

# Actioning sustainability through tourism entrepreneurship: Women entrepreneurs as change agents navigating through the field of stakeholders

Actioning  
sustainability:  
women  
entrepreneurs

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Sustainability is viewed as an encompassing perspective, as endorsed by the international policy context, driven by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We aim to examine how women entrepreneurs transform capitals to pursue sustainability, and to generate policy insights for sustainability actions through tourism entrepreneurship.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Applying qualitative approach, we have generated empirical evidence drawing on 37 qualitative interviews carried out in Turkey, whereby boundaries between traditional patriarchal forces and progressive movements in gender relations are blurred.

**Findings** – We have generated insights into how women entrepreneurs develop their sustainability practice by transforming their available economic, cultural, social and symbolic capitals in interpreting the macro-field and by developing navigation strategies to pursue sustainability. This transformative process demonstrates how gender roles were performed and negotiated in serving for sustainability pillars.

**Research limitations/implications** – In this paper, we demonstrate the nature and instrumentality of sustainable tourism entrepreneurship through a gender lens in addressing some of these SDG-driven challenges.

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**Originality/value** – We advance the scholarly and policy debates by bringing gender issues to the forefront, discussing sustainable tourism initiatives from the viewpoint of entrepreneurs and various members of local community and stakeholder in a developing country context where women’s solidarity becomes crucial.

**Keywords** Entrepreneurship, Bourdieu, Gender, Sustainability, Sustainable Development Goals

**Paper type** Research paper

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## 1. Introduction

There is a growing interest in sustainable tourism entrepreneurship and how it can help achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including those related to gender equality, decent work and economic growth, reducing inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and responsible consumption and production (Boluk, Cavaliere, & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2019; Rasolimanesh *et al.*, 2020). Tourism enterprises can be important actors in sustainable development and serve social transformation and inclusion (Bramwell, Higham, Lane, & Miller, 2017). Scholars often view sustainable tourism as a normative orientation that seeks to redirect societal systems toward an integrated path toward sustainable development (Bramwell *et al.*, 2017). The Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating consequences for tourism questioned the sector’s future and its ability to realize the sustainability potential (UNTWO, 2022). This adds extra urgency and creates extra demand for research on mechanisms of inclusive employment and work in tourism, as well as sustainability-driven entrepreneurial models and management practices. Moreover, these mechanisms capture governance systems and regimes that can drive societal relations including values and provision of technological platforms for the introduction of sustainable tourism practices (Wray, 2015; Hartman, 2016). As articulated in the SDGs, sustainable development requires collective action and systemic change (Bramwell *et al.*, 2017). One of those new mechanisms could be multilateralism and fully aligned collaboration among diverse groups of people, communities, and stakeholders to pursue prosperity and sustainability (COP26, 2021).

In this article, we focused on gendered socio-economic practices in sustainable tourism entrepreneurship in Turkey. In doing so, we problematized the role of socio-normative and business contexts in enabling and reinforcing gender inequality. This problematization addresses the scholars’ calls in regard to sustainable tourism, particularly since 2010, i.e. when we observed a shift from functionalist and reductionist approaches to more critical and holistic ones (e.g. Jamal & Camargo, 2014; Ferguson & Alarcón, 2015; Jimenes-Esquinas, 2017; Beall, Boley, Landon, & Woosnam, 2021; Higgins-Desbiolles, Blanchard, & Urbain, 2021). This disciplinary movement aligns with the evolving discourse and practice on sustainability. In other words, all three pillars of sustainability (social, environmental, and economic) require consideration (Ertuna, Karatas-Ozkan, & Yamak, 2019) and addressing in tourism practices (Bramwell *et al.*, 2017). As this wave of critical thinking unfolds in sustainable tourism research, it has now become even more urgent to study gender relations with a holistic approach seeking to change and transform society and help move away from oppressive, exploitative, and alienating practices (Bramwell & Lane, 2014; Zhang, Kimbu, Lin, & Ngoasong, 2020). There is growing consensus that SDG 5 concerned with gender equality and empowerment of women is essential for achieving all seventeen SDGs (Higgins-Desbiolles, Blanchard, & Urbain, 2021; Alarcon & Cole, 2019; Khoo-Lattimore, Yang & Sanggyeong, 2019). In this context, going beyond simplistic approaches to gender inequality in tourism entrepreneurship is critical for equipping women entrepreneurs, managers, and employees with a higher degree of control in relation to environmental and socially responsible decision-making (Figuroa-Domecq, Kimbu, & de Jong and Williams, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, Blanchard, & Urbain, 2021).

The gender dimension of sustainable tourism entrepreneurship has been a neglected area in the extant literature. Researchers have not thoroughly or widely examined gender as a social construct in sustainable tourism entrepreneurship (Weaver & Lawton, 2007; Reimer &

Walter, 2013; Tran & Walter, 2014). Despite the growing recognition of tourism having a significant potential for contributing to all SDGs, we do not yet fully understand gender dynamics and have not addressed the issues across the tourism value chain. This requires discerning the layered nature of gender dynamics and developing and exercising agency at both individual and community levels. In this regard, we identified a theoretical opportunity for utilizing Bourdieusian theory, which researchers have largely overlooked in tourism studies (Ahmad, 2013). We addressed this theoretical void and demonstrated the value and instrumentality of Bourdieu's theory of capitals in problematizing and explaining gender inequalities in sustainable tourism. Noteworthy, these inequalities emerge and reproduce via social institutions, power relationships, and cultural roles, practices, and norms, which form the other two theoretical constructs of Bourdieu, namely habitus and field. Bourdieusian insights into social relationships, structures, practice, and surrounding power dynamics in a field – which can be gendered – offer useful tools to formulate informed questions for research problematization at the intersection of gender and sustainable entrepreneurship studies. Such inquiry is highly context-laden. In other words, we need to understand and explain social and cultural context, namely the field, in which various actors are embedded and interact to take positions to accumulate capitals that found their practices.

Given this policy and disciplinary (theoretical) context, we explored the individual and collective agency of women entrepreneurs and owner-managers engaged in sustainable tourism entrepreneurship in Turkey whereby boundaries between traditional patriarchal forces and progressive movements in gender relations are blurred. In other words, our research questions were: How do women entrepreneurs use and transform their capitals, which form their agentic capacity, to pursue sustainable tourism entrepreneurship? What are the policy insights for change and sustainable development, as articulated by SDGs?

Drawing on qualitative interviews with 37 participants, our findings indicated that women entrepreneurs transform their available economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals in interpreting the macro-context (field) and accordingly, they develop navigation strategies to pursue sustainability through tourism entrepreneurship. This transformative process shows how individuals challenge gender stereotypes and perform and negotiate gender roles while serving all sustainability pillars. Enacting sustainability in such a field raises the importance of the collective participatory process with myriad manifestations such as women's solidarity for forward action, negating some unequal aspects of the field. Women's fuller interaction with cultural heritage and greater emotional and passionate labor invested in the process presents unique evidence to elevate how women can shift positions and power dynamics in the field to serve sustainability. This has implications for policy and practice.

