

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

Directions for the Development of Ecotourism in the Shaki-Zaqatala Economic Region

Zeynalova Maya Asgar¹

¹ Candidate of Geographical Sciences,
Associate Professor of the Department of Geographical Ecology;
Baku State University; Republic of Azerbaijan

Abstract. Within the framework of the study, the region's natural landscape features, cultural heritage, and ecotourism opportunities were assessed, and the current state of infrastructure was analyzed. The results of the analysis indicate that the tourism sector of the Zaqatala district has a high potential for development. However, weaknesses in infrastructure and marketing strategies, as well as the need to improve the quality of tourism services, were observed. The study also identified the level of local population employment in the tourism sector and the main problems they face in this field. At the same time, the article puts forward proposals related to the development of alternative types of tourism (ecotourism), the identification of new tourism routes, and ensuring sustainable tourism development based on clustering.

Keywords: *Zaqatala, employment, socio-economic development, alternative tourism, tourism clusters, tourism routes.*

The tourism sector has emerged as one of the strategically important areas of the global economy, and its development has significant effects in both macroeconomic and socio-political contexts. The acceleration of globalization processes, the application of modern technologies, and the expansion of international integration have further strengthened the development dynamics of the tourism sector [14].

Tourism is not limited merely to influencing economic indicators - such as the growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the increase in foreign currency revenues, and the attraction of regional investments - but also makes strategic contributions to the formation of social structures, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the improvement of the welfare of local communities [21].

Particularly for developing countries, the development of

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

tourism creates important opportunities in terms of job creation, increasing the economic activity of regions, and promoting sustainable development. Azerbaijan has not remained outside this general global trend and has made the development of the tourism sector one of the priority directions of state policy.

Among the major steps taken in this direction are the "State Program on the Development of Tourism in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2010–2014", signed by President Ilham Aliyev in 2010; the State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2008–2015, dated 15 September 2008, No. 3043; and the "Strategic Road Map for the Development of Specialized Tourism Industry in the Republic of Azerbaijan", adopted in 2016 [2, 3, 4].

These documents envisage increasing the role of tourism in the national economy, modernizing tourism infrastructure, and strengthening the country's competitiveness in the international tourism market.

In the modern era, environmental protection, the rational use of natural resources, and the обеспечение социально-экономического благосостояния местных сообществ are regarded as some of the principal directions of sustainable development. In this context, ecotourism holds strategic importance as a form of tourism based on nature, carried out without harming ecological balance, and aimed at strengthening the economic opportunities of local populations.

The North-Western region of Azerbaijan, including the districts of Qakh, Zaqatala, Balakan, Shaki, Oghuz, and Gabala, stands out for the richness of its natural landscapes, unique biodiversity, and cultural heritage, thereby creating favorable conditions for the development of ecotourism. However, in order to fully realize this potential, systematic planning, community-based approaches, and infrastructure improvement are necessary.

Ecotourism emerged in the 1970s and 1980s on the basis of the global idea of "protecting the nature of the Earth" and is considered an approach aimed at creating a balance between the economic benefits derived from nature and the conservation of recreational areas. However, before the concept of ecotourism was introduced, the excessive use of natural recreational areas by tourists had already led to negative environmental impacts. Examples of such impacts include the

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

degradation of nature in certain national parks in the United States, the Valley of Geysers in Kamchatka, and the Alps, as well as the increase in waste accumulation on Mount Everest in Nepal and along the Inca Trail in South America.

Although the term “ecological tourism” is widely used in various sources, only some of them provide a clear explanation of this concept. The concept of ecotourism was first formulated in 1980 by the Mexican economist and ecologist Héctor Ceballos-Lascuráin. He characterized this concept as a type of travel that emphasizes a responsible attitude toward nature and aims at the conservation of biodiversity and environmental awareness. Within this framework, ecotourism is regarded both as a means of studying the natural environment and as a tourism activity carried out with minimal impact on flora and fauna (Ministry of Education, 2019). Following this initial definition, many scholars and organizations have proposed different definitions of ecological tourism.

