

Policy Brief 40

Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Changes: Solutions for the Tourism Sector in Egypt

Prepared by:

Marwa Elghoubashy
Saleh Elghamrawi
Noha Elbalky
Asma Salama
Mohamed Shazly

Under the Supervision of:

Dr. Shahjahan Bhuiyan



Executive Summary

Climate change is soon becoming an unescapable challenge for many countries, Egypt included. Severe weather events are becoming more and more frequent and developing countries are expected to be more vulnerable to their effects.

Tourism is considered one of the most vulnerable sectors affected by climate change, not only due to risks to marine life coastal communities, but also because changes in temperatures are expected to affect tourists preferred destinations. This is especially challenging for Egypt given that Tourism contributes up to 15% of GDP, is one of the countries' main sources of foreign currency and employs more than 10% of the workforce.

This policy brief presents four different recommendations to adapt and mitigate climate change effects to the tourism industry in Egypt. The recommendations were formulated after several meetings with respective stakeholders in the Ministry of Tourism & Ministry of Environment. The recommendations in this policy brief are based on the integrated reform program of Ministry of Tourism and Egypt's and Egypt's National Climate Strategy for 2050.

Climate change's effect has been on the forefront of public discourse, especially with the increasing frequency of extreme weather events around the world, and the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Egypt in 2022. Experts are expecting difficult times ahead for climate change initiatives, with the global economy slowdown due to Covid-19, and the energy crisis due to the Russia & Ukraine war. Egypt, among other emerging markets, are facing mounting economical challenges including inflationary pressures, lack of foreign currency revenues, and sharp increases in imported commodities and fuel. (Fortune, 2022)

More specifically, the tourism sector in Egypt has been one of the most affected sectors due to the Ukraine war. Some estimates claim occupancy rates for Egypt's top resorts in Sharm El-Sheikh fell by 70% (Reuters, 2022). Russian and Ukrainian tourists are estimated to constitute around 30% of incoming tourists to Egypt's resorts. While this is clearly a challenging time for the tourism industry, it also means there will be increased willingness from different stakeholders to implement different new strategies and programs, since the status quo has been forcibly changed.

The below figure from a recent study provides an example of how climate change could affect major tourist destinations in Egypt. Estimates for Hurghada's temperatures till 2050 have been calculated using climate change scenarios RCP4.5 and RCP8.5. RCPs refer to Representative Concentration Pathway, which are scenarios of global emissions rising with varying degrees, the RCP4.5 is considered a moderate scenario by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), whereby countries would be able to curb emissions, while RCP8.5 represents the scenario where emissions continue to rise. For Hurghada, one of Egypt's top tourist attractions, in both scenarios, the number of months that have attractive weather conditions will continue to decline throughout the years 2021-2050. Essentially, this means Egypt should be ready with proper adaptation and mitigation tools for what this will mean for the tourism sector.

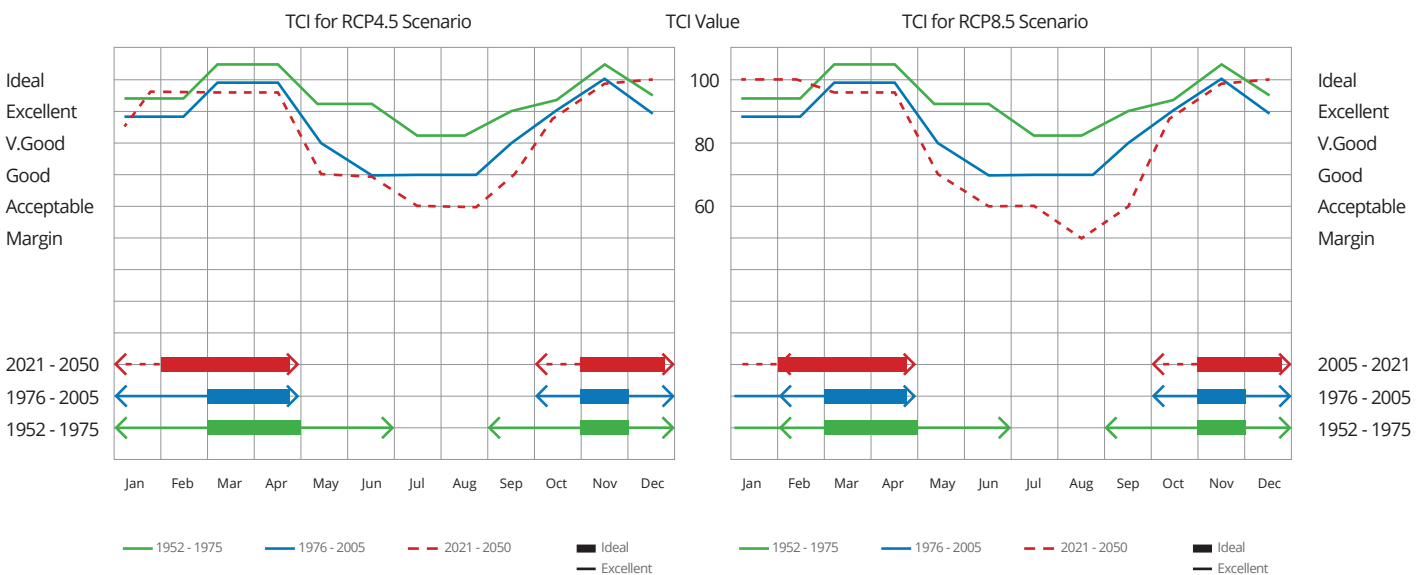


Figure (1) Example of Expected Climate Change Effects on Hurghada's Weather for Tourism

