

## **Rural Development through Intangible Cultural Heritage: The Cultural and Economic Transformative Potential of Pottery**

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### **Abstract**

Intangible cultural heritage plays a significant role in the development of cultural tourism and the sustainable development of rural areas. In recent years, tourists' growing interest in authentic and local experiences has positioned handicrafts as strategic attractions within tourism destinations. This study examines the pottery tradition of Kınık Village in Bilecik Province, which has a history of approximately 150 years, in terms of its tourism potential and contribution to rural development. The research adopts a qualitative approach, and the data obtained from face-to-face interviews with seven pottery artisans actively working in Kınık Village were analysed using content analysis. The findings reveal that pottery production in Kınık Village strengthens local identity, contributes to both female and male employment, and has the potential to generate local income through tourism activities. Moreover, the village -recognized for the distinctive Kınık *akıtma* pattern and home to Europe's largest ceramic jar- offers a differentiated and destination-specific tourism experience by enhancing the visibility of local and cultural values. However, the outmigration of young people poses a significant threat to the sustainability and intergenerational transmission of this traditional craft. In conclusion, integrating pottery into tourism activities and supporting it through conservation-oriented policies contribute not only to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage but also to the strengthening of rural development and cultural sustainability.

**Key words:** Intangible Cultural Heritage, Rural Development, Handicrafts, Pottery, Cultural Tourism

**JEL Code:** L83, P25, Z32

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## **1. Introduction**

Tourism stands out as one of the fastest-growing sectors worldwide. As tourists' desire to experience different lifestyles and cultures has intensified, many cities and villages that were previously little known in tourism terms have begun to emerge as new destinations (Zandieh and Seifpour, 2020). Over the past two decades, the global tourism market has become increasingly complex and fragmented, shaped by demographic, socio-economic, and psychographic differences related to tourists' motivations, interests, and perceptions. This situation has made it progressively more challenging for developers and policymakers to create distinctive, coherent, and competitive tourism products (Kesar, Matečić and Hodak, 2018). In this context, tourists' growing interest in cultural heritage tourism offers destinations a significant opportunity for differentiation and positioning.

The relationship between cultural heritage and tourism is as old as tourism itself, and cultural heritage continues to be one of the most powerful driving forces behind travel. Today, many tourism destinations interpret and promote their cultural heritage (Curkovic, 2021). Moreover, cultural heritage can provide a destination with a sustainable competitive advantage (Pfeilstetter, 2015). Authentic tourism destinations create memorable experiences for visitors. Many tourists who seek to understand different cultures by observing local lifestyles and traditions travel abroad in pursuit of such experiences. Cultural tourists examine the ways of life, histories, arts, architectures, religions, and identity-forming elements of societies (Timothy, 2011).

When cultural heritage is mentioned, buildings, monuments, and other tangible remain of human civilizations are generally the first elements that come to mind. However, these do not represent the entirety of human activities. Cultural heritage also encompasses beliefs, traditions, language, linguistic characteristics, handicrafts, music, and all other human practices that should be preserved for future generations (Zandieh and Seifpour, 2020). These elements, referred to as intangible cultural heritage (ICH), have become distinguishing values within cultural heritage tourism worldwide (Kim, Whitford and Arcodia, 2019). The main reason for this lies in the fact that contemporary cultural tourists show a strong interest in experiencing authentic culture through traditional practices, festivals, and rituals that constitute the intangible cultural heritage of local communities (Khanom, Moyle, Scott and Kennell, 2019).

Although studies on intangible cultural heritage have been increasing, research addressing the relationship between this heritage and tourism -particularly rural development- remains limited in number (Pfeilstetter, 2015; López-Guzmán and Santa-Cruz, 2016; García-Almeida, 2019). When compared with intangible cultural heritage inventories in Western countries (Ünal, 2020), pottery, which occupies an important place in folkloric sources such as folk songs and poems, appears to be underrepresented in the academic literature. In this context, the present study aims to make visible the pottery tradition of Kınık Village in Bilecik

Province, which has a history of approximately 150 years, to evaluate its tourism potential, and to reveal its potential contribution to rural development through tourism. Pottery is considered an important development tool in terms of its capacity to generate local employment and income, as well as its role in safeguarding cultural heritage and strengthening the socio-economic structure of rural areas.

## **2. Conceptual Framework**

### **Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH): Emergence, Definition, and Characteristics**

People learn their culture over time and live in accordance with it. A society's language, religion, lifestyle, beliefs, attitudes, eating and drinking habits, rituals, traditions, behaviors, and many other elements constitute culture (Gupta, Bhatia and Arora, 2018). Heritage shapes and distinguishes societies through their economic, spiritual, artistic, and social values. In its simplest sense, heritage refers to the elements transmitted from one generation to the next (Harrison, 2010). For this reason, cultural heritage is considered a holistic system composed of both tangible and intangible assets (Giudici, Melis, Dessì and Ramos, 2013). Cultural heritage encompasses traditional behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, and social structures that serve societies and constitutes an integral part of rural, urban, and local life (Muchenje, Nyaruwata, Pwiti and Mhizha, 2023).

For a long time, discussions on cultural heritage -including related legal regulations- have predominantly focused on material (tangible) heritage. The framework that defines intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and its protection mechanisms has emerged relatively recently (Eichler, 2021). Founded in Paris in 1945, UNESCO has been engaged in activities aimed at safeguarding, sustaining, and transmitting cultural assets to future generations, including those related to tourism. UNESCO maintains an inventory covering natural and historical tourism sites and considers these areas among the global priorities requiring protection and safeguarding (Lenzerini, 2011; Gupta et al., 2018).

The origins of efforts to safeguard intangible cultural heritage date back to multilateral negotiations among different countries in the mid-twentieth century concerning copyright claims over folklore and cultural traditions. A more systematic approach to the intangible dimension of cultural heritage first emerged in Asia during the 1950s and 1960s. In this context, for example, the governments of Japan and South Korea introduced various legal regulations after the Second World War to protect traditional practices and ceremonies perceived to be under threat from modernization and globalization (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Esfehni, 2016).

In 1972, UNESCO formalized the “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage” and established the World Heritage

List (Lenzerini, 2011). The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was prepared in response to the fact that the cultural heritage elements addressed under the 1972 Convention were defined as such due to their visible and tangible characteristics (Oğuz, 2013). The new “ICH” initiative began in 1989 with the first global normative instrument aimed at safeguarding traditional culture and folklore. Ultimately, in 2003, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, focusing on the protection and revitalization of heritage elements (Pelit and Türkoğlu, 2019).

