, and events, play a critical role in forming individual cognitive awareness (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010).

It is known that the concept of awareness has received academic interest in various fields such as environment, education, emotions, interpersonal relationships, healthcare, and tourism (Dutt and Ninov, 2016; Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010; Ogunjinmi and Braimoh, 2018; Zainal et al., 2022). Within these fields, tourism can be approached from various perspectives. This is because tourism has diversified, and alternative forms have emerged, departing from the classic sun, sand, and sea paradigm. The awareness of alternative forms of tourism, which can also provide different experiences, is essential. One of these alternative forms of tourism is agro-tourism. It is stated that agro-tourism is vital in providing new awareness about the visited regions, breaking away from routine life for tourists, and respecting cultural values and the environment (López and García, 2006).

A study aimed at determining awareness about agro-tourism evaluated students, faculty members, and farm owners' perceptions of agro-tourism and their understanding of agro-tourism activities. It is noted that participants in the study were aware of agro-tourism activities and the products they used. Additionally, participants agreed that agro-tourism would increase knowledge about agriculture (De Villa et al., 2018). In another study, agro-tourism status in Azerbaijan, its impact on rural development, and rural tourism awareness among students were examined. It was concluded that Azerbaijan has rich agro-tourism potential and could be a significant source of income if utilized correctly. Students also agreed with the notion that Azerbaijan has agro-tourism potential (Gurbuz et al., 2019).

In their research, Agustin and Cucio (2023) evaluated farmers' awareness and perceptions of agro-tourism. As a result, it was found that there is a high awareness of agro-tourism opportunities for developing connections between urban residents and

rural cultures and lifestyles. Farmers perceive agro-tourism as a potential assistance in improving their living standards. Another study focused on consumer awareness and preferences regarding agro-tourism among tourists. The research revealed that the majority of tourists in India need to be made aware of and uninformed about agro-tourism (Shembekar, 2017).

If it is acknowledged that the amalgamation of agriculture with tourism is a profitable venture in regions, one of the most critical issues is agro-tourism awareness (Shembekar, 2017). Primarily, awareness should be created among the residents of the visited lands. In this context, understanding agro-tourism and the perception of agro-tourism among the local population is crucial in decision-making and consensus-building processes in every aspect, from developing and implementing projects in agro-tourism management to marketing the region.

From this perspective, research on agro-tourism awareness remains quite limited. This study aims to determine the awareness of agro-tourism among residents of Azerbaijan and Turkey as the foundation for marketing development plans. In this regard, the following questions will be addressed:

Are there differences in agro-tourism awareness among residents of Azerbaijan based on their demographic characteristics?

Are there differences in agro-tourism awareness among residents of Turkey based on their demographic characteristics?

2. Methodology

In this research aimed at determining participants' awareness of agro-tourism, a survey was utilized as the data collection tool. The survey forms used in the study were designed to align with the purpose of the research. The question sets, which aimed to reveal the desired data, were adapted from Artuğer and Kendir (2013) and De Villa et al. (2018). The adapted statements yielded Cronbach's Alpha results ranging from 0.774 to 0.813 for Turkey and from 0.708 to 0.866 for Azerbaijan, indicating high validity and reliability. The population of this study, which focuses on two states of Turkish origin, consists of individuals aged 18 and over residing in Turkey and Azerbaijan. Factors such as gender, age, education level, income status, and frequency of vacations were utilized when examining participants' awareness of agro-tourism. The selection of these factors is essential for comparing geographical differences. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) calculated the sample size to be 384 individuals with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. Accordingly, the dataset for the research comprises 403 participants from Turkey and 390 participants from Azerbaijan.

Descriptive statistics (such as weighted mean, frequency, and percentage) were utilized alongside the Pearson Chi-Square Test to determine the participants' awareness of agro-tourism.

3. Results

Descriptive statistics were provided to give an overview of this study's participants' demographic characteristics (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distributions of participants' demographic information.

