

Tourism Development in the South Pacific: The Cases of Nauru and Tuvalu

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Abstract

Tuvalu and Nauru are isolated developing island nations located in the South Pacific Ocean. In contrast to the established larger Pacific destinations such as Fiji and Tahiti, the tourism industries on both Tuvalu and Nauru are in their infancy. Tourism development in these remote island nations faces a myriad of challenges which include a lack of infrastructure, environmental susceptibility, economic vulnerability, difficulties with access and considerable distances from major tourist markets. This paper reviews tourism on Tuvalu and Nauru and evaluates their current situation regarding potential tourism development through workshops with relevant stakeholders, surveys and subsequent SWOT analysis. The results of the paper outlined a large number of challenges faced by Tuvalu and Nauru due to their geographic location but also highlighted that both Islands possess fascinating and unique features that have the potential to attract niche tourism markets. A key finding of this paper is that the tourism stimulus or potential attraction can also be the chief threat to the islands' economic survival hence the two edges of the sword. Further research is required to assess the effect of the withdrawal of the Refugee Processing Centre on Nauru's economy and to evaluate the impact of climate change on Tuvalu's society and potential adaption strategies.

Keywords: Climate change; Nauru; SWOT analysis; tourism; Tuvalu

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Introduction

Sustainable Tourism Development

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation defines Sustainable Tourism Development as “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities” (2005, p. 11-12). The principle idea is that the tourism industry ought to develop in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner that will provide benefits to the local community. Over the last 15 years, there have been numerous terms used to label sustainable tourism development in less developed nations including pro-poor tourism, ecotourism, sustainable tourism, community tourism, community benefit tourism and responsible tourism (Simpson, 2009, p. 186). However, as Ruhanen (2008, p. 429) notes, much of the literature has been criticised for its preoccupation with defining the concept instead of concentrating on the practical aspects, such as the development of tools to implement the concept in practice. Problems emerge when evaluating whether these types of tourism are providing real benefits to the environment and local communities, whilst sustaining financial feasibility (United Nations Development Programme, 2011).

Tourism in the South Pacific

Economic growth, constructive political situation, technology and upgraded infrastructure have led to continued growth in the number of tourists from both long-haul and intra-regional markets in the greater Pacific Region (Tolkach, Chon & Xiao, 2016). Tourism is currently the principal export earner for many Pacific Island countries, with well-known destinations such as Fiji, Samoa and the Cook Islands all showing continued increases of tourism arrivals over the last year (Table 1). Historically, tourism in the South Pacific has been overshadowed by traditional tourist destinations such as New Zealand, Fiji and Tahiti built on the imagery of beautiful scenery and colourful cultures. And now the positive effects of tourism are being felt in several smaller, lesser-known islands such as Tonga and Papua New Guinea, offering more diverse tourist products. In these less developed smaller islands, the tourism sector is a large contributor to the gross domestic product (GDP) and employment in many of these nations (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2013).

Unfortunately, the economic benefits of tourism have not reached all Pacific nations, and many of the more remote lesser-known islands such as Tuvalu, Nauru, and Kiribati are being overlooked as potential tourism destinations by prospective

travellers. These developing small island states have numerous challenges to tourism development, which include a lack of economies of scale, limited infrastructure, difficulties with access and considerable distances from major tourist markets (Towner, Vas & Milne, 2015). Despite the numerous obstacles to developing tourism industries in these little-known, remote South Pacific islands, there are limited, traditional-sector development opportunities. Therefore, as Pratt (2013) notes, niche tourism holds the largest area of potential.