If there are no practitioners to sustain intangible cultural heritage, this heritage faces the risk of disappearing over time. Particularly in economically disadvantaged countries, ICH may sometimes be overlooked compared to tangible heritage due to its relatively lower environmental impact (Tan, Lim, Tan and Kok, 2020). Therefore, its safeguarding is of critical importance. The “UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage” (2003) provides legal protection and classification for ICH, thereby enabling its historical and cultural significance to be formally addressed (Mendonça and Lopes, 2016). Türkiye officially became a party to this Convention on 27 March 2006. Policies, studies, and practices related to intangible cultural heritage in Türkiye are carried out by the General Directorate of Research and Education of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In line with the prepared legislation and guidelines, ICH-related processes are managed in cooperation with institutions such as the Provincial Directorates of Culture and Tourism, the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and universities (Arıoğlu and Aydoğdu Atasoy, 2015).

The primary objective of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is the protection and revitalization of these heritage values (Krasojević and Djordjević, 2017). The Convention classifies ICH under five main categories: (1) oral traditions and expressions, including language; (2) performing arts; (3) social practices, rituals, and festive events; (4) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and (5) traditional craftsmanship (Lopez-Guzman and Santa-Cruz, 2016). However, UNESCO explicitly states that the boundaries between these domains are highly permeable and may vary from one community to another. For this reason, strict classifications are difficult to establish. For example, a form of expression considered a ritual by one community may be regarded as a song by another (Gupta et al., 2018).

The Convention defines intangible cultural heritage as follows:

“Intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills -as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith- that communities, groups, and in some cases individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity,

thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity” (UNESCO, 2003).

This definition characterizes ICH as the “living culture of human communities and groups.” It emphasizes knowledge and skills transmitted across generations through interaction with the environment (Giudici et al., 2013; Cheng and Yuan, 2021). This phenomenon, repeatedly reproduced over generations, provides humanity with a sense of identity and continuity (Petronela, 2016). Therefore, educating local communities and groups that sustain ICH elements is of great importance (Krasojević and Djordjević, 2017). The safeguarding approach adopted in the Convention does not aim to preserve ICH in its pure or original forms; rather, it prioritizes the transmission of knowledge, skills, and meanings. In this context, awareness-raising, transmission, inventory-making, and revitalization activities related to ICH fall within the core scope of the Convention.

Intangible cultural heritage is regarded as a bridge connecting the present to the future (Masoud, Mortazavi and Farsani, 2019). In this respect, as a synthesis of human civilization and wisdom, it reflects the spiritual values, imagination, and cultural consciousness of a destination and plays a significant role in the lives of countries, societies, communities, and local populations (Su, 2018; Wei, Liu and Park, 2021). Rather than being a tangible product that can be easily replicated, ICH is considered the intellectual property of a society and thus possesses a unique character. Accordingly, safeguarding cultural heritage can contribute to the development of collective awareness in terms of unity, solidarity, and national consciousness, while also encouraging peaceful coexistence among societies (Muchenje et al., 2023).

As a shared, traditional, and living culture within a community, intangible cultural heritage is continuously reproduced (Prada-Trigo, Pérez Gálvez, López-Guzmán and Pesántez Loyola, 2016); it is collectively performed and mostly transmitted orally among its bearers (Esfehani and Albrecht, 2018; Sinclair-Maragh and Bernard Simpson, 2021). In this respect, ICH establishes a link between the past, present, and future, providing societies with a sense of identity and continuity (Wei et al., 2021). Moreover, ICH plays a significant role in intercultural communication and can stimulate tourism. As an increasing number of tourists seek interaction with new cultures, intangible cultural heritage has become one of the major driving forces of tourism (Tan, Anwar and Jiang, 2023).

### **The Relationship between Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and Handicrafts**

Following the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at UNESCO’s General Conference in 2003, cultural and social demand for elements within this field has increased significantly. In parallel with this trend, the tourism sector has also begun to prioritise cultural heritage as a key area of interest (Ismail, Masron and Ahmad, 2014; Qiu and Zhang,

2021). According to researchers, tourists contribute to the formation and legitimization of what has been described as a “heritage-producing machine” as part of this process (Gravari-Barbas, 2018). Cultural heritage constitutes a fundamental resource for tourism development and explains a large proportion of people’s motivations to travel (Timothy, 2011). Owing to its diversity and authenticity, intangible cultural heritage is inherently and strongly connected to tourism. Tourist experience occupies a central position in the development of cultural heritage tourism, and tourism experiences are increasingly perceived as a psychological necessity (Lu, Su, Zhao and Zhang, 2022).

Heritage and cultural tourism focus on various elements such as traditional practices, handicrafts, and cultural performances (Upadhyay, 2020). In its simplest definition, handicrafts are described as “portable products produced by artisans using artistic and manual skills” (Son, 2023). Traditional handicrafts, as an integral part of cultural heritage, represent a significant component of cultural memory shaped by shared identity, emotions, and a sense of belonging. Handicrafts reflect traditions, customs, social practices, and ceremonies, and function as indispensable objects and aesthetic values that gain meaning at every stage of social life, from birth to death. Carpets, kilims, textiles, garments, jeweler, wooden objects, musical instruments, tiles, glassworks, pottery, and many other traditional objects, tools, and artefacts add meaning to everyday life and become ornaments of their time (Arioğlu and Aydoğdu Atasoy, 2015). In this respect, handicrafts possess high heritage value in representing a country and society and also constitute an important and valuable resource for tourism.

### **Pine and Gilmore’s Experience Economy Theory**

In today’s highly competitive tourism market, tourists seek not merely to purchase services or products, but rather to engage in memorable experiences that leave a lasting impression. Pine and Gilmore (1999) describe the concept of experience as economic offerings that provide a competitive advantage due to their difficulty in being imitated or replicated and that are perceived by individuals as unique and unforgettable, repeatedly narrated, and capable of being promoted through word-of-mouth communication. According to this approach, value resides not in the product itself, but in the interaction established between the consumer and the product, as well as in the experience retained in memory. In order to interpret the value consumers derive from experiential processes, the authors developed a model based on two principal dimensions (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

The first dimension of the model, namely the participation dimension, is divided into active and passive participation according to individuals’ level of involvement in the process. In active participation, visitors are directly involved in the creation and shaping of the experience, whereas in passive participation they remain merely as spectators or observers without influencing the functioning of the process. The second dimension of the model consists of the dimensions of “absorption” and “immersion,” which refer to the nature of the relationship established between the individual and the experiential environment. In the case of

absorption, individuals cognitively process the experience, acquire knowledge, and establish a mental connection with it. In the case of immersion, individuals become physically or emotionally integrated into the atmosphere rather than remaining external observers. Through the intersection of the participation (active-passive) and environmental relationship (absorption-immersion) dimensions presented in Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience economy model, four primary experiential realms emerge: (1) education, (2) entertainment, (3) esthetics, and (4) escapism (4E—entertainment, education, esthetics, escapism) (Hwang and Lee, 2019; Timothy, 2020; Willard, Frew and Lade, 2022; Gulbovaitė, Liorančaitė-Šukienė, Dabravalskytė-Radzevičė and Radzevičius, 2026).

