

# Tourism Potential and Assessment of the Mount Bazarduzu

*Gulnisa Mustafayeva*<sup>1</sup>, *Musulmat Allahverdiyeva*<sup>2</sup>, *Narmin Alizada*<sup>3</sup>, and *Sh. Urinbaev*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Western Caspian University, Baku, Azerbaijan

<sup>2</sup>Azerbaijan State University of Economics, Baku, Azerbaijan

<sup>3</sup>Azerbaijan State University of Economics Zagatala Branch, Zagatala, Azerbaijan

<sup>4</sup>“Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers” National Research University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

**Abstract.** Mountain tourism, one of the main tourism resources in the world, is developing rapidly. Despite the presence of many mountains worthy of evaluation in this field, the tourism sector is underdeveloped. Mount Bazarduzu, especially known for its 4466 meters high and outstanding appearance, is among the mountains with significant tourism potential in our country. However, despite this potential of Mount Bazarduzu, its underutilization is due to certain obstacles. When examining the reasons why the tourism potential of Mount Bazarduzu is not fully utilized, we encounter problems such as bureaucratic obstacles, insufficient promotion, lack of qualified personnel in this sector, lack of recognition as a destination, inadequate local and regional transportation infrastructure, lack of museums, limited accommodation options and lack of government incentives for tourism professionals. In addition, the lack of a comprehensive and unified marketing strategy, weak interest of the local population in tourism and insufficient promotion of the tourist resources of Mount Bazarduzu and its surroundings in the international tourism arena are serious problems. The purpose of this study is to draw attention to the tourist potential and possibilities of using the mountainous areas of our country, especially Mount Bazarduzu, in the context of geography and tourism, identify existing problems, prepare proposals for their solution and raise awareness on this topic.

**Keywords:** Mount Bazarduzu, mountain tourism, mountaineering, tourism assessment, tourist potential

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Definition of Mountain tourism and its development

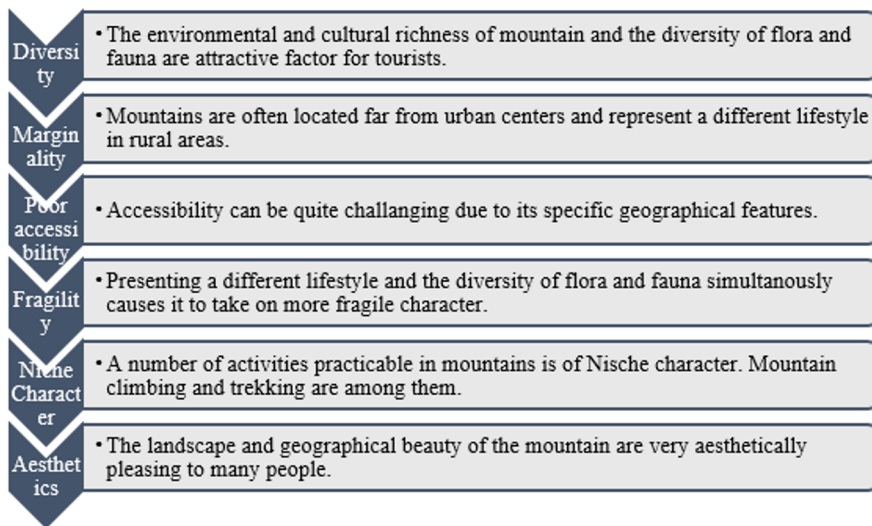
The history of mountain tourism begins in the Alps. In the past, people climbed mountains for reasons such as grazing livestock, determining national borders, and conducting scientific research. The first recorded climbing in the European Alps was the climb of Mont Venu, that stands at 1912 meters, made by Francesco and Gerardo Petrarca in 1336 (UNESCO, 1987:24;

Johnston and Edwards, 1994:461). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the European elite became more sensitive to the beauty of nature and began to travel to the Alps. Mountaineering as a sport came to the forefront as the attractive aspects of the mountains and the people living there were revealed.