Variables	Groups	Turkey		Azerbaijan	
		n	%	n	%
Age	18–27	320	79.4	318	81.5
	28–37	25	6.2	42	10.8
	38–47	35	8.7	13	3.3
	48–57	12	3.0	15	3.8
	58–63	11	2.7	2	0.5
Education	Uneducated	1	0.2	1	0.3
	Primary Edu. (1–4)	2	0.5	1	0.3
	Middle School (5–9)	-	-	22	5.6
	High School (10–11)	7	1.7	66	16.9
	University	393	97.5	300	76.9
Gender	Male	98	24.3	142	36.4
	Female	305	75.7	248	63.6
Vacation Frequency (in a year)	0 (Never)	51	12.7	97	24.9
	One time	117	29.0	121	31.0
	Two times	112	27.8	72	18.3
	Three times and more	123	30.5	100	25.6
Total		403	100.0	390	100.0
		Turkey			
		n		%	
Monthly Income (TL)	1–13000	58		14.4	
	13001–20000	75		18.6	
	20001–30000	77		19.1	
	30001–40000	58		14.4	
	40001–50000	42		10.4	
	50001–60000	27		6.7	
	60001–70000	22		5.5	
	70001+	44		10.9	
	Total	403		100.0	
		Azerbaijan			
		n		%	
Monthly Income (AZN)	1–350	46		11,8	
	351–500	80		20,5	
	501–750	84		21,5	
	751–1000	73		18,7	
	1001–1150	55		14,1	
	1151+	52		13,3	
	Total	390		100,0	

In Turkey, 75.7% of the participants were female, and when considering age groups, it was found that 79% were between 18–27 years old. While 97.5% of the

participants had received higher education, 19.1% had a monthly income between 20,001–30,000 TL, and 18.6% had a monthly income between 13,001–20,000 TL. Additionally, 30% of the participants went on three or more vacations yearly, while 12.7% had never been on holiday. In Azerbaijan, 63.6% of the participants were female, and 81% were aged between 18 and 27. Participants received education at the higher education level (%76.9), and 21.5% had a monthly income between 501–750 AZN, 20.5% between 351–500 AZN, and 18.7% between 751–1000 AZN. 31% of the participants had been on vacation once, while 24.9% had never been on holiday.

The chi-square analysis results for examining participants’ agro-tourism awareness in terms of gender distribution are provided in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Chi-Square analysis for participants’ gender and agro-tourism awareness.

			Azerbaijan			Turkey						
			Yes	No	Total	X ²	P	Yes	No	Total	X ²	P
I have heard of the term agro-tourism.	Male	N	53	89	142	2.569	0.109	16	82	98	0.295	0.587
		%	37.3	62.7	100,0			16.3	83.7	100.0		
	Female	N	73	175	248			43	262	305		
		%	29.4	70.6	100.0			14.1	85.9	100.0		
	Total		126	264	390			59	344	403		
%		32.3	67.7	100.0	14.6	85.4	100.0					
I have searched for information about agro-tourism before.	Male	N	35	107	142	1.765	0.184	5	93	98	0.088	0.767
		%	24.6	75.4	100.0			5.1	94.9	100.0		
	Female	N	47	201	248			18	287	305		
		%	19.0	81.0	100.0			5.9	94.1	100.0		
	Total		82	308	390			23	380	403		
%		21.0	79.0	100.0	5.7	94.3	100.0					
I have previously been interested in the agro-tourism opportunities in our country.	Male	N	31	111	142	3.396	0.065	7	91	98	1.700	0.192
		%	21.8	78.2	100.0			7.1	92.9	100.0		
	Female	N	36	212	248			12	293	305		
		%	14.5	85.5	100.0			3.9	96.1	100.0		
	Total		67	323	390			19	384	403		
%		17.2	82,8	100,0	4.7	95.3	100.0					
I have participated in an agro-tourism trip.	Male	N	9	133	142	2.202	0.965	4	94	98	0.546	0.460
		%	6.3	93.7	100.0			4.1	95.9	100.0		
	Female	N	16	232	248			8	297	305		
		%	6.5	93.5	100.0			2.6	97.4	100.0		
	Total		25	365	390			12	391	403		
%		6.4	93.6	100.0	3.0	97.0	100.0					
I know that agro-tourism is a type of tourism that intersects with the agriculture and tourism sectors.	Male	N	57	85	142	0.266	0.606	24	74	98	0.644	0.422
		%	40.1	59.9	100.0			24.5	75.5	100.0		
	Female	N	93	155	248			63	242	305		
		%	37.5	62.5	100.0			20.7	76.3	100.0		
	Total		150	240	390			87	316	403		
%		38.5	61.5	100.0	21.6	78.4	100.0					

Table 2. (Continued).