The main feature that distinguishes ecotourism from other types of tourism is that it promotes interaction between people and nature while adhering to the principle of causing minimal impact on the cultural and ecological environment in this process. This form of tourism is aimed at encouraging both tourists and tourism operators to contribute to environmental protection, as well as to the socio-economic well-being of local communities. Consequently, ecotourism is not only a means of environmental conservation, but also an important element of the sustainable development of natural areas.

The existence of numerous definitions related to ecotourism demonstrates that this field has not yet been fully systematized from either a theoretical or practical perspective and is still in a stage of development. For this reason, in order for any given definition to be considered comprehensive and adequate, it is important that it reflect the fundamental principles that constitute the essence of ecotourism. These principles indicate that ecotourism is not limited solely to nature-oriented activities, but is also based on the integration of social, economic, and ecological dimensions.

- Preservation of the biodiversity of natural recreational areas;
- Increasing the level of economic sustainability of regions involved in ecotourism;
- Enhancing the environmental awareness and ecological

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

culture of participants engaged in ecotourism activities;

- Preservation of the ethnographic status of recreational areas.

As a result, one of the main characteristics of ecotourism is that this form of tourism not only satisfies people's need for interaction with nature, but also aims to minimize negative impacts on the environment and cultural heritage. At the same time, tourists and tourism organizers involved in ecotourism activities are encouraged to contribute actively to environmental protection as well as to the socio-economic development of local communities.

Today, ecotourism is evaluated at the global level not only as a means of nature conservation, but also as one of the key mechanisms contributing to the socio-economic development of surrounding areas. In the majority of definitions of ecotourism presented in various sources, its direct connection with sustainable development is clearly evident. In this context, the concept of sustainability is understood primarily as ensuring an optimal and long-term balance among the ecological, socio-cultural, and economic impacts of tourism activity. In addition, the positive interaction and behavioral patterns among ecotourists themselves also play an important role in maintaining this balance.

Thus, ecotourism is not merely a form of recreational activity, but also serves as an important instrument that promotes the efficient and responsible use of natural resources, supports ecological balance, and contributes to regional sustainable development. This approach demonstrates that forms of tourism that are environmentally sustainable, economically effective, and socio-culturally inclusive can best be assessed within the broader context of sustainable tourism models.

Before Héctor Ceballos-Lascuráin introduced the term "ecotourism" in 1980, there were nearly 30 concepts and terms that were, to varying degrees, close in meaning to this notion (and many of them still exist today). Nature tourism (*nature tourism, nature-based tourism, or nature-oriented tourism*), unlike ecotourism, is based primarily on people's motivation – such as recreation or visiting natural areas—and on the character of their activities, for example, high-speed movement on rivers, trekking, and similar pursuits. Ecotourism, by contrast, is fundamentally based on interaction with the local population and the creation of

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

more favorable economic conditions in areas suitable for ecotourism. Thus, nature tourism is not regarded as a concept in itself, but rather as a description of specific types of tourism that may affect the environment in different ways.

Since the late twentieth century, ecotourism has become one of the fastest-growing forms of tourism worldwide. The declaration of 2002 as the "International Year of Ecotourism" by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) significantly increased global interest in this field. Over the last 20 years, demand for ecotourism has grown at an average annual rate of 10–15% (UNWTO, 2022).

The tourism sector has emerged as one of the strategically important areas of the global economy, and its development has significant effects in both macroeconomic and socio-political contexts. The acceleration of globalization processes, the application of modern technologies, and the expansion of international integration have further strengthened the development dynamics of the tourism sector [14]. Tourism is not limited merely to influencing economic indicators—such as the growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the increase in foreign currency revenues, and the attraction of regional investments – but also makes strategic contributions to the formation of social structures, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the improvement of the welfare of local communities [21].

Particularly for developing countries, the development of tourism creates important opportunities in terms of job creation, increasing the economic activity of regions, and promoting sustainable development. Azerbaijan has not remained outside this general global trend and has made the development of the tourism sector one of the priority directions of state policy. Among the major steps taken in this direction are the "State Program on the Development of Tourism in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2010–2014", signed by President Ilham Aliyev in 2010; the "State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2008–2015" (No. 3043, dated 15 September 2008); and the "Strategic Road Map for the Development of Specialized Tourism Industry in the Republic of Azerbaijan", adopted in 2016 [2, 3, 4]. These documents envisage increasing the role of tourism in the national economy, modernizing tourism infrastructure, and strengthening the country's competitiveness in the international tourism market.