### **Tourism, Experience Economy, and Rural Development**

Tourism is currently undergoing a transformation towards an experience-based economy, rendering tourism experiences grounded in intangible cultural heritage (ICH) critical in shaping destination image and consumer perceptions (Vitić-Četković, Krstić, and Jovanović, 2015). In this context, as proposed in Pine and Gilmore's (1999) theory, intangible cultural heritage (ICH)-based products in rural areas need to be transformed from mere souvenir items into experiential instruments. As exemplified by Kınık Village, which constitutes the research setting of this study, the income that local residents can generate solely through the sale of pottery products is limited. However, when tourists are provided with opportunities to engage directly in pottery-making by using the potter's wheel (education and escapism) or to experience the authentic atmosphere of pottery workshops (esthetics), cultural heritage is transformed into a high value-added tourism product. Therefore, in order to sustain traditional handicrafts and revitalize rural areas socio-economically, local communities and artisans need to develop strategies capable of transforming production processes into memorable experiences.

Owing to its intangible nature, the tourism sector exhibits a high degree of sensitivity to multiple variables that influence consumer behavior. In this context, tourists' destination choices are shaped by factors such as perceived cultural values, the characteristics of the local population, and living standards (Kaya et al., 2025). Within this process, tourists' perceptual, cognitive, and emotional evaluations play a central role in shaping destination image and, consequently, in guiding travel-related behaviors (Koçak, 2024). Despite the process of globalization, countries seek to differentiate their destinations by emphasizing cultural diversity and intangible cultural heritage. Accordingly, many developed countries strategically highlight cultural heritage elements in order to influence tourists' destination preferences and support tourism development (Godinho, 2022). Cultural heritage tourism enhances the competitiveness of intangible cultural heritage within the broader field of cultural tourism by offering authentic and immersive experiences (Esfehani and Albrecht, 2018). At the same time, cultural tourism functions as an important instrument for fostering socio-economic interaction between tourists and local communities (Cohen, 1988). In this respect, contemporary tourism

experiences should be evaluated as complex structures shaped by the dynamic interaction between cultural content, individual perceptions, and behavioral responses (Koçak, 2025). Furthermore, the effectiveness of such experiential structures is emphasized to depend on the extent to which cultural narratives can be consistently transformed into perceived destination value and behavioral outcomes within the destination context (Demir, 2025).

Within this experiential and culturally grounded framework, tangible cultural products such as handicrafts and souvenirs emerge as concrete representations through which tourists interact with, interpret, and internalize destination meanings. Today, souvenir shopping has become a popular activity and a significant expenditure item for tourists. In this context, handicrafts and souvenirs are regarded not only as important sources of income for destinations but also as cultural products that embody authenticity and meaning for tourists. As an integral component of the tourism experience, handicrafts play a crucial role in the development of a dynamic tourism sector that reflects the traditions, skills, and craftsmanship of local communities, while contributing to sustainable economic growth, employment creation, poverty reduction, and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage (Upadhyay, 2020).

In many Western countries, tourism is viewed as an alternative development strategy for the economic and social revitalization of rural areas due to factors such as the decline in rural economic activities, structural transformation in the agricultural sector, the contraction of rural industries, and population migration to urban areas (Aydın, 2012: 40). Within this framework, rural development refers to the creation of awareness, the provision of necessary material and moral support, and the encouragement of development through democratic processes in order to enable individuals and communities living in rural areas -whose livelihoods primarily depend on agriculture and other rural activities- to attain living conditions consistent with human dignity. At the same time, rural development is regarded as a planned and systematic process aimed at improving quality of life and enhancing human resources in rural areas (Pezikoğlu, 2012: 85). Based on these definitions, rural development can be conceptualized as a set of holistic and planned activities directed towards improving environmental conditions that negatively affect life in rural areas (Tolunay and Akyol, 2006).

Global transformations have necessitated the integration of all available resources into the economic process within the framework of contemporary development paradigms. Accordingly, the sustainable development approach encompasses food security, employment and income generation, the protection of natural and environmental resources, and the active participation of local communities in production, decision-making processes, and governance. These elements constitute the foundation of the relationship between rural development and rural tourism (Boyacıoğlu, 2014: 83-84). Tourism represents an important tool that supports the conservation of the natural environment and cultural heritage in rural areas, while simultaneously promoting regional development and rural development. When integrated with tourism activities, the traditional family

structure of rural areas and their social fabric—where production and consumption are largely intertwined—contribute to increased employment opportunities, enhance destination attractiveness, and stimulate local development (Fidan and Nam, 2012).

On the other hand, tourism also has the potential to revitalize and support traditional handicrafts and artisans, as sustaining handicrafts signifies the preservation of cultural identity and traditions (Ariffin et al., 2023). However, it is crucial that local handicraft producers are not forced to choose between authenticity and commercialization (Kim et al., 2019). Excessive commodification may lead to low-quality handicraft experiences, thereby harming intangible cultural heritage tourism and accelerating the erosion of heritage values (Tian et al., 2020). For this reason, the protection, revitalization, and sustainability of intangible cultural heritage resources require the development of planned and coordinated cooperation among public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local communities (Köşker and Karacaoğlu, 2019).

### **The Art of Pottery and Pottery Production in Kınık Village**

Pottery, which is based on shaping clay through various techniques and transforming it into everyday utilitarian objects, is an art form that develops by drawing upon culture and tradition (Sevim, 2016). The production of earthenware pottery has a history that is almost contemporaneous with human civilization and represents a tradition that has been sustained for thousands of years (Arı, 2021). Today, the decline of the art of pottery is influenced by several factors, including the weakening of the master–apprentice relationship, the loss of skilled and experienced artisans, the inability of the craft to adapt to technological developments, decreasing public interest, and the transformation of pottery from a traditional practice into a purely commercial craft. Despite its millennia-long history and high archaeological and ethnographic value, Anatolian pottery culture is currently under threat of disappearance. Moreover, pottery has not yet been adequately represented within the framework of “Intangible Cultural Heritage Domains.” Similarly, local cultural studies appear to address this subject only to a limited extent (Ünal, 2020).

The art of ceramics was introduced to Kınık Village, located in Bilecik Province, during the late period of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the nineteenth century by Şakir Ağa, who migrated from Bulgaria (Glassie, 1986). Following this introduction, pottery artisans residing in the village sustained the craft in approximately 45–50 workshops. Kınık Village pottery is distinguished by its high quality, achieved through the flawless application of ivory-toned slip on the clay surface (Türkiye Kültür Portalı, 2024). The clay used in Kınık pottery production is sourced from slopes located approximately one kilometer from the village and shaped on the potter’s wheel. With the introduction of electricity to the village in 1980, foot-powered wheels were replaced by electric wheels (Poyraz and Göker, 2019). In Kınık Village, a wide range of products is manufactured, including vases,