			Azerbaijan			Turkey						
			Yes	No	Total	X ²	P	Yes	No	Total	X ²	P
I know that the main factor of agro-tourism is visits to active farms and other agricultural areas.	Male	N	58	84	142			24	74	98		
		%	40.8	59.2	100.0			24.5	75.5	100.0		
	Female	N	91	157	248	0.659	0.417	50	255	305	3.243	0.072
		%	36.7	63.3	100.0			16.4	83.6	100.0		
	Total		149	241	390			74	329	403		
%		38.2	61.8	100.0			18.4	81.6	100.0			
I know that tourists can act as consumers of the products in the areas they visit.	Male	N	52	90	142			32	66	98		
		%	36.7	34.7	36.4			32.7	67.3	100.0		
	Female	N	79	169	248	0.919	0.338	63	242	305	5.926	0.115
		%	31.9	68.1	100.0			20.7	79.3	100.0		
	Total		131	259	390			95	308	403		
%		33.6	66.4	100.0			23.6	76.4	100.0			

It was determined that 67% of the participants living in Azerbaijan and 85.4% of the participants living in Turkey had not heard of the term agro-tourism. It has been concluded that 21% of the participants residing in Azerbaijan had previously searched for information about agro-tourism. In comparison, only 5% of the participants living in Turkey had yet to do so. 17.2% of the participants in Azerbaijan showed interest in agro-tourism opportunities, whereas this rate was 4.7% in Turkey. The participation rates in agro-tourism trips are relatively low both in Azerbaijan and Turkey. While this rate is 6.4% in Azerbaijan, it is even lower in Turkey, at only 3%. It was observed that 38.5% of the participants living in Azerbaijan knew that agro-tourism is a type of tourism that intersects agriculture and tourism sectors, while 61.5% still needed to learn. Among those who knew, the percentage of men was 40.1%, and the rate of women was 37.5%. In contrast, 78.4% of the participants living in Turkey did not know about agro-tourism, while 20.7% knew about it. The percentage of men who knew was 24.5%, and the rate of women was 20.7%. It was found that 38.2% of the participants knew that agro-tourism involves visits to farms and other agricultural areas, while 61.8% did not. According to the analysis, there was no statistically significant difference in agro-tourism awareness based on the gender of the participants living in Azerbaijan ($p = 0.606$; 0.417 ; 0.338 , $p > 0.05$) and those living in Turkey ($p = 0.587$; 0.767 ; 0.191 ; 0.460 ; 0.422 ; 0.072 ; 0.115 , $p > 0.05$) (Table 2).

Participants' awareness of agro-tourism has been examined based on the age variable.

Each uppercase letter resembling ^{a, b, c} indicates age categories that do not significantly differ in column proportions at the .05 level.

It has been determined that most participants in Azerbaijan and Turkey, aged between 18–27, used the expression “No, I don't know” regarding statements related to agro-tourism. In Azerbaijan, there are statistically significant differences among participants in terms of their awareness of agro-tourism based on age groups, specifically in only hearing about agro-tourism ($p = 0.012$, $p < 0.05$) and participating in agro-tourism trips ($p = 0.009$, $p < 0.05$). After binary comparison analysis, there are

statistically significant differences between the age groups of 18–27 and 28–37 regarding familiarity with the term agro-tourism. Statistically significant differences were found between the age groups of 28–37 and 58–63 concerning participation in agro-tourism trips. There are no statistically significant differences based on age groups among Azerbaijani participants in other awareness situations ($p = 0.155; 0.059; 0.401; 0.309; 0.176, p > 0.05$).

A statistically significant difference has been found in agro-tourism awareness among participants in Turkey based on age groups ($p = 0.000, p < 0.05$). Binary comparison analysis conducted to determine the source of this difference revealed statistically significant differences in agro-tourism awareness between the age group of 18–27 and the age groups of 48–57 and 58–63+, as well as between the age group of 28–37 and the age group of 58–63+, who stated that they have heard of agro-tourism and have previously searched for information about agro-tourism. A statistically significant difference has been identified in agro-tourism awareness among participants in the age group of 18–27 compared to the age groups of 48–57 and 58–63+, as well as among participants in the age group of 28–37 compared to the age groups of 48–57 and 58–63+, and also between the age group of 38–47 and the age groups of 48–57 and 58–63+, specifically in the statement “I have previously been interested in agro-tourism opportunities in our country.” A statistically significant difference in agro-tourism awareness was found among participants in the age group of 18–27 compared to the age group of 48–57 in the statement “I have participated in agro-tourism trips.” Statistically significant differences were observed in agro-tourism awareness among participants aged 18–27 and 28–37 compared to those aged 58–63+ in the statement, “I know that agro-tourism is a type of tourism that arises from the intersection of the agriculture and tourism sectors.” Statistically significant differences were identified between participants aged 18–27 and those aged 58–63+ in the statements “I know that the main factor of agro-tourism is trips to active farms and other agricultural areas” and “I know that tourists can act as buyers of products from the regions they visit” (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Chi-Square analysis for participants’ agro-tourism awareness by age group.

