CHAPTER IX

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AS A WAY TO COPE WITH LOCAL ECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES: THE ÜRGÜP, CAPPADOCIA CASE

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1. Introduction

The deindustrialization trend contributes to the tourism industry becoming the dominant sector in local economic development. Using tourism as a development tool began in the 1970s, but the role of tourism in reducing poverty was focused on in the 1990s. After this, pro-poor tourism was recognized, and poverty alleviation became a moral issue in tourism planning (Harrison and Schipani, 2007). However, the tourism industry has vulnerabilities in its structure that differ from those of manufacturing. The fact that the local economy is based on a vulnerable industry also risks local development. In the literature, tourism, especially mass tourism, is considered a vulnerable organization (Bahja et al., 2024). Along with seasonality, fluctuation in demand, being affected by socio-economic environments, and being in a multi-actor and multi-sector structure are considered among the vulnerabilities of the tourism industry. Additionally, establishment size, based on micro and small entrepreneurs, a limited skilled workforce, and limited innovation capacity are vulnerabilities that negatively affect the competitiveness of tourism establishments (Hall et al., 2007; Murphy

and Murphy, 2004; Streimikiene et al., 2021). The dominance of a small number of large establishments in local tourism also increases the vulnerability of small establishments and makes it difficult for them to compete (Font et al., 2023; Topuz Cerrah and Armatlı Köroğlu, 2023).

Large enterprises increase mass tourism as an organization based mainly on natural resources. Although there is an expectation of high economic returns from mass tourism, as an element of fragility, it also causes natural and social vulnerabilities in the region. The first of these vulnerabilities is the overuse and damage of environmental assets, which are the main resources of tourism. The destruction of the environment also negatively affects the sustainability of the tourism industry due to the simultaneous consumption and presentation of goods and services produced in tourism (Cunha and Cunha, 2005).

Mass tourism also causes social and economic vulnerabilities. Since tourism is a labour-intensive industry that creates direct or indirect employment, it is also a way to prevent the migration of young, skilled, and educated workers and provide new opportunities for the female workforce (Murphy, 1985; Buhalis and Main, 1998; Michael, 2007). However, the vulnerable small-scale nature of the industry means that the employment created is also fragile, generally low-paid and seasonal (Murphy, 1985; Yuhanis et al., 2012; Topuz Cerrah and Armatli Köroğlu, 2023) and those fact is leaving the local workforce at a disadvantaged position. Moreover, when the tourism industry is dominated by a few large companies which include different facilities in one establishment, the local economy suffers from an unfair distribution of economic benefits. The reason for this situation derives from the characteristics of mass tourism, whose main motivation is to lower the costs per unit. It is a tourism development approach that sells on a large scale, consists of standardized packages with low per capita expenditure, focuses on sea-sand-sun, supports growth by large establishments, and provides new establishments and employment in this sense (Papatheodorou, 2004; Michael, 2007). On the other hand, mass tourism leads to high tourist density, exceeding social and environmental carrying capacities, and the loss of destination attractiveness (Buhalis, 2000; Poon, 2003).

The environmental, economic, and social vulnerabilities of the tourism industry can be overcome by increasing its resilience and sustainability. The sustainable tourism approach against the vulnerabilities caused by tourism activity is considered a total “wealth creation system” (Poon, 2003; Durán-Román et al., 2021). In this context, it is essential to understand the three

dimensions of sustainable development and relate them correctly to the tourism industry. The dimensions of sustainable development are defined as economic, social, and environmental (UNWTO and UNEP, 2005):

- Economic sustainability; involves creating welfare across different levels of society and enhancing the efficiency of economic activities. Most importantly, it relates to the viability of establishments and activities and their ability to be sustained over the long term.
- Social sustainability; means respect for human rights and equal opportunities for everyone. It requires fair distribution of benefits, focusing on reducing poverty. The emphasis is on local communities maintaining and strengthening their life support systems and recognizing and respecting different cultures.
- Environmental sustainability; refers to protecting and managing resources, especially those that are non-renewable or valuable for life support. It requires action to minimize air, soil, and water pollution and to protect biodiversity and natural heritage.