Table 1. South Pacific Country Tourist Arrivals and Contribution to GDP

Country	2016 (r)	2017 (p)	2017 Absolute Change	2017 % Change	2017 Tourism Performance	2017 % Share
America Samoa	20050	19987	-63	-0.3	Negative	0.9
Cook Islands	146473	161362	14,889	10.2	Positive	7.5
FSM	29485	30060	575	2.0	Positive	1.4
Fiji	792320	842884	50,564	6.4	Positive	39.4
French Polynesia	192495	198956	6461	3.4	Positive	9.3
Kiribati	5018	5663	645	12.9	Positive	0.3
Marshall Islands	5431	6034	603	11.1	Positive	0.3
Nauru	3038	3002	-36	-1.2	Negative	0.1
New Caledonia	115676	120697	5021	4.3	Positive	5.6
Niue	8918	9805	887	9.9	Positive	0.5
Palau	138416	122726	-15690	-11.3	Negative	5.7
PNG	197632	142943	-54689	-27.7	Negative	6.7
Samoa	145176	155098	9922	6.8	Positive	7.3
Solomon Islands	23192	25709	2517	10.9	Positive	1.2
Timor Leste	92502	118586	26,084	28.2	Positive	5.5
Tonga	59130	62434	3304	5.6	Positive	2.9
Tuvalu	2465	2530	65	2.6	Positive	0.1
Vanuatu	95117	109063	13,946	14.7	Positive	5.1
Total	2072435	2137538	65004	3.1	Positive	100.0

Source: South Pacific Tourism Organisation, 2018

Small island developing states such as those found in the South Pacific can encounter challenges when employing tourism focused development strategies, due to their

economic and environmental vulnerability (Teelucksingh & Watson, 2013; Towner, Vas & Milne, 2015; Kurniawan, Adrianto, Bengen & Prasetyo, 2016), limited resources, and restricted opportunities for generating employment and foreign exchange (Fotiou, Buhalis & Vereczi, 2002). Bojanic and Lo (2016) note that there is a substantial negative effect on economic development for small island nations that depend more heavily on tourism than those countries located on the main continents. Bishop (2010) adds that when tourism forms the basis of a development strategy for small island developing states, it can be to a disadvantage to agriculture and other sectors.

Many of these small island countries in the South Pacific remain extremely susceptible to climate change and sea level rise. The effects of climate change are inadvertently linked to tourism as large-scale economic changes, such as undermining of food production and damages to infrastructure, can drastically impact the tourism sector (Barnett, 2011, p. 232). Additional, collective threats to tourism on these islands are flooding and inundation due to their low-lying topography; other dangers include saltwater intrusion, beach erosion, pressure on the coastal infrastructure, and adverse changes to daily life (Mimura, 1999). With impacts associated with food and water security, public health and safety, and infrastructure expected to become more significant over the impending decades, it is likely to result in mass migration from low-lying atolls to continental sites and higher islands (Keener, Marra, Finucane, Spooner & Smith, 2012). Reducing vulnerability in these small islands remains effective adaptation and mitigation strategies with appropriate assistance from international agencies while empowering communities and enhancing benefits to the local population (Nurse *et al.*, 2014).

The paper now introduces the two case studies of Tuvalu and Nauru and describes the methods. The paper then utilises the SWOT methodology to examine tourism development and offers discussion, mainly focused on climate change in Tuvalu and the refugee processing centre (RPC) in Nauru, as these were the main themes to emerge from the results.

Case Studies

Tuvalu and Nauru were selected as case study locations due to similar, largely undeveloped tourism industries, and because sustainable development on both islands is chiefly influenced by a single, significant, but contrasting phenomenon. Tuvalu's tourism industry is impacted by the environmental phenomenon of climate change, while in Nauru it is the RPC. The comparison of the two case studies is

fascinating and unique because it highlights how those dissimilar phenomena occurring at different destinations can be both potential attractions for niche tourists and at the same time the principal threats to the islands' survival.

