

An Approach to Sustainable Tourism Development in Coastal Area-Egypt

Prof. Dr. Magda Metwally

Head of Architecture & Housing Department, Housing and Building Research Center

E-mail: magda_met@hotmail.com

Dr. Sahar Soliman Abdalla

**Lecturer at Architecture & Housing Department, Housing and Building Research
Center**

E-mail: sahar_soliman99@hotmail.com

Abstract:

Travel and Tourism is the world's largest industry and creator of jobs across national and regional economies. For developing countries it is one of the biggest income generators and creators of millions of jobs. Jobs generated by travel and tourism are spread across the economy in retail, construction, manufacturing and telecommunications. These jobs employ a large proportion of women, minorities and young people. Tourism can also be one of the most effective drivers for the development of regional economies. These patterns apply to both developed and developing countries. The World Travel and Tourism Councils declared that tourism and related activities contribute 11% to the world's GDP (gross domestic production) in 2002, and the estimates show that it will rise to 12% by 2010.¹

Tourism is expected to grow in the future owing to population growth. According to forecasts by the World Tourism Organization, international tourist arrivals are almost to be triple over the next two decades, with nearly 1.6 billion tourists visiting foreign countries by the year 2020, and a share of growth ratio of about 6% in the middle east region.² Egypt is the largest single destination in the middle east region in terms of international tourists (arrivals with 3.1 million tourists in 1996). Its tourism receipts went up from \$3,202.0 million in 1996 to about \$5,912.3 million in 2002, however Egypt's share of the middle east market is lower than its fair share based on population compared to the rest of the region.³

The paper presents the existing status of the North West Coast including the natural resources, the cultural and demographic characteristics of the residents, and the economic activities. **It discusses the concept of sustainable tourism development** in the area, which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining culture integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems. This is to

1- World Travel & Tourism Council and International Hotels & Restaurant Association, The Global Importance of Tourism, Department of Economics & Social Affairs, New York, April 1999.

2- The World Bank, Country Economic Memorandum Egypt: Issues in Sustaining Economic Growth, Washington D.C., March 1997

3- GOPP, Regional Planning of The North West Coast of Egypt, 1998

meet the needs of present tourists and host communities whilst protecting and enhancing needs in the future, which leads to increase the national and international visitation to the region.

The paper suggests recommendations for the comprehensive sustainable development in the North West Coast of Egypt, and in-desert region behind the coastal strip which is presently home of Bedouin cultural groups.

Key Words:

Sustainable Tourism development, Eco-tourism, Coastal Area, the North West Coast of Egypt, Tourism Planning.

Introduction

The Rio Earth Summit in 1992 identified Travel and Tourism as one of the key sectors of the economy which could make a positive contribution to achieving sustainable development, economically, ecologically and socially. Travel and Tourism has less impact on natural resources and the environment than most other industry. It is acting as a catalyst for conservation and improvement of the environment and maintenance of local diversity and culture. ⁴

⁵ Tourism is expected to grow in the future owing to population growth. According to forecasts by the World Tourism Organization, international tourist arrivals are almost to be triple over the next two decades, with nearly 1.6 billion tourists visiting foreign countries by the year 2020, and a share of growth ratio of about 6% in the Middle East region. The tourism cities face double challenges, firstly they have to be able to respond to the expectations and needs of the growing numbers of tourists, so they need to continuously renovate and improve their facilities in order to maintain their share in the competitive tourism market. Secondly, tourism cities have to ensure that tourism is developed and managed in such a way that it benefits the resident population. ⁶

Egypt is the largest single destination in the Middle East Region in terms of international tourists (arrivals with 3.1million tourist in 1996).⁷ However Egypt's share of the middle east market is lower than its share based on population compared to the rest of the region. In 1996, Egypt hosted about 6 visitor per 100 persons in its resident population, compared with 59 per 100 in Bahrain, 38 per 100 in Israel and 26 per 100 resident in Jordan.

