



Assessment of tourism potentials and future prospects in the karakoram range of pakistan using delphi panel swot analysis

Rehmat Karim^{1*}, Najma Najam², Irena Mrak³, Tika Khan¹, Mehtab Alam⁴

¹*Integrated Mountain Area Research Centre, Karakoram International University, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan*

²*Former Vice Chancellor, Karakoram International University, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan.*

³*University of Ljubljana, Slovenia,*

⁴*Department of Business Management, Karakoram International University, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan*

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Abstract

Few National Parks around the world are well managed otherwise; a reasonable number of such a significant socio-ecological sites of global importance are either mismanaged due to weak planning and practices or ignored due to lack of politico-scientific negligence. Present research was aimed at investigation of potentials and future prospects of tourism in mountainous regions in general and Central Karakoram National Park in particular. Using Delphi panel discussion technique, research revealed that strengths of any sector can be tapped up to materialize its opportunities may be part of an aggressive strategy. Similarly, international partners already in coordination with CKNP directorate can also help in tourism marketing of CKNP across borders. Moreover, on the same footings, economical strategy can effectively be used as strength to minimize the susceptibility towards external threats. Expert opinion suggested to developing strategies to improve the quality of tourism in the Park area is unavoidable and that can be done through public private partnership. Enhanced coordination among different stakeholders of tourism can help park management to put effective and attractive promotion through their own promotional channels.

*Corresponding Author: Rehmat Karim ✉ rehmat@kiu.edu.pk

Introduction

Tourism is an extensive multifaceted activity, whose management and expansion has a very close and significant relationship with a large number of governmental and nongovernmental organizations working at any destination (Taghvaei and Kholghipoor, 2013). Therefore, to conduct any activity it should be ensure to define objectives, plans, policies, and other relevant planning tools with the consensus of indurty of field experts with the cooperation and coordination among the relevant agencies and organizations, in order to achieve the settle targets effectively (Taghvaei and Kholghipoor, 2103). Tourism industry plays a major role in flourishing the other economic sectors in local community development and helps the low-developed regions to progress (Shaw and Williams, 2002; Taghvaei and Kholghipoor, 2103), if is properly evaluated and assessed to identify its potentials and future prospects.

The Karakorum extends 350km parallel to the Himalayas, from the Siachen glacier in the east along the border between Pakistan and China to the Ishkamun River, which divides the Karakorum range from the Hindu Kush in the west (Ives, 2004). The development of tourism in the region of the Karakorum has been influenced in large part by the geographic conditions, most notably by the high concentration of tall mountains – four of them above 8000 m: K2 (8611m), Gasherbrum I (8063m), Broad Peak (8047m) and Gasherbrum II (8035m). The longing to ascend the world's highest peaks in the mid-20th century became a driving force for the development of tourism in this region, which was at first limited to exploration and mountaineering expeditions, and only considerably later was followed by a boom in trekking as one of the most popular forms of adventure tourism in the broader region of the Himalayas more generally (Mrak, 2011). The exceptional growth in the numbers of visitors was made possible by the construction of the Karakorum Highway (KKH) in 1978. The number of tourists to,

for example, the Hunza Valley was barely 302 in 1979, but by 1985 this had soared to 5361 (Ives, 2004).

Tourism of Gilgit-Baltistan in general and CKNP area in particular is rich in its tourism assets but it could not get proper attention of the authorities to develop any strategy for its management, therefore, this research is an attempt to identify the potentials and future prospects of tourism in Central Karakorum National Park and design a comprehensive tourism management strategies for newly established national park in the Karakorum mountains range of Pakistan.

Material and methods

Study Area

The central parts of the Karakorum Mountains are a protected area. Namely, in 1993, the Government of Pakistan established the Central Karakoram National Park which covers the area of 10,000 Sq. km (Mrak, 2011). The area has numerous high mountain peaks and long glaciers which are the largest outside the polar region is most easily reached on foot, and one of the main starting or exit points is the village of Askoli, which has been involved in mountain research expeditions and later on into tourism since the 19th century (Mrak, 2011). The men from the village traditionally work as porters, cooks, and guides, and help visitors transport equipment and food to the base camps or along the selected trekking route. Agriculture and tourism are the main sources of income for the village; together they sustain the quality of life of the households which are facing the rapid demographic increase, consequently also the race for natural resources, not only among themselves but also with visitors to the area.