Tuvalu

Tuvalu is a low-lying atoll located in the South Pacific between Hawaii and Australia, with a population of approximately 11,000 inhabitants. Tuvalu is particularly vulnerable as freshwater supplies are restricted to a shallow subsurface reserve prone to contamination from salt water and exhaustion in drought. The highest point in Tuvalu hardly exceeds two meters above sea-level, making the atoll highly vulnerable to wave damage and related infrastructure loss (Barnett, 2001). Due to its low topography, projected sea level rise is probably going to make Tuvalu uninhabitable within the next 100 years (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007; Karl, Melillo & Peterson, 2009). Corlew and Johnson-Hakim (2013) outline that Tuvalu faces a myriad of challenges produced by climate change, such as unstable social structures; disruption to daily life; increased storms and disaster events; and food and water insecurity. Unfortunately, there is no part of the island in Tuvalu that is safe from sea level rise, and therefore the imminent peril from climate change threatens the way of life for many living on the atoll, with mass immigrant to foreign countries around the globe an uneasy reality (Stratford, Farbotko & Lazarus, 2013).

The tourism industry in Tuvalu is focused on Funafuti Atoll and the main population centre of Fongafale. In this section, the key characteristics of the tourism industry are outlined. The number of tourism arrivals into Tuvalu has remained very low over the past 5 years (2011-2015) (World Bank, 2016). The number of travellers visiting Tuvalu fluctuates and heavily depends on the availability of seats and regular air service connections from Suva, Fiji. From 2011, air services started to be maintained at regular intervals with Fiji Airways flying twice a week and more recently a third weekly flight was added to the schedule. The greater capacity of air services and affordable pricing would increase visitor numbers to Tuvalu.

Most visitors to Tuvalu are mostly businesspersons and government officials. The main leisure tourist season is from February-March, coinciding with the King Tides (king tides are the highest tides of the year and normally occur when the moon is closest to the earth). These recreational travellers are primarily attracted to the island by its beautiful natural surroundings. The Government-owned 16-room Vaiaku Lagi Hotel is the hub of tourism activities on Fongafale. Other attractions are found on the

outer islands with the recent development of a small, 6-room, boutique eco-lodge on Mulitefala Island, attracting new visitors to Tuvalu (South Pacific Tourism Organisation, 2014a).

Tourism in Tuvalu has the potential to offer more economic opportunities to the country, provided it is planned, marketed and managed properly. However, tourism development faces a series of challenges such as its isolated geographical location and very low awareness of Tuvalu as a tourism destination in the market place. Other constraints to tourism development include the very fragile local environment of the Funafuti atoll, which has not been helped by the slow progress of local campaigns to clean up areas of Funafuti and the ineffective Funafuti Falekaupule, who are responsible for the collection and disposal of household rubbish (South Pacific Tourism Organisation, 2014a). The very small size and the limited capacity of the private sector is also a constraint to tourism growth (United Nations Development Programme, 2010).

While Tuvalu does not possess a wide array of traditional tourist attractions, it offers a unique set of cultural and environmental resources that will be of interest to niche markets. Niche market development and special interest tourism offer real potential. Small scale ecotourism operations, tours associated with witnessing the effects of climate change, and voluntourism all have a small foothold in Tuvalu. There is also potential to tap into niche markets in WWII related history. An abandoned airstrip located on the north-eastern side of Nanumea Island, the relics of planes from World War 2, and a wrecked ship close by Numea village are just some of the items of interest. Indeed, Fongafale atoll was the chief base for the US army who left behind numerous, discarded war relics and an underground bunker on the outlying atoll of Tepuka (SPTO, 2014a).