The figure bellow shows a comparison between population and tourism in some tourism countries boarding the Mediterranean ⁸

4 The Global Importance of Tourism, New York, April 1999. ⁴

5- Country Economic Memorandum Egypt : Issues in Sustaining Economic Growth, Washington D.C., -March 1997

6- Aide Memoire, Tourism and the City: The Challenge of Sustainability, Madrid, Spain , 1999

7-- GOPP, Regional Planning of The North West Coast of Egypt, 1998

8- World Tourism Organization (WTO) – -World Bank Atlas,1997

country ▶	France	Spain	Italy	Portugal	Greece	Egypt
Population (million)	58	39.2	57.2	9.9	10.5	57.8
Tourism (million)	61.5	41.3	35.5	9.9	9.7	3.695

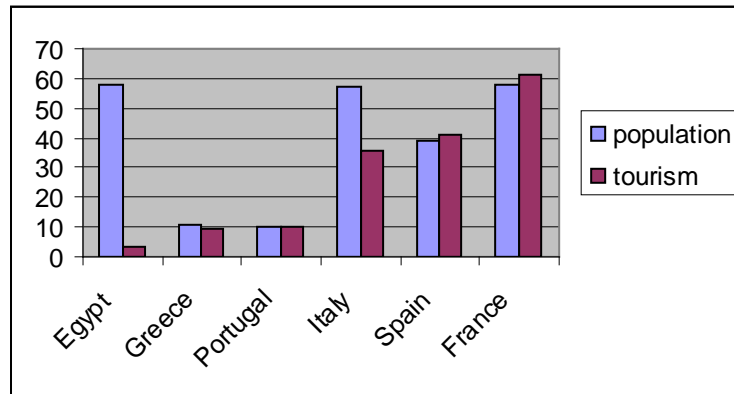


Figure 1. Comparison Chart

The tourism industry has tremendous potential to provide viable solutions to absorb the new labor force and to better disperse the population geographically. So Egypt should plan, even in the very long term, to target a level of foreign visitors equal to its resident population. The development of large new destination resorts in Egypt is necessary to enable Egypt to maintain and improve its current market share of international tourism flows to the Middle East

The Coastal Tourism in Egypt

The Red Sea coastline, south Sinai and the Gulf of Aquba provide better potential for year-round tourism, and offers a superior target for development of new settlements on the basis of permanent well-paying jobs that the tourism industry can offer.

The large stretch of the North West Coast line along the Mediterranean which stretching from the city of Alexandria to Salloum on the Libyan border, with its convenient road, sea and air access seems to offer optimum development conditions to meet Egypt's current social and economic objectives.

The study focuses on the sustainable tourism development of the coastal stripe of Matruh governorate, which begins at Hammam at km.41 in the western suburbs of Alex. with a distance of about 451km. The area includes the eastern sector with a length of about 166km, the middle sector with 135km, and the western sector with about 150km. The regional development plan for the North West concentrates on the development of the middle sector. The area has a dramatic coastline with white sandy beaches and pristine water, compared to the Greek-Roman antiquities along this coast which would have been major tourism attraction as they are in France, Italy, Greece, Turkey and the Adriatic Coast. The governorate of Matruh extends south to the oasis of Siwa, which is one of the most famous tourist sites of the ancient world featuring the pharaonic temple of Amon. In addition to many other tourist attraction sites, Cleopatra's bath, a rock formation on the Mediterranean which can be reached by adventurous waders. Also the headquarters cave of field Marshal Rommel of Germany at the time of most famous tank battle of World War II at El-Alamein, as well as the Italian cemetery memorial park at El-Alamein.