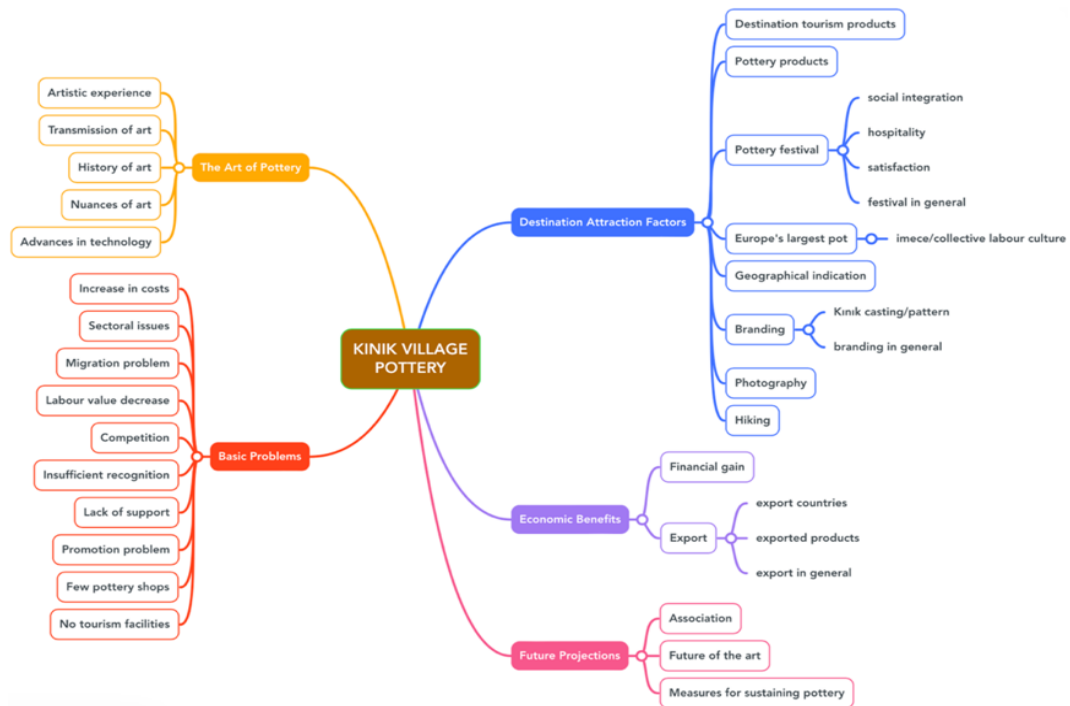
jugs, pitchers, casseroles, coffee sets, flowerpots, ashtrays, and various souvenir items.

Pottery is regarded as one of the traditional handicrafts that has maintained a significant role within the cultural production practices of numerous civilizations from past to present. In this regard, Kınık Village constitutes a meaningful research setting, as it represents a distinctive rural cultural context in which this craft is sustained through local production practices and offers an opportunity to examine endangered traditional handicrafts within the framework of tourism and cultural heritage.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, and content analysis was employed as the data analysis method. Within this framework, Kınık Village, located in the Pazaryeri district of Bilecik Province, was visited on 10 May 2025, and face-to-face interviews were conducted with artisans actively engaged in pottery production. The sample of the study consisted of seven pottery artisans who continue the pottery tradition in Kınık Village. The number of participants was limited to seven because all living pottery masters who are still actively engaged in pottery production in Kınık Village were reached. The participants' experience in pottery ranges from 30 to 70 years, and all of them stated that they had been involved in this craft since childhood, having inherited it from their elders and previous generations. Data saturation was considered to have been reached, as the interview responses began to recur after a certain point, the participants' answers largely converged around similar themes, and the entire accessible population of active pottery masters in the village had been included in the study. Accordingly, the number of participants was limited to seven. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which is based on identifying individuals who are most capable of representing the research phenomenon (Miles and Huberman, 2015). Among the interviewees, one participant is a state artist who has received the "Living Human Treasure Award," and another participant is an academic with a professional connection to pottery production.

The semi-structured interview form used in the data collection process consisted of open-ended questions aimed at obtaining information on the pottery tradition that has been sustained in Kınık Village for approximately 150 years, as well as the village's tourism potential. Interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and securely stored. After the audio recordings were transcribed, the data were analysed using ATLAS.ti (v.24.1.1). During the analysis process, codes were clearly and systematically defined, and these codes were grouped under themes and sub-themes in order to enhance the reliability of the study.

**Figure 1.** Code Hierarchy Mind Map


**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

As a result of the data analysis, five themes, twenty-eight codes, and ten sub-codes were identified under the main theme of “Kınık Village Pottery.” In order to visually present the relationships between themes and codes, a mind map was created using the online mind-mapping software MindMeister. To ensure transparency and credibility in the analysis process, direct quotations from the interview transcripts were included where deemed necessary, and participants were coded as P1, P2, ... according to the order of the interviews. Furthermore, in order to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study, the findings were presented in line with the principles of consistency, transferability, and confirmability, and all documents related to the data collection and analysis process were archived by the researchers.

## 4. Findings

Content analysis was conducted using the ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software, starting from the interview transcripts obtained through face-to-face interviews with pottery artisans in Kınık Village. In the first stage of the analysis process, a code–document analysis was performed on the interview transcripts. As shown in Table 1, a total of 156 codings were identified under the main theme, with the highest coding density concentrated in the themes of “Key Problems,” “The Art of Pottery,” and “Destination Attractiveness Factors.” Table 1 also presents selected codes with the highest data density under each theme. The

distribution of data density assigned to themes and codes is illustrated in the table both numerically, through frequencies and percentages, and visually, through shading gradients ranging from darker to lighter tones.

An examination of Table 1 indicates that the highest data density is concentrated under the theme of “Key Problems.” This finding can be explained by the participants’ strong emphasis on the challenges faced by Kınık pottery, which has been practised in Kınık Village for approximately 150 years but has not yet received the recognition it deserves at either the national or international level as an element of intangible cultural heritage. Within this framework, the main problems identified include a “lack of support,” “promotion-related issues,” “migration,” “the limited number of pottery shops,” and “insufficient awareness.” Participants stated that they have not received any public support for the development of Kınık pottery, have difficulties in finding sponsors, and have been attempting to sustain the craft through their own means for many years. The lack of support is also reflected in promotional activities, resulting in the limited visibility and recognition of Kınık Village pottery.

**Table 1.** Code-Document Analysis

		1 KINIK VILLAGE...
		156
Basic Problems	10 59	%14,15 59
Few pottery shops	11	%2,64 11
Insufficient recognition	11	%2,64 11
Lack of support	16	%3,84 16
Migration problem	14	%3,36 14
Promotion problem	15	%3,80 15
Destination Attraction Factors	15 51	%12,23 51
Destination tourism products	16	%3,84 16
Pottery festival	19	%4,56 19
Pottery products	12	%2,88 12
Economic Benefits	5 21	%5,04 21
Export	8	%1,92 8
Financial gain	14	%3,36 14
Future Projections	3 16	%3,84 16
Future of the art	14	%3,36 14
Measures for sustaining pottery	12	%2,88 12
The Art of Pottery	5 54	%12,95 54
Advances in technology	13	%3,12 13
Nuances of art	14	%3,36 14
Transmission of art	27	%6,47 27
Totals		100 % 417

**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

Another significant issue highlighted in the village is the migration of the younger population to neighbouring provinces in search of more stable sources of

income, rather than learning and continuing the practice of pottery due to increasing production costs. In addition, young people leaving the village for university education further hinders the intergenerational transmission of the pottery tradition and poses a serious threat to the sustainability of this craft in Kınık Village. The insufficient number of pottery sales outlets across Bilecik Province also constitutes a barrier for tourists visiting the region to become acquainted with Kınık pottery and to purchase these products. Consequently, despite its one-hundred-and-fifty-year history, Kınık pottery has failed to achieve adequate recognition.

