

Digital Resilience and Sustainable Opportunity Recognition Among Small Entrepreneurs in Post-COVID Local Markets

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 crisis forced small firms worldwide to rethink how they identify and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities while coping with unprecedented uncertainty. This paper examines how small sustainable entrepreneurs in local food, retail, and service sectors build digital resilience and use their prior knowledge, motivations, and values to recognize sustainability-oriented opportunities in a post-pandemic context. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with twelve owner-managers operating environmentally and socially responsible ventures, the study explores how internal factors (knowledge of ecological issues, personal experience, and prosocial motives) interact with external triggers (health restrictions, digital platforms, and local support schemes) to shape opportunity recognition and adaptation strategies. Thematic analysis reveals three main patterns: digitalization as a central resilience capability, sustainability values as a lens for opportunity identification, and agile reconfiguration of business models in response to shocks. The paper contributes to sustainable entrepreneurship literature by highlighting how digital resilience capabilities reinforce the recognition and exploitation of sustainability-oriented opportunities during systemic disruptions. Practical implications are offered for entrepreneurs, educators, and policymakers seeking to support resilient and sustainable small business ecosystems*

Keywords: Sustainable entrepreneurship, Digital Resilience, COVID-19 impact, entrepreneurs.