			Azerbaijan			Turkey											
			Yes	No	Total	X ²	P	Yes	No	Total	X ²	P					
I have heard of the term agro-tourism.	18–27	N	90 ^a	228 ^a	318	12.803	0.012*	30 ^a	290 ^a	320	62.472	0.000*					
		%	28,3	71,7	100.0			9.4	90.6	100.0							
	28–37	N	21 ^b	21 ^b	42			6 ^{a,b}	19 ^{a, b}	25							
		%	50,0	50,0	100,0			24.0	76.0	100.0							
	38–47	N	6 ^{a, b}	7 ^{a, b}	13			8 ^{a, b}	27 ^{a, b}	35							
		%	46.2	53.8	100.0			22.9	77.1	100.0							
	48–57	N	8 ^{a,b}	7 ^{a, b}	15			6 ^{b, c}	6 ^{b, c}	12							
		%	53.3	46.7	100.0			50.0	50.0	100.0							
	58–63	N	1 ^{a, b}	1 ^{a, b}	2			9 ^c	2 ^c	11							
		%	50.0	50.0	100.0			81.8	18.2	100.0							
	Total		126	264	390			59	344	403							
	%		32.3	67.7	100.0			14.6	85.4	100.0							
	I have searched for information about agro-tourism before.	18–27	N	60	258			318	6.657	0.155			10 ^a	310 ^a	320	80.994	0.000*
			%	18.9	81.1			100.0					3.1	96.0	100.0		
28–37		N	14	28	42	1 ^{a, b}	24 ^{a, b}	25									
		%	33.3	66.7	100.0	4.0	96.0	100.0									
38–47		N	3	10	13	2 ^{a, b}	33 ^{a, b}	35									
		%	23.1	76.9	100.0	5.7	94.3	100.0									
48–57		N	5	10	15	3 ^{b, c}	9 ^{b, c}	12									
		%	33.3	66.7	100.0	25.0	75.0	100.0									
58–63		N	0	2	2	7 ^c	4 ^c	11									
		%	0.0	100.0	100.0	63.3	36.4	100.0									
Total			82	308	390	23	380	403									
%			21.0	79.0	100.0	5.7	94.3	100.0									

Table 3. (Continued).

			Azerbaijan			Turkey						
			Yes	No	Total	X ²	P	Yes	No	Total	X ²	P
I have previously been interested in the agro-tourism opportunities in our country.	18–27	N	46	272	318	10.331	0.059	8 ^a	312 ^a	320	82.114	0.000*
		%	14.5	85.5	100.0			2.5	97.5	100.0		
	28–37	N	12	30	42			0 ^a	25 ^a	25		
		%	28.6	71.4	100.0			0.0	100.0	100.0		
	38–47	N	4	9	13			1 ^a	34 ^a	35		
		%	30.8	69.2	100.0			2.9	97.1	100.0		
	48–57	N	5	10	15			5 ^b	7 ^b	12		
		%	33.3	66.7	100.0			41.7	58.3	100.0		
	58–63	N	0	2	2			5 ^b	6 ^b	11		
		%	0.0	100.0	100.0			45.5	54.5	100.0		
	Total		67	323	390			19	384	403		
	%		17.2	82.8	100.0			4.7	95.3	100.0		
I have participated in an agro-tourism trip.	18–27	N	19 ^{a, b}	299 ^{a, b}	318	13.592	0.009*	4 ^a	316 ^a	320	44.002	0.000*
		%	6.0	94.0	100.0			1.3	98.8	100.0		
	28–37	N	1 ^b	41 ^b	42			1 ^{a, b}	24 ^{a, b}	25		
		%	2.4	97.6	100.0			4.0	96.0	100.0		
	38–47	N	3 ^{a, b}	10 ^{a, b}	13			2 ^{a, b}	33 ^{a, b}	35		
		%	23.1	76.9	100.0			5.7	94.3	100.0		
	48–57	N	1 ^{a, b}	14 ^{a, b}	15			4 ^b	8 ^b	12		
		%	6.7	93.3	100.0			33.3	66.7	100.0		
	58–63	N	1 ^a	1 ^a	2			1 ^{a, b}	10 ^{a, b}	11		
		%	50.0	50.0	100.0			9.1	90.9	100.0		
	Total		25	365	390			12	391	403		
	%		6.4	93.6	100.0			3.0	97.0	100.0		

Table 3. (Continued).