Sustainable development requires balancing environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Sustainable tourism is also considered within the framework of sustainable development (Cunha and Cunha, 2005; Hall, 2019). Therefore, in the sustainability of the tourism industry, economic sustainability should be correctly integrated with environmental and social sustainability (Poon, 2003; Hall, 2019).

For the sustainability of tourism, it is imperative to maintain a balance between the protection and use of local natural resources. Failure to sustain raw materials for tourism will cause a decrease in the industry's growth and cause businesses to shrink over time (Durán-Román et al., 2021). Discussions on sustainable tourism development began in the early 1990s as a response to the negative effects of mass tourism, such as the overuse of natural resources (Hassan, 2000; Reed, 1997). Sustainable tourism can be defined as an innovative economic development model to improve the quality of life of local people, provide a good quality, personalized, unique experience for visitors, and to protect and maintain the quality of the environment for both local people and visitors (Durán-Román et al., 2021; Papatheodorou, 2004; Poon, 2003). The environmental dimension has been discussed in detail in many sustainable tourism studies (Ghosh, 2022; Peeters et al., 2024).

The sustainable tourism approach can be seen as a solution to social, environmental, and economic vulnerabilities and a strategy to increase local resilience. From this perspective, analyzing local vulnerabilities is the first step in ensuring sustainable tourism. Based on the identified local vulnerabilities, the path to economic resilience is essential for developing effective development strategies for the industry.

The aim of this study is to reveal ways for the tourism industry to overcome local economic vulnerabilities and ensure economic resilience within the framework of a sustainable tourism approach. The research question is "Which dimensions of the sustainable tourism approach positively affect the economic resilience of the industry?" Undoubtedly, the general acceptance is that the dimensions should be considered to be in balance and together for all settlements. Moreover, it is essential to consider these dimensions an interrelated, complex system. The answer to the research question will also guide understanding the problems and identifying place-based sustainable tourism strategies.

To address the research question, field research was designed for the tourism industry in Ürgüp - Cappadocia region, a medium-sized tourism destination in Türkiye. A questionnaire survey was conducted with accommodation establishments. In the questionnaire form, the characteristics of the tourism industry, economic, social, and environmental drivers affecting economic resilience, and environmental protection activities of tourism enterprises exist.

The introduction is followed by the methodology of the study. In the research findings and discussion section, first, the characteristics and capacity of firms in the Ürgüp tourism region are scrutinized. Then, the findings regarding the main drivers of economic resilience are discussed. Finally, in this section, environmental protection activities at the accommodation establishment level are systematically presented and evaluated. In the last section, conclusions and further studies are explained.

2. Methodology

In the study, field research was conducted on the economic resilience of the tourism industry in the Ürgüp district and the drivers affecting them. In the field research, a questionnaire survey was designed with accommodation establishments.

Interviews established connections with 62 accommodation establishments in Ürgüp Central District and Ortahisar and Mustafapaşa Towns of Ürgüp District, which correspond to 25.83% of the total 240 accommodation establishments within the Ürgüp District. During the interviews, establishments were determined

using the snowball technique. Despite this, the rate of those who refused to be interviewed among the establishments reached is high (24.19%). The high rejection rate can be related to the small-scale and vulnerable firm structure. The 45 accommodation establishments that completed the interview constitute 18.75% of all accommodation establishments (Table 1).

