

Environmental Auditing for Sustainable Tourism Development in Australia

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**A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
the University of New England, Armidale, Australia**

1997

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

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Peiyi Ding

Acknowledgments

Many people have helped me over the last four years during the period of preparation and completion of this thesis.

First and foremost of, I extend my thanks to my supervisor, Associate Professor John Pigram who has been supervisor, friend and mentor to me and provided encouragement and constructive criticism. His insights, patience and enthusiasm for my work were ongoing sources of inspiration throughout my candidature. This has been a period considerable learning under his supervision, and he has given generously of his time and interests. In addition, he provided assistance and encouragement, particularly, by the way of employment and research opportunities from his ARC project during the early stage of my candidature. Without his valuable help, this thesis would not have existed. I cannot thank him enough for the help he has provided me over the years, not least of all, for the opportunity of having him as a supervisor, confidant and good friend.

Special thanks are also due to Professor Ralf Buckley (Griffith University) and Professor Richard Butler (Surrey University). Their valuable help in stimulating interest in the area of environmental auditing and tourism, aiding in the research design, offering the use of personal reference material, and commenting on the research proposal, proved indispensable to the completion of the thesis.

I would also like to give my special thanks to Professor Jim Walmsley (University of New England) who read and commented on the research proposal and the first two chapters of the thesis.

My appreciation is extended to Professor Grame Hugo (University of Pretoria), Dr. Ross Dowling (University of Nortre Dame) and Mr. Trevor Atherton (Bond University) who provided valuable comments on the research proposal.

My appreciation is also extended to the many individuals, in both private industry and government organisations, who willingly provided data and expertise relevant to this thesis. My thanks go especially to Mr. Vince Brooker (Aanuka Beach Resort), Mr. Tony Charters (Kingfisher Bay Resort), Mr. Ken Maguire (Planning Department, Coffs Harbour City Council), Ms. Wendy Hall (Tourism Committee, Coffs Harbour City Council), Mr. Eric Anderson (Environmental Committee of Australia Tourism Commission), Mr. David Rivett (Environmental Consultant, Cairns), and Mr. Alec Taylor (Green Island Resort).

In addition, I would like to express my thanks to the present and former staff and postgraduates of the Department of Geography and Planning, University of New England, in particular, Mr. Angus Witherby, Professor John Humphreys, Mr. Alan Jones, Dr. Tony Sorensen, Dr. Wade Edmundson, Dr. Liz Teather, Dr. Fran Rolley, Dr. Bob Haworth, Dr. Barbara Rugendyke, Mr. Chris Cuningham, Mr. Roger Epps, Mrs. Megan Wheeler, Mrs. Jan Hayden, Mrs. Janice Johnston, Mrs. Helen Creagan, Mr. Tilak Kuruppuarachchi, Mr. Sattar Mousavi, Mr. Bae-haeng Cho, and Mr. Eddo

Coiacetto. I would also like to thank Mr.Terry Cooke for helping me resolve several word processing problems, and Mr.Rudi Boskovic and Mr. Mike Roach for the maps they drew for the thesis.

During the period of candidature, financial support was provided from several sources: an Overseas Postgraduate Research Scholarship (1993-1996), a University of New England Postgraduate Scholarship (1995-1996), Professor Pigram's ARC Grant (1994), the Faculty of Arts' Affirmative Supplement (1995-1996), the Faculty of Arts' Internal Research Grant (1993-1995), the Professor Grey Foundation Grant (1993), and the Department of Geography and Planning's Postgraduate Research Fund (1993-1996).

My daughter Delinna was born during the writing of the last chapter of this thesis and has given me constant enjoyment, hope and love.

Finally, this thesis could not have been completed without the encouragement and support of Lin, my wife and best friend.