Nauru

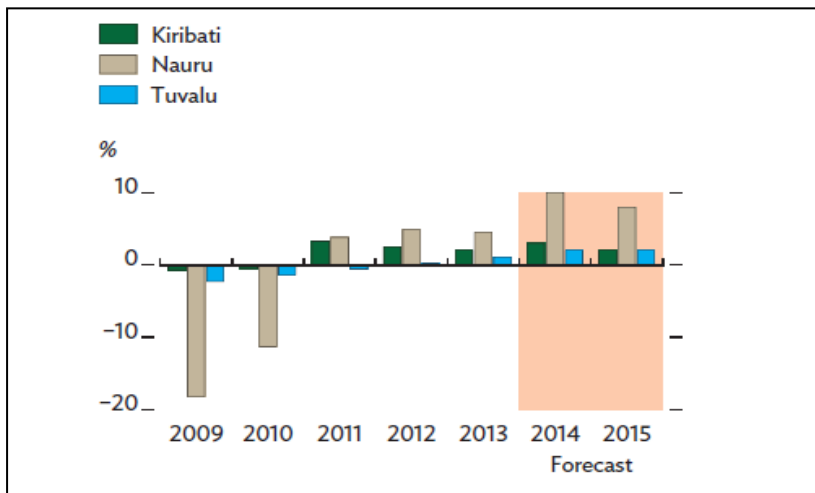
Nauru is a remote island located 300 kilometres east of Kiribati and is the smallest state in the South Pacific, with a total land area of 21km² and a population of approximately 10,000 inhabitants. Nauru's economy has been dominated by the phosphate industry for more than 100 years, ever since mining commenced in 1906 under the auspices of the Pacific Phosphate Company (Nauru Bureau of Statistics, 2013). In 1968 Nauru gained its independence from the government of Australia. Previously, its prospective wealth through the phosphate mining was thought to be guaranteed (Fagence, 1996, 1997 & 1999). Nauru's affluence has however changed dramatically over the past 40 years. In the 1980s, because of its extensive resources

of phosphate (a key ingredient in agricultural fertilizer), Nauru was one of the most affluent countries per capita. However, by 2000 commodity prices plummeted, and with the country's phosphate reserves coming close to exhaustion, Nauru found itself crippled by debt. During this period, the tourism sector did not play a major role in the island's economic growth. Tourism was not considered a sector worth pursuing, as a disfigured landscape covering two-thirds of the island renders it largely unattractive and inhospitable for visitors (SPTO, 2014b).

Despite possessing the natural features of exotic varieties of tropical plants and fish, an ideal destination for game-fishing and interesting WW2 relics, tourism development in Nauru has been sluggish. The tourism industry in Nauru had its beginning with the establishment of the national carrier Air Nauru in the 1970s and the construction of the two main hotels, the Menen Hotel and the Odn Aiwo. Excluding regional sporting events and political forum meetings, tourism arrivals to Nauru have historically remained low, averaging under 2,000 visitors annually from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. Visitor numbers dropped even further during the 1990s, with the Air Nauru experiencing financial problems, and the country going into bankruptcy as revenue from the phosphate industry continued to diminish (SPTO, 2014b).

Nauru's unemployment rate in 2012 was as high as 90%, and the average national income is about US\$6,746 a year, with few industries other than fishing providing income (Nauru Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Foreign aid from the government of Australia remains a significant contributor to Nauru's gross domestic product (GDP). During the 2013-2014 period, AusAID provided US\$27 million, which equated to nearly 40% of Nauru's GDP (Figure 1) (The Asian Development Bank, 2014). The Australian government's program to resettle refugees as from 2012 has brought an influx of investment and RPC-related officials and workers to Nauru, giving it a much-needed economic boost. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimated the refugee centres, home to about 800 refugees, boosted Nauru's economic growth by 8% annually in 2013 and 2014, up from 4.9% in 2012 (The Asian Development Bank, 2014).

Figure 1. GDP Growth in Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu



Source: ADB, 2014

The current RPC activities in Nauru are producing unprecedented demand on the accommodation sector, hospitality businesses and services, infrastructure, and utilities supply. Currently, there are limited tourism services, facilities and infrastructure, and the island is struggling to cater for the hundreds of weekly RPC-associated visitors to the country. The government needs to upgrade tourism infrastructure and restore public utilities if Nauru's tourism industry is to develop into a significant economic sector for the Island (SPTO, 2014b). Unfortunately, the RPC has generated unwanted media attention for Nauru, regarding the tensions between refugees and the local community. In April 2016, Nauru MP, Sprent Dabwido, commented in an ABC news report that the RPC has the capacity to house more refugees. However, without a final destination, there will be tension amongst refugees living on Nauru (ABC, 2016). Earlier in 2016, another media article by spinoff.com (2016) reported that tensions between refugees and locals were escalating. Some refugees had been threatened and forced to stop working, and police didn't provide protection from assaults, with many women and children being concerned over their personal safety.

