Geotourism is a branch of general tourism based on travelling and enjoyment of a place with unique geological character. It helps preserving the original geological character of the place, along with its surroundings, its heritage, its aesthetics, and preserving or improving well beings of its inhabitants. Geotourism makes it possible for the present generations to benefit from a treasury of nature and protects it for future generations to use. Its activities are compatible with the rural tourism activities, which is a type of tourism that complements elements of rural culture, natural environment and agriculture. Both the rural- and geotourism are means to provide sustainable development for the benefit of people of a region by stimulating income-generating activities and contributing to overall economy; in particular, by providing employment for women, fostering local entrepreneurship and protecting agriculture and culture of the area. The aim of this study is to examine some geological structures in the Harçık Valley of Tunceli province and evaluate their potential contribution to rural tourism.

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis technique, widely used by managers and experts in strategic planning, is used in the study. Thus, Harçık Valley is briefly evaluated for its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and possible threats in the context of rural tourism and geotourism. Many natural formations with unique geological character exist in the valley; such as formations resembling fairy chimneys, a field with accumulated fossils, geothermal waters, and hanging valleys) give the overall valley a potential for geotourism development. There is potential for a more versatile rural tourism; as the main river valley and its surroundings are also suitable for development of small beaches (some currently being used), rafting, mountaineering, and organic agriculture - all in a region with unspoiled environment. In order to assess this potential, development plans involving local dynamics should be prepared with a participatory and holistic approach for the purpose of sustainable development; and rural-geo-tourism should be included in these plans. Local governments, producer organizations and non-governmental organizations should be involved in the formulation of rural development policies.