Richins and Hall [4] argue that mountain travel has evolved from being an activity for aristocrats to one for scholars, and as a result, guide providers have helped mountain tourists penetrate the mountain desert. To this day, mountain communities strategically position tourism as a key economic activity by developing themed mountain routes in their areas [4, 9, 13].

We define mountain route tourism as the description of the activities of travelers who enjoy the tourist products found along a predetermined mountain route or direction. This definition is an adoption of the definition of route tourism offered by Meyer [11]. Mountain route tourism is a favourable option for reducing poverty in terms of the high poverty levels characteristic of many mountainous regions [1, 3, 5]. This is because tourism in any form is labor-intensive and connected to many other industries [1-3].

The resources and characteristic features of mountains have led to the emergence of mountain tourism and created tourist demand [13] explain these mountain features in six articles.



**Fig. 1.** Characteristics of the mountain tourism [13].

The features shown in Figure 1 highlight the significance of mountain tourism and attract more visitors, making the planning of mountain tourism increasingly urgent. Camps set up in the mountains, due to carelessness, often cause wildfires and the destruction of forest areas in many regions. Therefore, to ensure sustainability, it is crucial to manage mountain tourism effectively and protect the environment while achieving the expected economic benefits [14-18].

The development of mountain tourism and, consequently, formed mountain sports are driven by two main reasons. One of them is the desire of people to temporarily break free from the dull and exhausting environment of industrial and urban social life. Another factor is the attractions offered by the healthy living environment of mountainous regions as a natural setting in both summer and winter. Depending on these two facts, the mountain

tourism actions sometimes bring tourism-oriented and sometimes sports-oriented desires and actions to the fore [17].

Until recently, geographers have conducted and published numerous studies in the field of physical and human geography related to mountains both worldwide and in our country. While research in physical geography focused on the natural features of mountains, the studies by human geographers especially revolved around interpreting agricultural changes or demographic issues. However, over the past fifteen years, the situation with the mountains has dramatically changed. After the World Summit held in Rio in 1992, mountains are of more importance from both a political and scientific point. The allocation of a special section dedicated to mountains (Chapter 13) in the Agenda 21, an important document of the Rio Summit proves this case [3].

The section “State Program for Development of Tourism in Azerbaijan for 2010-2014” of the law signed by Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, on April 6, 2010, emphasizes the importance of tourism, alongside the oil and natural gas market. It was emphasized, especially with the development of existing tourist facilities, that mountain tourism is one of the new types of tourism that has emerged in our country over the past 4-5 years. In this area, it is important to emphasize the influence of the Air and Extreme Sports Federation of Azerbaijan and the Mountaineering Federation of Azerbaijan [18].

In short, mountains; Planning and managing activities in these areas are becoming increasingly important, since the mountains are directly related to altitude, exposure, direction of spread, water, energy, climate, forest flora and fauna, economic structure, settlements and population, transportation, sports, and tourism. Tourism is a rapidly growing phenomenon in mountainous regions, one of the main sources of tourism in the world. Mountaineering-based tourism does not require large investments (Somunku, 2004:5). Because capital in mountain tourism is the mountain itself and nature. The quality of life in the host community improves, while the needs of tourists are met through investments in infrastructure within the framework of tourism activities. Moreover, it is an undeniable fact that tourism makes a positive contribution to the development of society in terms of culture and education. However, if tourism in mountainous areas develops unplanned and is not managed applying a sustainable approach, it is inevitable that it will cause severe damage to the natural environment [12].

The year 2002 was declared by the United Nations as “International Year of Mountains”. The year 2002 was also recognized as “Year of Ecotourism”. An important event is that the concepts of mountain and ecotourism were combined by the United Nations in the same year and brought to the international stage. This highlights the importance of both mountains and eco-friendly tourism in the world, as well as the sensitivity of the United Nations on this issue.