## 2. Theoretical underpinnings and disciplinary perspectives

### 2.1 Sustainable entrepreneurship

In recent years, researchers have increasingly focused on establishing entrepreneurship's impact on society and the environment. New forms of entrepreneurship such as social entrepreneurship and sustainable entrepreneurship have gained popularity in academic, practitioner, and policy circles (Cohen & Winn, 2007). Underpinned by a strong conviction in sustainability values, including shared responsibility, solidarity, social equality, and respect for nature, sustainable enterprises engage in related activities or activities addressing the pillars of sustainability (Leiserowitz, Kates, & Parris, 2006). The central premise behind sustainable entrepreneurship is maintaining the balance between the three pillars of sustainability, namely economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Traditionally, researchers have associated sustainable entrepreneurship with the triple bottom line construct, which reflects the integration of economic, social, and environmental goals. However, more recent research has recognized that a distinguishing attribute of

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sustainable entrepreneurship is the hybrid nature of these forms of enterprises (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014) and entrepreneurial processes underpinned by the intersectionality of these three pillars: economic, social, and environmental. According to Shepherd and Patzelt (2011, p. 137), sustainable entrepreneurship aims to “preserve nature, life support, and community in the pursuit of perceived opportunities to bring into existence future products, processes, and services for gain, where gain is broadly construed to include economic and non-economic gains to individuals, the economy, and society.” This is particularly relevant to enterprises in the tourism sector. Contrary to the traditional views that consider tourism as a “benign industry” (Higgins-Desbiolles, Carnicelli, Krolikowski, Wijesinghe, & Boluk, 2019) with negative externalities on sustainable development, Hall (2009) stresses the potential of the tourism industry to make considerable contributions to the sustainable development goals, acknowledging that tourism is a part of the “socio-bio-physical structure” of ecosystems.

### *2.2 Women and sustainable entrepreneurship*

Across the globe, diversity movements have gained momentum and women’s rights are no exception to this. Gender inequality in societies, organizational practices, and wider ecosystems came into the debates’ fore. United Nation’s (UN, 2015) 2030 agenda for sustainable development embedded all three pillars of sustainability (economic, environmental, and social) in 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs). In fact, SDG5 specifically focuses on gender equality. Policymakers, academics, and practitioners across all kinds of organizations agree that transformation toward sustainability entails impactful and innovative short-term and long-term efforts (Wasieleski, Waddock, Fort, & Guimarães-Costa, 2021). Moreover, SDG12b specifically asks for “developing and implementing tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products” (UN, 2015). In our study, we departed from a context-sensitive premise and acknowledged the importance of this international policy and practice context. In other words, the experiences and views of women who engage in sustainable tourism practices are part of a broader framework grounded in complex, multidimensional cultural, social, political, and historical systems (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000) and these systems provide a field for action to pursue sustainability via tourism entrepreneurship. This is also encouraged by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs being grounded upon a process of contextualization and conceptualization with respect to the links between poverty and gender equality (Chant, 2016; Alarcon & Cole, 2019). More specifically, SDG5 stresses the improvement of women’s capacities and their human rights; re-evaluation, reduction, and addressing unpaid care work conducted by women and girls, women’s full and equal participation in sustainable development as agents and decision-makers in their communities, countries and worlds; enhance leadership experience of women and support those leaders who defend women’s rights and gender equality in parliaments and other public spheres; and elimination of discriminatory laws and promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment (Alarcon & Cole, 2019; UN Women, 2018).

Academic debates have offered valuable insights into increasingly complex analyses of gender identities, gender roles, and relations in tourism development policy and practice (Swain, 1995; Aitchison, 2005; Gentry, 2007; Ferguson, 2011). In recent years, especially the “cultural turn” of post-structuralism in tourism studies has been approaching issues such as hegemonic tourism discourses, cultural practices, power inequities, gender identity construction, host and tourist subjectivities, embodiment, and symbolic representation (Aitchison, 2005; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Tucker, 2007). For instance, feminist theorists have critically approached popular issues such as the economic empowerment of women discussed within the logic of the “business case” to gender equality. They argue that this is one of the ways to position gender equality as a means to an end rather than an end itself (Keating, Rasmussen, & Rishi, 2010). Research has sought to explore how tourism is linked to the economic empowerment of women in several tourism destinations. Based on qualitative

research in Uganda and Turkey, [Tucker and Boonabaana \(2012, p. 438\)](#) strongly argued for the need to “move beyond simplistic and fixed thoughts of women’s economic empowerment” and to “consider more fully the cultural complexity and the shifting dynamics of how gender norms, roles and inequalities affect, and are affected by development and poverty reduction outcomes.” Similarly, [Ferguson \(2011\)](#) critically examined a World Bank tourism development project in Honduras with a specific emphasis on the gender’s role in these types of projects. If we do not consider the feminization of poverty, it is unlikely to discuss sustainable tourism development ([Alarcon & Cole, 2019](#)).

When looking more closely at the progress of the sustainable tourism literature, we notice that the structural and post-structural themes found in gender and tourism studies are present in research on gender and ecotourism/sustainable tourism in particular ([Dilly, 2003](#); [Schellhorn, 2010](#); [Scheyvens, 2000](#); [Stronza, 2005](#); [Tucker & Boonabaana, 2012](#)). Researchers often argue a duality in relation to women’s changing roles in sustainable tourism entrepreneurship. For instance, drawing on her research on a community-based ecotourism project in the Peruvian Amazon, [Stronza \(2005\)](#) argues that women assumed additional burdens of labor when working in an ecotourism lodge, but this also results in new gender roles and increased their decision-making power and involvement in community affairs. [Tucker’s \(2007\)](#) study on gender and tourism development in Turkey has explored the processes of tourism and socio-cultural change. Thus far, in Turkey, mostly men engaged in and dominated entrepreneurial activities and benefited from tourism employment whilst women remained largely excluded from tourism work. More recent scholarly works such as the study by [Çiçek, Zencir, and Kozak \(2017\)](#) and [Ertac and Tanova \(2020\)](#) touch on more positive impacts of tourism on women’s employment such as psychological empowerment and growth. Accordingly, tourism has the potential to transform the existing traditionally male-dominated structure and the women who previously worked at home have gained considerable self-esteem, confidence, and empowerment by participating in the workforce and exploiting the opportunities as entrepreneurs. Similarly, [Moswete and Lacey \(2015\)](#) demonstrate women’s empowerment as a multifaceted, highly situated, and contested notion in the context of Botswana. They revealed that women have made considerable progress from passive involvement to active participation in culture-related tourism ventures.

Empirical research revealed another interesting dimension. It relates to challenging stereotypical labeling against women engaged in sustainable tourism. For instance, [Jimenes-Esquinas \(2017, p. 312–313\)](#) challenges the idea of a one-way relationship between hosts and guests with an inherent assumption of a complete lack of control and power over local women’s own lives and the dominant empowerment discourse in the field. Drawing on ethnographic research among craftswomen in the north-western coast of Galicia (Spain), [Jimenes-Esquinas](#) demonstrates how gender stereotypes work in tourism performances and how we may exchange labels such as “conservative,” “rural,” “traditional,” “fine lady,” or “urbanite” in a fluid way.

To date, beyond the above-discussed studies and the growing prevalence of women in sustainable and ecotourism, relatively little research has examined gender as a social construct and as an analytical category in sustainable tourism entrepreneurship ([Weaver & Lawton, 2007](#); [Reimer & Walter, 2013](#); [Tran & Walter, 2014](#)). Scholars rarely challenge sustainable tourism discourse and practice or question them in relation to gender dynamics. As argued by [Alarcon and Cole \(2019\)](#), tourism has a significant potential to contribute to all SDGs in a meaningful manner provided that we address the issue of gender inequality across all parts of the tourism value chain, in other words, across all highly interconnected members of the ecosystem. This requires developing and exercising agency at both individual and community levels.

### *2.3 Theoretical lens*

We applied [Bourdieu’s \(1986, 1998\)](#) theory of capitals (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic) and field (of forces) to account for the contested, multifaceted, and relational nature

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of gender dynamics in sustainable tourism entrepreneurship. The theory of capitals can serve as an analytical framework to facilitate a more holistic analysis of sustainable tourism entrepreneurship by incorporating the critical aspects of power relations, inequalities, and social inclusion/exclusion. Despite the significance of employing a robust and integrative methodological approach in tourism research, tourism studies have largely neglected Bourdieu's work (Ahmad, 2013). We addressed this gap in theoretical orientation and demonstrated the value and utility of Bourdieu's theory of capitals in problematizing and explaining gender inequalities in sustainable tourism that emerge and reproduce via social institutions, power relationships, and cultural roles, practices, and norms.