**P5:** “There is no support at all. We promote it through our own means. We wish we could receive support from the municipality, but unfortunately, there is none.”

**P3:** “The young people have left; there is no one left who makes pottery by hand. Everyone now uses press machines. No one has been able to find a solution. Everyone’s children have gone to Bursa, Eskişehir, or other big cities. They work or study there. Even my own child has left.”

**Table 2.** Code Co-Occurrence Analysis of Basic Problems and The Art of Pottery Themes

	Basic	Co...	Few...	Incr...	Insuf...	Lab...	Lack...	Mig...	No t...	Prom...	Sec...	The...	Adv...	Art...	Hist...	Nam...	Trans...
Basic Problems	59	5 (0.08)	11 (0.19)	8 (0.14)	11 (0.19)	7 (0.12)	16 (0.27)	14	3 (0.05)	15 (0.25)	10 (0.17)	9 (0.09)	3 (0.04)				7 (0.09)
Competition	5	5 (0.08)		1 (0.08)	3 (0.23)		1 (0.05)	1 (0.06)		2 (0.11)	2 (0.15)						
Few pottery shops	11	11 (0.19)										1 (0.05)					
Increase in costs	8	8 (0.14)	1 (0.08)			4 (0.36)	1 (0.04)	4 (0.22)			5 (0.38)	2 (0.03)	1 (0.05)				1 (0.03)
Insufficient recognition	11	11 (0.19)	3 (0.23)				4 (0.17)		1 (0.08)	7 (0.37)	1 (0.05)						
Labour value decrease	7	7 (0.12)			4 (0.36)		1 (0.05)	3 (0.17)			2 (0.13)	4 (0.07)	2 (0.11)				2 (0.06)
Lack of support	16	16 (0.27)	1 (0.05)	1 (0.04)	4 (0.17)	1 (0.05)			1 (0.08)	8 (0.35)	1 (0.04)						
Migration problem	14	14 (0.24)	1 (0.04)		4 (0.22)		3 (0.17)				1 (0.04)	6 (0.33)	8 (0.13)	2 (0.08)			7 (0.21)
No tourism facilities	3	3 (0.05)			1 (0.08)		1 (0.06)				1 (0.06)						
Promotion problem	15	15 (0.25)	2 (0.11)		7 (0.37)		8 (0.35)	1 (0.04)	1 (0.04)		2 (0.09)						
Sectoral issues	10	10 (0.17)	2 (0.15)		5 (0.38)	1 (0.05)	2 (0.13)	1 (0.04)	6 (0.33)		2 (0.08)		2 (0.03)				2 (0.06)
The Art of Pottery	54	9 (0.09)		2 (0.03)	4 (0.07)		8 (0.13)				2 (0.03)		15 (0.29)	7 (0.13)	9 (0.17)	15 (0.28)	19 (0.31)
Advances in technology	13	3 (0.04)		1 (0.06)	2 (0.11)		2 (0.08)						15 (0.29)	1 (0.05)	1 (0.05)	5 (0.23)	3 (0.08)
Artistic experience	7												7 (0.13)	1 (0.05)			4 (0.13)
History of art	9												9 (0.17)	1 (0.05)		2 (0.10)	
Nuances of art	14												15 (0.28)	5 (0.23)	2 (0.10)		4 (0.11)
Transmission of art	27	7 (0.09)		1 (0.03)	2 (0.06)		7 (0.21)				2 (0.06)		16 (0.31)	3 (0.08)	4 (0.13)		4 (0.11)

**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

Table 2 presents the co-occurrence (co-presence) of codes. Due to the relatively large volume of data, the table specifically focuses on pottery as the core subject of the study, as well as on the key issues encountered in the practice, development, promotion, and intergenerational transmission of this craft. The table illustrates how frequently related themes and codes emerge together. The themes and codes listed in the row and column headings are arranged in the same order, enabling an easy association between the column entries and the corresponding row headings. Darker shades in the table indicate stronger relationships between the themes and codes.

For instance, when the “Pottery Craft” theme and the “Transmission of the Craft” code are examined together, it is evident that this pair exhibits the highest co-occurrence value. This finding indicates that when pottery masters talk about

their craft, they particularly emphasize the intergenerational transmission of pottery. All participants stated that they learned pottery from their fathers or grandfathers and highlighted the importance of the master–apprentice relationship in this craft. Furthermore, they emphasized that transferring pottery-making skills to younger generations is essential for ensuring the continuity of the craft in the future.

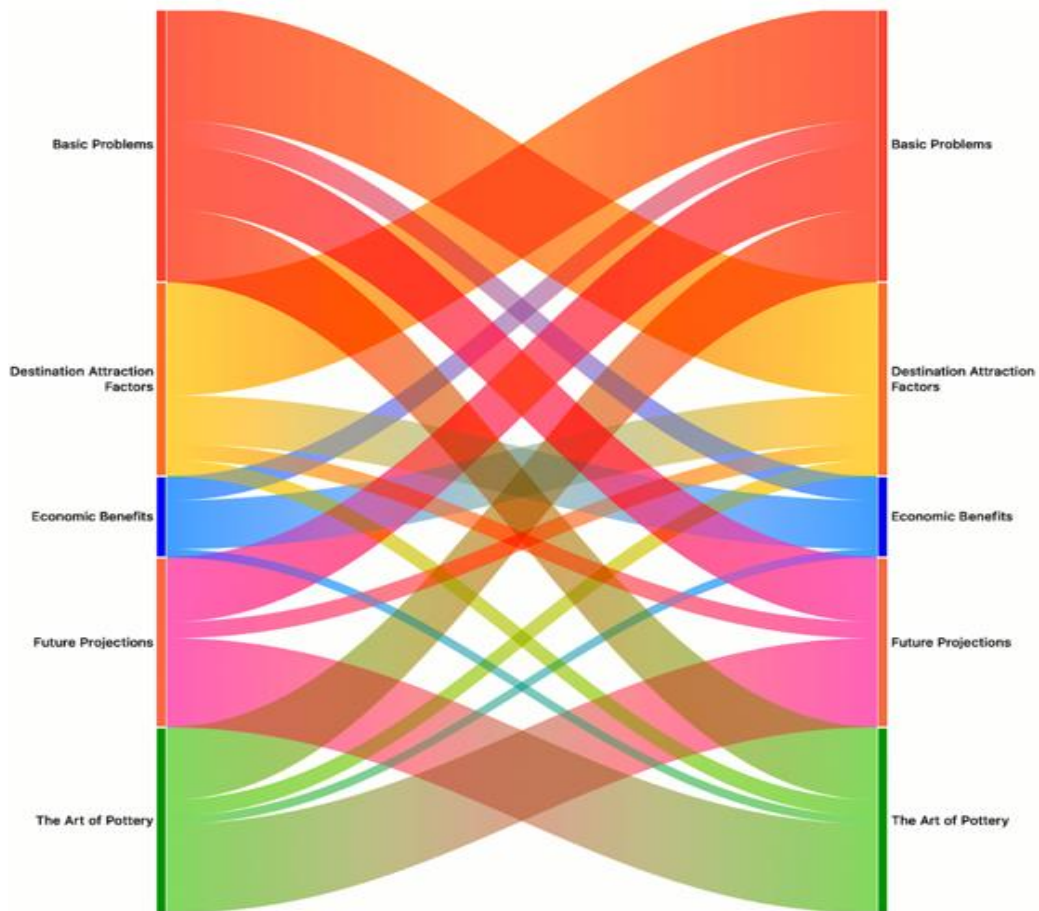
**P7:** “Traditional pottery is practised in this village. I learned it from my father, my grandfather, and my relatives. I was a family member who was deeply interested in and passionate about this craft. After learning it, I also pursued its academic dimension. I studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts and was a successful university student.”