## **2 Development of Mountain Tourism within Azerbaijan**

Mountain tourism is one of the areas of tourism that has attracted sufficient interest in Azerbaijan in recent years. Although the history of this sector in global experience dates back to the past, the age of mountain tourism in our country is limited to the last few years. This type of tourism combines hiking, trekking, mountaineering, and ice climbing.

Azerbaijan is located in the Alpine-Himalayan fold belt between 38-41-degree north latitude and 44-50 degrees east longitude in the Northern Hemisphere. 2/3 of the country’s territory is occupied by the Greater and Lesser Caucasus mountains and the Talysh mountains. The Greater Caucasus Mountains are located in the north of the country. Most of the mountains are covered by the Central Caucasus mountain range, where Bazarduzu (4466 m), Tufandagh (4191 m), Bazaryurd (4126 m), Babadagh (3629 m), and Dubrar (2205 m) are distinguished by their height. The Yan mountain range lies north from the Main

Caucasian mountain range. Its highest point is Shahdag (4243 m). Govdag (Govdagi 2473 m) and Nialdag (Mount Yelliadik 2322 m) mountain ridges rise to the south of the Central Caucasus mountain range.

Azerbaijan is a very favorable place for mountain tourism with its rich natural beauty and mountainous regions. The mountains located in different parts of the country offer a variety of entertainment and natural beauty to both local and foreign tourists.

The Lesser Caucasus mountains are less fragmented than those of the Greater Caucasus, and their peaks and slopes are more level. The largest mountain ranges are: Shahdag (Mount Karaarkhay, 3063 m), Goycha (Shahdag, 2901 m), Eastern Goycha (Mount Ketik, 3399 m), Garabagh (Mount Great Kirs, 2725 m), and Mount Dalidagh (3616 m), and Great Ishikli (3550 m) and Kizilboghaz (3581 m) passive volcanoes in the Garabagh volcanic plateau. The height of Mount Kamish, rising in the Murovdagh range, is 3724 meters. In addition, there are other high peaks here as Hinaldagh (3367 m), Koshkar Mountain (3361 m), and Kapaz Mountain (3066 m). The Zangazur and Daralayaz ranges, that a continuation of the Lesser Caucasus mountains, are located in the territory of Nakhchivan. The Mount Kapichik (3904 m) in the Zangazur Mountains is the highest peak of the Lesser Caucasus. The Mount Kazangel (3829 m), Damirli (3368 m), Mount Soyug (3146 m), Mount Bichanak (2346 m) in the Zangezur mountains, and Mount Kuku (3120 m), the Galingaya (2773 m) and Garakush mountains in the Daralayaz range are distinguished by their height.

The Talish mountain system is located on the southern borders of the country. The Talish Mountains consist of the Buravar, Dizdoni, Pastaser and Talish ridges, with heights ranging from 1105 to 2493 meters (Museyibov, 1998: 6, 10; Eminov, 2004: 503-505; ANAS Institute of Geography, 2014: 2).

The following table 1 presents SWOP analysis of mountain tourism in Azerbaijan.

In order to ensure the implementation of the strengths identified in the SWOP analysis presented in Table 1, the local government and the local population should work together to achieve the short, medium- and long-term tourism goals for Mount Bazarduz. In order to solve the problems faced by mountain tourism, it is necessary to focus on effectively using its potential to mobilize central decision-making mechanisms and propose initiatives by creating various tourism projects that can complement each other. When drawing up action plans to eliminate the deficiencies identified during the analysis, it is recommended to act using the "prioritization" method. The purpose of prioritizing the weaknesses that need to be improved should be to avoid the loss of time that may occur if intractable deficiencies are addressed first while attempting to solve relatively more complex problems. This management system will facilitate the effective use of resources such as time and labor, as well as faster implementation of plans. Such improvement will result in a sufficient number of mountain tourism enthusiasts coming to Bazarduzü in the near future.

According to the estimates of the geographers, although 78% of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan is suitable for settlement, this figure is one and a half times lower for mountainous areas than 52.9%. This situation is observed both within the settlement and in building a tourism industry [10].

