

# VISITOR MANAGEMENT IN ACTION

An analysis of the development and implementation of visitor management models  
at Jenolan Caves and Kangaroo Island

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## ABSTRACT

Many of the places that people value are the places they wish to visit and experience for themselves. However, each person that visits one of these places can cause impacts that reduce its value. A fundamental aim of visitor management therefore is to ensure that each visitor's experience is a high quality one, and is sustainable. Various models have been designed to assist with this aim by linking visitor management planning, monitoring and decision making. However, there is a lack of published examples of how visitor management models have been implemented, what results they have yielded, and how well they have performed. There is also a lack of evidence of widespread application of such models. Without information and insight, there is only a theoretical case to argue for the greater use of visitor management models.

The aim of this study was therefore to describe, analyse and explain the formulation and implementation of the most widely published visitor management models, with reference to case studies of Jenolan Caves (New South Wales) and Kangaroo Island (South Australia). The study involved: a literature review; personal observations by the author; in-depth interviews with those involved in developing and implementing the two case studies; and an objective analysis using a Goals Achievement Matrix.

The thesis critically examined seven visitor management models with respect to their: evolution and definition; dimensions and planning and development approaches; documented applications in Australia and overseas; and limitations. This would appear to be the first time that these models have been critically examined in this way so that comparisons can be easily made between them. This would also appear to be the most comprehensive identification of examples of implemented visitor management models in Australia.

The study identified five critical issues relating to development and implementation of visitor management models:

1. Poor planning frameworks and poorly defined organisational culture, particularly in visitor and tourism management.
2. Lack of, or inconsistent human and financial resources.
3. Resistance to involving stakeholders in fundamental decision-making.
4. Difficulty in choosing the right model for the situation.
5. Lack of strategic emphasis and technical ability.

The study suggested that more effort needed to be made in the pre-development and implementation phases. Critical to such efforts is the development of an implementation plan, written as part of the development process. The implementation plan requires an

individual(s) to take on a strategic coordination role that addresses marketing, staff development, budgeting, evaluation and areas for improvement. The study suggested that the conventional emphasis on technical expertise needs to be re-balanced with political skills to lobby for and protect the human and financial resources needed to implement a model long enough for it to prove its value. In the event where resourcing is too limited to fully operationalise an entire model at once, it was recommended to conservatively develop a portion of the chosen model all the way to the stage in which it delivers results that can be marketed to stakeholders.

Finally, the study proposed a tool to assist visitor managers to clarify their need for a model, as well as their capability to develop and implement one. In the absence of sufficient information about the implementation of models, the tool empowers managers to consider the merits of using a visitor management model further, and to select a model that best meets their needs.

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Background to the problem	1
1.2 Explanation of the problem	3
1.3 Aims and objectives of study	6
1.4 The contribution of this thesis to heritage, tourism and visitor management	7
1.5 The structure of this thesis	9
<b>CHAPTER TWO - THE HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PARADOX AND ITS MANAGEMENT</b>	
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 The heritage management paradox	12
2.3 Conventional approaches to addressing the heritage management paradox	14
2.4 An integrated approach to addressing the paradox	15
2.5 Recreational Carrying Capacity	18
2.6 The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum	33
2.7 The Limits of Acceptable Change	45
2.8 The Visitor Impact Management Model	53
2.9 The Visitor Activity Management Program	60
2.10 The Visitor Experience and Resource Protection Model	64
2.11 The Tourism Optimisation Management Model	69
2.12 Contrasting the models	75
2.13 Implementation theory	79
2.14 Chapter summary	93

## CHAPTER THREE - STUDY APPROACH

3.1	Introduction	96
3.2	Personal observations	96
3.3	Literature review	98
3.4	Use of case studies	99
3.5	In-depth interviews	100
3.6	Objective analysis	109
3.7	Stakeholder review	110
3.8	Chapter summary	111

## CHAPTER FOUR - CASE STUDY ONE: DEVELOPMENT OF A VISITOR IMPACT MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR THE JENOLAN CAVES RESERVE

4.1	Introduction	113
4.2	Site management context	113
4.3	Tourism context	116
4.4	Management context	120
4.5	Project emphasis	127
4.6	Development approach	130
4.7	Preliminary implementation	148
4.8	The medium term - full implementation	174
4.9	The long term - evaluation and enhancement	176
4.10	Chapter summary	179

## **CHAPTER FIVE - CASE STUDY TWO: DEVELOPMENT OF A TOURISM OPTIMISATION MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR KANGAROO ISLAND**