Survey method (Delphi method)

The Delphi method is a commonly used and recognised technique for collecting information from respondents within their field of knowledge (Hsu and Sandford, 2007). The technique is aimed as expert contribution procedure which helps in attaining a broad and related consensus on a specific real-world issue and it has been used in numerous fields such as planning and management, project evaluations and policy determination etc. (Hsu and Sandford, 2007). The Delphi technique is well suited as a method for

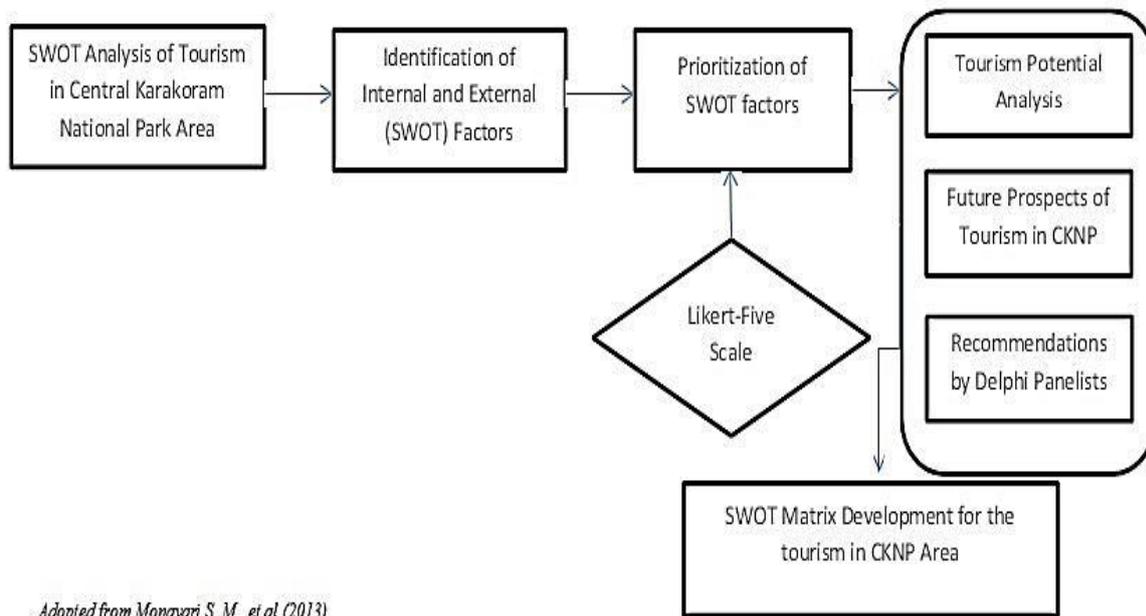
consensus-building by using a series of questionnaires delivered using multiple iterations to collect data from a panel of selected subjects (Hsu and Sandford, 2007). Delphi studies should be limited to three rounds since response rates are likely to decline, especially from the second round onwards (Turoff, 1970; Lee and King, 2008). Therefore, three round of online discussion was carried out.

For the purpose of analyzing future prospects and potentials of tourism 25 Delphi panelists were contacted by online correspondence. Total 25 (10 policy makers and 15 industry experts and practitioners) were contacted but total 15 (7 policy makers and 9 industry experts and practitioners) were participated in the discussion process.

Tourism SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) matrix was formulated by using the expert opinion of industry experts and other stakeholders. Step wise process was carried out as given in Table 1 and Fig. 1.

Table 1. Steps for Delphi Discussion.

Steps	Process	Outcome
Step I	Identified the experts by different means e.g. asked from tour operators and other sources	Identify more reasonable practitioners and policy makers in tourism sector for the study
Step II	Sent request email to get the consent to participate in online discussion. Out of 25 experts 10 were not responded while 15 policy makers and practitioners were participated in discussion.	Find out the willingness of the participants.
Step III	Sent on line first questionnaire which was comprised of Name of Panel Member, Field of Specialization, Professional Experience (years), Qualification, Current Position, Name of the Organization, Identifications of internal factors (Strengths and Weaknesses-SW) of tourism in CKNP area, Identification of External factors (Opportunities and Threats-OT) of tourism in CKNP area.	Obtaining the demographic information of participants and find out the open ended opinion of Delphi participants about tourism SWOT factors in CKNP area.
Step IV	First level analysis and merged the common factors drawn from all opinions.	Summarized the information and make close ended factors for further analysis.
Step V	Sent second questionnaire formulated from first SWOT open ended factors and made close ended SWOT factors based on likert five scale items.	Prioritized the factors for further analysis.
Step VI	Second level analysis was carried out to analyse the second level information obtained from likert scale data by using statistical tools	Simplified the acquired information from Delphi participants
Step VII	Sent third round questionnaire to get the recommendations from Delphi participants.	Incorporated the acquired recommendations into study



Adopted from Monzavari S. M., et al. (2013)

Fig. 1. Tourism Potentials and Future Prospects in CKNP.