			Azerbaijan			Turkey						
			Yes	No	Total	X ²	P	Yes	No	Total	X ²	P
I know that agro-tourism is a type of tourism that intersects with the agriculture and tourism sectors.	18–27	N	115	203	318	4.037	0.401	58 ^a	262 ^a	320	32.222	0.000*
		%	36.2	63.8	100.0			18.1	81.9	100.0		
	28–37	N	20	22	42			7 ^a	18 ^a	25		
		%	47.6	52.4	100.0			28.0	72.0	100.0		
	38–47	N	6	7	13			7 ^a	28 ^a	35		
		%	46.2	53.8	100.0			20.0	80.0	100.0		
	48–57	N	8	7	15			6 ^{a, b}	6 ^{a, b}	12		
		%	53.3	46.7	100.0			50.0	50.0	100.0		
	58–63	N	1	1	2			9 ^b	2 ^b	11		
		%	50.0	50.0	100.0			81.8	18.2	100.0		
	Total		150	240	390			87	316	403		
	%		38.5	61.5	100.0			21.6	78.4	100.0		
I know that the main factor of agro-tourism is visits to active farms and other agricultural areas.	18–27	N	114	204	318	4.795	0.309	46 ^a	274 ^a	320	34.096	0.000*
		%	35.8	64.2	100.0			14.4	85.6	100.0		
	28–37	N	21	21	42			6 ^{a, b, c}	19 ^{a, b, c}	25		
		%	50.0	50.0	100.0			24.0	76.0	100.0		
	38–47	N	5	8	13			8 ^{a, c}	27 ^{a, c}	35		
		%	38.5	61.5	100.0			22.9	77.1	100.0		
	48–57	N	8	7	15			6 ^{a, b}	6 ^{a, b}	12		
		%	53.3	46.7	100.0			50.0	50.0	100.0		
	58–63	N	1	1	2			8 ^b	3 ^b	11		
		%	50.0	50.0	100.0			72.7	27.3	100.0		
	Total		149	241	390			74	329	403		
	%		38.2	61.8	100.0			18.4	81.6	100.0		

Table 3. (Continued).

			Azerbaijan			Turkey						
			Yes	No	Total	X ²	P	Yes	No	Total	X ²	P
I know that tourists can act as consumers of the products in the areas they visit.	18–27	N	98	220	318	6.331	0.176	60 ^a	260 ^a	320	21.965	0.000*
		%	30.8	69.2	100.0			18.8	81.3	100.0		
	28–37	N	20	22	42			10 ^{a, b}	15 ^{a, b}	25		
		%	47.6	52.4	100.0			40.0	60.0	100.0		
	38–47	N	5	8	13			13 ^{a, b}	22 ^{a, b}	35		
		%	38.5	61.5	100.0			37.1	62.9	100.0		
	48–57	N	7	8	15			6 ^{a, b}	6 ^{a, b}	12		
		%	46.7	53.3	100.0			50.0	50.0	100.0		
	58–63	N	1	1	2			6 ^b	5 ^b	11		
		%	50.0	50.0	100.0			54.5	45.5	100.0		
	Total		131	259	390			95	308	403		
	%		33.6	66.4	100.0			23.6	76.4	100.0		

* $p < 0.05$.

When **Table 4** is examined, it is found that 83.1% of participants living in Turkey and 24% of participants residing in Azerbaijan did not see any information, briefing, or promotion about agro-tourism. In Azerbaijan, the rate of social media as a means of awareness about agro-tourism is 59%, while in Turkey, it is only 9.2%. Those who noticed agro-tourism on television account for 4.2% of those living in Turkey and 11.3% in Azerbaijan. It is observed that for both countries, the primary source of information about agro-tourism is recommendations from others.

Table 4. Information sources on agro-tourism for participants.