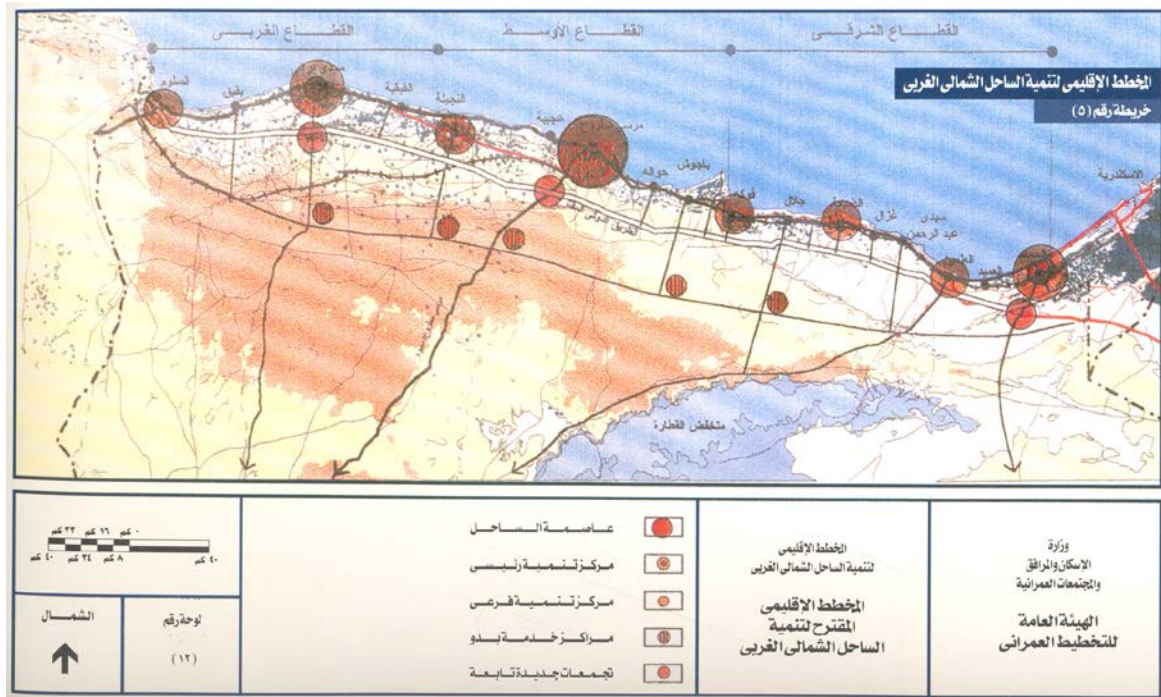


Figure 2. The regional development plan for the North West Coast of Egypt
 Source: Regional Planning of the North West Coast of Egypt, 1998

The Main Problem

The area are used at a maximum of about four to five months of the year, the characteristics of the tourism villages are very local and never attract the international tourism. This type of usage represents a tremendous waste of public investments in infrastructure and private investment. It is a type of real estate development that is bound to collapse under the weight of continued building, especially the tourism villages, which have a lake of facilities that attract international tourists. Since this tourism villages are owned and used by middle and upper middle class families residing in Cairo, Alex, and other towns in the Nile Delta. The houses and the different building units are used and occupied in the summer months only (3 or 4 months) and the rest of the time these tourism villages are almost empty.

The hotels and resorts in the North West Coast also facing problems through the low rate of occupancy (about 30 %) so:

- Hotels don't generate an adequate rate of return on invested capital since the hotels are not used for more than five months / year.
- Much faster deterioration because of the unused months.
- Provide seasonal employment for all categories of workforce.

The Challenge of Developing the North West Coast of Egypt

Egyptians usually visit the North West Coast annually from the last weak in May till the first week of September, they think, with some justification, that it is too cold to spend even weekend. Secondly the summer vacation pattern is ingrained in Egypt, and many think that it is not worth to spend many hours driving to the beach during the odd weekend. So, the program for the future development of tourism in the North West Coast must be aimed at both the local and international sources of demand. For sure there is tremendous potential to increase international visitation to North West

Coast, this is because the climate during the year is not as forbidding to North Europeans who accounted for about 45% of the 3.9million visitor to Egypt in 1996. ⁹

The table below shows the forecast in Matruh at the North West Coast of Egypt during the year months:

Month	Mean Temp. Degree	Humidity %	Rain Days	Sun Hours
January	12.8	65	7.4	6.5
February	12.4	64	5.3	7.3
March	14.9	63	3.7	8.3
April	17.4	64	1.3	9.4
May	20.2	67	0.7	10.3
June	23.2	70	0.2	11.9
July	25.0	73	Zero	12.1
August	25.6	72	Zero	11.0
September	24.4	67	0.2	10.5
October	21.8	66	2.5	9.0
November	18.2	66	4.8	7.6
December	14.4	68	6.5	6.6