**P3:** “Of course, learning is essential; otherwise, one cannot learn pottery on their own. You must learn by watching the master.”

**P2:** “To prevent this craft from disappearing, you have to be involved in it. Young people need to be introduced to clay and taught how to use the wheel. They need to learn finger movements and how to shape the clay. Transferring basic techniques is very important. I am also gradually training my grandchild during the summer and trying to teach them.”

A detailed examination of Table 2 reveals that it offers content similar to a correlation analysis, supported by frequency data. The numerical values presented in the left column and top row, corresponding to themes and codes, indicate the coding intensity applied to the analysed interview transcripts. Each cell formed by the intersection of rows and columns represents the frequency with which the relevant codes co-occur, while the number provided in parentheses next to the frequency value denotes the co-occurrence coefficient. When interpreting relationships based on code co-occurrence, each code pair is compared within its own context. In cases where one code is coded at least five times more frequently than the other, a yellow circle is added to the right side of the relevant cell to highlight this difference. This visual indicator draws attention to the co-occurrence of codes even when the coefficient value is relatively low (Erdoğan, 2023: 89).

**Figure 2.** Sankey Diagram of Theme Co-Occurrence



**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

In Figure 2, a Sankey diagram is used to facilitate a clearer understanding of the relationships among the themes. Widely employed across different disciplines, the Sankey diagram takes its name from the Irish Captain Matthew Henry Phineas Riall Sankey, who in 1898 used a similar visual representation to explain the energy efficiency of steam engines (ATLAS.ti, 2022). As shown in Figure 2, all direct and indirect relationships among the themes are visualised bidirectionally through coloured flows. In the diagram, stronger relationships between themes are represented by thicker bands, while weaker relationships are illustrated with thinner bands. For example, the themes most strongly associated with the theme “Future-Oriented Projections” are, respectively, “Pottery Craft,” “Fundamental Problems,” and “Destination Attractiveness Factors.”

Participants stated that pottery-making in Kınık Village began with Şakir Ağa, who migrated from Bulgaria to Türkiye, and that this craft has been practised in the village for approximately 150 years. When expressing their projections regarding the future of the craft, participants frequently referred to the intricacies of pottery-making, the transition to mass production driven by technological developments, and the perception that mass-produced items lack the quality of

handmade products. The repeated emphasis on these issues has contributed to the formation of strong interconnections among the themes. At the same time, it is evident that participants portray a rather pessimistic outlook for the future due to the fundamental problems they currently experience. While they believe that pottery-making in Kınık Village will not disappear entirely, they anticipate a significant decline in the number of individuals practising the craft.

**P4:** *“This work will continue like this for another 10–15 years, but after that, I cannot predict what will happen. I do not know whether it will end one day. A profession that has continued for 150 years does not disappear easily. Even if the number of workshops decreases, there will definitely be three or five people who continue it as a hobby.”*

**P6:** *“We recently established an association with some colleagues, and I am currently serving as its interim president. Our first goal is to organise a festival. We have also applied for a geographical indication. Together with the district governorship and the tourism directorate, we have promising projects. Very positive developments are taking place in this field. At the moment, our sole focus is on promoting pottery. There are no regular tours coming here. At one point, we tried to establish connections with travel agencies, but we were not successful. Visitors who come to the nature park also stop by here. However, travel agencies look for facilities such as food and beverage services or breakfast options; such facilities need to be available.”*

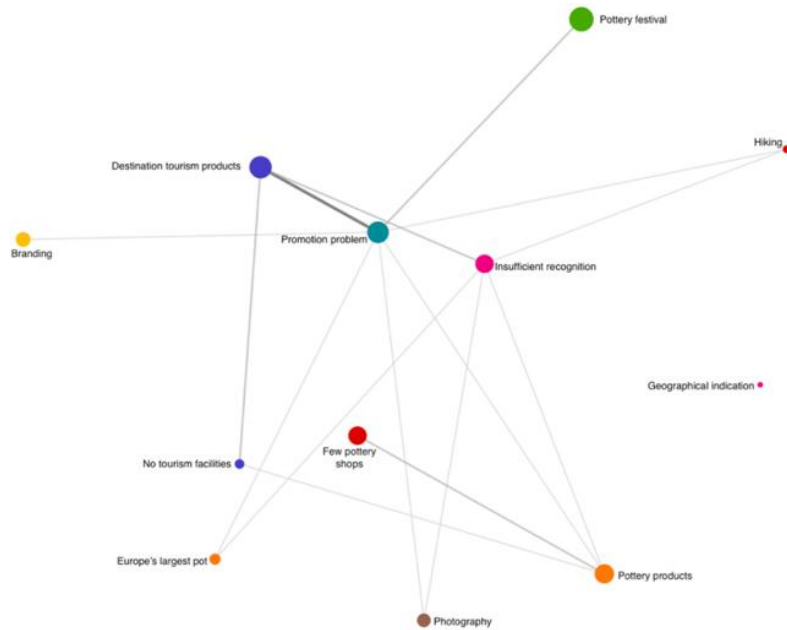
Participants also believe that the destination of Kınık Village has tourism potential due to its natural landscape. They anticipate that, provided adequate promotion is carried out—particularly through events such as pottery festivals—the destination could attract a larger number of tourists. In this respect, it is evident that the tourism potential of the destination has not yet been fully utilised, as connections with travel agencies have not been established, tourism facilities are lacking, and tourists are not brought to the village through organised tours.