In general, the revival of tourism in Azerbaijan is

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

observed mainly during the summer season. During the summer months, tourists travel to various destinations for recreation and tend to prefer отдых in an environmentally clean setting. Considering the existing conditions, small villages located in mountainous regions possess particular attractiveness for tourists from the perspective of ecotourism. These areas have significant potential both for the development of ecotourism and for the expansion of socio-economic opportunities for the rural population.

One of Azerbaijan's important natural-geographical advantages is its climatic diversity. Of the 11 major climate types recognized worldwide, 9 are observed within the territory of the country (Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, 2021). This diversity has played an important role in the formation of the country's biological richness. At present, Azerbaijan is home to more than 4,500 plant species, which constitute approximately 64% of the flora of the Caucasus (Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, 2021). Of these, 240 species are endemic or relict in nature. In addition, nearly 140 rare and endangered plant species have been included in the Red Book of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, 2021).

In terms of fauna, approximately 14,000 insect species, 123 fish species, 9 species of aquatic invertebrates, 54 reptile species, 360 bird species, and 99 mammal species have been recorded in the country. Of these, 108 species are listed as protected species in the Red Book (Science Development Foundation under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2019).

In recent years, one of the regions of Azerbaijan that has shown notable development in the field of ecotourism is the Shaki-Zaqatala economic-geographical region, located in the north-western part of the country, on the southern slopes of the Greater Caucasus Mountains. The Shaki-Zaqatala economic-geographical region includes the administrative districts of Balakan, Qakh, Gabala, Oghuz, Shaki, and Zaqatala. It is situated in north-western Azerbaijan, on the southern slopes of the Greater Caucasus and within the Ganikh-Ayrichay Valley. The region covers an area of 8.96 thousand km², accounting for 10.3% of the country's total territory. Its population amounts to 581.7 thousand people, of whom 160.7 thousand are urban residents. 5.7% of the country's population lives in this region, and the urbanization level is 27.6%. The population is concentrated mainly in the foothill zone.

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

Forests cover 27% of the territory, with the largest share located in the Balakan and Zaqatala districts.

The Shaki-Zaqatala economic-geographical region comprises six administrative districts. The region's climatic conditions, relief structure, and hydrographic network create favorable natural conditions for the development of ecotourism. The duration of annual solar radiation amounts to 2,200–2,400 hours, indicating the predominance of sunny days throughout the year. During the coldest months, average temperature indicators vary across the territory: in some zones, winter conditions are moderate (0 to -5°C), while in others the climate is very mild (2.5 to 5°C).

Between April and October, the level of potential evaporation ranges from 400 to 1,000 mm, which is significant in terms of humidity and water balance. During the period from June to September, the number of dry days generally varies between 5 and 25 days. The average annual wind speed is low – approximately 2 m/s or less—which creates a favorable environment for tourism activities. The climate of the region varies mainly from weakly continental to moderately continental. The length of the frost-free period during the year ranges from 150 to 250 days, while the number of days with temperatures below 0°C fluctuates between 20 and 120 days (Institute of Geography, Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, 2020).

Although a subtropical climate prevails at elevations of 500–700 meters above sea level, with increasing altitude the climate becomes cool and temperate-cold in character. In terms of precipitation, this region ranks second in the country after the Lankaran-Astara zone. The lowest precipitation is observed in the Ajinohur area (300–350 mm), while the highest precipitation occurs in the middle mountainous zones (1,000–1,300 mm) (Institute of Geography, Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, 2020).