Parts of this thesis have been presented as conference papers or have been published in conference proceedings, journals or book chapters. These are:

Conference Proceedings:

Ding, P. and Pigram, J. 1994, "Environmental audits: an emerging concept for sustainable tourism development", in *Abstracts of the 1994 Annual Conference of the Australian Institute of Geographers*, Townsville, September, 53-54.(Chapter One and Two)

Pigram, J. and Ding, P. 1994, "The greening of tourism: environmental audits and sustainability", in *Abstracts of the Annual Conference of the Australian Institute of Geographers*, Townsville, September, 54-55. (Chapter Four)

Ding, P. and Pigram, J. 1995, "An approach to monitoring and evaluating the environmental performance for Australian beach resorts, in *Proceedings of the Fourth International Outdoor, Recreation and Tourism trends Symposium*, Minnesota, May. 577-583. (Chapter Five)

Ding, P. and Pigram, J. 1996, "Some critical issues in environmental management for Australian tourism development", in *Proceedings of Pacific Rim Tourism 2000 Conference*, Rotorua , November. (Chapter Two)

Journals:

Ding, P. and Pigram, J. 1995, "Environmental audits: an emerging concept for sustainable tourism development", *The Journal of Tourism Studies*, No.2. 2-10 (Chapter One and Two)

Ding, P. and Pigram, J. 1996, "An approach to monitoring and evaluating the environmental performance for Australian beach resorts", *Australian Geographer*, No.1. 77-86. (Chapter Five)

Chapter in the Book

Pigram, J. and Ding, P. 1997, "Tourism-environment interaction: the greening of Australian beach resorts", in *Tourism Recreation Research*, ed Tej vir Singh. (in press). (Chapter Four)

Abstract

Tourism, in Australia and globally, is a growth industry. With this growth has come concern about its environmental implications. As a result, the tourism industry has experienced increased scrutiny in regard to environmental management, and efforts are being made to achieve more sustainable forms of tourism development.

The case for the tourism industry in Australia to develop an effective approach to improve its environmental performance is compelling. The industry depends primarily on conserving and improving the environment which is its main resource. For this reason, the improvement of environmental performance is likely to grow in importance.

This study examined the principle of sustainable tourism development and analysed the current environmental impact assessment process in Australia. The study argued that the current EIA process has shortcomings. It cannot provide sufficient information for effective environmental management, and cannot meet the requirement of sustainable tourism development. Given these shortcomings, it appears that improved and effective environmental impact assessment relevant to tourism development must extend beyond impact statements to include continual monitoring and evaluation of objectives, and operational procedures and performance. To this end, it is further argued that a new approach which provides a continuing management tool that can play a key role in the environmental management for tourism is needed. It also can overcome the shortcomings of current EIA process and complements EIA. This approach is termed environmental auditing, and is seen as more beneficial and

effective for improving the environmental performance of tourism development. It is stressed that environmental auditing should become a key element in an integrated environmental management system, in particular when adopted by management as an approach for providing feedback about particular problem areas and overall environmental performance.

The study, by discussing the relationship between tourism and environment and reviewing the existing research, emphasised the importance of monitoring and evaluation for environmental auditing. It further examined the existing management organizational structure and the responsibilities which have been created to deal with the environment in tourism industry in Australia. Emphasis was given to the roles played by three levels of government - Federal, State and local, and the community and tourism industry. It addressed that the responsibility of environmental management for tourism in Australia is shared between the Federal, State and local governments and industry.

In order to assist in achieving the objectives and to guide the development of an effective and efficient environmental auditing program, this study identified some applicable, clear and well understood principles and discussed constraints may influence the implementation and effectiveness of environmental auditing process for tourism industry.

Based on the establishment and identification of objectives and principles, and consideration of existing constraints, this study presented a systematic framework for

an Environmental Management Performance Auditing (EMPA) program within which a series of activities and decisions can be made that help define a set of desired performance outcomes and the management actions necessary to maintain or improve this performance. It is seen primarily as an internal and voluntary audit.