To admire the magnificent mountains of the Greater Caucasus, traveling north from Baku is one of the most recommended routes in Azerbaijan, especially during summer. In these mountains, there are many small, timeless villages where people speak their own language and are often cut off from the world throughout the winter (Time Out, Baku and the Best of Azerbaijan, 2012). For those who want to see a different side of Azerbaijan, one that is completely different from Baku, a trip here is definitely a good idea.

**Table 1.** SWOP Analysis of Mountain Tourism in Azerbaijan [18].

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographically availability of transportation opportunities to Asia and Europe</li> <li>• Presence of peaks surrounded by high mountains, with the Greater Caucasus to the north, the Lesser Caucasus to the west, and the Talish Mountains to the south from the point of mountain tourism</li> <li>• Suitable climate for mountain tourism</li> <li>• Rich flora and fauna</li> <li>• Rich natural and cultural heritage</li> <li>• Availability of a sufficient workforce that can be directed towards mountain tourism. Better recognition of the country thanks to certain international events (Eurovision, European Games 2015, Azerbaijan Grand Prix F1, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of adequate infrastructure for mountain tourism</li> <li>• Insufficient awareness of mountain tourism</li> <li>• Lack of action by the relevant authorities</li> <li>• Lack of a mountain tourism policy</li> <li>• Lack of sufficient advertising and promotion</li> <li>• Lack of funding</li> <li>• Inability to determine mountain roads</li> <li>• Lack of trained mountain tourism guides</li> <li>• Absence of rescue teams in the mountains</li> <li>• Insufficiency and high prices of mountaineering equipment</li> <li>• Prolonged occupation of most of the Lesser Caucasus mountains</li> <li>• The Talysh Mountains are poorly studied.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Hazards</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High mountains around</li> <li>• Being on the Silk Road route in terms of mountain tourism potential</li> <li>• Increasing interest of the local population from the point of newly developing type of tourism</li> <li>• The smaller the country's territory, the better understanding of how various types of tourism can benefit throughout the day</li> <li>• Proximity to the capital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient awareness of tourism.</li> <li>• Pollution of nature</li> <li>• Damages caused by visitors</li> <li>• Monopoly</li> <li>• Commercial mentality towards tourists</li> <li>• Lack of control</li> <li>• Presence of constructions that will disrupt the landscape</li> <li>• Economic problems and crises that the country often faces</li> </ul>

### 3 Tourism potential of the Mount Bazarduzu

The Mount Bazarduzu is a remarkable natural phenomenon due to its geographical location, height, and geological features. As the highest peak in Azerbaijan, it is located on a strategic position from geographical point and reflects the natural beauty and complex geological history of the Greater Caucasus.

The Mount Bazarduzu is located in the Main Caucasian Range of the Greater Caucasus mountain. The highest point of the mountain is located on the border between Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation and is the southernmost point of the Russian Federation. The peak is located in Gusar region, Azerbaijan and, due to its position, is the highest mountain peak within Azerbaijan. The nearest town in the vicinity is Gusar. According to the geographical coordinates, the peak is located at approximately 41°13' north latitudes and 48°0' east longitudes. The height of Mount Bazarduzu is 4,466 meters (14,652 feet). This makes it the highest peak of both the Caucasus Mountains and the Republic of Azerbaijan. The slopes of the mountain are very steep, and the elevation difference is great, which complicates its relief and poses serious challenges for climbers.



**Fig. 2.** Mount Bazarduzu (<https://en.wikipedia.org>, (05.09.2023)).

In this part of the study, various routes organized to the Mount Bazarduzu are analyzed in the Table 2. At the moment, websites, books, and articles about mountain tourism in Azerbaijan have been analyzed.