Table 1. The Forecast in Matruh

Source: Mersa Matruh Airport Authority

The Economic Resources of the North West Coast

The economic resources include the agriculture sector, the industry sector and the tourism sector. The agriculture development is an essential factor for the economic balance of the region. It depends on the rain water, the canal or stream water such El Naser and El Hamam, and the drain water. ¹⁰ The agriculture land in Matruh region is about 127 thousand acres of the upland in 1990. The population working in this sector is about 31 thousand workers. The development strategy of the region focuses on the upgrading of about 250 thousand acres till 2017. The industry sector is a vital process for the social and economic development. The environmental industry providing about five thousands working opportunities. The tourism sector is one of the important sectors of the economic development of the region. According to the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, less than 2% of the nights spent by foreign visitors in Egypt in 1996 were spent in the north west coast.

From the previous information, we suggest a comprehensive sustainable development for the North West Coast of Egypt, based on the sustainable tourism development.

⁹- World Tourism Organization WTO; Author Consulting Group International , 1996

¹⁰- Regional Planning of The North West Coast of Egypt, 1998¹⁰

What is Sustainable Tourism, Eco-tourism

Sustainable tourism, as defined by The World Tourism Organization in 1996, is the tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining culture integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems. In addition, they describe the development of sustainable tourism as a process which meets the needs of present tourists and host communities whilst protecting and enhancing needs in the future.¹¹

Sustainable tourism supports integrity of place, so tourism revenues raise the character of the local value in terms of architecture, heritage, aesthetics and ecology. It should benefit residents by providing employment opportunities and training of local people, it conserves resources through the concept of minimizing pollution, waste, energy consumption, water usage, and landscaping chemicals.¹²

Sustainable Tourism includes all segments of industry with guidelines and criteria that seek to reduce environmental impacts, particularly the use of non-renewable resources, this can be understood through the concept of **Eco-tourism** which conserves the environment, and provides local benefits environmentally, culturally and economically. It is an environmentally responsible travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy study, appreciate nature, and culture features.¹³

The term "Eco-tourism" seems to have a different definition for many international Organizations, but it can be classified into two main concepts depending on the ecotourism goals and targets:¹⁴

1-Concept of Integration (Conservation & Local Communities)

The following principles distinguish between the principles and the wider concept of sustainable tourism:

- Contributes activities to conservation of natural and cultural heritage
- Includes local and indigenous communities in its planning, development and operation, contributing to their well-being.
- Interprets the natural and cultural heritage of the destination to visitors.
- Lends itself better to independent travelers, as well as to organized tours for small size groups.

2- Concept of Participation (Communities & NGO's)

From that concept, ecotourism is sustainable tourism which follows clear processes that (UNEP, 2002):

- Ensures prior informed participation of all stakeholders.
- Acknowledges local people communities rights to say "No" to tourism development, and to be fully informed, effective, and active participants in the development of tourism activities
- Promotes processes for indigenous people and local communities to control

¹¹ Kishore Shah, Jan McHarry and Rosalie Gardiner, Sustainable Tourism- Turning the Tide, Toward Earth Summit 2002 Project, United Nation Foundation, STAKHOLDER FORUM, 2002 ¹¹

¹² hsrinivas@gdrc.org National Geographic Online ¹²

¹³ Tourism Development Authority, Best Practices for Tourism Center Development, Cairo, Egypt, - 1998 ¹³

¹⁴ Mohga Embaby, Towards an Ecotourism Development and Planning in the Red Sea Coastal Zones, International Conference: Future Vision and Challenges for Urban Development, Cairo, Egypt, December 2004 ¹⁴

and maintain their resources .