The hydrographic network of the region is also highly developed. Most of the rivers here originate in the mountains and are characterized by high water discharge and flood potential. The most significant rivers include Mazim (30 km; 2,720 m), Kish (33 km; 3,680 m), Shin (39 km; 2,800 m), Balakanchay (39 km; 1,000 m), Ayrichay (46 km; 3,200 m), Katekh (54 km; 2,840 m), Garachay (56 km; 2,800 m), Kumruk (55 km; 3,480 m), Demiraparan (69 km; 3,400 m), Alijan (98 km; 3,500 m), Turyan (180 km; 3,680 m), and Ganikh (413 km; 3,500 m).

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

The region is also rich in various natural hydrological resources, particularly thermal and mineral waters. Water sources such as Oghlanbulag, Gizbulag, Hamambulag, Budushor, Aghbulag, and Khal-khal enhance the balneological tourism potential of the region. Natural lakes such as Tufangol, Nohurgol (Gabala), and Ajinohur Lake (Qakh) create favorable conditions for various forms of ecological tourism.

This richness of climate, water resources, relief, and biodiversity further strengthens the region's ecotourism opportunities. Against the background of growing interest in ecological tourism, this region has a sufficiently high potential to become a center of tourism activities at both the domestic and international levels. Based on these characteristics, Table 2.1, presented below, systematizes the ecotourism opportunities of the North-Western region of Azerbaijan in the context of natural resources and ecological significance.

Table 1

Ecotourism Potential of the Shaki-Zaqatala Economic Region			
District / City	Main Ecotourism Attractions	Natural Resources and Features	Tourism Opportunities / Activities
Qabala	Nohur Lake, Yeddi Gözəl Waterfall, Tufandag, Gabala Forests, Shahdag National Park, Duruca and Bum Villages, Qəmərvan Forests and River Valleys, Vandam Village, Amirvan Highlands	Lakes, Forest Massifs	Mountain biking, ecological summer camps, hiking, village tourism, ecological observation, camping, village tourism and local hospitality (homestay), orchard tours and tasting of natural products
Oguz	Xalxal Waterfall, Meşəbəy Village, Qalaboyun and Bayan Villages, Mountain-Forest Zone, Bağlıca and Filfilli Rivers, Highlands (Sarıdağ, Ilisu Road Area)	Mountain-Forest Climate, Ecological Balance	Green camps, horseback riding tours, nature walks, cycling tours, village tourism, mountain hiking, homestay experiences and cultural immersion in village life, highland trips

NATURE MANAGEMENT,
RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

Table continuation 1

Sheki	Kish River and Kish Village, Oxud and Baş Göynük Villages, Shaki Highlands (Sarıca, mountain hiking, ecological tours, village tourism, family farm visits - Qaratorpaq, etc.), Biodiversity Areas, "Khudger" and "Meşəbaşı" Waterfalls, Danavech Highlands	Forests, Mountains, Rivers	Mountain hiking, ecological tours, village tourism, participation in family farms, mountain biking and horseback riding, orchard tours and natural product tastings, camping, tent tourism, photography and adventure tours, introduction to local natural products
Qax	Ilisu Village, Ram-Rama Waterfall, Caucasus Mountains, Areas of Əyriçay and Kürmük Rivers, Sarıbaş Village, Ilisu State Nature Reserve	Mountains, Rivers, Forested Areas	Camping, nature hikes, village tourism, mountain hiking, homestay services, ecological nature observation, photography, tent tourism, ecological nature observation (birds, flora, fauna)
Zaqatala	Zagatala State Nature Reserve, Mazikh, Qımır, Mamrux and other mountain villages, Silban Forests, Qalaçay Valley, Car Village, Katekh River	Subtropical Climate, Rare Plant Species, Mountains, Rivers, Forested Areas	Ecological hikes and mountain tours, staying in village houses and experiencing local lifestyle, nature walks and ornithological observation, camping and ecological tours, photography and adventure tours, introduction to local natural products (honey, hazelnuts, walnuts, fruits)

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

Table continuation 1

Balakan	Katekh Forests, Mazımçay and Balakənçay Rivers, Gullar Village, Qubek Mountain Massifs and Valleys, Forest Strips and Hazelnut Orchards	Mountains, Forests, Rivers	Nature walks and mountain hikes, staying in village houses and village tourism, introduction to local products (honey, hazelnuts, fruits), camping and photography sessions, ornithological and ecological observation, adventure tours and photo tourism
---------	---	----------------------------	---