5.1	Introduction	181
5.2	Site context	182
5.3	Tourism context	186
5.4	Management context	192
5.5	Project emphasis	201
5.6	Development approach	202
5.7	Preliminary implementation	235
5.8	The medium term – full implementation	247
5.9	Chapter summary	249

## **CHAPTER SIX - ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES**

6.1	Introduction	252
6.2	Differences in context	252
6.3	Differences in stakeholder support base	254
6.4	Differences in scope for developing a model	256
6.5	Differences in approach	258
6.6	Differences in implementation	260
6.7	Differences in addressing the heritage management paradox	265
6.8	Chapter summary	269

## **CHAPTER SEVEN – ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

7.1	Introduction	271
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7.2	Poor planning frameworks and poorly defined organisational culture	272
7.3	Lack of, or inconsistent expertise and resources	274
7.4	Resistance to involving stakeholders in fundamental decision making	275
7.5	Difficulty choosing the right model for the situation	275
7.6	Lack of strategic emphasis and technical ability	276
7.7	Recommendations for more effective application	277
7.8	Chapter summary	286

## CHAPTER EIGHT - CONCLUSION

8.1	Introduction	288
8.2	Review of chapters by study objectives	288
8.3	Limitations	297
8.4	Recommendations for further research and development	298
8.5	Conclusion	300

## REFERENCES

References	302
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## APPENDICES

Appendix A	Interview format for Jenolan Caves	318
Appendix B	Interview format for Kangaroo Island	321
Appendix C	List of Kangaroo Island workshop participants and their fields of expertise	324
Appendix D	Feedback form for Kangaroo Island workshop	327
Appendix E	Alternative scenarios for tourism on Kangaroo Island	329



## LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	Visitor management matrix	13
2.2	Recognition of the relationship between visitor management, visitor experience and the condition of the resource	17
2.3	Components of the Visitor Activity Management Program and its integration into heritage management	62
2.4	Three tiered structure of the Tourism Optimisation Management Model (TOMM)	72
2.5	Level of awareness and use of models between 1965-2000	76
4.1	Location of Jenolan Caves Reserve and high use area	115
4.2	Implementation and evaluation components and responsibility	143
5.1	Kangaroo Island and location of key townships and roads	183
5.2	TOMM Management response	222
5.3	Fictitious example of a TOMM report chart	225

## LIST OF TABLES

1.1	Contribution of this study to heritage management, the tourism industry and visitor management	8
2.1	1970s definitions and elements of various dimensions of recreational carrying capacity	20
2.2	1980s definitions and elements of various dimensions of recreational carrying capacity	21
2.3	Staged process for developing a Recreational Carrying Capacity Model	23
2.4a	Applications of recreational carrying capacity in Australia	25
2.4b	Applications of recreational carrying capacity outside Australia	26
2.5	Propositions about the nature of recreational carrying capacity	29
2.6	Limitations of recreational carrying capacity	31
2.7	Six potential classes of a Recreational Opportunity Spectrum	35
2.8	'Upgraded' development approaches for establishing a ROS	37
2.9a	Applications of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum in Australia	39
2.9b	Applications of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum in the United States of America	39
2.10	An approach to develop a Limits of Acceptable Change model	47
2.11a	Applications of the Limits of Acceptable Change Model in Australia	49
2.11b	Applications of the Limits of Acceptable Change Model in the United States of America	49
2.12	Steps to establish a Visitor Impact Management Model	55
2.13	Matrix to evaluate alternative visitor management strategies for VIMM	56

2.14a	Applications of the Visitor Impact Management Model in Australia	57
2.14b	Applications of the Visitor Impact Management Model outside Australia	58
2.15	Nine steps to develop a Visitor Experience and Resource Protection Model	66-67
2.16	Approach to develop a Tourism Optimisation Management Model	73
2.17	Actual and proposed applications of the Tourism Optimisation Management Model across the World	74
2.18	Qualitative assessment of visitor management models	78
2.19	Contrasted elements of four possible properties of implementation processes	82
2.20	Contrasting scenarios of control for developer and implementer of models	83
2.21	Restraints to implementation of models and potential responses	91-92
3.1	Structure of in-depth interviews	102
3.2	Interests and expertise represented by interviewees for the Jenolan Caves Visitor Impact Management Model	105
3.3	Interests and expertise represented by interviewees for the Kangaroo Island Tourism Optimisation Management Model	107
4.1	Duration and pricing structure for Jenolan Show Caves	117
4.2	Visitation to Jenolan Caves 1993/94-96/97	119
4.3	Critical stakeholders to deciding to proceed with developing a model	126
4.4	Critical stakeholders to deciding to selecting the type of model	129
4.5	Major development phases of Jenolan Model	131
4.6	Expertise of workshop participants	132
4.7	Explanation of four management units for the Jenolan VIMM and evolving sub categories for developed caves	135