Eco-tourism focuses on local culture, adventures, and volunteering. It is typically defined as culture tourism and natural tourism. It is also an approach that creates a variety of quality tourism products that are environmentally and ecologically sustainable. Moreover, it is economically viable, socially and psychologically acceptable. The facilities which emphasize the values of natural environment and wildlife habitats called "**Eco-lodge**", this term is used to meet the philosophy and principles of eco-tourism. The **eco-lodge** can be built from local natural materials to provide the basic needs of the tourists, or it can also be a camp...it doesn't matter. What matters is the quality of the surrounding environment, and the activities taking place within the eco-lodge.¹⁵

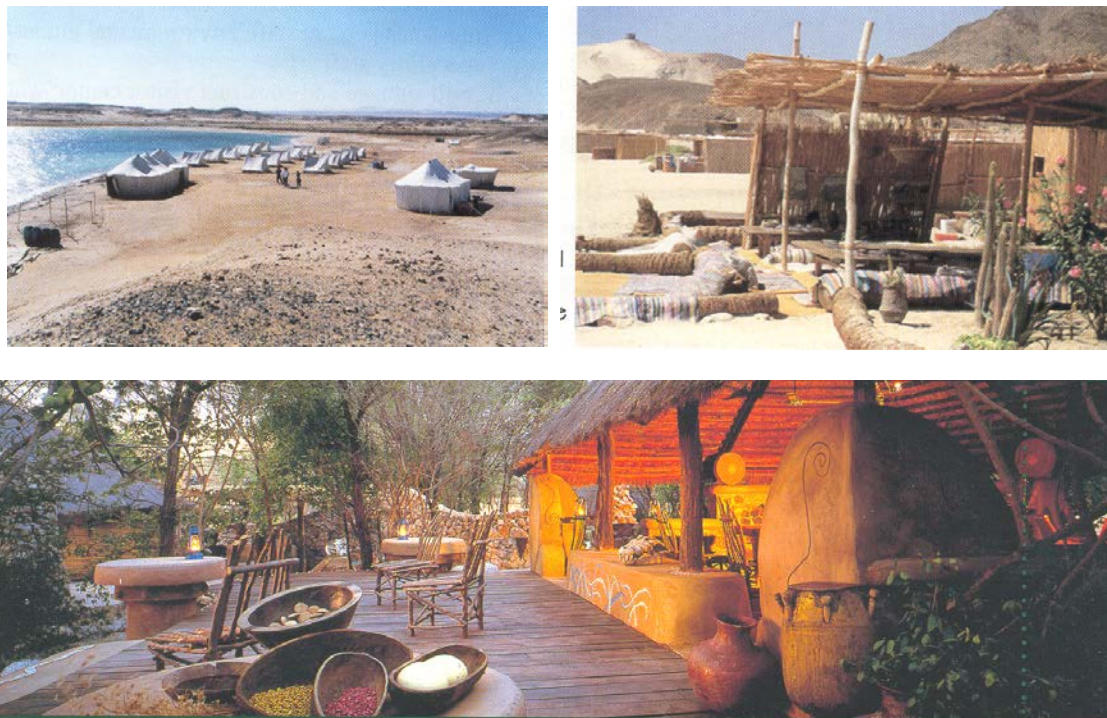


Figure 3. Types of Ecotourism Facilities

According to the estimates of WTTC, natural- based eco-tourism accounts for 10-15% of all international travel expenditures. Unfortunately, less than 1% of this market is being captured in Egypt, despite some of the most attractive marines, deserts and mountains environment in the world. This is because there are few proper facilities in the country that can serve the needs or meet the expectations of these eco-tourists. A system of eco-lodges in Egypt could include numerous sites having a relationship to desert safari campus, diving centers, oriented lodge serving Bedouin areas, old historical sites.

Eco-lodges generally do not provide many of the entertainment and luxurious services, which are normally provided by conventional hotels. This means that investment in eco-lodge facilities is often much less, and the environmental impacts resulting from operation of a more complex hotel or resort can be avoided or minimized. In addition to the tourist who is looking for luxurious services and

15- Tourism Development Authority, Guidelines for Eco-lodge Development in Egypt, , Cairo ,Egypt, 1999. ¹⁵

facilities, there is also large demand for simple and nature based facilities where people can enjoy the natural environment. To attract this market, consider the development of eco-lodges a complement to conventional development.