Bourdieu's insights into power, gender, and social structure provide possibilities to enrich our understanding of sustainable tourism practices within the larger social and cultural context, namely the field, in which various actors are embedded and interact. Drawing on insights from several scholars, who applied Bourdieu's thinking tools in explaining social phenomena (e.g. Karataş-Özkan & Chell, 2010; Karataş-Özkan, 2011; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Tatli, Vassilopoulou, Özbilgin, Forson, & Slutskaya, 2014; Karataş-Özkan & Chell, 2015), we demonstrate the transformative potential of Bourdieu's theoretical constructs, mainly capitals, and field, in explaining gendered socio-economic practices and relationships in sustainable tourism. According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital has three forms: embodied capital (e.g. ways of thinking, talking, acting), objectified capital (e.g. cultural items such as books, instruments, etc.), and institutionalized capital (e.g. qualifications and education credentials). Cultural capital can be highly instrumental in bridging economic and social capitals to empower women with symbolic capital, particularly in the context of sustainable tourism. Social capital renders itself in such a way that it equips a social actor with the capacity to influence a group or individuals or to position themselves in a social setting (Bourdieu, 1986; Zhang & Tang, 2021). In a pertinent study, Yavuz, Karatas-Ozkan, and Howells (2014) show how the transformation of different forms of capital that social entrepreneurs obtain in the Brazilian context helped them fight racial inequalities and discrimination, which led to a change in institutional regulations and norms in different fields. Similarly, Filimonau *et al.* (2022) draw attention to the importance of the gendered nature of building social capital by women entrepreneurs as agents of entrepreneurial practice in interaction with their family, friends, policymakers, employees, and competitors, reinforcing how cultural context shapes formation of various types of capital and women's habitus, particularly in critical times.

We may understand the cultural and social habitus of women sustainable entrepreneurs by drawing on Bourdieu's notion of habitus as a wide repertoire of possible actions enabling such women to draw on. In other words, Bourdieu views the dispositions which constitute habitus, as the products of opportunities and constraints shaping individuals' life experiences (Reay, 2004). In a way, habitus is a useful construct that shows how such dispositions of women entrepreneurs (their choices and agency) are the product of cultural and social conditioning and are reflective of the social context in which they were acquired to obtain and transform various forms of capitals. Although we did not use habitus as an analytical construct in this study, we should highlight that it is the interaction of habitus, capitals, and the field that generates the logic of practice, namely the Bourdieusian theory of practice. Furthermore, habitus is highly useful in explaining gendered structures and relationships as it is a tool that helps us analyze the experience of social agents and the social structures that make this experience possible and shape its nature and trajectory (Bourdieu, 1988). Contrary to many arguments, habitus is a dynamic concept that allows for examining the evolutionary shifts in practice as such practice might change due to position in the field, capital resources, new experiences, and other factors (In Grenfell, 2012; Grosswirth, 2019). We can understand the gender dynamics of any social phenomena only through a holistic and reflexive perspective of the relationship between individual subjectivities and social structures.



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### 3. Methodology

We aimed to understand gender dynamics of sustainable tourism entrepreneurship, linked to the macro-policy context of sustainable development. Hence, our research questions include: How do women entrepreneurs use and transform their capitals, which form their agentic capacity, to pursue sustainable tourism entrepreneurship? What are the policy insights for change and sustainable development, as articulated by SDGs? We have conducted an empirical study in Turkey to address these questions.

#### *3.1 Research setting: sustainable tourism in Turkey*

Tourism has been an important industry in Turkey and has been growing since the 1980s, attracting internal and external tourists to beach holidays and visiting numerous cultural and historical attractions. Overall, Turkey's tourism revenues averaged 4229.06 USD million from 1990 until 2022 reaching an all-time high of 17950.00 USD million in the third quarter of 2022 ([www.tradingeconomics.com](http://www.tradingeconomics.com)). Sustainability and sustainable tourism received support through several government-backed projects involving civil society, international organizations, and private-sector collaborations. Authorities recognized the role of sustainable tourism in supporting job creation for women and youth, promoting inclusive social integration, protecting natural and cultural heritage, and improving well-being. For instance, in partnership with the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Anadolu Efes (a private holding of companies) developed the Future is in Tourism project. It aims to promote sustainable tourism, encourage entrepreneurship at the local level, offer capacity-building, foster partnerships between the public sector, private sector, academia, and civil society, and create sustainable models that can be applied to various tourism domains. Amongst 18 grant-supported projects as part of this wider program, Lavender Scented Village (nearby Isparta) is a prime example that brings together all pillars of sustainability through tourism. They address the environmental pillar through preserving the biodiversity of lavender; the social pillar – through training and upskilling women for product design, management, and entrepreneurship through the Village Women Entrepreneurship Cooperative; and the economic pillar – through creating income streams for the local community via sustainable tourism (<https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/future-tourism-0>).

Another UNDP and private-sector collaboration has brought about a heritage project in Turkey, which exemplifies a strong commitment to sustainable tourism by all kinds of stakeholders in different domains of tourism. United Nations Development Programme and Jolly, one of Turkey's prominent travel and leisure agencies, jointly created the Mirasım Türkiye (My Heritage Turkey) campaign to promote sustainable tourism in Turkey aiming to raise awareness about sustainable tourism, child-friendly tourism, and the importance of cultural heritage and passing it onto future generations. Their target is to reach 250,000 children through training programs and workshops (<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/tourism/un-development-programme-supports-sustainable-tourism-in-turkey>).

#### *3.2 Production of empirical evidence*

We decided for an exploratory qualitative study (Patton, 2015; Myers, 2015) to address these questions. We collected qualitative data via 37 semi-structured interviews with participants, including entrepreneurs, employees, and representatives of an umbrella organization and stakeholders (see Table 1 for the sample).

We conducted initial seven interviews in the pilot stage of the research. We drew participants from small-scale eco-farms leveraging the touristic dimension of the farms by attracting domestic and foreign tourists to the farm (to a large extent as part of the TaTuTa project, which is an umbrella organization), a few eco-friendly boutique hotels, wine houses,

Enterprises	Main activity	Interview no	Position	Gender
1 PV	Ecofarm	Int1	Founder (Entrepreneur)	Male
2 PV	Ecofarm	Int2	Employee (local woman)	Female
3 PV	Ecofarm	Int3	Employee (local woman)	Female
4 PV	Ecofarm	Int4	Employee (local woman)	Female
5 PV	Ecofarm	Int5	Manager	Male
6 YL	Ecofarm	Int6	Co-Founder	Male
7 DG	Ecofarm	Int7	Founder	Female
8 BA	NGO Association	Int8	Professional	Male
9 KE	Ecofarm (TaTuTa)	Int9	Founder	Male
10 KOFM	Olive Oil Museum	Int10	Founder	Male
11 HF	Ecofarm	Int11	Founder	Female
12 TC	Ecofarm	Int12	Founder	Female
13 IHC	Ecofarm	Int13	Founder	Female
14 AP	Bed and Breakfast	Int14	Founder	Male
15 NHH	Hotel	Int15	Manager	Female
16 AB	Young Entrepreneur	Int16	Entrepreneur	Male
17 IGH	Guest House	Int17	Founders	Female and Male (Husband & Wife)
18 VB	Winemaking	Int18	Founders	Female and Male (Husband & Wife)
19 GWY	Winemaking	Int19	Founder	Male
20 YV	Medical Yoga & Meditation	Int20	Founder	Male
21 EC	Carpentry	Int21	Owner	Male
<i>Stakeholders</i>				
22 FD	Tourism Association	Int22	Head & Vice Head	Male
23 ED	Tourism Association	Int23	Head	Male
24 SM	Municipality	Int24	Mayor	Male
25 BM	Municipality	Int25	Mayor	Male
26 DD	NGO Association	Int26	Head	Male
27 MM	Municipality	Int27	Mayor	Male
28 MM	Municipality	Int28	Mayor	Male
29 MSO	Chamber of Commerce	Int29	President	Male
30 FTM	District Director of Tourism	Int30	Manager	Male

**Table 1.**  
Sample: Participants of the study

**Note(s):** Additionally, we had 7 pilot interviews with a range of founder/entrepreneurs of sustainable tourism enterprises

**Source(s):** Table created by authors

olive oil museum various macro-level stakeholders, influential NGOs in the field, the local government officers (mayors of touristic towns). One participant was the head of the chamber of commerce. We focused on the views and experiences of entrepreneurs/owner-managers, compared (and often corroborated) with the views of employees and local and national stakeholders in the research setting, which is Aegean region of Turkey where tourism has traditionally been one of the major sectors for the country (32% of the overall GDP, [TUIK, 2017](#)) in the pre-pandemic period.