As seen from the table, Azerbaijan's North-West region is rich in diverse natural resources and provides ideal conditions for ecotourism activities. The forests, mountains, rivers, waterfalls, and highlands in this area offer extensive opportunities for ecotourism, village tourism, mountain tourism, and nature observation. Nature-oriented excursions, mountain routes, ecological tours, and village tourism activities organized in the region have the potential to contribute both to the improvement of local communities' social welfare and the conservation of the environment. The region's ecotourism potential is also significant for promoting local natural products (honey, hazelnuts, fruits, etc.) and showcasing traditional lifestyles. This provides tourists with unique experiences while simultaneously supporting the local economy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

During the research, an extensive review of relevant scientific literature was conducted, referencing both local and international studies. In this context, the works of local researchers such as Abadov M.K., Müseyibov M., Budaqov B., Əhmədov N., Əzəmmədov S., İmrani Z.T., Məmmədov E.Q., Rəsulova M., Bəhərçi T., and Zeynalova K.Z., as well as studies by international scholars including Лопатников Д.Л., Sezgin M., and Porter M.E., were utilized. These sources provided a foundation for scientifically evaluating the tourism potential of Zaqatala district and linking it to employment issues.

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

The Role of Routes in the Formation of Tourism Clusters

Competitive tourism clusters require the synergy of various stakeholders—tourism operators, transport services, and cultural sites—and this collaboration is considered one of the key mechanisms for regional development [17]. Proper route planning shapes the functional structure of these clusters, strengthening economic connections and ensuring sustainable development [11].

In Zaqatala district, the systematic management of existing tourism potential in ecotourism, cultural tourism, and village tourism, as well as the planned organization of routes, is crucial for achieving sustainable regional development. The formation of tourism clusters facilitates coordination and interaction among entities operating in different sectors within the region while simultaneously increasing access to broader markets. As a result, this approach enhances the competitiveness of the district's tourism sector and supports economic and social development.

Moreover, improving organizational and management mechanisms for the conservation and efficient use of natural and cultural resources promotes the integration of ecotourism and cultural tourism sectors, increasing the synergy effect. Within this study, the existing tourism routes in Zaqatala district were grouped according to specific criteria, and for the first time, competitive tourism clusters corresponding to these routes were identified, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Grouping and Classification of Tourism Routes by Category in the
Zaqatala District.

Route Category	Routes and Main Attractions	Tourism Clusters
Historical and Cultural Heritage Routes	• Car Village (Cingöz Castle, Şeytan Castle, 17th-century Mosque) • Aşağı Tala Village (Aşağı Tala Mosque, Omar Efendi Shrine) • Qəbizdəre Village (8th-9th-century Temple) • Kəbəloba Village (Kəbəloba Tower) • Yuxarı Çardaxlar Village (3rd-4th-century Maiden Tower, Periqala Cave) • Mamrux Village (Circular Alban Temple)	Craft and Handicraft Production Enterprises that encompass values such as archaeological and architectural monuments, religious and ethnographic heritage, and folk craftsmanship.