Results and discussion

To obtain the detailed information about internal and external factors, two open ended questions were included in the questionnaire. Factors obtained from

questionnaires were scrutinized. Repeated factors were merged in same factors and drawn the final SWOT list.

Table 2. SWOT Analysis of Tourism in Central Karakoram National Park.

SWOT Factors	Questions
Strengths and Weaknesses	Identification of the internal factors (Strengths and Weaknesses-SW) of tourism in CKNP area.
Opportunities and Threats	Identification of the external factors (Opportunities and Threats-OT) of tourism in CKNP area.

Table 7.2. List of Strengths (S).

S1	The largest Protected Area of country, biggest tourism destination in Gilgit-Baltistan, most visited areas
S2	Peaks; 4 peaks above 8000m including K2, the second highest peak in the world, 60 peaks above 7000m attracting climbers
S3	Glaciers; the largest extensive glacial complex outside polar regions, attracting trekkers. Fresh water towers having the biggest source of fresh water to the country
S4	Rock Climbing Areas; including TRANGO TOWERS the highest mountain cliffs in the world, attracting Rock climbers
S5	Having unique fragile and fragmented mountain eco systems which harbour unique biodiversity including the globally significant endangered species Markhor, Snow Leopard and Ladakh Urial etc. Natural scenic beauty and cultural heritage

S6	Visitor facilities; Established visitor registration and information centres at important sites Askoli, Hushey and Hisper, Designated Camp Sites along Baltoro and other trails, maintained trails and foot bridges, signage fixed for information.
S7	coordination and linkages with tourism stakeholders; Tourism department, PATO, Tour operators, Khurpa care, Alpine Club Pakistan and other relevant organizations
S8	Waste management practices initiated by CKNP Directorate itself and its partner organizations including fixing and maintaining eco-plate forms (portable toilets on glaciated areas), transportation of human generated waste, segregation of waste and incineration in dedicated incinerator machine at Askoli maidan.
S9	Integrated Management Plan for CKNP available; having a specific focus on tourism mentioning the tourism zonation, sub plans for CKNP Fee mechanism to help boosting sustainability of tourism promoting practices like camp site and waste management through revenue generated.
S10	Awareness raising among the masses about tourism related activities for income generation as inhabitants at along peripheries of High Frequency zone are dependent on tourism related activities like porters, cooks, sardars and guides, hoteliers, camping, shops etc. Awareness is given to these communities on the norms and hospitality management.

Table 3. List of Weaknesses (W).

W1	Gaps in coordination among Directorate of CKNP, GB tourism department at provincial as well as federal level with GB council.
W2	lack of proper policies for tourism promotion in the protected areas of Gilgit-Baltistan like CKNP and weak policy implementation and law enforcement; Lack of full-fledged comprehensive tourism plan (implementation) for CKNP
W3	Future sustainability of the park and activities undertaken in the framework of SEED project;
W4	Lack of financial resources and far flung areas with no or poor communication means
W5	No timely approval of Tourism promotion and management related plans by the competent authorities
W6	Lack of coordination among tourism related agencies, lack of cooperation with CKNP staff by Tourist guides during registration
W7	Strict laws of Protected areas in the country like Category II of National Parks; may result reducing the tourist flow
W8	Camp management; no clear cut notification for designated camp sites and circulated to the Tour operators for implementation
W9	No entry fee revenue received; delays in the endorsements
W10	No proper waste management; no clear cut notification for waste management and circulated to the Tour operators and guides for implementation

Table 4. List of Opportunities (O).

O1	Coordination among CKNP partners
O2	Support of Provincial government and Forests wildlife and environment department Gilgit-Baltistan
O3	Support of CKNP partner organizations for its management and development
O4	Developed strategies and plans by foreign organizations in collaboration with CKNP Directorate
O5	Foreign funded projects

O6	Promotion of CKNP by regional, national as well as International organizations through media, web etc.
O7	Linkages with the tourism related institutions and collaboration with GB tourism department
O8	Participation of local communities in policy making
O9	Address the tourism related issues of CKNP in higher forums
O10	Facilities available in around CKNP for accommodation, information and sport etc like paragliding, rafting, mountain biking, Yak Safari, fishing, Trophy Hunting, Filming.