The semi-structured interview is a preferable method in the case of under-researched topics (Alvesson & Ashcraft, 2012). We designed the interview schedule to elicit responses to a set of questions including entrepreneurs' life stories, their motivation to start up the businesses, barriers and challenges they faced throughout the process, their sustainability practices, own perception and understanding of ecotourism/sustainable tourism, the relationship with the local community including any possible conflicts and tensions between entrepreneurs and locals, any changes introduced in the local community with the emergence of ecotourism initiatives in the region, and their views of the broader macro-environment. To contextualize all these interview data, we triangulated data sources by including the analysis of relevant policy reports.

We applied a qualitative data analysis that utilized a rigorous and systematic approach known as thematic analysis (Patton, 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2020). The thematic analysis involves multiple interconnected stages to ensure the robustness and richness of the qualitative data produced. Initially, we conducted the interviews in Turkish and translated them into English to facilitate the analysis process. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the interviews and the contextual factors surrounding them, three researchers engaged in an iterative process of reading and interpretation. The first stage consisted of multiple readings of the interview transcripts, enabling the researchers to familiarize themselves with the data and grasp its nuances. This thorough engagement with the interview material ensured a complete understanding of the interviews and the underlying contextual factors. While this stage involved minimal coding, it formed the foundation for subsequent analysis.

Drawing on this preliminary understanding, we started coding the data. A code in qualitative research represents a summative and meaningful unit of data that captures the essence of the participants' perspectives and experiences (Saldaña, 2021). We labeled the first set of codes as open codes, following Strauss and Corbin's (1998) approach. As we progressed through iterative cycles of reading and coding, we continuously refined and expanded the coding scheme. We added new sub-codes allowing for a more nuanced data analysis and exploration. Coding entailed moving from open codes to axial and selective codes (Seale, 2004). While open coding leads to first-order codes identifying instances of data according to emerging analytic themes, axial coding aims to identify the second-order codes that explain the interconnections between the open codes. Selective coding is the stage that involves highlighting third-order codes and core thematic categories using the analytical (theoretical) lens, which in our case was Bourdieu's theory (see Appendix for the illustrative interview data as coded accordingly). Throughout this iterative process, we employed a flexible and reflexive approach, constantly moving back and forth between the data and the Bourdieusian theoretical framework. In addition to this theoretical base, the existing literature served as a guide, allowing for pre-existing themes that informed some of the interview questions. However, we did not limit the analysis to predetermined themes. Rather, it remained open to the emergence of new codes and themes that arose directly from the data.

We continued this iterative process until we reached a point of thematic saturation when the identification of key themes (selective coding) was complete, and the data provided sufficient evidence to support and substantiate these themes. Saturation occurred when further analysis did not yield new insights or themes related to the research questions, signifying that we attained a comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurs' views and experiences. This iterative and detailed approach to data analysis aimed to ensure the depth and breadth of the analysis, bridging existing theoretical perspectives and empirical insights emanated from the data. By actively engaging with the data through repeated readings, attentive coding, and constant comparison with the themes from the literature and Bourdieusian theory, we established a robust foundation for generating meaningful findings.

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#### 4. Findings and discussion

Bourdieu's theory of capitals informed our findings. The key themes that we report in this section align with these capitals that form our higher-level codes. We will present the findings with support from in-text empirical evidence from interviews and provide an appendix (see [Appendix](#)) full of rich qualitative data to corroborate our findings and arguments.

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##### 4.1 Economic capital

From a Bourdieusian perspective, successful entrepreneurship in the context of sustainable/eco-tourism is contingent upon access to the mixture of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital (Shaw *et al.*, 2009, 2013; Lee & Shaw, 2016). Bourdieu (1986) argues that of these, economic capital is an important and critical asset for organizations. In this study, the majority of female entrepreneurs invested in their eco-farms or eco-friendly hotels through their earnings from their previous jobs and accumulated savings, income, and other financial resources and assets:

I used to work in Istanbul. I had a busy business life in construction for ten years in Istanbul. Before 2000, I worked for the Directorate General for Highways, which included the restoration and painting of bridges. I would go to foreign fairs for high technology, bring these, and apply. I was a very popular man in the Directorate and the metropolitan municipality at that time, because I worked very fast day and night. In this fast-paced life, I achieved economic opportunities. I always dreamed of growing olives in the countryside and making my own place where I could grow my own product. Thanks to my work in Istanbul, I got the economic resources. Around 2000, I bought the land for the project I thought of doing. (Participant, man, founder of an eco-farm.)

Moreover, women entrepreneurs attempted to overcome many of the context-specific challenges they face by being self-sufficient and by sustaining their businesses financially:

In 1992, we started to run a restaurant that enables us to use our crops produced from domestic seeds and varieties in the kitchen and to serve our foods in a totally local way." (Participant, woman, founder-manager of a sustainable tourism enterprise)

They usually get no additional support from the government or extra funding from any agency. This presents a risk for sustainable entrepreneurship as over-reliance on economic capital may impede the deployment and generation of non-material forms of capital including cultural, social, and symbolic capital, which in turn would impact their sustainability goals as articulated by the SDGs.

##### 4.2 Cultural capital

We found many examples of women entrepreneurs whose cultural capitals share similar aspects. Precisely, most of them have farming and natural-habitat-based backgrounds from their families, which led them to develop eco-friendly attitudes since their childhood. Given that their parents or grandparents used to be farmers, they grew up in an environment where farming, agricultural life, and sustainability issues were valued and appreciated as a way of respecting nature and people:

For example, when we were young, we planted trees, grew vegetables, and had chickens. We grew up in such an environment. So, we had a vision regarding nature. We somehow learned the information existing in our lives in nature step by step. I had a lot of experience both because my parents supported women and because they taught us nature. (Participant, Woman, Founder of an eco-farm.)

Now my grandmother came to my mind. . .She had a small cottage there. She would cut nylon bags, make ropes, knit them, and make mats, for example. Then she would melt the bins and repair them. I come from such a culture. Nothing would be thrown away; everything would be evaluated and recycled. (Participant, Woman, Founder of an eco-farm.)

I am a granddaughter of a farmer family, too. I spent a lot of time with them on the summer holidays. When I remembered what they did, I ran into a contradiction because what I was doing was different. They would do things differently. There were different things in my genetic memory. I mean, I was confused. I did not have any agricultural education, but the conflict between the things done in my childhood and those that were done that day started to make me feel uncomfortable. I can understand many years later that farming was quite different than it is today, more ecological if you like. (Participant, Woman, Founder of an eco-farm.)