(Hurghada's Tourism Climate Index Pattern Analysis - Source: Gamal & Aboelseoud, 2019)

Recent efforts in acting against climate change in the Tourism Sector in Egypt:

Egypt has recently shown commitment to acting against climate change, with the establishment of the National Council for Climate Change, and the announcement of its National Climate Change Strategy 2050 to support a stronger, greener Egyptian economy. In 2018, the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism announced an overall reform program that tackles: Institutional, Legislative, Branding and Promotion, Infrastructure and Tourism Development, and International Tourism Trends.

Egypt has been partnering with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in several sustainable tourism projects through the Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Egypt's Tourism (MBDT), in coordination with the Ministry of Environment. In 2022, Egypt launched the first-ever Green List (GL) to promote the tourism establishments; best practices and products contributing to environmental and cultural heritage preservation.

Egypt has also initiated for the very first time a dedicated portal for sustainable tourism, entitled the Egyptian Sustainable Tourism Portal (ESTP) – the first online tool dedicated to hospitality professionals and tourism experts was also launched to help increase the adoption of green and cost-effective measures in the tourism sector.

Review of Current Policy Environment: Egypt Welcomes Sustainable Development Policies in Tourism

In summary, while there are multiple initiatives and programs that have been initiated either by the Ministry of Tourism or the Ministry of Environment regarding sustainable solutions for the tourism industry, there is still a long way to go. Fortunately, this could be considered a time of opportunity for policymakers interested in sustainable development for the tourism sector, as there are multiple factors that pave the way for policy implementation.

First and foremost, there has been a tremendous increase in the political will of Egypt's government to address climate change effects in all aspects, not just tourism. This can be easily deduced from the previously mentioned programs initiated for the restructuring of the Ministry of Tourism and the new partnerships with the UNDP. There is also the fact that Egypt is hosting COP27 in November-2022 which has propelled climate change discussions to the forefront of the public discourse.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Mobile Application: "Horus the Travel Planner"

Launch a mobile application travel planner "Horus the Travel Planner" where visitors planning to visit Egypt can find online consultation and recommendations enhancing their travel experience in Egypt

Recommendation 2: Mandatory Online Reporting of Environmental KPIs for Hotels & Tourism Operators

Establish mandatory environmental reporting guidelines for hotels and tourism operators in Egypt through a portal that would have all the environmental key performance indicators, using the recently launched Egyptian Sustainable Tourism Portal (ESTP).

Recommendation 3: Establishing Food Loss and Waste Reduction and Recycling Program

Encourage tourism operators and other stakeholders in the industry through tax laws and incentives, and through food waste laws that mandate regulatory requirements to minimize food waste and establishing frameworks to monetize turning it to fertilizers.

Recommendation 4: Establish an Integrated Strategy for Medical Tourism

Encouraging medical tourism in Egypt through a development strategy that integrates all aspects, platform for governance with the concerned authorities, development of medical tourism products and framework of insurance regulations.

Conclusion

The current policy programs provide a solid base in action against climate change especially with the Ministry of Tourism reform program, green star certification, and with UNDP partnerships. However, more actionable policies that engage multiple stakeholders in the private sector are required for a more wholesome approach. As established above, Egypt is one of the countries at risk of being susceptible to negative implications of climate change, resulting in declining tourism, and should in turn start mitigation and adaptation actions. This policy brief provides 4 different policy alternatives that all contribute to the efforts already in place to support the Egyptian tourism industry. These policy recommendations could also be considered as a groundwork for further research into programs that could tackle climate change effects in Egypt.

Moreover, further research is required to explore the opportunities of using carbon capture, utilization, and storage capacities, as well as the potential and possible initiation of a market for carbon credits in Egypt. Other topics for further research include exploring potential of using other fuels like natural gas for cars and ships in touristic areas on a trial basis and promoting non-motorized transportation for residents and tourists using bicycles and electric bicycles.



Figure (2) Example of Underwater photo of the impacts of climate change on Hurghada coral reefs

(Photo by Ahmed El-Adawy 2021)

«All the academic references used in this brief are mentioned in the policy paper.»

This brief is published by: The Public Policy Hub - GAPP School (AUC)

<https://gapp.aucegypt.edu/public-policy-hub>

Follow us on:  PublicPolicyHub  PolicyHub  Public Policy Hub  The Public Policy HUB - AUC GAPP