Table 1: Accommodation establishments surveyed

Accommodation Establishments	**The number**		**% in total**
All Establishments		240	100
Contacted Establishments		62	25.83
Valid Survey	4 online 1 on phone 40 face to face	45	18.75
Accommodation Establishments	**The number**		**% in contacted**
Contacted Establishments		62	100.00
Accepted to Participate in the Survey		47	75.81
Rejected to Participate		15	24.19

Since the data collection process in the field coincided with the period when measures were taken against the Covid-19 pandemic, the prepared questionnaire form was first transferred to the digital platform. An attempt was made to reach tourism operators by phone and e-mail. Due to the low completion rate of digital surveys or the surveys being left unfinished, it was decided to conduct the surveys face-to-face. The surveys were completed with a total of 14 days of fieldwork, including 4 days between 25 October and 28 October 2021 and 9 days between 19 November and 27 November 2021.

For the purpose of this study, questionnaire form includes questions about the establishment characteristics, the characteristics of the entrepreneurs, establishment economic resilience, economic, social, and environmental variables that may affect resilience, and environmental-related minimum resource input and maximum waste prevention practices in the establishment.

In this study, economic resilience[1] is identified with property ownership, whether or not there is additional income, duration of survival without tourism income in the establishment.

[1] In terms of property ownership, 1 point is given for a tenant and 2 points for a property owner; in terms of additional income, 1 if there is additional income, 0 otherwise; the answers to the question of how long they can survive with their savings without earning an income are determined as 1 point between 0-3 months, 2 points between 4-6 months, and 3 points between 7-12 months. The economic resilience score was obtained by the sum of all these scores.

Economic drivers that affect economic resilience are the number of employees, bed capacity, and the number of certificates. The number of employees and bed capacity determine the economic size of the tourism enterprise. The number of certificates has been accepted as an innovation proxy in tourism as it includes innovation related to new environmentally sensitive practices or quality processes in the establishment. Environmental drivers are environmental protection implementations that include minimum resource input implementations and maximum waste prevention. Social drivers are the membership of collective formations such as non-governmental organizations and professional organizations, the number of establishments' cooperation and solidarity, and the number of employees who are family members regarding the importance of family ties.

The critical limitation in the field study is the lack of open data for establishments and the data collection phase by surveying establishments in the field. Accessing establishments, including the establishment in the survey, and ending the survey before completing it are critical challenges in field study. Due to these limitations, data on limited number of variables have been collected in the field. The variables used in the study represent the economic, social, and environmental characteristics of establishments.

The relationship between economic resilience and economic, social, and environmental variables was tested with correlation analysis, a two-dimensional analysis.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Characteristics and Capacity of Establishments in the Ürgüp Tourism Industry

In the literature, the structure of the tourism industry, based on small entrepreneurs, is emphasized as one of the primary vulnerabilities of the industry (Yuhanis et al., 2012; Topuz Cerrah and Armatli Köroğlu, 2023). While the number of employees in establishments in Ürgüp ranges from 1 to 130, the average number of employees is 16.58 (Table 2). It can be said that the tourism industry in Ürgüp consists primarily of micro and small establishments. On the other hand, it is seen that the number of rooms in establishments varies between 5 and 352, and the average number of rooms is 35.44 (Table 2). Bed capacities are approximately twice the number of rooms. 42.2% of the accommodation establishments interviewed are micro-scale, and 35.6% are small-scale establishments (Table 3).

One of the most vulnerable aspects of the tourism industry is seasonality. Survey results show that the average occupancy rate in the low season in Ürgüp is 32.21%. Indeed, this rate drops to a 10% occupancy rate in some establishments (Table 2). In the peak season, the average occupancy rate rises to 80%, and some establishments operate at full capacity in the region. The seasonal structure of the tourism industry leads to a more vulnerable economic structure in micro-establishments; it encourages entrepreneurs to create additional income to be more resilient. The rate of income generated from non-tourism activities in Ürgüp is 62.2%, providing strong evidence of seasonality. Another vulnerability that needs to be improved in the tourism industry in Ürgüp is the average number of overnight stays, which is 2.21 (Table 2).

Table 2: Capacity of firms in the tourism industry in Ürgüp, Cappadocia Region, Türkiye.