Methods

To ensure an on-going social, economic, and environmentally sustainable contribution from the tourism industry to the overall economy of Nauru and Tuvalu, this paper utilized three different data collection techniques. Step one of the research consisted of a review of current literature focusing on the current sector and related economic activities; market and product development; accessibility, aviation policies

and the airline roles; niche analysis; tourism and environmental sustainability; infrastructure development, and public and private institutional roles and set up. Step two involved a series of workshops carried out in Nauru and Tuvalu during 2013 and 2014; for specific dates and locations, see Table 2. The participants were identified by the Nauru Tourism Officer and Tuvalu Secretary of Tourism. Key participants included government, relevant community members, and private sector stakeholders involved in the tourism industry, such as local fishing tour operators and accommodation providers. In both cases, due to the small size of their respective tourism industries, the sample was effectively the entire tourism stakeholder population. The final stage of the research required the data collected in the field to be analysed and integrated into relevant theory and tourism strategies.

Table 2. Fieldwork Schedule

Date/Time	Location	Tasks
October- November 2013	Auckland, New Zealand	Review of current academic literature and relevant tourism plans/strategies
November 28 th -4 December 2013	Nauru	Workshops with key government, community and private sector stakeholders.
16-21 January 2014	Tuvalu	Workshops with key government, community and private sector stakeholders.
November 2015 – May 2016	Auckland, New Zealand	Analysing data, integration of theory and formulation of tourism strategies

Source: Authors' compilation

The workshops were organised with the assistance of the Nauru Tourism Officer and Tuvalu Secretary of Tourism. The total length of the workshops was approximately three hours. The format of the workshops consisted of an informal lunch followed by an overview of tourism in the Pacific region and preliminary, future strategic tourism planning. The participants were asked their thoughts on tourism in general, focusing on how it impacts their daily lives and whether the strategic vision would be acceptable. This format proved to be effective as it was culturally and socially appropriate for conducting research in small Pacific Islands. Due to cultural sensitivities, workshop discussions were not documented using a recording device, rendering direct quotations from participants impossible. Significant themes that emerged during the workshops were recorded as workshop minutes.

During the workshops, it was very important that the government and people of both Nauru and Tuvalu take ownership of their involvement in the plan. This ensured greater success in implementation, and that it remains sustainable. Specifically, the

workshops focused on developing a realistic strategic vision for the local tourism sector through exploring tourism offerings, infrastructure, environment, advantages, constraints, product development and institutional arrangements. Workshops were dynamic, with the overall direction dependent on the participants' attitudes and perceptions of tourism development. Additional areas of discussion varied greatly between the two nations included in the study. In Nauru, there was much debate centred on the impact of the RPC and the availability of air services as essential for tourism development. On the other hand, in Tuvalu, there was much discussion on the impact of climate change and environment issues impacting the tourism industry.

During the data analysis phase of the research, due to the absence of detailed quotes and verbatim, it was determined that a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis would be a practical and useful technique for exploring the information collected during the stakeholder workshops, as emergent themes could be easily grouped into the four different categories. SWOT analysis has been widely used in tourism development studies, as it can simply evaluate the current state of tourism and prospects for future development in a destination (Wall, 2002; Collins-Kreiner and Wall, 2007; Kantawateera, Naipinit, Sakolnakorn, Churngchow & Kroeksakul, 2013; Demir, Esbah & Akgun, 2016). Collins-Kreiner and Wall (2007) found that the SWOT technique was an effective evaluation of tourism potential of was wide applicable to tourism destination in their early stages and that it can assist decision makers by approximating the benefits and threats.