**Table 2.** Various routes to the Mount Bazarduzu (prepared by the authors).

<b>Routes</b>	<b>Starting point</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Estimated duration</b>	<b>Description of route</b>
Route starting in Gusar city	Gusar city	60-70 km approx.	3-4 days	Starting in Gusar city and heading towards Shahdagh National Park, this route is one of the most popular routes. In the first stage, mountain roads and forested areas are passed. The route passes through small villages, such as Laza village. There are stops for climbers to take short breaks.
Route starting in Khinalig village	Khinalig village	55-60 km approx.	4-5 days	This route starts in Khinalig village, one of the highest mountain villages in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Khinalig village is known for its natural beauty and ancient history. The route goes through the foothills and ascends to the Mount Bazarduzu. This route is characterized by very steep slopes and may pose a risk depending on weather conditions.

Continuation of table 2.

Routes	Starting point	Length	Estimated duration	Description of route
Route starting in Laza village	Laza village	50-60 km approx.	3-4 days	Laza village is another popular starting point for climbing to the Mount Bazarduzu. This village is also known for its beautiful waterfalls and offers a more accessible route with hilly roads at the first stage. As you approach the peak, the slopes become steeper and more challenging.
Route starting in Guba	Guba region	50 km approx.	3 days	This route starts in Guba region and goes along mountain roads. In this direction, you can also walk through various picturesque meadows. No technical equipment is required for climbing mountain slopes, but seasonal challenges in certain areas, such as snow cover or strong winds, can cause difficulties for climbers.
Route starting in Russia	Russian side of the mountain (Daghestan Republic).	30-40 km approx.	2-3 days	You can also reach the Mount Bazarduzu from the Republic of Daghestan in the Russian Federation. This route is shorter, but quite challenging, as the ascent to the peak is made along steeper slopes. This route is also intended for professional climbers and may require special permission.
Route through Shahdag National Park	Shahdag Milli Park	50-60 km approx.	3-4 days	This route starts in Shahdag National Park and lies to the Mount Bazarduzu. The natural landscapes around Shahdag are very diverse and span both forested and meadow areas. As you approach the peak, the mountainous relief becomes increasingly challenging.

There are several main routes to reach the Mount Bazarduzu. These routes are usually designed for climbers of various levels and are adapted to the geographical and weather conditions of the region. Since the peak is at an altitude of 4,466 meters above sea level, each route requires physical strength and preparation.

There are various routes to reach the summit of Bazarduzu. The difficulty level of these routes ranges depending on the experience and physical fitness of the climbers. To go through the routes depending on the weather and season, proper equipment and safety measures are also necessary. For those who want to reach the peak, each route offers a different beauty of nature and an exciting hike.

Since the Mount Bazarduzu is a part of the Greater Caucasus mountain range from the geological point, it is primarily composed of effusive rocks and rocks of volcanic origin. The mountain mainly consists of slates, sandstones, limestones, and other sedimentary rocks of

marine origin. Most of these rocks were formed during the Mesozoic and Cenozoic eras. As a part of the Caucasian geosynclinal zone, the collapse and destruction processes in the Earth's crust played an important role in the formation of the Mount Bazarduzs. The Greater Caucasus Range was raised as a result of the processes of uplift and twisting of the Earth's crust, which explains the unique geological structure of the mountains. This is a seismically active region, as it is located in a zone of tectonic plate movement in the Earth's crust. This causes periodic earthquakes in the region.

The climate at the top of Bazarduzu is harsh; due to the height of the peak, the weather here is very cold and windy. In the winter months, the snow cover is thick, and for most of the year, the mountain peak remains snowy. Starting from the mountain, important water basins are formed, such as the Turyan and Gusar rivers. These rivers not only provide water resources for local communities, but also impact the aquatic ecosystem of the region.

The Mount Bazarduzu and its surroundings are rich in natural tourist attractions, which create great opportunities for the beauty of nature and ecotourism. Since this region is the highest point in Azerbaijan and the Greater Caucasus, it holds particular interest for climbers, tourists, and nature enthusiasts. Natural tourism spots located at the top of Bazarduzu and its surroundings offer diverse ecosystems, landscapes, and rare natural scenery.