Demonstrating the diverse nature of cultural capitals, several women entrepreneur participants did not have a rural background and they have been living in metropolitan cities by holding professional jobs (such as being a CEO of a family company, teacher, psychologist, and academic). One day, they decided to leave their jobs and wanted to shift their life from urban areas to rural ones to change their lifestyle, to avoid competition in corporate lives, or in other settings. For example, one of our participants (previously a businesswoman, currently the founder of an eco-farm) called this escape a “bohemian rhapsody.” Being a woman of a rural background constitutes one of the challenges for women entrepreneurs. This creates different gender and cultural stereotypes. As these women escaped from urban living to rural living, they brought strong social and cultural capitals with them. Consistent with this argument, another participant (founder of an eco-farm, which offers an eco-farm experience to visitors via training, workshops, and accommodation) completed her undergraduate degree in pharmacy and a postgraduate degree in physiotherapy. She has worked in different management levels of her family company including the position of board’s president. She became a member of TUSIAD (Turkish Industry and Business Association) and was in charge of the working groups on gender equality and intellectual property rights. She was the founding president of an association that has been impactful in supporting women’s entrepreneurship. We interviewed several other women entrepreneurs, who accumulated strong cultural and social capitals, and were endowed with economic capital due to their family and/or professional backgrounds. According to [Jayawarna, Jones, and Macpherson \(2014\)](#), family socio-economic status can predict future business ownership. We may also observe the higher socioeconomic position that these women entrepreneurs attain due to transforming their cultural and social capitals into economic capital. Hence, individuals can transform cultural capital into social capital or vice versa.

For some participants, their cultural capital with respect to objectified affiliations with goods, products, and materials as well as their hobbies and previous work experiences influenced the decision to launch sustainable tourism enterprises. Such accumulated cultural capital provided the surveyed women entrepreneurs with an advantage over their male counterparts. Those individuals, who have awareness and understanding of sustainability accumulated through earlier jobs and lifestyles, have fuller dispositions toward sustainable entrepreneurship.

I had difficulties convincing myself due to both the feudal structure and the wrong perception of the community in the city with a high level of education. But it is over now. Now if we are to list three names in organic agriculture, I believe that we would be listed among the top three. (Participant, woman, founder of an eco-farm.)

#### *4.3 Social capital*

Participants’ accounts revealed that social capital differs between men and women, with the former relying heavily on the bonding social capital, which reflects close relationships, strong ties, and social networks with key, influential local actors (such as the town’s mayor, President of the Chamber of Commerce), with the latter emphasizing primarily the

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importance of developing and bridging social capital through weak ties and resources' heterogeneity. Male participants in the study appeared to be enjoying a more advantaged position through participation or membership in male-dominated structures and networks, which enabled them to access various actual and potential resources compared to women. Local actors became important sources of mutual and reciprocal support as community and reciprocity are considered essential for strong bonding (Lee & Shaw, 2016). This over-reliance on bonding social capital can lead to parochialism and the emergence of an "old boy network" in the community where men can have more instrumentalist social capital compared with women, who are not part of useful networks and experience isolation.

#### *4.4 Symbolic capital*

Finally, we have seen symbolic capital as the amalgamation and the situated value of all other forms of economic, social, and cultural capital that participants draw on (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 47). This form of capital is crucial as it generates trust and legitimizes entrepreneurial actions, which we may also be viewed as the way different forms of capital convert into power and privilege (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Having accumulated the various forms of capitals, the participants possessed and gained prestige, status, legitimacy, authority, and reputation, which in turn, they can convert into social, cultural, and economic capitals for their pursuit of sustainable tourism entrepreneurship.

In sustainability efforts, individuals highly value symbolic capital. This is especially true for women entrepreneurs in their local region as they touch on the lives of local people including children and rural women with low income. They soon become change agents and well recognized in the region by contributing to the community and transforming gender values, in line with SDG1 (No poverty), SDG5 (Gender Equality), and SDG (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities:

I was elected the beauty queen in 1982. In reality, I am a ballet dancer. Nowadays, I have found myself a new life in this village. I built a small five-room hotel in the village I settled in and at the same time, I served breakfast. All the dishes and the products we offer are ecological, organic, and environment-friendly. First of all, I observed the people in the village. I started the change from the village's coffeehouse. It was normally occupied by men all the time. I organized all the women in the village. First, I went and sat there and the other women in the village followed me. As you can imagine, I got very negative reactions from the men in the village at first. Just then first I and then the other women in the village started sitting in the coffeehouse one by one. In time, reactions faded away. Of course, as a result of great struggles. Nowadays, we sit in village's coffee houses together, both men and women. We even perform dance shows in the middle of the coffeehouse. I bargained with the men in the village. I told them "Let's make a deal. Allow some freedom to your wives and you will see that you will earn money, too." I discovered many artists among those women. They draw pictures on all the walls in the village. (Participant, woman, founder of an eco-friendly boutique hotel.)

We also established an association: Atolye Deneme Art and Ecological Studies Association. It is completely a local association that we established to do something in the village. Our main goal is to be able to introduce artistic activities to disadvantaged groups in rural areas, primarily to children and women, including men. Some children have never been to a theatre or listened to a fairy tale. I want to do something about them. This July, we are carrying out a project with MEF University. In Yakakoy Elementary School's garden, we will build a playground, an open library, and something like an amphitheater through a design-and-run project. We will introduce innovation to the village and children will be able to touch on the design. (Participant, woman, founder of an eco-farm.)

Such symbolic capital gained out of engagement with their community and environment for natural continuity as well as positive change often determines women's approach to sustainable tourism:

This concept is related to soil, water, the lives of people who live in this region, and the possibility of continuing their lives as human beings in accordance with the principles of sufficiency and continuity. These people are part of a generation cycle. If they can continue the lifestyles they learned from their ancestors, namely the past members of the family in this territory, and if they produce and earn and at the same time show respect for soil, air, people, animals, and plants and continue being friends with them, this is sustainable tourism for me. (Participant, woman, founder of a hotel.)

For us, being sustainable means trying to improve yourself and at the same time staying connected to the past. Technology should not be denied, but when necessary, to give a very extreme example, for the good of the grapes, they should be plowed; tractors should not be used all the time. We should follow traditional ways. That is why, we plant ancestor seeds. We believe that these seeds are preserved in the ground, not in the bank. So, we plant them here and we take those seeds and plant them again the following year. If we can live in the way our ancestors did, this means we are able to sustain ourselves. The important thing is not to earn money but to be sustainable. (Participant, woman, founder of a winery and hotel.)

#### 4.5 Discussion

Our research questions for this study were: “How do women entrepreneurs use and transform their capitals to pursue sustainable tourism entrepreneurship? What are the policy insights for change and sustainable development, as articulated by SDGs?” Addressing these questions, we focused on different forms of capital that women entrepreneurs have and their myriad manifestations in actions for sustainable tourism entrepreneurship through interactions with an array of stakeholders.

Research findings point to the gendered nature of entrepreneurship in sustainable tourism as embodied in the dual nature of gender providing the women with both the advantage and disadvantage in a Bourdieusian perspective. Participants’ accounts addressed how women involved in sustainable tourism develop rural and gender identities by contributing to their local, national, and international communities (people) and also by connecting to their natural habitats (planet). As argued by [Hatipoglu, Ertuna, and Salman \(2020\)](#), this contribution to the social and environmental pillar of sustainability can be full if we first identify people’s needs and resource gaps and then establish an alignment with the community’s social goals. As indicated by [Hatipoglu et al. \(2020\)](#), such tourism projects and activities have more power to impact societal well-being.

An important question is how these engagements with community actors and the broader macro-field may either reproduce and/or challenge traditional rural and gender identities. Many women entrepreneurs who participated in our study told us their stories about how they experienced various challenges and tensions with their co-workers and the local community on the basis of their (strong) gender identities. They also reflected on the lack of concrete support mechanisms from important institutional actors in the environment, particularly for economic sustainability. Therefore, it is fundamentally important to consider all three pillars of sustainability, which we may achieve by transforming all kinds of capitals into each other in an aligned and collaborative manner, as dictated by SDGs. We may create new forms of collaborative capacity utilizing the recent breakdown of barriers between digital and physical settings and platforms. In a study demonstrating the core components of a physical–digital collaboration for entrepreneurship for women, [Johnson and Mehta \(2022\)](#) highlight that it is not rules that guide the collaboration context but multiple ideologies within society. Translating this to our study, women entrepreneurs can overcome some of the barriers they face due to their gender roles by co-creating and participating in solidarity networks, which can be more than activist networks, namely networks for resource generation to pursue sustainability goals.