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

Table continuation 3

	• Zaqatala Historical and Cultural Reserve • Pipan Basilica (7th-8th century)	
Agrotourism Routes	• Aşağı Tala Village (tobacco and flower plantations: rose, lavender, mint) • Muğanlı Village ("Babek" and "Ülkər" viticulture farms) • In villages such as Bəhmətli, Göyem, Suvagil, Yuxarı Tala, etc. (livestock farming, beekeeping, and fishing) Collection of hazelnuts, walnuts, and chestnuts; experiencing village life; production of local products	Agricultural facilities, experimental fields, farmers' markets and farms, vineyards, tea plantations, organic production areas, and other related sectors aimed at agrotourism.
Ecotourism Routes	• Qəbizdəre Village (waterfalls and forests) • Qazangül Village (Sarı Lake, Ümid Lake) • Meşleş Village (Sarmaşık Waterfall) • Zaqatala State Nature Reserve (waterfalls, Piçigel Cave)	Tourism facilities and enterprises oriented toward ecotourism; reserves, nature parks, national parks, and other sites that do not harm the ecosystem.
Adventure and Extreme Tourism Routes	• Yuxarı Çardaxlar Village (Xalaxel Lake) • Katex and Qanslar Waterfalls (mountain hiking and camping) • Zaqatala State Nature Reserve (mountaineering and trekking)	Tourism facilities and enterprises focused on ecotourism; reserves, nature parks, national parks, and other sites that do not harm the ecosystem.
Religious Tourism Routes	• Aşağı Tala Village (Omar Efendi Shrine) • Danaçı Village (19th-century Mosques) • Pipan Basilica (Christian Religious Monument)	Complexes, mosques, churches, shrines, temples, and other sites related to religious belief systems and cultures.
Health and Wellness Tourism Routes	• Sulfate-mineral springs and natural healing waters in Çimçimax, Əliabad, Qımır, Sabunçu, Mamrux, and Yuxarı Çardaxlar villages (Zaqatala State Nature Reserve) • Shamilovka Highland (nature and wellness hiking)	Wellness hotels, health centers; rehabilitation centers; facilities offering therapeutic spa services, recovery programs, and massage therapy; thermal water centers.
Gastronomic Tourism Routes	• Local cuisine specialties based on livestock products (all villages) • Aşağı Tala Village (flower	Restaurants and cafés; local product producers; enterprises operating in the agriculture and food

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

Table continuation 3

	• products - rose tea, rose pastries) • Muğanlı Village (grape and wine tasting)	industry sectors; wineries and breweries, etc.
Urban Tourism Routes	Zaqatala City Tour (Historical and Cultural Reserve, Dede Gorgud Square, Plane Tree, Qala Duzu Stairways, and Park)	Shopping centers and retail complexes; amusement parks and cinemas; museums (history, art, archaeology, ethnography) and other urban infrastructure facilities.

Source: Compiled based on the research of Aygün İsmaylova, a researcher at the Shaki Regional Scientific Center of ANAS.

The Shaki-Zaqatala economic region, with its rich nature, ancient history, and recreational potential, is one of Azerbaijan's main tourism regions. In the districts of Qabala, Shaki, Zaqatala, and Qakh, recreational centers, thermal springs, and ecotourism opportunities are being developed. Additionally, silk production, kelaghayi craftsmanship, and local cuisine (Eastern sweets) enhance the region's tourism appeal.

The analyses conducted and the proposed solutions provide relevant conclusions on the issues mentioned and identify directions for development in the form of recommendations. The study revealed that in a region with rich tourism opportunities, resolving existing problems can attract more tourists and positively influence the tourism image of the country to which the region belongs. By developing various types of tourism, including alternative tourism, in a destination region, it is possible to contribute to the national economy and increase revenue.

One of the most notable problems identified in the research related to Shaki is the dilapidated state of some historical and architectural monuments. For example, restoring several ruined sites, such as the Alban Temple, is necessary to preserve the region's historical heritage and ensure that conservation efforts are undertaken. Additionally, the development of high-quality hotel services and transport infrastructure can influence tourists' decisions to visit and lead to an increase in tourist flows.

Tourism, considered one of the most important and profitable sectors today, plays a crucial role in enhancing welfare levels and promoting countries positively on the

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

global stage. In recent years, Shaki's hosting of several international events and the significant tourist interest in various competitions held there demonstrates the special position of Shaki as a tourism destination in Azerbaijan.

As a result of the research, we consider it essential to undertake a series of measures to develop alternative types of tourism in Shaki:

- Restoration of several historical and architectural monuments that require repair and conservation;
- Creation of new employment opportunities through the construction and commissioning of new tourist facilities alongside existing tourism enterprises;
- Improvement of transport infrastructure, including the development of key roads and service points;
- Implementation of measures to ensure that tourism facilities in Shaki meet international standards in both service and quality;
- Development of language skills and other professional competencies for specialists and staff working in the tourism sector, including regular training courses and seminars at tourism enterprises, hotels, and guesthouses;
- Organization of comprehensive service systems to simplify formalities, documentation, permits, and related processes, making it easier for foreign tourists to visit.