	N	Av.	median	Min.	Max.	ss
Number of rooms 2021	45	35.44	12	5	352	66.00
Total bed capacity 2021	45	75.07	30	10	750	136.02
Total number of employees 2021	45	16.58	5	1	130	26.47
Percentage of foreigners staying in 2019	42	58.81	70	1	100	30.91
% occupancy rate in peak season	38	80.03	80	40	100	14.51
Occupancy rate in low season %	38	32.21	30	10	90	20.33
Average Length of Stay (night) 2019	28	2.21	2	1	4	0.63

The Cappadocia region is a popular international destination, attracting a high number of foreign tourists, which is a significant advantage for the region. While there are accommodation establishments in Ürgüp that serve only foreign tourists, there are establishments where the foreign tourist rate decreases to 1%. On average, 58.81% of the establishments provide service to foreign tourists (Table 2).

Another important dimension in determining vulnerabilities is the social dimension, which includes how much local people can take part and have a say in the tourism industry (Harrison and Schipani, 2007; P. E. Murphy and A. E. Murphy, 2004). In Ürgüp, whether the entrepreneurs were from the local community was checked to measure the social dimension. Survey results reveal that for foreign entrepreneurs from outside the region, the rate is 46.66%. In this case, the entrepreneurs are mainly local people. Educated and male entrepreneurs

lead the industry (Table 3). Over half of the establishments (57.8%) were established between 2010-2019. The relative strength of the industry in the region is that young establishments established after 2020 are in the minority.

When examining property ownership, it is noted that 68.9% of establishments are owners. However, one could argue that the 31.1% tenant ratio is also high. (Table 3).

The main vulnerabilities of the tourism industry in Ürgüp include being composed mainly of micro and small establishments, being seasonal, and having a low number of overnight stays. However, the high rate of foreign tourists, the high level of education of entrepreneurs, and the creation of additional income by entrepreneurs are factors that will increase the industry's resilience.

Table 3: Characteristics of firms and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry in Ürgüp, Cappadocia Region, Türkiye.

		n	%
Firm size	Micro firm	19	42.2
	Small firm	16	35.6
	Medium + large establishment	10	22.2
	Total	**45**	**100.0**
Year of establishment	Before 2000	9	20.0
	2000-2009	3	6.6
	2010-2019	26	57.8
	2020-2021	7	15.6
	Total	**45**	**100.0**
The establishment owner's status as a local entrepreneur	Local entrepreneur	24	53.3
	Not local entrepreneur	21	46.7
	Total	**45**	**100.0**
Gender of the establishment owner	Woman	9	20.0
	Male	32	71.1
	Female+Male (For Partnerships)	4	8.9
	Total	**45**	**100.0**
Educational status of the establishment owner	Primary education (primary school + secondary school)	2	4.4
	High school	13	28.9
	College	2	4.4
	Undergraduate and above	28	62.1
	Total	**45**	**100.0**
Establishment owner's operating assets outside the establishment that provide additional income	Yes	28	62.2
	No	17	37.8
	Total	**45**	**100.0**
Property ownership	Rent	14	31.1
	Property owner	31	68.9
	Total	**45**	**100.0**

3.2. Main Drivers of Economic Resilience

Economic resilience is closely related to sustainable tourism's economic, environmental, and social dimensions and is a vital determinant in coping with vulnerabilities. Moreover, achieving a resilient and productive local economy is an effective strategy for local development. In this study, resilience is considered as the survival ability and flexibility of the establishment.

Table 4 demonstrates the correlations between drivers of economic resilience in tourism establishments and the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism.

The economic variables include the number of employees in the establishment, bed capacity, and the number of certificates received. The findings regarding economic variables in the analysis are interesting. According to the literature, the number of employees, quality certificates, and innovations are expected to correlate positively with economic resilience. However, the results show that only bed capacity has a positive and significant correlation with economic resilience (Table 4). In other words, the certificates received and the innovations made are not related to economic resistance. Likewise, no relationship was detected between the number of employees and economic resilience (Table 4).