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All of the above demonstrates the transformative process showing how different forms of capital serve three sustainability pillars. Central to Bourdieusian theory of capitals, through the accumulation of transformation of capitals, women can develop and exercise agency in pursuing sustainable entrepreneurship. One of the underlying interaction mechanisms between different forms of capital and sustainability practices is that individuals can convert, e.g. cultural capital into physical and cognitive dispositions and actions (Moore, 2012) to trigger certain sustainability practices. At the same time, symbolic capital reproduces power relationships and might lead to addressing inequalities or perpetuating them (Gander, 2019). Our data shows that the collective participatory process, in other words, women's solidarity, allows for forward action exemplifying "well-formed habitus" bringing together the socially advantaged and disadvantaged. Such salient aspects of gendered dynamics also include women having greater interaction with their cultural and heritage context in tourism entrepreneurship. The notion of women being more emotional and passionate about sustainability and actively engaging in creating their social world presents unique evidence depicting the salience of gender roles and different forms of capital that can shift positions and power dynamics already predefined by class and gender relations so that they serve sustainability.

## 5. Conclusions and contributions

According to our findings, it is crucial to explore sustainable tourism practices and entrepreneurship through a gender lens to develop a critical awareness and understanding of the gendered socio-economic relationships with implications for policy and practice. Drawing on empirical evidence, we demonstrated the importance of developing, deploying, and transforming various forms of capitals to pursue sustainability in tourism entrepreneurship, departing from the premise that all three pillars of sustainability (economic, social, and environmental pillars) entail equal and balanced attention in the process. Through a Bourdieusian lens, we showed that women participants transformed their available economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals in interpreting the macro-context (field) and accordingly, they developed navigation strategies to pursue sustainable tourism. This transformative process demonstrates how individuals challenged gender stereotypes and performed and negotiated gender roles while serving all sustainability pillars. This answers our first research question. Addressing our second question, we argued that these processes of capital accumulation and transformation and underlying mechanisms of the interaction between capitals should entail a collective participatory process, including entrepreneurs, rural people, local representatives, and NGOs to better address the perceptions of gender equality, gender roles and relations, and gendered understanding of entrepreneurship in sustainable tourism. Understanding gender roles and tapping into women's strength (e.g. deeper engagement with cultural heritage; passionate and emotional labor put into entrepreneurial action) in the context of sustainability empower policy institutions to develop relevant and meaningful support and intervention mechanisms.

Our contributions are multiple. First, we bring gender issues to the forefront by discussing sustainable tourism initiatives from the viewpoint of entrepreneurs and various members of the local community and stakeholders in a developing country context. Here, women's solidarity becomes crucial not only for achieving gender equity in rural areas through sustainable tourism but also for sustaining the environmental resource base upon which sustainable tourism relies for future generations (Scheyvens, 2007). In so doing, we also advance theory by demonstrating how the transformative process of capital interactions and conversions captures the essence of the gender dynamics and the shifts in women's practice in sustainable entrepreneurship. We may fully understand the gender dynamics of such sustainability phenomena through a holistic and reflexive perspective of the relationship



between individual experiences of women, their choices, and actions that are bounded by the opportunities and constraints inscribed in cultural and social structures.

Second, our arguments bridge the scholarship, practice, and policy divide in putting together evidence-based arguments for achieving sustainability via tourism entrepreneurship to support the UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development as articulated by the SDGs. Our participants' accounts clearly illustrate that women tend to have greater interaction than men in terms of cultural and heritage relationships with land, utilization, and support for the preservation of the natural resources that found sustainable tourism activities. Moreover, women's relationships with people and communities are also more aligned with the true sustainability mission underpinning most of the SDGs. We found clear evidence regarding the profound values such as care, love, passion, friendship, concern for nature and solidarity consistently reflected in mostly women participants' accounts as strong signs toward the accomplishment of the goal of social inclusion of historically excluded and marginalized local people in their regions through sustainable tourism.

Third, we generate policy insights on the timely topic of sustainability highlighted at the opening of the COP26 summit in 2021, which concluded that the impacts of SDGs, their adaptation and implementation to protect communities and natural habitats should be the priority, draw on science (evidence and stories of our participants), and bring together the resources for an aligned approach and action. Policymakers and other actors of a sustainable entrepreneurship ecosystem can connect better with aligned goals and priorities to pursue activities that align with SDGs. Such key actors at the policy level can remove structural barriers for women by co-creating capacity for physical and digital networking, resource redistribution, and reconfiguration of opportunities for sustainable tourism entrepreneurship. The SDGs' role is not only to allow stakeholders to work toward specific goals and plans but also to harmonize their actions, synergize resources, and bridge any gaps in sustainability understanding and practice so that women and other underserved groups become empowered.

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**Table A1.**  
Illustrative qualitative  
data (quotes from  
interviews)

First order code (open code)	Second order code	Third order code	Illustrative quotes
Education and work experience	Institutionalized capital	<i>Cultural Capital</i>	I am originally a teacher. I graduated in 1974. I taught for 5 years as an English teacher. We got married in 1975. In 1977, my husband founded his own company. Just after the first years, he realized his need for my assistance. After 5 years of teaching, I started to work in our own family company, so I switched to tourism sector (Interview 7).
	Embodied capital and Institutionalized capital	<i>Cultural Capital</i>	I have a bachelor's degree in public administration. I did my master's degree on culture management. In the third grade at university, I took courses on ecology and environment. I got familiar with ecology there for the first time. I heard about 92 Rio Conference and so on. After 2013, I was consulted in the joint projects of the United Nations with the Ministry. Anadolu Efes also has a project called "Future is in Tourism" and I was consulted by them. Time to Evaluate Female Labor. There was a guest house operated by a Women's Cooperative established in Mardin. I was also consulted by them for a while (Interview 6). I was born in a family business. I am the child of an entrepreneur father and a mother who decided to study pharmacy after giving birth to two children. When I started primary school, my sister started to go to kindergarten and my mother to university. My father would take us to work when we were children. So how can a person become an entrepreneur? It is thanks to this environment, the ecosystem. For example, when we were young, we planted trees, grew vegetables, and had chickens. We grew up in such an environment. So, we had a natural vision. We somehow learned the information existing in our lives in nature step by step. I have had a lot of experience both because my parents supported women and because they taught us nature. I also studied pharmacy. I got a master's degree in phytotherapy. I worked as a CEO in our family company. I had a TUSIAD membership, and then I found myself in the women's movement. I worked as the founding president of KAGIDER (The Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey). There is such a long story behind the road to HF (Interview 11).