The association established by pottery masters in January 2025 has been working to implement sustainable practices aimed at securing the future of pottery-making in the village. Participants stated that they have begun to receive public support following recent changes in local administration. They indicated that the association’s primary objectives are to organise pottery festivals and to obtain a geographical indication for Kınık pottery. Having recognised the importance of branding through comparisons with competing destinations, pottery masters in Kınık Village reported that they intend to focus on the distinctive Kınık pattern (Kınık akıtma) in order to brand their products. They further stated that they plan to produce new items incorporating this distinctive pattern.

**P6:** *“There is a well-known pattern here called ‘Kınık akıtma.’ The Kınık akıtma pattern is a registered product. We will work on obtaining international registration for it. This year, I will produce items with the Kınık akıtma pattern. I*

*aim to create a wider variety of products; frankly, my goal is to experiment with very different designs.”*

**Figure 3.** Force-Directed Graph of the Basic Problems and Destination Attraction Factors Themes



**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

Figure 3 illustrates the co-occurrence patterns and spatial positions of the codes grouped under the themes “Fundamental Problems” and “Destination Attractiveness Factors.” As understood from the interviews, in addition to pottery-making, the destination of Kınık Village also possesses a variety of touristic attractions. The village’s natural landscape, areas suitable for hiking and photography, pottery festivals, and the largest ceramic jar in Europe -collectively produced by the village’s pottery master’s through communal labour and located in the village square- constitute significant attraction elements for tourists. As shown in Figure 3, there is a strong relationship, represented by a thick line, between the codes “Destination tourism products” and “Promotion problem.” This indicates that the lack of promotion plays a decisive role in highlighting the destination’s tourism products and in attracting tourists to the destination. If adequate promotional and advertising activities are carried out with sufficient support, the tourism potential of the destination is expected to become more visible.

The direct association of the code “The largest ceramic jar in Europe” with the codes “Promotion problem” and “Insufficient awareness” confirms that this distinctive feature of the village is not sufficiently recognised either nationally or across Europe, and that inadequate promotion is a determining factor. Although Figure 3 displays the relationships among all codes, it is noteworthy that the code

“Geographical indication” does not show any direct connection with other codes. This situation stems from the fact that the relevant code was not co-coded with any other code in the interview texts. Nevertheless, it is evident that geographical indication constitutes an important element in terms of destination branding.

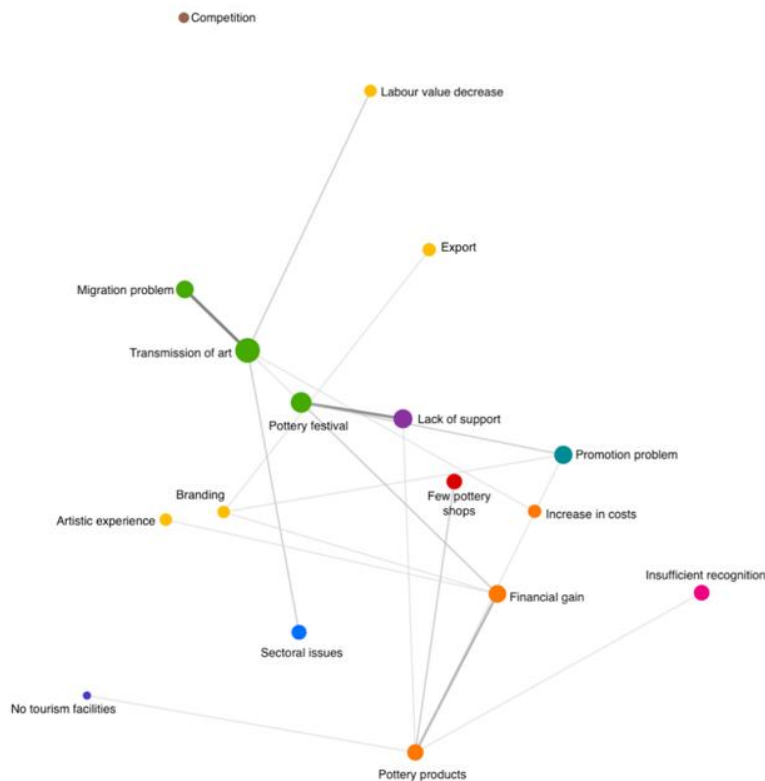
P4: “We made this jar in 2002, and it attracted considerable attention. The jar is 3 metres and 30 centimetres tall. A young person who had previously completed an internship here later became a university lecturer and came to the village with his students. They said, ‘Let’s make a jar that will become the symbol of the village and also be the largest in Europe.’ This jar is the largest in Europe” (see Photograph 4).

P7: “Our village is not sufficiently recognised for its pottery craft; we have really struggled with promotion. However, we were not able to establish a collective movement.”

Figure 4 presents the relationships among the prominent codes under the themes “Pottery Craft,” “Economic Benefits,” and “Fundamental Problems.” When the codes with strong connections -visualised by thick lines- are examined, it becomes evident that factors such as rural-to-urban migration, sectoral problems, increasing costs, and the devaluation of labour hinder the intergenerational transmission of the pottery craft. Moreover, insufficient support emerges as the primary reason why the pottery festival has not been organised for many years. Yet, pottery festivals represent a highly significant promotional element for Kınık Village. In previous years, these festivals included entertainment activities, competitions, concerts, and food and beverage offerings; such events attracted tourists from both domestic and international destinations. This process facilitated interaction between visiting pottery masters from neighbouring provinces and tourists, while simultaneously contributing to the promotion of the destination. During the festival period, pottery products produced by local artisans were sold to visitors.

Nevertheless, it is observed that the economic returns obtained from pottery products have declined compared to the past. All participants stated that they were previously able to sustain their livelihoods solely through pottery production and sales and that they were satisfied with the income generated from this activity. However, they indicated that today pottery-making no longer provides sufficient income. Participants further noted that whereas there were approximately 80 pottery workshops in Kınık Village in the past, this number has currently decreased to only 7–8 workshops.

**Figure 4.** Force-Directed Graph of the Art of Pottery, Economic Benefits and Basic Problems



**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

Participants stated that the transition to mass production in pottery as a result of technological developments has diminished the value of craftsmanship based on manual labour and has led to a decline in the number of artisans producing with traditional methods. Nevertheless, it was also noted that the introduction of mass production has enabled the export of pottery products. At present, due to insufficient networks and connections, export activities are carried out primarily through intermediaries. The countries to which exports are made include Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Greece, Ukraine, Balkan countries, Qatar, and Dubai. Although exports are not conducted on a regular basis, pottery products such as rice pudding bowls, cooking pots, yoghurt containers, casseroles, decorative items, candle holders, cup sets, and coffee pots (cezve) are sent to these destinations.

Based on the research findings, it can be stated that the pottery craft, which has been practised in Kınık Village for approximately 150 years, makes a significant contribution to the destination's tourism potential. The deep-rooted history of pottery in the village, together with its role in generating employment for both women and men over the years, has enabled the village to develop a distinctive identity closely associated with pottery-making. This identity serves as an important motivational factor for tourists, offering opportunities both to experience the

village's natural landscape and to observe the traditional pottery craft in its place of origin. In this context, the main challenges identified include insufficient support and a lack of effective promotion. As an element of intangible cultural heritage facing the risk of disappearance, the pottery craft is examined under the following section within the framework of measures required for its transmission to future generations and its development as a touristic value.