It is observed in the analysis results that there is no significant positive correlation between social variables and economic resilience (Table 4). Although it is not statistically significant, the analysis shows a negative relationship between the number of cooperation/solidarity and economic resilience with family member employees (Table 4). Based on field research, solidarity in the tourism industry in Ürgüp, formal collaborations like NGO membership are unrelated to economic resilience. This result requires a thorough evaluation. On the other hand, family relationships are not correlated with economic variables, which is an essential result of this study for Ürgüp. It may be a clue to the transition from business relationships based on family ties to more professional relationships in the region.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis; Indicators of Economic Resilience

			Economic Resilience
Economic variables	**Number of Employees**	r	0.177
		p	0.244
		N	45
	Bed Capacity	R.	0.297*
		P.	**0.048**
		N	45
	Number of Certificates Received	R.	0.208
		P.	0.170
		N	45
Environment variables	**Number of Environmental Protection Measures**	R.	0.351*
		P.	**0.018**
		N	45
social variables	**Number of Memberships in Collective Bodies**	r	0.198
		p	0.192
		N	45
	Number of Cooperation/ Solidarity	R.	-0.083
		P.	0.588
		N	45
	Family Member Employee Ratio in Total Employees	r	-0.186
		p	0.373
		N	25

Undoubtedly, the most exciting result of this study is the findings regarding environmental protection measures. Analysis results reveal that environmental protection measures have a significant and positive correlation with economic resilience (Table 4). Among the three dimensions of sustainable tourism in Ürgüp, the only dimension positively related to the economy is the environment. In light of the research results, it can be expected that innovations, practices, and investments in the environmental field in Ürgüp have a positive impact, reducing vulnerabilities and increasing economic resilience.

This unexpected result, which highlights the environmental dimension of sustainable tourism, may influence academic studies and policies when environmentally sensitive approaches and studies such as climate change, renewable energy, and circular economy have increased.

3.3. Environmental Protection Activities in Accommodation Establishments

The results of the study reveal that environmental innovations and conservation activities positively affect economic resilience in tourism establishments. This significant result gives a clue on how to cope with the vulnerabilities of the tourism industry. This section discusses the environmental protection in Ürgüp tourism establishments.

When it comes to environmental protection, turning to environmentally friendly products that minimize the damage to the environment, decreasing resource usage, the amount of waste (solid, gas, etc.), and in this regard, turning to alternative energy sources constitutes an example of fundamental environmental strategies in the tourism industry (Banga et al., 2022; Peeters et al., 2024; Velenturf and Purnell, 2021). Water and electricity are the leading examples of limited resources used in the tourism industry. Environmental protection activities carried out in establishments, which can be listed under different headings, are also called green innovation and, in a sense, reveal the innovation capacity of tourism. Since tourism is an experience-based activity, tourists are open to innovative practices, and diverse products and services are expected (Colarič-Jakše and Ambrož, 2015; Bressan and Pedrini, 2020; Aires et al., 2022). However, as with all innovation processes, using environmentally friendly products and processes in tourism establishments brings significant costs and risks.

Table 5 illustrates implementations that minimize natural resource input and environmental damage at the establishment level. It also includes practices that reduce the use of water and electricity resources.

When examining the practices implemented in establishments to minimize environmental damage, the most common practice (100%) is the presence of non-smoking rooms. Other common practices are using washable cups instead of disposable ones (91.1%) and changing towels and sheets upon customer demand (84.4%). However, it is observed that the rate of using specialized environmentally sensitive products such as environmentally labelled linens, air conditioners, detergents, and minibars is below 20% in establishments, which drops to 2% for some high-cost products (Table 5). This result shows that tourism establishments in Ürgüp are aware and volunteer to carry out environmentally friendly practices, but they avoid paying additional costs, especially high costs, for them.