The Mount Bazarduzu is the highest peak in Azerbaijan, standing at 4,466 meters. From the top, wide and stunning Caucasian landscapes open. Clean air, high-altitude climate, and beautiful landscape plains make the peak attractive to tourists. There are several routes leading to the peak, which are perfect for nature lovers and climbers. The routes in the region vary in difficulty for both experienced tourists and professional climbers.

The Mount Bazarduzu and its surroundings are protected as part of the Shahdag National Park. The national park is one of the largest national parks in Azerbaijan and is rich in flora and fauna. The national park is home to rare species of plants and animals. Various predatory and climbing animals, such as wolves, bears, mountain goats, and eagles inhabit this area. Shahdag National Park offers a wide range of opportunities for hiking, camping, mountain sports, and nature walks. Throughout the park, there are various walking trails, waterfalls, and natural springs.

It is located in the area near the Mount Bazarduzu, where the famous Laza waterfall is situated. This waterfall is a popular spot among tourists and is famous for its beautiful natural landscapes surrounding it. The Gusar and Turian Rivers, originating at the foot of the Mount Bazarduzu, are also natural tourist resources. In addition to being a source of water for the surrounding villages and meadows, these rivers offer beautiful scenic spots along the river.

The vast meadows located at the foot of Mount Bazarduzu are the areas that were once used by shepherds as pastures. These areas are an ideal place for tourists who want to learn about ecotourism and pastoral life. In the past, herders lived their lives, moving from pasture to pasture. In the region, you can still find families who continue this tradition. This creates an interesting ethnographic experience for tourists.

Khinalig village, located near the Mount Bazarduzu, is known as one of the oldest settlements in the world. The history and culture of the village are ancient, and tourists can get acquainted with the lifestyle, traditions, and architecture of the local population here. It is located on one of the routes leading to the Mount Bazarduzu, and as you progress from the village to the peak, you can see various natural beauties.

The Mount Bazarduzu and its surroundings are covered with thick snow during the winter months. This mountain provides favorable conditions for skiing and winter hiking. The directions of winter tourism developing in the nearby regions, especially near Shahdag, combine winter sports with the wonders of nature around the Mount Bazarduzu.

As a part of the Greater Caucasus mountains, the Mount Bazarduzu is home to rare endemic species of plants and animals. It is of particular interest to tourists who are interested in ecotourism and biological research. The geological structure of the peak is one of the



interesting areas of research for those who want to engage in the history and geological studies of this place. The high mountain rocks and the history of formation of the Greater Caucasus provide interesting research opportunities here.

The Mount Bazarduzu and the natural sites surrounding it hold a special place among the natural tourism destinations in Azerbaijan. Meadows, waterfalls, mountain rivers, and national parks in this region attract nature lovers. Tourists can not only seek adventures to reach the mountain's peak, but also get acquainted with the rich natural and cultural heritage of the region.

The Mount Bazarduzu and its surroundings have numerous advantages in terms of tourism in Azerbaijan. The geographical location and unique natural and cultural features of this region make it attractive to tourists. Below are the main advantages of Bazarduzu and its surroundings from a tourism point.

**1. Highest point in Azerbaijan** - For climbers and adventurers, reaching this peak is a special achievement and a unique experience. Tourists who reach the summit can enjoy the magnificent view of the Greater Caucasus Mountains. These are unforgettable experiences for mountain tourism and hiking enthusiasts.

**2. Shahdag National Park** – The Mount Bazarduzu is known for its rich nature and protected ecosystem as part of **Shahdag National Park**. The national park offers tourists excellent opportunities for ecotourism, trekking, camping, and nature walks. The national park is rich in rare species of plants and animals. In particular, eco-tour and nature lovers can encounter unique species in this park.

**3. Mountain sports and adventure tourism** – The Mount Bazarduzu offers a variety of routes for both experienced climbers and beginners. These routes of varying difficulty levels open up wide opportunities for mountain sports enthusiasts. In the winter months, this region is covered in snow, making it ideal for skiing and winter hiking. Winter tourism centers located near Shahdag also contribute to development of winter tourism in the surrounding areas of Bazarduzu.