(continued)



First order code (open code)	Second order code	Third order code	Illustrative quotes
	Embodied capital	<i>Cultural Capital</i>	<p>Now my grandmother came to my mind. For example, she would do something like that in our summer house in Gumusyaka. My grandmother had a small cottage there. She would cut nylon bags, make ropes, knit them, and make them mats, for example. Then she would melt the bins and repair them. I come from such a culture. Nothing would be thrown; everything would be evaluated and recycled (Interview 11).</p> <p>Foca is a place accustomed to tourism because French Holiday Village was founded in 1964 in Foca. The tourism activity started in this city in 1964. Foca is Turkey's first French Holiday Village and the first place declared as a tourism zone. Can you imagine? There are grandmothers that speak French here because they worked in French Holiday Village for years and they were also taken to the hotel in Switzerland or Israel as part of the system requirement of French Holiday Village. The person in Foca could suddenly find himself in Switzerland. He could be equipped with the cultural environment there, and after surviving the living conditions there, come here and bring another source. At the end of the summer, he would go back to working in the village here. Foca is very familiar with tourism in this sense, and that French Holiday village got their stuff from the grocery here. The grocery got the greenery from the village; the tomato was also coming from the village. This could lead to mobility here. Festivals were taking place. All the people were involved. There was a culture festival. The basis of all of them lies in the fact that it is a region which started tourism very early in 1964. The region is very familiar with tourism and knows what tourism is. It has been internalized. And this is true for everyone from old to young (Interview 22, TUDER).</p> <p>Since my childhood, I have been interested in this Caretta caretta turtle project all my life, and I can also say that I grew up with students. We were already here every summer. So, there was a little familiarity with this environment coming naturally from there and from childhood (Interview 6).</p> <p>I spent my childhood in the olive groves in Buca. I am from Buca. Our nature and culture are based on olive. We have grown up all in olive groves. We did not know any other oil than olive oil. In the morning we would eat olive oil. Olive oil was used even in frying. There was no sunflower seed oil then. We come from a culture like that. Our family is drama immigrants. When they migrated, they came with their culture. Olive oil (Interview 10).</p> <p>It was my dream to lead this natural life here. Our house in Istanbul also had a garden. We would plant our own vegetable in the middle of Istanbul, in Etiler. We had one and a half-decare garden. We had everything from fruit trees to chickens. We would plant all the vegetables like parsley, dill, and spinach. We lived like that even in Istanbul. I am a person of nature, and I have been so since my childhood (Interview 31-pilot interview).</p> <p>I was born and grew up in a village. I actually mean farm when I say village. We lived in a farm. As I said before, my ancestors came and settled in a village a long time ago. Then they bought nearly every part of the village. We grew up in houses which were built in places that were bought to be utilized later (Interview 16).</p>

*(continued)*

## Actioning sustainability: women entrepreneurs

Table A1.

Table A1.

First order code (open code)	Second order code	Third order code	Illustrative quotes
Gender	Gender in Sustainable Tourism	<i>Cultural Capital</i>	<p>These women are perfectionists and extremely emotional. They behave their customers coming to the hotel as guests at their own home. In fact, in farming tourism and boutique hotel management, it is impossible to be successful when you do not see your customers as guests at your home. Customers feel this... I can clearly say that women are the ones who keep Alacati alive. There are entrepreneurs and there are people who run hotels. Many cultivated people bought houses there. A lot of cultured, quality people came to Alacati, bought buildings there, and eagerly restored them (Interview 10).</p> <p>There is of course sustainable tourism, too. Alacati is the best example. Women keep the boutique hotels in Alacati up. This place would not survive without them. It is impossible. For example, our hotel is one of the top-rated hotels on booking and this is totally thanks to my wife because she is putting her heart and soul in her work. Turkish women are remarkable. When you give them a task, they perform it excellently. They never miss anything. They are perfectionists (Interview 10).</p> <p>In the past boys in Bodrum reserved fertile grounds for themselves and gave grounds near sea and fields where orange was grown to girls, thinking that they were not worthy. This is a story that is still told. Then, of course, when tourism flourished and seaside grounds increased in value, girls became rich and naturally so did their husbands. Hence, brothers became poor compared to their sisters (Interview 27).</p> <p>I used to work in Istanbul. I had a busy business life in construction for 10 years in Istanbul. Before 2000, I did the work of the Directorate General for Highways such as the restoration and painting of bridges. I would go to foreign fairs for high technology, bring these, and make applications. I was a very popular man of the Directorate and the metropolitan municipality at that time because I worked very fast day and night. In this fast-paced life, I achieved economic opportunities. I always dreamed of growing olive in the countryside and making my own place where I could grow my own product. Thanks to my work in Istanbul, I got the economic resource. Around 2000, I bought the land of the project I thought of doing (Interview 9).</p> <p>I was a man with a firm in Istanbul, but I always preferred to stay small-scale and protect my own freedom zones. I would ride bicycle. I have never had luxury preferences. I spent the money I earned in different ways like on culture, art, and painting. But, these are all choices (Interview 12).</p> <p>I am a learning enthusiast, very open to improvement, and I love learning. For example, just because of this, I started permaculture courses. I had already studied phytotherapy. I have had a lot of books about agriculture, all kinds of it (Interview 11).</p> <p>I dreamed of doing this job for years. Namely, as I like making wine, I wanted to do such a thing (Interview 19).</p>
Gender	Gender in sustainable tourism	<i>Economic Capital</i>	
	Deployment and conversions between capitals	<i>Economic and Cultural Capitals</i> (interacting)	

(continued)

First order code (open code)	Second order code	Third order code	Illustrative quotes
Generation of new ideas for sustainable entrepreneurship	Embodied capital and Institutionalized capital	<i>Cultural Capital</i>	As my wife and I are both people of soil origin, we bought land with a part of the money we earned from tourism. There were also the lands my wife inherited from her family, but we bought these lands ourselves. However, after a while, in 1995 the costs of farming on land became unsustainable. We are a family company. The family council wanted me to deal with these lands and institutionalize them. We have a travel agency and a group of hoteliers, but this duty was given to me at the same time surely because I was the mother. I was a person who did not receive any agricultural training, but my education in teaching gave me confidence there. In addition to the planning, learning and teaching skills I got, I thought that my social intelligence would be enough to accomplish this task, so I said yes and accepted it. I took it over in 1995 and structured the first Degimen Restaurant that year (Interview 7).
	Bridging Social Capital	<i>Social and Cultural Capital (interacting)</i>	As we have a travel agency, we naturally traveled abroad often. Since our friends knew that both I and my wife love earth and nature, they took us to places similar to what we want to do here. I started to think why we could not do the thing they were doing. We had field, we had place, we had our country, and we had our minds. Why could not we create an ecotourism model? When I started thinking whether I could do this, I started to build DR in 1995 (Interview 7).
	Bridging Social Capital through weak ties	<i>Social Capital</i>	In the beginning, I mean in the 2008s, 2009s, 2010, I went to 6 foreign and domestic fairs in a year. I wondered what was happening in the ecotourism world. I went to conferences and so on. I started to get a little more involved there; I wanted to learn who was doing what on ecotourism. . . After going to such meetings for a while. . . I was offered consultancy in the project in Mardin by the United Nations. After dealing with the Mardin project, reporting it, they also had projects in Seferhisar, Bursa, and Mardin. They asked me to join the project in Seferhisar, too. . . So, it went on like this (Interview 6).
	Deployment and conversion of capitals	<i>Social and Cultural Capital (interacting)</i>	We are active and moving very fast. We are getting very fast results because we can use our local relations. At this point, there is of course an advantage of living in a small place. For instance, there is an issue about the hall of the municipality. We know the person and we get in contact immediately. Or there is a matter that needs to be talked about. We call the president immediately and we reach him. Even if we cannot reach him, he calls us back within half an hour (Interview 22).
	Constraints of social capital		We were living in Nazilli. I had a water factory. I transferred it and had some money. I also had a land. You already know everybody in the area you are in as you work for 8 years in a nearby area as the owner of the water factory. You naturally feel more comfortable at the place where you know the municipality, the district governor, and so on. So, we started in order to be able to do some things (Interview 13).
			What I have gone through is so hard. I am a very well-known person in Izmir. Despite that, I cannot do many things. I have trouble doing this job. All the bureaucrats in Izmir are my patients. I have been helpful to every one of them, yet I did not get help from anyone (Interview 10).

(continued)

Table A1.

Table A1.