References:

- [1] Azərbaycan Milli Elmlər Akademiyası Coğrafiya İnstitutu. (2020). Azərbaycanın təbii-coğrafi şəraiti və iqlimi haqqında məlumatlar. Bakı: AMEA Coğrafiya İnstitutu.
- [2] Azərbaycan Respublikası Dövlət Statistika Komitəsi. (2022). Azərbaycan Respublikasının Dövlət Statistika Komitəsinin rəsmi internet səhifəsi. <https://stat.gov.az>
- [3] Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin Administrasiyası. (2016, dekabr 6). Azərbaycan Respublikasında ixtisaslaşmış turizm sənayesinin inkişafı üzrə Strateji Yol Xəritəsi. <https://president.az/az/articles/view/22134>
- [4] Azərbaycan Respublikası Təhsil Nazirliyi. (2019). Ekoturizm və təbiətə məsuliyyətli yanaşmalar üzrə tədris materialları. Bakı.
- [5] Azərbaycan Respublikasının Dövlət Turizm Agentliyi. (2022). Azərbaycanın turizm potensialı və inkişaf prioritetləri haqqında hesabat. Bakı: DTA. <https://tourism.gov.az>
- [6] Azərbaycan Respublikasının Prezidenti yanında Elmin İnkişafı Fondu. (2019). Biomüxtəliflik və təbii sərvətlər üzrə araşdırmalar. Bakı: AR EIF.
- [7] Becken, S., & Hay, J. E. (2007). Tourism and climate change: Risks and opportunities. Channel View Publications.
- [8] Doc.govt.nz. (2024). Department of Conservation - New Zealand.

NATURE MANAGEMENT, RESOURCE SAVING AND ECOLOGY

- <https://www.doc.govt.nz>
- [9] Ekologiya və Təbii Sərvətlər Nazirliyi. (2021). Rəsmi hesabatlar və statistika. <https://eco.gov.az>
- [10] e-qanun.az. (1999). Turizm haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikasının Qanunu (Qanun № 674-IQ, qəbul tarixi: 4 iyun 1999). https://eqanun.az/framework/49162_46
- [11] Fennell, D. A. (1999). Ecotourism: An introduction. Routledge.
- [12] GSaz.az. (2023). Şəki-Zaqatala iqtisadi-coğrafi rayonu haqqında. <https://gsaz.az/articles/view/112/ShakiZaqatala-iqtisadicografi-rayonu>
- [13] Honey, M. (2008). Ecotourism and sustainable development: Who owns paradise? (2nd ed.). Island Press.
- [14] Ict.go.cr. (2023). Costa Rica Tourism Board. <https://www.ict.go.cr>
- [15] MagicalKenya.com. (2024). Kenya Tourism Board. <https://www.magicalkenya.com>
- [16] Nepal, S. K., & Chipeniuk, R. (2005). Mountain tourism: Toward a conceptual framework. *Tourism Geographies*, 7(3), 313–333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616680500164851>
- [17] Parks.swiss. (2024). Swiss Parks Network. <https://www.parks.swiss>
- [18] Pc.gc.ca. (2024). Parks Canada. <https://www.pc.gc.ca>
- [19] Steck, B. (1999). Sustainable tourism as a development option: Practical guide for local decision-makers. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).
- [20] Tra.gov.au. (2023). Tourism Research Australia. <https://www.tra.gov.au>
- [21] UNWTO. (2019). Guidelines for the development of ecotourism in protected areas. World Tourism Organization.
- [22] UNWTO. (2020). International tourism highlights: 2020 edition. United Nations World Tourism Organization. <https://www.unwto.org/>
- [23] UNWTO. (2022). Tourism and sustainable development: A global perspective. United Nations World Tourism Organization. <https://www.unwto.org/>
- [24] UNWTO. (2024). Tourism and green investments: World tourism day 2024. United Nations World Tourism Organization. <https://www.unwto.org/>
- [25] Weaver, D. (2001). Ecotourism. Wiley. 47 26. WelcomeNepal.com. (2024). Official site of Nepal Tourism Board. <https://www.welcomenepal.com>