**4. Cultural and ethnographic tourism** – The villages located at the foot of Mount Bazarduzu, including **Khinalig and Laza villages** are ancient settlements and have a unique cultural heritage. Here, tourists can get acquainted with the traditions, culture, and customs of the local population. The meadows located in this region were once inhabited by shepherds. Tourists can visit these plains and enjoy the natural beauty and life in the plains.

**5. Beautiful natural landscapes** – The **Gusar and Turyan rivers** originate at the foot of the Mount Bazarduzu. In addition, the famous natural beauties of the surrounding regions, especially the Laza waterfall, are an attractive destination for tourists. The Mount Bazarduzu and natural landscapes surrounding it are of great interest to photographers and nature enthusiasts. The mountain landscapes, waterfalls, and vast meadows create perfect opportunities for photography and nature observation.

**6. Proximity to tourism centers** – The Mount Bazarduzu is located near the winter tourist complex “Shahdag”. This complex is the perfect place for skiing and other winter activities during the winter months, which contributes to the development of winter tourism around Bazarduzu. The historical and cultural sites located in Guba and Gusar regions are interesting places for tourists to visit. The proximity of these regions to the Mount Bazarduzu provides an additional advantage in terms of tourism.

**7. Favorable geographical position** – Guba and Gusar regions, located near the Mount Bazarduzu, are tourist destinations that are easily accessible from Baku. A good road infrastructure allows tourists to easily reach the region. The Mount Bazarduzu is located on the border with Russia, making it an interesting travel destination for both Azerbaijani and foreign tourists.

**8. Protected nature and sustainable tourism** – The presence of protected areas, such as Shahdag National Park, allows for the development of sustainable and eco-friendly tourism

in the region. This creates conditions for the development of tourism in Bazarduzu and its surroundings with minimal impact on nature. Various ecotourism and nature conservation projects are being implemented in the national park, ensuring a balance between tourism development and nature protection.

Although the Mount Bazarduzu and its surroundings have a lot of advantages from a tourism perspective, there are also some disadvantages and challenges. Some of these shortcomings are related to geographical location, infrastructure, weather conditions, and other factors affecting the development of tourism. Below are the main disadvantages of Bazarduzu and its surroundings from a tourism perspective:

**1. Unfavorable weather conditions** - Since the Mount Bazarduzu and its surroundings are a high mountainous area, the weather conditions can be very changeable and harsh. Especially in the winter months, this region is covered by a thick layer of snow, the weather is very cold and windy, which makes tourist activities difficult. A sudden change in weather conditions can pose a danger to tourists. Activities such as hiking and mountaineering can only be carried out in the summer when the weather is more stable and safer. In winter, tourist activities in the region are limited due to harsh weather conditions.

**2. Poor infrastructure** – The quality of the roads leading to the Mount Bazarduzu and the surrounding villages can sometimes be poor. Due to the mountainous terrain, some sections of the roads can be dangerous, and in the winter months, snow and ice make the roads impassable. This makes it difficult for tourists to access the region. The accommodation infrastructure in the region is not very developed. In particular, there are no hotels or tourist complexes near the peak, which limits the options for overnight stays for tourists. Often, tourists are forced to pitch tents or stay in simple local guesthouses.

**3. Safety problems** - The routes leading to the Mount Bazarduzu can sometimes be quite difficult and dangerous. Tourists who travel without guides and experienced climbers on these routes may find themselves under risk. Routes should be well marked, and safety measures along the route should be strengthened to ensure safe tourist activities. Some tourists wishing to climb the Mount Bazarduzu may lack experience in mountaineering and trekking. The lack of proper training and guidance for inexperienced tourists increases safety risks.

**4. Lack of medical and emergency services** – Medical and emergency assistance services are extremely limited in the Bazarduzu surrounding and mountainous regions. In mountainous areas, emergency medical intervention can be challenging in the event of accidents or health issues. This increases the risks to tourist safety. The region lacks resources and logistical support that could be utilized in case of emergencies. Rescue services may be limited in the event of accidents or losses during climbing or hiking.