Table 5: Minimum resource input implementations at the establishment level

		None		Available		Total	
		N	%	n	%	n	%
Products and implementations that minimize environmental damage	Washable Cups and Forks Instead of Disposable ones	4	8.9	41	91.1	45	100.0
	Environmentally Labelled Products (pillows, air conditioners, etc.)	36	80.0	9	20.0	45	100.0
	Refillable Soap Dispenser, Shampoo Dispenser	41	91.1	4	8.9	45	100.0
	Ammonia Non-Motorized Minibar System	44	97.8	1	2.2	45	100.0
	Changing Towels and Bed Linens Upon Guest Request	7	15.6	38	84.4	45	100.0
	Use of Environmentally Labelled Detergent and Disinfectant	34	75.6	11	24.4	45	100.0
	Non-Smoking Rooms	0	0.0	45	100.0	45	100.0
Reduce electricity and water consumption	Electrical System That Turns Off Automatically When the Customer Leaves the Room	32	71.1	13	28.9	45	100.0
	Air Conditioner That Turns Off Automatically When the Windows Are Opened	44	97.8	1	2.2	45	100.0
	Energy Saving Devices	14	31.1	31	68.9	45	100.0
	LED Lighting System	6	13.3	39	86.7	45	100.0
	Central Heating and Cooling System	1	2.2	44	97.8	45	100.0
	Air Mixing Shower Heads	25	55.6	20	44.4	45	100.0
	2 Stage Reservoir System	6	13.3	39	86.7	45	100.0
	Shower Tray or Reduced Depth Bathtub	24	53.3	21	46.7	45	100.0
	Frequency Inverter, Heat Pump or Heat Exchanger Device	34	75.6	11	24.4	45	100.0
	Timed Sprinklers in the Garden	35	77.8	10	22.2	45	100.0
	Photocell Taps and Urinals in Common Areas	40	88.9	5	11.1	45	100.0
	Electricity and Water Saving Devices	13	28.9	32	71.1	45	100.0
	Motion Sensitive Lighting Elements	22	48.9	23	51.1	45	100.0

Since electricity and water are both crucial resources for the industry and important cost issues for the establishment, it is seen that tourism enterprises make efforts to prevent overuse or waste of these resources. LED lighting systems are widely used to reduce electricity consumption (86.7%). Central heating and cooling systems (97.8%) and electricity and water-saving devices (86.7%) are also widely used (Table 5). Air conditioning that automatically turns off when the windows are opened (2.2%), photocell taps and urinals in common areas (11.1%), timed fountains (22.2%), practices that reduce electricity and water consumption are uncommon in the region (Table 5). It is seen that the application of technologies to reduce electricity and water consumption is limited in the region when the installation and use costs in the enterprise are high.

Table 6 shows waste prevention implementations that establishments either apply or do not, such as implementations of solid waste. It is seen that the most common practice is to reuse food waste, which is the most significant amount of waste in the tourism industry, by donating it to animal shelters (77.8%). 60% of establishments choose to collect and safely dispose of hazardous waste (Table 6). However, applications such as grease trap systems for kitchen wastewater reuse are rare.

Although the use of environmentally friendly renewable energy is the last topic discussed in this article, it ranks first among environmental applications in the relevant literature, and there are many studies on the use of renewable energy in the sustainability of different sectors (Wang et al., 2021; Weng and Sun, 2023). Empirical studies have shown results on the nexus between carbon dioxide emissions and tourism development (Leitao and Balsalobre-Lorente, 2020; Banga et al., 2022; Ghosh, 2022). Thus, if more renewable energy sources are used in tourism, the effects of greenhouse gas emissions will be lowered (Bhat 2018; Wang et al. 2021).

Renewable energy resources are not widely used in the Ürgüp tourism industry. The most common use is water heating systems that benefit from solar energy, with a rate of 46.7% (Table 6). Only one establishment (2.2%) uses electricity from renewable energy sources (Table 6). No other establishment stated that it used alternative energy. Therefore, renewable energy is an issue that needs to be studied and developed more deeply for the tourism industry in tourism destinations in Türkiye.