	Turkey		Azerbaijan	
	n	%	n	%
Your source of information on agro-tourism.				
Television	17	4.2	44	11.3
Social Media	37	9.2	230	59.0
I didn't see it	355	83.1	95	24.4
Event	5	1.2	9	2.3
Advertising brochures/posters	3	0.7	7	1.8
Recommendation	6	1.5	5	1.3

Among the 25 participants who lived in Azerbaijan and participated in agro-tourism trips, 23 (92%) conducted this trip in their locality. It is observed that one of the other participants made the agro-tourism trip to Georgia, and the other participant went to England. Among the 12 participants who lived in Turkey and participated in agro-tourism trips, it was determined that 11 (90.9%) conducted this trip in their locality. It is noted that one participant joined this trip in Azerbaijan (**Table 5**).

Table 5. Findings regarding the travel destinations of participants who participated in agro-tourism trips.

		Destination	n	%
Turkey		Turkey	10	90.9
		Azerbaijan	1	9.1
		Total	11	100.0
Azerbaijan		Azerbaijan	23	92.0
		Georgia	1	4.0
		United Kingdom	1	4.0
		Total	25	100.0

Of participants who lived in Azerbaijan and participated in agro-tourism trips, all 25 (100%) expressed satisfaction with the trip, with 76% stating that their knowledge about agriculture increased and 88% indicating that they had a better understanding of the importance of agriculture. Among participants who lived in Turkey and participated in agro-tourism trips, findings suggest that 91% of the 12 participants were satisfied with the trip, with 75% reporting an increase in their knowledge about agriculture and 88% acknowledging the beneficial aspect of understanding the importance of agriculture (**Table 6**).

Table 6. Findings regarding the evaluations of participants who participated in agro-tourism trips.

	Yes		No		
	n	%	n	%	
I enjoyed the trip.	11	91.7	1	8.3	Turkey
	25	100.0	-	-	Azerbaijan
The trip increased my knowledge about agriculture.	9	75.0	3	25.0	Turkey
	19	76.0	6	24.0	Azerbaijan
The trip was beneficial in helping me better understand the importance of agriculture.	11	91.7	1	8.3	Turkey
	22	88.0	3	12.0	Azerbaijan

The findings regarding participants' negative attitudes towards agro-tourism are presented in **Table 7**. According to this data, 50.8% of Azerbaijani participants disagree with the idea that the arrival of agro-tourists will increase the number of thefts and other crimes in the area. The percentage of participants who partially agree with this notion is 18.7%, while 4.4% fully agree, and 26.2% do not know about it. In Turkey, 24.1% of participants disagree with the idea that the arrival of agro-tourists will increase the number of thefts and other crimes in the area. 34.5% of participants partially agree, 4% fully agree, and 37.5% have no knowledge about it. It was found that 48.2% of participants in Azerbaijan do not agree with the notion that agro-tourists will frequently encounter problems with the local people. In comparison, 23.3% of participants in Turkey do not agree at all with this idea. Regarding the negative attitude that agro-tourism will intrude into the private lives of farmers, 51.5% of Azerbaijani participants selected the option of not agreeing at all. This percentage is lower than the rate of 2.3% who agree with this attitude. In Turkey, the percentage of participants who partially agree with this attitude (27.3%) is higher than those who do not agree at all (20.3%) and those who fully agree (3%). Nearly 50% of participants said they did not know about this attitude. The rate of non-agreement with negative attitudes is low in Turkey.

Table 7. Findings on negative attitudes towards agro-tourism.

	I completely disagree		I partially agree		I completely agree		I don't know		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
The arrival of tourists will increase the number of thefts and other crimes in the region.	97	24.1	139	34.5	16	4.0	151	37.5	Turkey
	198	50.8	73	18.7	17	4.4	102	26.2	Azerbaijan
Tourists will often encounter issues with the local community.	94	23.3	143	35.5	24	6.0	142	35.5	Turkey
	188	48.2	97	24.9	11	2.8	94	24.1	Azerbaijan
Agro-tourism will intrude on the private lives of farmers.	82	20.3	111	27.3	12	3.0	198	49.1	Turkey
	201	51.5	57	14.6	9	2.3	123	31.5	Azerbaijan

Participants in Azerbaijan account for 59.2% of those who want additional information about agro-tourism, while in Turkey, this percentage is 40.9%. Participants in Azerbaijan make up 40.8% of those who do not want additional information, while in Turkey, this figure is 59.1%. In Azerbaijan, more than half of

the participants (55.6%) desire to participate in agro-tourism trips; in Turkey, this percentage is 34.2% (**Table 8**).