Table 5. List of Threats (T).

T1	Negative impact on Ecological integrity due to tourism (if unmanaged) cause more solid waste if high tourist flow
T2	Depraved impression of the country in foreign countries
T3	Environmental hazards and natural calamities
T4	Changes in social context and cultural norms and practices
T5	Insecurity in the country and terrorism
T6	Local and religious conflicts
T7	Killing of tourist in the region (Nanga Parbat Incident) etc.
T8	Poor communication means; road infra-structure and no mobile service in faraway areas of CKNP
T9	Harsh weather conditions; not suitable for winter expeditions and trekking
T10	Challenging fragile and fragmented areas

Second questionnaire was sent to Delphi members for their agreement on given SWOT factors. Likert scale five (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree) was developed to prioritize the factors. Out of 25 members 15 responded the questionnaire. From the obtained data majority of members ranked the SWOT (internal and external factors) between agree to strongly agree. Five factors in strengths (S1 to S5) obtained mean scores (4.47-4.73). Whereas nine factors as weaknesses (W1-W9) obtained mean scores (4.27-4.73). Seven factors (O1-O7) included in opportunities were scored mean values (4.33-4.80) and ten factors (T1-T10) in Threats obtained mean values (4.27-4.73). Mean values of all internal and external factors are given in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2.

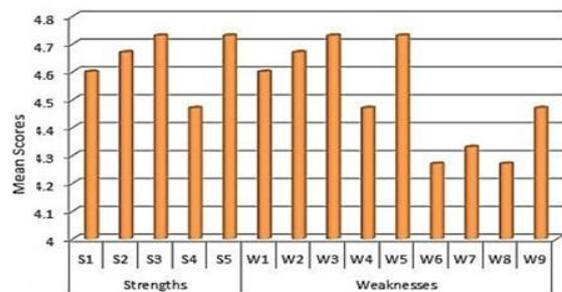


Fig. 2. Mean Scores of Internal Factors.

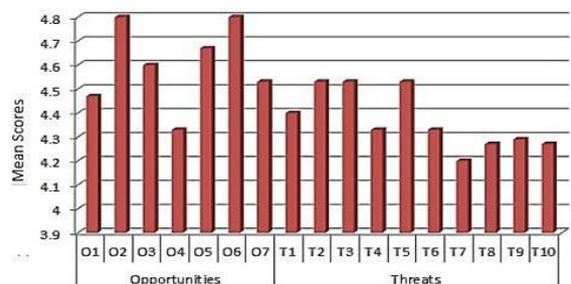


Fig. 3. Mean Scores of External Factors.

SWOT Matrix

Matrix was developed based on mean scores. Factors which obtained more than mean score above 3.5 were

included in SWOT matrix. This shows an agreement of Delphi members on internal and external factors of strategic management of tourism in CKNP area. Table 8 shows SWOT matrix, drawn to formulate different strategies to overcome weaknesses and threats using strengths and opportunities for tourism in Central Karakorum national park and its adjacent areas in Gilgit-Baltistan. Using SWOT matrix different strategies were developed to incorporate internal and external factors. Using strengths of any sector to materialize its opportunities is part of aggressive strategy. Using strengths of tourism sector in CKNP

(glaciers, peaks and other attractions) can be used to capitalize different opportunities available for tourism sector of CKNP region e.g. international partners are already in coordination with CKNP directorate for its management plan. So, these partners can also help in tourism marketing of CKNP in other countries. By using economical strategy, internal strengths can be used to minimize the susceptibility of available external threats e.g. appealing attractions of CKNP can be used to improve deprived image of country in other countries.

Table 8. SWOT Matrix Analysis for Tourism Management Strategies.

IF(SW) EF(OT)	Factors of Strengths (S)	Factors of Weaknesses (W)
Factors of Opportunities (O)	Aggressive Strategic Approach Combining Opportunities and Strengths (SO)	Conventional Strategic Approach Combining Opportunities and Weaknesses (WO)
	Economical Strategic Approach Combining Threats and Strengths (ST)	Cautious Strategic Approach Combining Threats and Weaknesses (WT)
Factors of Threats (T)		

CKNP as largest protected area can help in reducing negative environmental impact and sports tourism can also be used as alternative tourism during harsh weather or off seasons. Conventional strategy is also used to pursue available opportunities by controlling or minimizing internal weaknesses e.g. developing short, medium and long term tourism development

strategies by utilizing foreign partners' expertise and funds.