Results and Discussion

The following SWOT analysis is based on the main themes that emerged from the workshops, meetings, and 27 returned surveys (identified in Table 2). The message that comes through from the SWOT analysis is that Tuvalu's natural beauty, isolation, and the Funafuti lagoon are the main distinguishing features that provide a unique product for further niche market development (Table 3). Increasing awareness of climate change and rising sea levels has alerted the global population of Tuvalu in the market place, and provides the opportunity to further develop tourism associated with the effects of climate change. Tuvalu has the potential to attract more visitors for this identified niche market where tourists can view the effects of climate change first-hand.

Table 3. Tuvalu Tourism SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural scenery, uniqueness and remoteness • The Funafuti lagoon and the surrounding islands, attractions for recreational marine activities • Hospitable and friendly host population • A safe and non-threatening peaceful destination • Unique opportunities to view first-hand the impacts of sea level rise • A supportive government, with aid agencies willing to help develop tourism in the islands especially off-shore islands and eco-lodges • Interesting history and WW2 relics 	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to tap into both long-haul and short-haul demand for niche travel • Ecotourism activities, marine reserves, new product development and initiatives • Educational tourism niches on impacts associated with global sea level rise and climate change • Small-scale, culturally-focused activities and handicraft production • To further develop a new marina in the Vaiaku waterfront as a departure point for marine tours and excursions to the outer islands around the lagoon • WW2 relics, cruise ship, and yacht market
<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remoteness, poor accessibility and high airfares • Low awareness, still an unknown destination in the Pacific • Fragile environment, pollution and waste management limited, land area and land use complications/challenges • Lack of infrastructure • No unique selling point • Lack of skilled personnel, lack of trained workforce • Non-prioritising of tourism as important • No organised inbound tour operation • Lack of hotel rooms • Poor services and facilities for visitors • A physical environment that doesn't look clean and appealing to visitors 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global warming effects • Change in Fiji aviation policy may adversely affect air services to Funafuti • Lack of improvements in cleaning up the environment and litter • Growing population density is having a negative impact on the Funafuti ecosystem • Slow development and upgrading of the airport facility and runway • The low priority given to the tourism sector by Government irrespective of its associated financial and economic benefits to the people

Note: Due to the time lag between data collection/analysis and publication several characteristics listed in the SWOT have changed; however, the core themes remain relevant.

The current state of air services to and from Tuvalu (Funafuti) is the key hindrance to the development of tourism. A more sustainable and reliable transportation sector is necessary to support tourism development. Air accessibility from Fiji requires improvements along with endeavours to explore other potential regional markets.

Airfares to Tuvalu are expensive compared to routes of similar distance in Oceania. Other weaknesses and threats lie, to a certain degree, beyond the direct control of the public and the Tuvalu Government, such as limited land area, small ecosystem, and limitations in natural resources development. Other weaknesses identified could be overcome, such as further development of a viable marine tourism industry; improvement to an expansion of tourism facilities; continual training of a core team of a confident tourism workforce; and smart, online marketing programmes to highlight the unique aspects of Tuvalu - especially for tourists wanting to witness first-hand the effects climate change and other specific niches.

Construction of a small marina and tourism precinct for yachts and fishing boats alongside the existing Vaiaku Lagi pier is an opportunity worthy of more exploration. This area could potentially become a tourism hub for activities for offshore day trips and eventually become an economic centre for the entire island. There is a requirement to ensure that appropriate infrastructure, equipment, and resources, such as rubbish trucks and proper waste management for cleaning up areas surrounding Fongafale, are implemented. An unpolluted, attractive environment would be more conducive for tourism growth. Upgrading and expanding current accommodation options is recommended, with opportunities to hold minor, regional conferences, workshops, and tours relating to climate change. Rejuvenation of the small handicraft and culture centre, and the associated replanting of raw materials and teaching of traditional skills would provide a direct economic link to the local community. Destination marketing, and other web-based actions would be cost-effective ways of promoting the tourism sector, ensuring global visibility for Tuvalu.