With current tourism development trends in Australia, the study selected beach resort as a case study. The result of case studies demonstrated that the EMPA tends to be well understood and supported by resort management. Improving environmental management performance of resorts does not have to increase costs or reduce comfort and convenience of guests. As better environmental practices are being sought, more solutions which enable environmental, commercial and guests service goals to be met simultaneously are being found. It further showed that improving environmental performance enhances the resorts' reputation, and responsible actions of management are positive marketable commodities. As such, environmental auditing has great potential to make a valuable contribution to improvement of the environment.

List of Figure

- Figure 2.1: Environmental Impact Assessment Procedure in Australia, 39
- Figure 4.1: Summary of Present Environmental Management Organisation in
Australia, 114
- Figure 5.1: The Framework of an Environmental Management Performance Auditing
(EMPA) Program for Beach Resorts, 169
- Figure 7.1: Beach Resorts in Australia, 197
- Figure 7.2: Potential Impacts of Resort Development, 198
- Figure 7.3: Location of the Sampled Resorts in Queensland, 202
- Figure 7.4: Location of the Sampled Resorts in Coffs Harbour, 203
- Figure 7.5: Resort Environmental Management Structure, 218

List of Table

Table 2.1: Elements of a Sound Environmental Management System,	36
Table 2.2: Sample Evaluation of Tourism for Environmental Impact Assessment,	41
Table 2.3: Environmental Audits in Australia,	62
Table 3.1: Tourism-Environment Relationship,	81
Table 3.2: A Framework for the Study of Tourism Impact,	87
Table 3.3: Environmental Impacts to which Tourism may Contribute,	88
Table 3.4: Criteria for Selecting Sustainability Indicators for Tourism Development,	100
Table 3.5: TUI Environmental Criteria for Destinations,	105
Table 3.6: TUI Environmental Checklist for Hotels,	106
Table 3.7: Environmental Performance Indicators for Auditing the Recreation Division's Mission Concerning Hiking Facilities,	108
Table 5.1: Types of Audits and Examples of Possible Use by Tourism Firms,	161
Table 7.1: The latitudinal Location and Region of Each Resort in the Samples,	204
Table 7.2: Average Hours of Sunshine per day,	205
Table 7.3: Environmental Responsibilities in a Resort,	219
Table 7.4: Strengths of Current Resort Environmental management System,	221
Table 7.5: Weakness of Current Resort Environmental management System,	223
Table 7.6; Opportunities of Current Resort Environmental management System,	224
Table 7.7: Potential Threats Relating to Improved Resort Environmental Management Performance,	225
Table 7.8: The most Relevant Legislation for the Sampled Resorts,	227

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	1
Abstract	6
List of Figures	9
List of Tables	10

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Significance of the Research	16
1.2 Objectives, Benefits and Outcomes	21
1.3 Nature and Extent of the Research	24
1.4 Definitions	26
1.5 Structure of the Thesis	29

CHAPTER TWO

Environmental Audits for Tourism Development

2.1 Introduction	32
2.2 Evolution of Environmental Audits	34
2.2.1 Environmental Management Systems,	34
2.2.2 Environmental Impact Assessment,	36
2.2.3 Environmental Audits	48
2.2.3.1 Introduction	48
2.2.3.2 Definition	49
2.2.3.3 The Need for Environmental Auditing	54
2.2.3.4 Types of Environmental Audits	56
2.2.4 Environmental Audits as an Important Component in an Environmental Management System	57
2.2.5 Environmental Audits in Australia	60
2.3. Sustainable Tourism Development and Environmental Auditing	64
2.3.1 Evolution of Concern for Sustainable Tourism Development	64

2.3.2 Definition of Sustainable Tourism Development	69
2.3.3 Principles of Sustainable Tourism Development	71
2.3.4 Major Characteristics of Sustainable Tourism Development	72
2.3.5. Implication of Environmental Auditing for Sustainable Tourism Development	74
2.4 Conclusion	76