First order code (open code)	Second order code	Third order code	Illustrative quotes
Sustainability dimensions (all three pillars) of tourism entrepreneurship	Meanings, practices and motivations for sustainable tourism entrepreneurship	<i>All four capitals (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) serving for all three pillars of sustainability (environmental, social and economic sustainability)</i>	<p>Indeed, the important thing is not to do things, but to continue them. What we do is just a beginning. We need to struggle to continue, but of course not everyone can do it. Especially the villagers. People like us need to be sensitive. They should lay claim to the village. As I always say, I have such a thing in my dreams. Every region has a land baron, an agrarian elite. If these people claim their own village and if tourism and ecological development can be achieved there like here, then the way for ecological village tourism is definitely paved. In every village, there are houses that reflect past life experiences. They could be found out and put forward. There is a small garden in every house. People can make a small place with two rooms and then take things out of their chest and hang them there (Interview 31- pilot interview).</p> <p>This concept is something first related to soil, water, the lives of people who live in this region, and the possibility of continuing their lives as a human being in accordance with the principles of sufficiency and continuity. These people are part of a generation cycle. If they can continue the life styles they learned from their ancestors, namely the past members of the family in this territory, and if they produce and earn and at the same time show respect for soil, air, people, animals, and plants and continue being friends with them, this is sustainable tourism for me (Interview 31- pilot interview).</p> <p>So, if tourism develops in this country, in this town, or anywhere, it can be said that children can have a happier life there (Interview 24).</p> <p>It is supposed to be sustainable so that everything can go on. We should not consume our resources. For this, we have to fulfill the requirements of sustainable tourism. We have to follow, we need to cultivate. I think the future of the country and tourism is all in this definition. Future is in tourism, in fact, in sustainable tourism (Interview 22).</p> <p>We give so much importance to sustainable tourism so that we can transfer it to the next generations. We think that starting from today, precautions should be taken in places where people live with tourism or in agricultural tourism partnership in order to transfer resources to the future. We must at least create awareness. Hence, we have a responsibility and a concern for future generations. To give an example, my friend is both a hotelier and a boat owner. If we do not keep our environment clean, if we do not keep our water clean, then who will our friends take to the sea after 20 years? Or if the special elements of Foca are wasted, who are we going to invite? Where are we going to accommodate these people? (Interview 22)</p> <p>We do not use packaged products, for example. We put all our things (jam, honey, and so on) in ceramic cups. We do not buy these in packages; we use natural products. We do not create industrial waste from breakfast. There is no industrial waste from the breakfast; it is natural waste. There is no plastic in it. We are trying to sort out our trash. We are trying to separate them into groups such as glass, plastic, and paper as much as possible. We do not use anything plastic in the breakfast service. We do the washing ourselves. If you give your washing to laundry, they will not wash them as meticulously as we do both in terms of cleanliness and damage to nature. We use less water. We heat the water with solar energy. Besides, we will get our hotel inspected by a sustainable tourism expert. There are criteria for this, and then there are 122 criteria for the green star certification. We will gradually try to comply with these criteria. We will see our deficiencies and what we can do for them (Interview 22).</p>

*(continued)*

First order code (open code)	Second order code	Third order code	Illustrative quotes
			<p>We are trying not to use plastic as much as possible, including loungers. Lately, we have been trying to buy our products from tatuta farms, from the ones that produce with certificate in the region. We try to reduce the number of packages. For example, we found a kind of soda produced near here in Denizli and bought from there. (procurement from the local manufacturer) (Interview 6).</p> <p>We do not use plastic in any way. We have glass bottles. I may even use paper plates, but never plastic. I tried to teach it in this village. As a matter of fact, they also turned from plastic to paper. I mean if it was up to me, you could get rid of the plastic bottles in coffeehouses. But, of course, it is expensive for villagers (Interview 31).</p> <p>For us, being sustainable means trying to improve yourself and at the same time staying connected to the past. Technology should not be denied, but when necessary, to give a very extreme example, for the good of the grapes, they should be plowed; tractors should not be used all the time. Traditional ways should be followed. That is why, we plant ancestor seeds. We believe that these seeds are preserved in the ground, not in the bank. So, we plant it here and we take those seeds and plant them again the following year. If we can live in the way our ancestors did, this means we are able to sustain. The important thing is not to earn money but to be sustainable (Interview 32- pilot interview).</p> <p>People who come here stay in old stone houses. They eat the products of the farms, drink their wine, stay there, do what they want, go to the pool or to the sea, pick tomatoes and pepper from the garden, and eat them. They can eat or drink whatever they want; they just pay us a certain fee. Everything is full pension (Interview 9).</p> <p>I am against waste. When our rice remains uneaten on our plate, we turn it into either soup or meatball. I do not like waste because I labor my tomatoes, peppers, and parsley. I gather them according to the number of people coming. Otherwise, they go to waste. Of course, I do not waste all the remains. I have animals. All are in a process of recycling. I have geese, ducks, peacocks, goats, lambs, and dogs. I waste nothing, but what matters is to raise such awareness. For example, I have three separate bins: plastics, glass, and compost. When I sprinkle the remains, my rabbit eats, and my dog eats (Interview 31).</p> <p>It means that tourism does not remain limited to one season and can be sustained throughout a year. It means tourism is sustainable throughout four seasons. Of course, it is not limited to it. That is, in parallel to the literal meaning of sustainability, it has to be sustained years later (Interview 19).</p>

*(continued)*

## Actioning sustainability: women entrepreneurs

Table A1.

Table A1.

First order code (open code)	Second order code	Third order code	Illustrative quotes
			<p>A single season of tourism is entirely wrong. First, it is wrong how we define it. It makes clear there is no sustainability. I mean we have tourists in the summer, but no tourists in the winter. Here is the abnormality, especially in a country like Turkey, when we see tourism season-based or always summer-based. Then, you cannot also find a qualified employee. This is because they work for one season, starting in the summer and leaving in the winter. They work for 4 or 5 months. What happens then? Nobody makes their work sustainable. Thus, problems arise here. First, tourism should not be a matter of summer or winter. It has to be sustained for four seasons. Well, what can we do now? Let's think olive harvesting, the harvest program. Or bird monitoring can be done in the winter. Think of the bird monitoring activities in the region. That is, in February in this region. We will never wait for an occupancy rate of 100%. We do this seasonally. If occupancy is 30 or 40% in the winter, we can extend it over a year. We can achieve sustainability by differentiating each season according to its own characteristics. This entire region has its own characteristics. They have to be introduced and unveiled. Inventory work, botanical work has to be done here. A tamarix here, I do not know, a hackberry there. How old are olive trees? How many of them are monument trees? Thus, you will have saved them. People walking around, traveling here. Native and foreign travelers see a tree which is 25,000 years old and take a picture. For example, they say this is a hackberry, oh, 100–150 years old. Then, people travel to the fullest (Interview 14).</p> <p>We are almost self-sufficient. Almost up to 90%. We do all our vegetable. We have about 150 chicken, about 50 dogs, bees, turkeys. We've got almost ten different type of fruit juices. In each season for our guests. We do not buy from anybody. I do not know, if you call that eco or organic. You know, I am a farmer child. I know how to deal with these things. I grow... Even still... at least ten years in November. I have a lot of tomatoes, green pepper and egg-plant. So aubergine. English and American people use different name for it © We are a lot of them. We grow up agriculture things for our self. I mean only really barely buy from market like sugar. We do not have any acting drink in our hotel. You know like that cola, fanta, not fizzy drinking in our hotel, if guest ask. Mostly fresh food do, we do our self... beet juice, orange juice, mandarin juice. We do everything for our self here. People want to get from garden. It is ideal for people to pick up tomatoes in the morning, pick up their own pepper in the morning. This is how do people like these things. And we hate to plastic. Even, when we go to supermarket here, I do not like any plastic. I take my baskets with myself to put them in. I do not want to buy any more plastic bags. And also we do not use any plastic bag here (Interview 33- pilot interview).</p> <p>In 1992, we started to run a restaurant that enables us to use our crops produced from domestic seeds and varieties in the kitchen and to serve our foods in a totally local way (Interview 34- pilot interview).</p>