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**Dr. Natalie Ooi**

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**Emerging Scholar Profile**

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Dr. Natalie Ooi is an Assistant Professor and the Program Director of the Ski Area Management Program in the Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources at Colorado State University.

Natalie was awarded her PhD from Monash University, Australia in 2013 where she was recognized as a Donald Cochrane Scholar by the Faculty of Business and Economics. Her PhD thesis titled ‘Social capital and socio-cultural sustainability: Mountain resort tourism and the community of Steamboat Springs, was based on a 10 month ethnographic study of the mountain resort community of Steamboat Springs, CO and the networks, norms, and power relationships and resources that result from the interdependencies and relationships with tourism operators (most notably, the Steamboat Ski and Resort Corporation), community residents, seasonal employees, and amenity migrants. The purpose of this research was to shed light on the often overlooked socio-cultural dimension of sustainability when examining mountain resort communities, given the important role that the community plays in the provision of the tourism experience within a mountain resort context. In particular, a deeper understanding of different community perspectives, as well as different tourist-amenity migrant perspectives was examined to emphasize the heterogeneous nature of these different stakeholder groups. Much from this research has been published as academic journal articles in publications such as the Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Journal of Travel Research, and Journal of Rural Studies, and as conference papers.

It is because of her specialization in mountain resort tourism that she was hired at Colorado State University in 2014 to develop the online Graduate Certificate in Ski Area Management. This is the first graduate program in ski area management of its kind in the world, developed in close conjunction with ski area managers and industry professionals for those currently working in the ski industry or those looking to develop a career in the ski industry. The focus of this program is to provide practical, managerial knowledge that is specific to the

unique nature of the ski industry to ensure that the next generation of ski area managers have the business acumen and expertise to make sound decisions that ensure the sustainability of the industry and the alpine environment in which it operates. A key area of interest for Natalie has been learning and applying best practices related to online pedagogy to ensure that: students are provided with information in a variety of formats and from a variety of industry perspectives; content is also provided in a variety of ways to ensure retention and high levels of engagement; students are provided with opportunities to engage with industry professionals; students are given practical assignments that are career relevant; and students are encouraged to develop a sense of community through peer-to-peer interaction.

Due to the success of this online graduate program, Natalie has since been heavily involved in the development of other related online graduate and undergraduate tourism programs, with the Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources now offering graduate online programs in ski area management, adventure tourism, and agritourism, and an online bachelor degree in natural resource tourism. This is in conjunction to the existing online and on campus Master of Tourism Management program, within which Natalie also teaches.

In addition to her recent emphasis on teaching and course and program development, Natalie has continued to engage in issues surrounding sustainability and the ski industry in the U.S. This has covered a wide range of activities, including presenting to managers within the ski industry on current trends and issues, and how these link to the importance of leadership development and employee retention for long-term success of the industry. Additionally, Natalie has recently published a book chapter titled ‘Managing resilience in the face of climate change: The adaptive capacity of U.S. ski areas’, in the book, *Tourism Resilience and Adaptation to Environmental Change: Definitions and Frameworks*. This was part of a two-book series focused on tourism resilience and adaptation. Natalie was also an editor for a recent special issue of *Tourism Geographies* titled ‘Tourism in Changing Natural Environments’. This was based off a special session at the *Tourism Naturally* conference held in Sardinia, Italy in 2016.

Natalie received a Bachelor of Sport and Outdoor Recreation/Bachelor of Business and Commerce (Major in Management (Tourism)) from Monash University, Australia. She graduated with first class honors and was awarded the University Medal for Undergraduate Excellence by the Faculty of Business and Economics. She was also a recipient of the Sir John Monash scholarship during her time as an undergraduate student. Her honors thesis focused on the overlap between motivations between backpacker tourists and volunteer tourists, with the

aim being to examine whether there were opportunities to make backpacker tourism a more sustainable form of travel. Findings indicated that there were key overlaps between the motivations to participate in the two types of tourism, with results identifying a sub-population of backpackers who are also interested in volunteer tourism.

Natalie currently remains very active, both within the U.S. ski industry and within the tourism academe. She has been a reviewer for the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, and the *Journal of Hospitality Management and Tourism*, and was invited to be an editorial board member for *Tourism Geographies*. She has also been a member of the American Association of Geographers (AAG), which has provided her with the opportunity to present her work and engage with other tourism professionals at their annual meetings.

Natalie is an avid hiker and skier, which makes Colorado the perfect location for her both professionally, and personally! She also loves to travel and unwinds through spending time in her veggie garden and cooking.