Table 8. Findings regarding participants’ knowledge of agro-tourism.

	Yes		No		
	n	%	n	%	
I want to get more information about the concept of agro-tourism.	165	40.9	238	59.1	Turkey
	231	59.2	159	40.8	Azerbaijan
I want to participate in an agro-tourism trip.	138	34.2	265	65.8	Turkey
	217	55.6	173	44.4	Azerbaijan

4. Conclusion and recommendation

This research examined the awareness of agro-tourism among individuals living in Azerbaijan and Turkey. The awareness of agro-tourism among participants was analyzed based on gender, age, education level, income status, and frequency of vacations.

The results indicate that most participants living in Azerbaijan and Turkey need more awareness of agro-tourism. Participants’ understanding of agro-tourism does not show statistically significant differences based on their gender, monthly incomes, education levels, and frequency of vacations in both countries. The findings of no significant differences based on gender and monthly incomes align with the research findings of Agustin and Cucio (2023). However, unlike these aspects, there is a statistically significant difference in participants’ agro-tourism awareness based on age variables. The critical difference between the age group of 18–27 and other age groups could serve as a starting point for initiatives to increase awareness. Younger age groups require more awareness about agro-tourism. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by De Villa et al. (2018).

Most participants in Turkey have been found to lack exposure to information about agro-tourism. This reflects that the public is unaware of the existing services and facilities. This also means that when encouraging the public to visit, the country needs to emphasize the available services and facilities.

In Azerbaijan, it has been found that more than half of the participants come across information about agro-tourism on social media. Although the number of participants who have participated in agro-tourism trips in Turkey and Azerbaijan is low, they have expressed satisfaction with their experiences. According to Willson and McIntosh (2007), engaging in interesting new experiences generates awareness and ensures participants’ satisfaction. Participating in agro-tourism trips has contributed to participants’ increased knowledge about agriculture and its importance. Furthermore, participants in both countries disagreed with negative attitudes towards agro-tourism; instead, they expressed a desire for more information about agro-tourism and a willingness to participate. This finding is also consistent with the research findings conducted by Sihombing et al. (2017) in a different region.

Agro-tourism, which combines agriculture and tourism, has recently become increasingly popular. Several suggestions can be offered to increase awareness and enable more people to benefit from this experience. Leveraging the power of social

media and digital marketing tools is very important. Experiences provided by agro-tourism can be highlighted through content with vital visual and storytelling elements. Engaging topics such as natural beauty, agricultural activities, and the production processes of local food and beverages can attract attention. Collaboration between governments, local authorities, and tourism offices can be a significant step in promoting agro-tourism. Organizing festivals, workshops, and farm visits to invite people to experience directly can increase interest in this field and raise awareness.

The agro-tourism potential of each country can vary depending on geographical, cultural, and economic differences. Therefore, governments and policymakers should increase awareness of agro-tourism and understand local conditions before developing it, shaping their strategies accordingly. Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the agricultural sector can provide essential insights into how agro-tourism can be created. Identifying the necessary infrastructure and supportive policies to develop agro-tourism is crucial. These policies may include identifying suitable areas for agritourism, providing incentives to tourism operators, enhancing tourism education, and raising environmental awareness. As Zivkovic et al. (2021) stated, developing environmental awareness and behavior is crucial.

Agro-tourism activities must be compatible with and meet the needs of local communities. Governments, when determining agro-tourism strategies, should primarily ensure the participation of local people to increase awareness and take their expectations into account. Community involvement can help make more informed and conscientious decisions regarding using and preserving natural resources. Engaging agricultural communities in local environmental activities can contribute to environmental protection and sustainable resource management. Increasing awareness of agro-tourism is crucial for its development.

Although studies in the literature address different sample groups regarding agro-tourism awareness (such as farmers, tourists, and students), they are limited, and there is a lack of research specifically focusing on the local community. To fill this gap and to compare the results of the study, it is recommended that research be conducted with a larger sample size and different study areas. This would allow for comparing the findings with previous research, contributing to filling the knowledge gap. Future studies could also be expanded by ensuring the active involvement of the local community in agro-tourism and providing them with firsthand experiences, as this study is limited to examining only the awareness of agro-tourism.

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