**5. Poor development of tourism** – The Mount Bazarduzu and its surroundings are not known sufficiently in Azerbaijan and abroad as a tourist destination. Due to the lack of advertising and promotion, few tourists are coming to the region, which hinders the development of tourism. There are few organizations and agencies in the region that provide tourist services. The services for tourist guiding, travel planning, and the organization of travel routes are not developed sufficiently.

**6. Limited tourism activity** – The Mount Bazarduzu can accommodate tourists mainly during the summer months. In the winter months, due to weather conditions, tourist activity in the region decreases, that prevents the area from being an active tourist center year-round. The region has well-developed mountain sports, such as hiking and climbing mainly. However, cultural tourism, recreational tourism, and other types of tourism are not sufficiently developed.

**7. Environmental problems and sensitivity** – The Mount Bazarduzu and its surroundings are an ecologically sensitive area. Excessive growth in tourist activity and unsustainable development can have a negative impact on the environment. Special attention

should be paid to the protection of natural resources during tourism activities in mountainous areas. Waste and environmental pollution caused by tourists visiting the region can harm the environment if not managed properly. More attention should be paid to ecotourism and measures should be taken to encourage tourists to protect nature.

**8. Proximity to border** – The Mount Bazarduzu is located on the border with the Russian Federation. The use of this region for tourism purposes may create certain political and legal difficulties. Restrictions on free movement near the border and additional permits may be required.

## 4 Conclusion

Mount Bazarduzu and its surroundings have great potential in terms of tourism. Various types of tourism such as mountain sports, ecotourism, meadow tourism and ethnographic tourism can be developed here. Mount Bazarduzu, the highest peak in Azerbaijan, offers unique natural and cultural experiences for both local and foreign tourists.

Although Mount Bazarduzu and its surroundings have tourism potential, certain difficulties and shortcomings prevent the full development of tourism here. Infrastructure shortcomings, safety issues, adverse weather conditions and lack of recognition of the region are the main reasons for these shortcomings. Solving these problems is important for the development of tourism and the full use of the region's potential.

For this reason, a general framework for the development of tourism in Bazarduzu and its surroundings is proposed above. As a result, the works to be done and the actions to be taken for sustainable tourism within the framework of the assessment in this study can be summarized as follows, relevant projects can be developed and studies conducted in the future.

- First of all, the procedure for obtaining permits for foreign mountaineers should be simplified. Ensure coordination by defining the conditions and fees required to obtain a permit from the concerned authority;
- Establishment of sports training centres and camps for sports tourism;
- Redefinition of trekking and climbing routes by the concerned agencies;
- Establishment of an academic and scientific website and publication of pocket guides representing all the assets of the region;
- Establishment of private security units related to tourism;
- Establishment of sewage treatment plants and waste management plants;
- Focus on urban transformation practices in tourism regions;
- Upgrading the quality of existing facilities to meet current standards rather than focusing on the quantitative deficit of facilities in the region;
- Use of surveys to determine the favourite or preferred tourist activities of incoming tourists and take measures to increase the number of overnight stays of tourists appropriately;
- Conducting studies to develop foreign language skills of personnel working in the tourism sector;
- More effective promotion of regional tourism by participating in domestic and international fairs;
- Placing brochures and posters advertising the region's tourism values at airports; digital guide for tourists;
- Preparing promotional materials;
- Preparing tourist tours covering all the tourism values of Mount Bazarduzu;
- Organizing alternative programs for tourists to choose from;
- Tourism activities in the region aimed at familiarizing the local population with our tourism values and ensuring the sustainability of tourism activities;
- Informing the public about the protection of their values;

- Modernizing roads to tourism sites and improving the quality of the existing infrastructure at these sites;
- Reducing pollution around the sites of tourist value in the region and introducing these areas to tourism;
- Establishing trained first aid, search and rescue teams for the camps to be set up on the top of Mount Bazarduzu;
- A helicopter to intervene in any incidents.

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