## **5. Conclusion and Discussion**

The present research allows for important conclusions. First of all, it confirms that the constructed FCI is sensitive to the upcoming shocks from the USA and Germany. The different countries however demonstrate distinct sensitivity to the global economic shocks. The countries with fixed exchange rates like Bulgaria and Estonia (during the 2008 crisis) were especially vulnerable, while the Czech Republic confirms the positive role of the floating exchange rate and the implementation of sophisticated monetary policy. Negative financial trends have a longer impact on growth in the emerging economies compared to the benchmark developed countries. Countries with autonomous monetary policy (Czech Republic, Romania, Poland, Hungary, and Turkey) adjust faster and more successfully to the negative external shocks. In the case of Turkey, we observe a self-inflicted negative financial shock after 2016.

Rural development is a comprehensive process aimed at improving the living conditions of rural populations, reducing disparities between rural and urban areas, protecting environmental and cultural values, strengthening social and physical structures, and maintaining a balance between natural resources and the environment. Within this process, the objective is to make the most effective use of elements that support the agricultural, economic, and social development of rural communities while preserving the authenticity and unique cultural identity of the destination (Kuter and Ünal, 2013; Erdoğan, 2022). In this context, handicrafts evaluated within the scope of intangible cultural heritage offer significant potential by ensuring the preservation and intergenerational transmission of local knowledge and skills, while also contributing to economic diversification and the promotion of sustainable development in rural areas.

Traditional Turkish handicrafts, rooted in Anatolia's millennia-old historical heritage, are today addressed within the framework of tourism activities as an important component of cultural heritage (Belber and Duman, 2023). In this regard, the pottery tradition that has been sustained for more than a century in Kınık Village stands out as a distinctive cultural value that contributes both to the preservation of local identity and to rural development. In addition to generating employment and income without requiring large-scale investments, handicraft products encourage the use of local resources and play a crucial role in safeguarding cultural heritage and transmitting it to future generations (Özcüre and Yavuz, 2006).

The findings of the study confirm that rural areas are significantly affected by social, economic, cultural, and spatial transformation processes and that these areas require holistic planning approaches. Indeed, Yenigül's (2017: 23-24)

assertion that rural areas should be addressed in a multidimensional manner finds concrete expression in the case of Kınık Village. The results indicate that handicrafts emerge not only as cultural elements but also as functional instruments of rural development through their capacity to support local production, employment, and income generation. This finding is consistent with the literature emphasizing that handicrafts contribute to rural development alongside the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

The findings further reveal that rural-to-urban migration continues markedly in Kınık Village, negatively affecting traditional production activities in particular. This outcome parallels studies highlighting the need to strengthen rural development-oriented policies. As noted by Kaya and Erol (2021), tourism activities capable of generating added value through natural and cultural resources without requiring large-scale investments present significant opportunities for rural development. Similarly, the present study demonstrates that handicraft products gaining value through tourist demand increase local participation in tourism activities and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage. However, as also noted by Yenigül (2017: 17), the long-standing focus of rural policies on urbanization-related problems has disrupted the rural–urban balance and led to the weakening of rural areas.

The findings of the study reveal that the migration of especially the younger population from Kınık Village to metropolitan areas for education and employment purposes has led to a significant decline in the number of individuals engaged in the pottery craft, thereby constituting a serious threat to its intergenerational transmission. As also emphasised by Can (2017), tourists' orientation towards handicrafts in pursuit of authentic experiences contributes to increasing employment, slowing rural-to-urban migration, and strengthening the attractiveness of destinations. In this context, when designed in accordance with Pine and Gilmore's experience economy model (1999) for tourists, the pottery tradition possessed by the local community in Kınık Village becomes not merely a cultural value, but also a strategic instrument that enhances regional competitiveness, supports rural development, and generates sustainable economic value (Er and Kara, 2019).

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the sustainability of Kınık Village pottery and to strengthen its contribution to rural development:

- Experience-oriented projects should be developed, and the transmission of artisans' knowledge and skills to younger generations should be ensured through pottery courses and hands-on workshops (Lu et al., 2022).
- Activities should be organized in which tourists are not merely passive spectators but are directly involved in the production process by using

the potter's wheel and designing small souvenir items that they can take with them when leaving the destination (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

- Product diversity should be expanded, and pottery should be integrated with handicrafts, gastronomy, and local lifestyle practices as a holistic tourism product (Prada-Trigo et al., 2016).
- The pottery festival should be organized annually on a fixed date, and its national and international promotion should be strengthened through collaboration among local stakeholders.
- Infrastructure and superstructure investments should be supported; home-based accommodation should be encouraged, and a ceramics museum should be established in Kınık Village.
- Innovation should be pursued while preserving authenticity; product quality should be monitored, and artisans should receive design and production support through relevant university departments (Olalere, 2019).
- Marketing and sales channels should be expanded; strategies aimed at reducing intermediaries should be developed, and export opportunities should be strengthened.
- Sales outlets should be diversified, ensuring that pottery products are accessible in tourism facilities, museums, terminals, and information centers.

In conclusion, safeguarding and sustaining traditional handicrafts such as pottery not only contributes to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage but also supports the strengthening of local production culture, diversification of the rural economy, and reinforcement of social cohesion in the context of Kınık Village. The planned integration of pottery with tourism presents an original and feasible development approach that enables local development while preserving local identity and jointly addressing cultural sustainability and rural development. The sustainability of this approach can be achieved through the transformation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) products from purely commercial commodities into memorable tourism experiences that mentally and physically engage tourists, structured within the framework of Pine and Gilmore's (1999) 4E typology model (education, entertainment, esthetics, and escapism).

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has several limitations. First, the number of artisans actively engaged in pottery-making in Kınık Village has decreased significantly over time, and the remaining practitioners largely belong to older age groups. This situation limited the number of in-depth interviews that could be conducted. Nevertheless, the fact that these artisans have been producing in the same village for many years and have long-standing, close relationships with one another resulted in the repetition of similar themes during the interviews, indicating that a certain level of data saturation was achieved. This condition is therefore considered to support the internal consistency of the research findings.

Another limitation of the study is that it is confined to a single rural destination. While this focus allows for an in-depth examination of the local context, it may limit the generalizability of the findings to destinations with different socio-cultural and economic structures.

Future research may conduct comparative studies in different destinations where pottery-making traditions are still maintained, in order to more comprehensively examine intergenerational transmission processes, migration-related risks, and the sustainability of traditional handicrafts. In addition, the use of longitudinal and mixed-method research designs could enable a deeper investigation of the transformation of traditional crafts over time, as well as the role of rural development and intangible cultural heritage policies in shaping these processes.

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