4.8	Visitor Impact Management Model for Jenolan Caves	139-140
4.9	Preliminary management response mechanism for Jenolan VIMM	142
4.10	Critical stakeholders to developing the model	147
4.11	Status of Jenolan Caves Social and Environmental Program (SEM) for developed above ground areas, as at 1/5/98	153-154
4.12	Status of Jenolan Caves Social and Environmental Program (SEM) for developed caves, as at 1/5/98	155-157
4.13	Status of Jenolan Caves Social and Environmental Program (SEM) for low density surface areas, as at 1/5/98	158
4.14	Status of Jenolan Caves Social and Environmental Program (SEM) for other caves, as at 1/5/98	159
4.15	Status of Jenolan Caves Social and Environmental Program (SEM) for all indicators, as at 1/1/98	160
4.16	Status of Jenolan Caves Social and Environmental Program (SEM) for environmental indicators, as at 1/1/98	161-162
4.17	Status of Jenolan Caves Social and Environmental Program (SEM) for experiential indicators, as at 1/1/98	163
4.18	Status of Jenolan Caves Social and Environmental Program (SEM) for management indicators, as at 1/1/98	164
4.19	Implementation status as at 1/1/98 and contrast between the forecast and actual establishment costs	167
4.20	Estimate of annual costs for operating the SEM at Jenolan Caves	169
4.21	Critical stakeholders to implementing the model	169
5.1	Kangaroo Island tourism product	187
5.2	Projected tourism growth (visitation) for Kangaroo Island 1996-2006	191
5.3	Tourism market needs from Kangaroo Island	191
5.4	Critical stakeholders to deciding to proceed with developing a model	200

5.5	Approach to developing a TOMM for Kangaroo Island	203
5.6	Feedback from TOMM workshop participants	211
5.7	Summary of working components of monitoring system for Kangaroo Island application of TOMM	213
5.8	Criteria used to select indicators	214
5.9	Projected costs for operation of TOMM	216
5.10	Fictitious Report Table for two economic optimal conditions and their indicators	225
5.11	Critical stakeholders to developing the Kangaroo Island TOMM	234
5.12	Major implementation responsibilities and responsible organisations	237
5.13	Critical stakeholders aware of the Kangaroo Island TOMM	240
5.14	Critical stakeholders to implementing the Kangaroo Island TOMM	241
5.15	Benefits of TOMM to various stakeholder groups involved in tourism on Kangaroo Island	243-244
6.1	Differences in context between the two case studies	253
6.2	Differences in stakeholder support base between the two case studies	255
6.3	Differences in the two case studies' scope for developing a model	257
6.4	Differences in approach to developing models between the two case studies	259
6.5	Differences in the way the two case study models have been implemented to date	262
6.6	Aims and objectives of visitor management	267
6.7	Application of Goals Achievement Matrix to assess the way the two case studies address the heritage management paradox	268
7.1	Demonstration of a situation assessment mechanism for Jenolan Caves	281-282

7.2	Situation assessment to select the most appropriate visitor/tourism management model	283
7.3	Assessment of desired visitor management approach to select the most appropriate visitor/tourism management model	284
7.4	Assessment of resourcing capability to select the most appropriate visitor/tourism management approach	285

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>CC</b>	<b>Carrying Capacity</b>
<b>DENR</b>	<b>Department of Environment and Natural Resources</b>
<b>JCMT</b>	<b>Jenolan Caves Management Trust</b>
<b>LAC</b>	<b>Limits of Acceptable Change</b>
<b>NSW NPWS</b>	<b>New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (the Service)</b>
<b>ONT</b>	<b>Office of National Tourism</b>
<b>RCC</b>	<b>Recreational Carrying Capacity</b>
<b>ROS</b>	<b>Recreation Opportunity Spectrum</b>
<b>SATC</b>	<b>South Australian Tourism Commission</b>
<b>TKI</b>	<b>Tourism Kangaroo Island</b>
<b>TOMM</b>	<b>Tourism Optimisation Management Model</b>
<b>VAMP</b>	<b>Visitor Activity Management Program</b>
<b>VERP</b>	<b>Visitor Experience and Resource Protection Model</b>
<b>VIMM</b>	<b>Visitor Impact Management Model</b>