Principles for Sustainability and Tourism Planning

Tourism must be developed and managed in a controlled, integrated and sustainable manner, with this approach, tourism can generate substantial economic benefits to an area without creating any serious environmental or social problems. Planning tourism at all levels is essential for achieving successful tourism development and management. Tourism should be planned at the national and regional levels, at these levels, planning is concerned with tourism development policies, structure plans, facilities and all other elements necessary to develop and manage tourism. Within the framework of national and regional planning, more detailed plans for tourism attractions, resorts, urban, rural or other forms of tourism development can be prepared. The planned approach to developing tourism at the national and regional levels is now widely adopted as a principle, while implementation of the policies and plans is still weak in some places.

Tourism planning should be viewed as an inter-related system of demand and supply factors. The demand factors are international and domestic tourism market, the local residents who use the tourist attractions, facilities and services. The supply factors comprise tourist attractions and activities, accommodation and other tourist facilities and services. Attractions includes natural, culture and special types of features such as parks, gardens, aquariums and the activities related to these attractions. Accommodation includes hotels, motels, guest houses and the facilities and services related to, which include restaurants, shopping, banking, medical and postal facilities. Infrastructure is also relate to supply factors, it includes transportation, water supply, electric power, sewage, and telecommunications.¹⁶ Adequate infrastructure is important to protect the environment and maintain a high level of quality that is necessary for successful tourism and desirable for residents.

It is important that tourism planning aim for integrated development of all parts of the inter-related system, both the demand and supply factors, and the physical and institutional elements. All the elements of tourism should be considered in the planning and development process, also flexibility must be considered to allow for changing within the frame work of the policy and plan recommendations.

The approach of sustainable tourism development implies that the natural, cultural patterns of areas, historical heritage and other resources of tourism are conserved for continuous use in the future, while still bringing benefits to the present society. The environmental planning approach is a basic technique in achieving sustainable tourism development, this approach focuses on community involvement in planning and development process, also in developing the type of tourism which generate benefits to local communities.

¹⁶ Edward Inskeep, Tourism Planning An Integrated and Sustainable Development Approach, California

The Future Challenges for Tourism Development in the North West Coast of Egypt:

The paper suggests recommendations to the current problems of seasonality of demand for tourism services in the North West Coast of Egypt. The approach of this paper suggest sustainable comprehensive tourism development of the coastal line and in-desert region behind the coastal strip, by creating tourism attraction spots. The upland contains ancient and historical sites, it is presently home of Bedouin cultural groups. The development approach based on creating and developing new tourism attraction spots, beside developing economical activities, such as agriculture, fishing, environmentally friendly industries, domestic handicraft activities, and commercial activities, this is besides the importance of the public services which benefits the local communities.

The following issues are recommended as an approach to sustainable tourism development:

Developing the coastal line and the upland:

The coastline is a finite resource. Encouraging development along the entire coastal strip may choke opportunities for future development and regulate upland to second class status. By keeping the sea front more open and clustering development in fewer locations, all resorts can claim the seacoast as their “draw”. This will enable the region to maintain higher quality resorts. In addition, the best area for tourism development isn’t always along the sea, this is because of the strong winds along the coastline which can produce uncomfortable conditions in exposed locations. So, the development plan should address the following: ¹⁷

- Creating destinations of interest in areas other than the waterfront that will attract development to the upland location
- Relocating some waterfront packages to upland location
- Providing access corridors for vehicular and pedestrian from all area resorts to the key marsas.
- Redirecting development that would interfere with dramatic coastal vista or impact landscape.

Consider Local people and culture heritage:

Attention has to be given to developing the uplands regions behind the coastal strip. It can be, if well developed, a complement to beach activities. It can offer spectacular views and vistas, it could contain interesting and unique geological features and landforms. It also could contain ancient or historical sites, it is now the home of Bedouin cultural group. The culturally significant Bedouin people of the region should be an important shaping feature in tourism center planning, which must respect the values and ways of life of these peoples. Local residents will be able to share their values and skills with tourist and secure a source of income that can help them sustain their ways of life. Visitors can have direct exposure to traditional people through guided trips to the area's natural features.