Cautious strategy formulation is needed to minimize the weaknesses to defend from vulnerable external threats for tourism in Central Karakoram National Park area. These strategies are developed in the Table 9 as SWOT matrix.

Table 9. SWOT Matrix.

Internal Factors External Factors	List of Strengths	List of Weaknesses
List of Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glaciers; the largest extensive glacial complex outside the polar region which attracting trekkers. Fresh water towers having the biggest source of fresh water to the country Having unique fragile and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of financial resources and far flung areas with no or poor communication means Lack of coordination among tourism related agencies, lack of cooperation with CKNP staff by Tourist guides during registration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support of CKNP partner organizations for its management and development Participation of local 		

Internal Factors	List of Strengths	List of Weaknesses
External Factors		
<p>communities in policy making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linkages with the tourism related institutions and collaboration with GB tourism department • Developed strategies and plans by foreign organizations in collaboration with CKNP Directorate • Sport tourism opportunity e.g. paragliding, rafting, mountain biking, Yak Safari, fishing, Trophy Hunting, Filming. • Support of Provincial government and Forests wildlife and environment department Gilgit-Baltistan • Foreign funded projects • Growing tourism and economy of neighboring countries e.g. China, India etc. 	<p>fragmented mountain eco systems which harbor unique biodiversity including the globally significant endangered species Markhor, Snow Leopard and Ladakh Urial etc. Natural scenic beauty and cultural heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peaks; 4 peaks above 8000m including K2, the second highest peak in the world, 60 peaks above 7000m attracting climbers • The largest Protected Area of country, biggest tourism destination in Gilgit-Baltistan, most visited areas • Rock Climbing Areas; including TRANGO TOWERS the highest mountain cliffs in the world, attracting Rock climbers • Sports Tourism e.g. paragliding, polo game etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of proper policies for tourism promotion in the protected areas of Gilgit-Baltistan like CKNP and weak policy implementation and law enforcement; Lack of full-fledged comprehensive tourism plan (implementation) for CKNP • Gaps in coordination among Directorate of CKNP, GB tourism department at provincial as well as federal level with GB council. • No timely approval of Tourism promotion and management related plans by the competent authorities • No proper waste management; no clear cut notification for waste management and circulated to the Tour operators and guides for implementation • Camp management; no clear cut notification for designated camp sites and circulated to the Tour operators for implementation • No entry fee revenue received; delays in the endorsements • Strict laws of protected areas in the country like Category II of National Parks; may result reducing the tourist flow.
List of Threats	Aggressive Strategic (SO)	Conventional Strategic (WO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depraved impression of the country in foreign countries • Environmental hazards and natural calamities • Insecurity in country due to terrorism • Negative impact on Ecological integrity due to tourism (if unmanaged) cause more solid waste if 	<p>SO1: Tourism attractions like largest glacial complex, peaks above 8000 meters, and biggest protected area can be marketed in neighboring countries and other potential visitors generating regions by utilization CKNP partners (EvK2CNR, ICIMOD, embassies etc.).</p> <p>SO2: Partnerships amongst CKNP and GBTD, forest department, wildlife department & environment</p>	<p>OW1: Establishment of tourism control room in CKNP region to properly disseminate the tourism related information to all stakeholders.</p> <p>OW2: Development of short term, medium term and long term policies utilizing the international partners' expertise and funds.</p> <p>OW3: Installation of GPS in different locations to share the centralized information in control room.</p> <p>OW4: Development of tourism promotional plan well in time e.g.</p>