Table 6: Maximum waste prevention implementations at the establishment level

		None		Available		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Wastes and reuse	Reuse by Submission Organic Food Waste to Animal Shelter	10	22.2	35	77.8	45	100.0
	Separation of Plastic, Paper, Glass, Metal Waste and Delivery to the Municipality or an Authorized Company	22	48.9	23	51.1	45	100.0
	Collecting Waste Batteries and Delivering them to an Authorized Company	23	51.1	22	48.9	45	100.0
	Collecting Hazardous Wastes Such as Fluorescent Bulbs, Toner, Oil Filters, Waste Oils and Delivering them to an Authorized Company	18	40.0	27	60.0	45	100.0
	Delivery of Waste Oils to an Authorized Company for Recycling for Biodiesel/Electricity Production	20	44.4	25	55.6	45	100.0
	Grease Trap System for Kitchen Wastewater	36	80.0	9	20.0	45	100.0
	Rainwater Collection System	39	86.7	6	13.3	45	100.0
Renewable energy	Obtaining and Using Electricity from Renewable Energy Sources	44	97.8	1	2.2	45	100.0
	Use of Thermal Water for Heating	45	100.0	0	0.0	45	100.0
	Water Heating System that Benefits from Solar Heat	24	53.3	21	46.7	45	100.0
	Trigeneration System (Converting Natural Gas into Electricity and Producing Hot Water)	45	100.0	0	0.0	45	100.0

4. Conclusion

The results of this study show a significant correlation between environmental protection activities, which are an essential component within the scope of sustainable tourism and economic resilience. Therefore, the most

exciting result of the study is that the environmental dimension has a high correlation with economic resilience in Ürgüp tourism.

Ürgüp tourism industry suffers from low bed capacity and low number of employees. The main vulnerabilities of the tourism industry in Ürgüp are that it consists of micro and small establishments, the industry is seasonal and the establishments do not operate at full capacity even during the high season, innovations are limited due to the scale and structure of the industry, and is based on natural and cultural assets. In the paper, a sustainable approach to tourism is recommended to enhance the economic resilience of the tourism industry in Ürgüp. The approach emphasizes the importance of economic, social, and environmental sustainability in tourism.

The result of the study, which highlights activities related to environmental protection, also supports a change in understanding of the sustainable tourism approach. The fact that natural resources are the primary basis of the tourism industry and that savings and economic returns are possible with an environmentally friendly approach puts it in a position that prioritizes the environmental dimension. It would be revealing that the environmental dimension is in a position to include social and economic aspects (Velenturf and Purnell, 2021). A tourism approach associated with a circular economy approach may have the chance to be more economically resilient.

The activities of tourism enterprises in Ürgüp regarding environmental protection show that they are aware of the environment and find these practices helpful. While the education of entrepreneurs in the region increases environmental awareness, the high rate of foreign tourists also encourages the development of environmental protection activities.

Regarding innovation capacity, the tourism industry is not an industry where innovations end with invention and patent. Environmental protection implementations, certificates obtained, and systems established in this regard are important areas of innovation for the tourism industry. Innovations in the field of environmental protection are called green innovation. This area is open to development and support.

It is important to encourage establishments to innovate in a green way. Tourism establishments forming partnerships and collaborating in environmental protection can initiate the innovation process and result in more success. However, the relationship between the tourism industry and green innovation is poorly understood. Increasing research on environmentally friendly implementations will yield economic returns and the timeframe for such results may lead

entrepreneurs to invest in green initiatives. Thus, the spread of green innovation in the tourism industry can encourage other establishments to participate in the green innovation process through learning by seeing.

This study reveals that environmental protection in the tourism industry is also associated with economic resilience. In this context, environmental policies to be implemented at micro and mezzo levels are an area that can be addressed in future studies.

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