17- Best Practices for Tourism Center Development, Cairo ,Egypt , -1998 ¹⁷

Development Shaping Features:

The man-made or built environment play significant roles in shaping the development of new tourism centers in coastal areas. Understanding of and respect for these development shaping features will be key to designing successful and sustainable tourism centers. The dramatic natural feature of the region, the beautiful beaches, the powerful sea front, are the principle attractions for visitors and provide the basis on which resort profitability depends. To make land available to investors for resort development along the coastline, many significant decisions have to be made with respect to lands allocated for tourism centers and to subdivisions of those lands. The focus has been to commit most available land along the length of the coastline to tourism center development. There is a trend in new resort communities to develop lagoons and island waterways that provide swimming and small boat recreational opportunities. Especially in areas where access to the sea is difficult, lagoons can provide an attraction option.

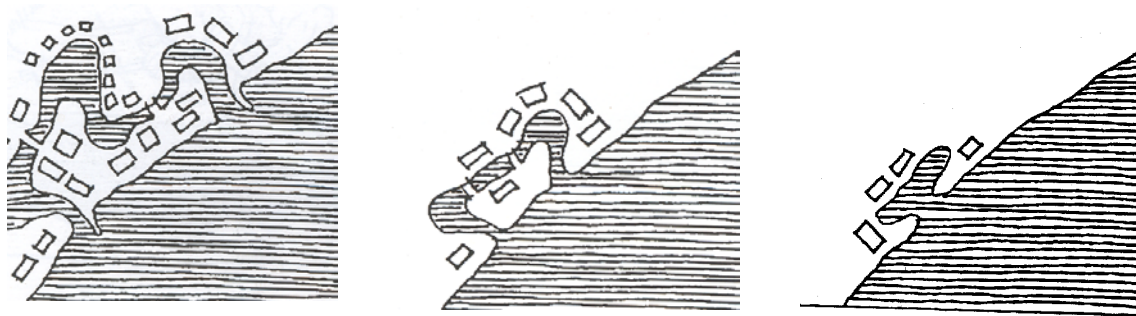


Figure 4. Designing of artificial lagoons

for one or more resort to avoid environmental impact & insure good water quality

Provide networks for pedestrians, bicyclists & horseback riders

Visitors to all tourism centers may walk, ride bike or horses for fun or to reach destinations within the communities such as beaches, commercial centers, or an attraction at another resort. In order to facilitate walking, biking, or riding, a safe and enjoyable network must be planned to accommodate these forms of circulation.

The setback from high water mark to the building front lines, and the open space in each of the tourism centers represent important opportunities to insure attractive and accessible pedestrian, bicycle and horse back use. A coastal trail could provide more than a movement path for pedestrians. If it is well planned, it becomes a commercial and social center for at least a portion of the resort community. By its linear nature, it offers the opportunity to link all parts of the resort community using design elements such as paving, planting, street furniture, and lighting.

Vehicular networks within the tourism center should meet multiple purposes, such maintenance, security, emergency, and construction activities. Electric carts, shuttle buses or other people mover could be used in tourism centers that are composed of large development parcels to facilitate movement

The design of the coastal trail system is important during the development planning stages of a tourism center. The trail plan should serve as link to all attractions within and beyond the tourism center including commercial centers, beaches, marinas, sports areas, upland attractions, restaurants and visitor centers.

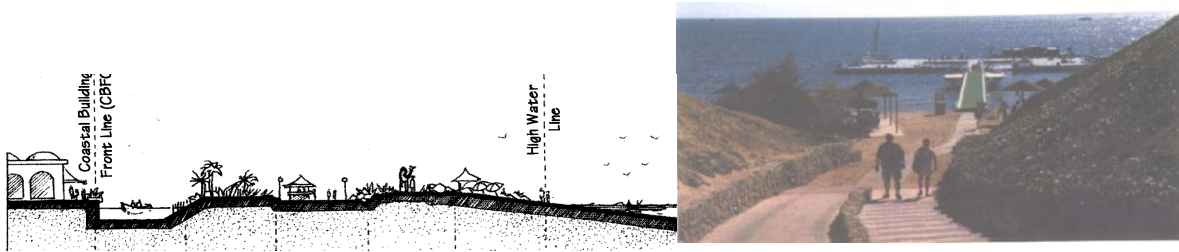


Figure 5. Designing the setback areas for the circulation network

Building Setback provides opportunities for corniche, land water ways, trails, beaches, and landscaping