Internal Factors External Factors	List of Strengths	List of Weaknesses
<p>high tourist flow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and religious conflicts Changes in social context and cultural norms and practices Harsh weather conditions; not suitable for winter expeditions and trekking Challenging fragile and fragmented areas Poor communication means; road infrastructure and no mobile service in faraway areas of CKNP Killing of tourist in the region (Nanga Parbat Incident) etc. 	<p>department to protect biodiversity and environment.</p> <p>SO3: Sharing the developed strategies with federal government through GBTD to implement tourism management plan well in time.</p> <p>SO4: Foreign funded projects like SEED and other projects should be utilized to improve the quality of tourism in CKNP region.</p> <p>SO5: Funds should also be used to preserve cultural heritage of CKNP region.</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Economical Strategy (ST)</p> <p>TS1: Marvelous glaciers, peaks, protected areas and other tourism attractions of CKNP region can bring many tourists from different countries which can improve depraved image of the country (Pakistan).</p> <p>TS2: Visited tourists can disseminate the real information in their countries that there is no any terrorism in CKNP region.</p> <p>TS3: CKNP as largest protected area in GB will help in reducing environmental degradation.</p> <p>TS4: Tourism improvement will ultimately bring communicational improvement.</p> <p>TS5: Sports tourism like polo game, yak safaris, paragliding can be used as alternative tourism during harsh weather in winter.</p>	<p>before the tourism season starts.</p> <p>OW5: Involvement of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in waste management,</p> <p>OW6: Camping site selections with the help of local community to reduce negative environmental effects and easily locating the groups in mountain ranges.</p> <p>OW7: Review the strict laws of protected areas to increase the tourist arrivals. CKNP has different dynamics as compare to other national parks. So considering the CKNP dynamics laws need to be reviewed.</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Cautious Strategy (WT)</p> <p>TW1: Improve coordination amongst the tour companies, CKNP directorate, security agencies', GBTD and federal government to protect tourists when they visit CKNP region.</p> <p>TW2: Timely approval of policies regarding tourism management, its implications, code of conduct for tour operators and tourists.</p> <p>TW3: Financial empowerment to CKNP directorate, so that all required steps can be taken well in time.</p> <p>TW4: Need of continues research and studies to be conducted to improve management plan of CKNP.</p> <p>TW5: Development of policies for economic integration of tourism income for the development of local communities so that they will not involve in local and other conflicts.</p> <p>TW6: Policy formulation for sustainable use of natural resource in CKNP region.</p> <p>TW7: Involvement of local community in securing tourists, tour guides and porters etc.</p>

Each strategy was redistributed among the Delphi members to prioritize for proposed implementation. Strategies were ranked as per given scores; 1=Least Important, 2=Important, 3=Very Important).

Table 10. Strategies for Tourism Management in CKNP.

Strategy	Mean	SD
OW1: Establishment of tourism control room in CKNP region to properly disseminate the tourism related information to all stakeholders.	2.79	.579
TW1: Improve coordination amongst the tour companies, CKNP directorate, security agencies', GBTD and federal government to protect tourists when they visit CKNP region.	2.64	.633
TS5: Sports tourism like polo game, yak safaris, paragliding can be used as alternative tourism during harsh weather in winter.	2.64	.633
TW2: Timely approval of policies regarding tourism management, its implications, code of conduct for tour operators and tourists.	2.57	.646
SO2: Partnerships amongst CKNP and GBTD, forest department, wildlife department & environment department to protect biodiversity and environment.	2.50	.650
TW3: Financial empowerment to CKNP directorate, so that all required steps can be taken well in time.	2.50	.650
SO3: Sharing the developed strategies with federal government through GBTD to implement tourism management plan well in time.	2.50	.650
TW7: Involvement of local community in securing tourists, tour guides and porters etc.	2.43	.756
SO1: Tourism attractions like largest glacial complex, peaks above 8000 meters, and biggest protected area can be marketed in neighboring countries and other potential visitors generating regions by utilization CKNP partners (EvK2CNR, ICIMOD, Embassies and other International Partners etc.).	2.43	.756
OW4: Development of yearly tourism promotional plan well in time e.g. before the tourism season starts.	2.43	.756

Ranked as: 1=Least Important, 2=Important, 3=Very Important

In the given top ten strategies OW1 strategy obtained highest mean value as “ $\mu = 2.79$ and standard deviation “ $\sigma = .579$ followed by TW1 and TS5 as ($\mu = 2.64, \sigma = .633$). TW2 strategy scored ($\mu = 2.57, \sigma = .646$) whereas SO2, TW3 and SO3 obtained ($\mu = 2.50, \sigma = .650$). Out of ten three strategies TW7, SO1 and OW4 score ($\mu = 2.43, \sigma = .756$) (Table 7.10). From the revealed scores it can be concluded that given ten strategies are placed between important to highly important therefore, these strategies should be incorporated in CKNP management plan to make this plan effective and beneficial of the whole sector.

Conclusion

Research findings will help national park management to improve their grey areas as highlighted using international standard survey technique i.e. Delphi survey. Professional but wide

range expert opinion obtained on scientific grounds is equally effective to management practitioners and policy makers of Central Karakoram National park in particular and rest of touristic and national conservation area across Pakistan and world over. Majority of specialised respondents suggested improving the service quality making them tourist friendly. In the prevailing situation and looking at the future scenarios as expressed in the results of the survey, this can be achieved effectively through public private partnership and enhancing coordination among different stakeholders.

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