CHAPTER THREE

Environmental Performance of Tourism Development

3.1 Introduction	78
3.2 Relationship between Tourism and Environment	79
3.3 Evaluation of the Environmental Performance of Tourism Development,	83
3.3.1. Introduction	83
3.3.2. Environmental Impacts of Tourism Development	84
3.3.3. Monitoring and Evaluating the Environmental Performance of Tourism Development	90
3.3.4. Performance Indicators	96
3.4. Summary	109

CHAPTER FOUR

Organisational Structure and Responsibilities of Environmental Management for Tourism in Australia

4.1. Introduction	111
4.2. The Environmental Management System and Organisational Structures for Tourism in Australia	112
4.3. The Roles of the Public Sector and Related Legislation and Regulations	115
4.3.1. Introduction	115
4.3.2. Federal Government	118
4.3.3. State Government	124
4.3.4. Local Government	127
4.3.5. Community Participation	131
4.3.6. Co-ordination of Public Sectors	135

4.4. The Roles of the Private Sector	137
4.4.1. Introduction	137
4.4.2. Initiatives	138
4.4.3. Self-regulation	143
4.4.4. Some Examples of Self-regulation	145
4.5. Co-operation of Public and Private Sectors	148
4.6. Summary	150

CHAPTER FIVE

The Framework of Environmental Audits for a Tourism Organisation

5.1. Introduction	153
5.2. Objectives and Benefits	154
5.3. Principles	157
5.4. Types	160
5.5 Some Special Considerations	163
5.6. The Framework of an Environmental Management Performance Auditing (EMPA) for a Tourism Organisation	168
5.7. Conclusion	170

CHAPTER SIX

An Environmental Management Performance Auditing (EMPA) Program for Beach Resorts in Australia

6.1. Introduction	172
6.2. Overview of the EMPA Framework	174
6.3. Step 1: Preparation	175
6.4. Step 2: Determination of Objectives and Scope	178
6.4.1. Objectives	178
6.4.2. Scope	180
6.5. Step 3: Understanding of Resort Management Systems	182
6.6. Step 4: Determination of Regulations, Policy Requirements and Standards	183
6.7. Step 5: Assessment and Evaluation	185
6.8. Step 6: Identification of Key Environmental Issues and Areas	187

6.9. Step 7: Collection and Evaluation of Evidence	188
6.10. Step 8: Determination of Performance Status	190
6.11. Step 9: Preparation and Implementation of Action Plan	193
6.12. Step 10: Preparation of Report	194
6.13. Summary	194

CHAPTER SEVEN

Application of Environmental Management Performance Auditing to Australian Beach Resorts

7.1. Introduction	196
7.2. Field Survey	200
7.3. Characteristics of Selected Integrated Beach Resorts	202
7.3.1. Location	202
7.3.2. Climate	204
7.3.3. Attractions	206
7.3.4. Facilities and Activities	207
7.3.5. Accessibility	208
7.3.6. Infrastructure	209
7.4. Environmental Management Systems	211
7.4.1. Initiatives and Processes	211
7.4.2. Organisational Structure and Responsibilities	217
7.4.3. Effectiveness	220
7.5 Legislation and Regulation	226
7.6. Key Environmental Issues and Areas	231
7.6.1. Pollution Control	231
7.6.1.1. Sewage	231
7.6.1.2. Noise	235
7.6.1.3. Air Pollution	236
7.6.2 Energy Consumption	239
7.6.3. Recycling	241
7.6.4. Landscaping	243
7.6.5 Kitchen and Food Services	247

7.6.6. Offices	248
7.6.7. Products Purchasing	249
7.7. Environmental Management Performance Measurement	251
7.8. Performance Improvement Action	253
7.9. Conclusion	257

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

8.1. Introduction	259
8.2. Summary	260
8.3. Conclusions	264
8.4. Limitations	271
9.4. Further Research	272

APPENDICES

1. Letter	275
2. Appendix 1: Questionnaires 1 - 2	276
3. Appendix 2: Questionnaires 3-10	286
4. Appendix 3: Range of Facilities and Activities of Integrated Beach Resorts	313

BIBLIOGRAPHY	315
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