

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

**TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED SYSTEMS APPROACH TO  
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MANAGEMENT IN PROTECTED AREAS**

A thesis submitted by

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Doctor of Philosophy

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School of Accounting Economics and Finance

Faculty of Business and Law

# Certification of Dissertation

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I certify that the ideas, results, analyses, and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where due reference is made

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# List of Publications Drawn from the Thesis

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## Journal articles under review

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Imran, S., Alam, K., & Beaumont, N. Exploring the capacity of local communities for sustainable tourism development in alpine protected areas. *Tourism Geographies*, (Under Review)

## Fully refereed conference papers

Imran, S., Alam, K., & Beaumont, N. (2012). An empirical assessment of stakeholders' understanding of sustainable tourism in alpine protected areas: an analytical study of Central Karakoram National Park, Pakistan. *4th Asia-Euro Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy Conference*, 28 November– 1 December, 2012, Selangor Malaysia.

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# Abstract

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Sustainable tourism has been widely viewed as an effective way of addressing the socio-economic and environmental issues associated with protected areas, particularly alpine protected areas which are popular destinations providing opportunities for adventure tourism with close-to-nature experiences. They also serve as tourist attractions and are a source of livelihoods for local communities. Nevertheless, the impact of tourism is controversial and its sustainability is not always evident both in terms of socio-economic development and nature conservation.

In view of the negative social-ecological consequences and economic implications of tourism there is growing recognition for sustainable approaches to tourism management in protected areas. Tourism has been acknowledged as a tool for conservation and for creating local livelihoods. However, the complex nature of alpine and marginalized protected areas such as Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP), conflicting interests of multiple stakeholder groups and inadequate opportunities for networking have ostensibly inhibited tourism in achieving the social, environmental and economic objectives of sustainability. Therefore, the research viewed the protected area system from the prism of interlinked complexity, stakeholder, sustainability and collaboration theories that integrate the concepts of communities systems (social, economic and environmental) and interdependencies in their theoretical paradigms. Keeping in perspective the complex systems approach, the purpose of this research was to identify key governance factors emerging from the perceptions of multiple stakeholder groups that could influence the development of an integrated systems approach to tourism management in protected areas.

To achieve the purpose of the research four research questions were developed and investigated through a mixed method approach. The results revealed that despite the rhetoric and interest, sustainable tourism was not the underlying approach taken by protected area authorities and other stakeholder groups in the planning and management of tourism in the CKNP. This was evidenced by a centralized and ineffective governance structure, a culture of withholding and concealing information, and exclusion of key stakeholder groups in the decision-making process.

The results of the research revealed that the level of stakeholders' capacity and opportunities for local communities in tourism development were low. Community

members had restricted access to decision-making, lacked knowledge and skills and exhibited a marginal sense of ownership with regard to protected area tourism.

The findings disclosed that the main factors derived from stakeholders' perceptions that underpin the development of sustainable tourism in CKNP included: evolution of a participatory governance structure, a participatory strategic planning process and an integrated and inclusive policy approach to sustainable tourism development in the protected area.

In view of the factors identified a guideline was proposed as a possible option for driving the process of sustainable tourism that incorporated the principles of participatory governance and strategic planning.

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## List of Abbreviations

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AKRSP	Aga Khan Rural Support Program
ANOVA	One-way analysis of variance
CESVI	Cooperazione e Sviluppo
CKNP	Central Karakoram National Park
CKPA	Central Karakoram Protected Area
CBD	Convention on Biodiversity
CC-ST	Community capacity for sustainable tourism Scale
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EFA	Exploratory factor analysis
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FWD-GB	Forest and Wildlife Department Gilgit-Baltistan
GOP	Government of Pakistan
HBP	Hagler Bailly Pakistan
HEP	Human exemptionalism paradigm
HKKH	Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Himalaya
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IGBS	Institute of Gilgit-Baltistan Studies
ITF-STD	International Task Force on Sustainable Tourism Development
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure
KNP	Khunjerab National Park
LC	Local Communities
NAFWD	Northern Areas Forest and Wildlife Department

NEP	New Ecological Paradigm Scale
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NOC	No objection certificate
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PA	Protected Area Authorities
PAC-ST	Protected area authorities capacity for sustainable tourism scale
SATC	South Australian Tourism Commission
SEED	Social Environmental Economic Development Project
SUS-TAS	Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale
TE	Tourism Enterprises
TR	Tourists
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
WCED	World Commission on the Environment and Development
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature Pakistan