Suggesting Recreational facilities:

To attract domestic tourism from within Egypt in the non summer months, many European cities have solved the problem of attracting year- round tourism by building large space frames, inside which the climate controlled, so atmosphere can be maintained year round. These space frames enclosing large area of about 2500m², the roof structure consists of transparent material that allows photosynthesis to take place enabling all types of plants and flowers to be grown. These structure accommodate the development of recreational area with sports facilities such as indoor, tennis and basketball courts. The enclosed space permit a variety of uses from tropical garden and swimming pools for children to water slides and amusement parks, supported by restaurants, shops and a variety of other entertainment facilities.

To attract foreign visitors, health resorts are required.

The indoor facilities should also promoted as a health and medical spa which could use sea water for health maintenance. It contains fitness center specialize in weight loss program, medical supervised treatments& cares, relaxation purpose, water-related therapies and treatment and sauna. Additional facilities such as exercise rooms, tennis, golf and other family oriented facilities are also required.

Using the upland to meet employee needs:

The tourism facilities create great job opportunities for thousands of employees. So, the tourism centers is home and place of work for many of the employees of resorts and their families. The development plan should provide employee housing that enables long term creation of community places rather than separate housing projects on individual resort properties. The housing program should include support facilities such as religious facilities, schools, day care, medical clinic, recreational facilities, and other basic community facilities and services. The housing project should also be located within easy walking distance of the commercial service centers in order to meet needs for entertainment, shopping, and other service for the majority of employees. All the above facilities will bind the community together and create a quality of life that promote high staff moral and productivity.



Figure 6.
Kafr el Gouna employees housing and support facilities

Planning for commercial & services centers:

The resort center should be a dynamic community of residents, guests, employee and others. The commercial activities such as stores, travel agencies, boutiques, restaurants, coffee shops...and the support activities such as medical center, post office, fire station... represent both an important financial opportunity for investors as well as an opportunity to create an attractive social community center. An appropriate urban design should be planned; this plan would focus on creating a rich mix of commercial uses, services and pedestrians. The design should provide clear and easy access for all forms of circulation, and provide convenient pedestrian and vehicular access for the different resorts.

Conclusion

Tourism is an important tool to achieve national development goals. The North West Coast of Egypt is a promising region for development, able to provide a great economic help to the local community and to the national economy, if it is properly managed, developed and sustained.

References:

- Aide Memoire, **Tourism and the City: The Challenge of Sustainability**, Madrid, Spain, 1999.
- Edward Inskip, **Tourism Planning an Integrated and Sustainable Development Approach**, California, 1999
- GOPP, **Regional Planning of The North West Coast of Egypt**, 1998.
- hsrinivas@gdrc.org National Geographic Online
- Kishore Shah, Jan McHarry and Rosalie Gardiner, **Sustainable Tourism- Turning the Tide**, Toward Earth Summit 2002 Project, United Nation Foundation, STAKHOLDER FORUM, 2002
- Mohga Embaby, **Towards an Ecotourism Development and Planning in the Red Sea Coastal Zones**, International Conference: Future Vision and Challenges for Urban Development, Cairo, Egypt, December 2004
- World Tourism Organization WTO; Author Consulting Group International, 1996
- The World Bank, **Country Economic Memorandum Egypt : Issues in Sustaining Economic Growth**, Washington D.C., March 1997
- Tourism Development Authority, **Best Practices for Tourism Center Development**, Cairo ,Egypt , -1998
- World Tourism Organization (WTO), **World Bank Atlas**, 1997.
- World Travel & Tourism Council and International Hotels & Restaurant Association, **The Global Importance of Tourism**, Department of Economics & Social Affairs, New York, -April 1999.