The SWOT analysis highlighted that Nauru's main strength lies in the current development of the RPC, which has led to upgraded air services and improved tourism infrastructures and services (Table 4). The increased inflow of visitors (principally Australian employees/contractors) has been positive for the local economy; however, the inhospitable, lunar-like physical landscape, largely affected by a long history of phosphate mining combined with a polluted environment, doesn't create an appealing destination for prospective tourists. The unattractive physical environment is not the only restriction to tourism development, as Nauru also suffers from a lack of a trained workforce, minimal experienced inbound tourism operators, and poor services and facilities for visitors. These identified weaknesses could be improved through tourism and hospitality training program on customer service and basic upskilling; continued clean-up programmes to address the major issue of human waste polluting the beach environment; accommodation restoration, upgrading and expansion; improvement of roading; a water desalination plant; and

sanitation systems.

Table 4. Nauru Tourism SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New yet to be explored destination • Much improved air services, especially from Brisbane • Improved tourism infrastructures and services • Mild impact of aspects of climate change, such as less frequency of the occurrences of cyclones • New Ministry of Home Affairs (Tourism Office) determined to put in place tourism policies and active events • Key tourism stakeholders managed by resourceful teams with commendable commercial visions to the future 	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of public funds from the RPC activities for the development of infrastructure and facilities very much needed to 'jump start' tourism development • New, yet-to-discover Pacific destinations • Proximity and familiarity with the Australian market • Potential gateway to other smaller destinations in Central Pacific, such as Kiribati • The new, commercial, international strategic role of the national airline • Much improved infrastructure and good roads • Establishment of a tourism 'Mining Town' complex /museum • Deep sea fishing and surfing attractions
<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still unknown destination in the Pacific • Non-prioritising of tourism as important, lack of infrastructure. • Market perception that it's an inhospitable, lunar-like, physical landscape island • Limited traditional attractions/natural resources possessed by other Pacific destinations • Poorly performing national airline • Lack of trained workforce • No organised inbound tour operation • Lack of hotel rooms, along with • Poor services and facilities for visitors • The physical environment doesn't look clean and appealing to visitors • Complacency - attitude amongst some community leaders • Fiji restrictive aviation policy 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown future and direction of the Australian Refugee Processing Centres (RPC) • Lack of improvements in cleaning up the environment and rubbish • Possible contamination of the water tables and source • Slow development and upgrading of the airport facility and runway • The commercial viability of the national airline should there be a change in the RPC plan • The low priority given to the tourism sector by government in view of the RPC and its associated financial and economic benefits to the people • Lack of a strategic tourism plan with reasonable objectives • Only one national airline serving the island • Tensions between refugees and the local community

Note: Due to the time lag between data collection/analysis and publication several characteristics listed in the SWOT have changed however the core themes remain relevant.

The increased number of direct flights from Brisbane, Australia has created a vital link to the largest tourism market in the South Pacific. Therefore, opportunities identified, including the establishment of a tourism “Mining Town” complex and development of water-based activities, need to be further explored. The proposed tourism “Mining Town” complex and museum development would be administered by the Rehabilitation Corporation in a historic inland mining site. The concept is to re-experience the old mining days with a small museum, shops and cafes with descriptions and stories. The development of water-based activities would include the expansion of the Nauru Surf Club and the encouragement of local marine-based tourism activities, such as deep-sea fishing and surfing.

With fresh opportunities presenting themselves, it will be imperative that Nauru creates a national tourism organisation, with the key role being to develop marketing, policies and strategies, and capacity-building programs, including training. A primary objective of the Nauru Tourism Organisation would be to aggressively promote Nauru through strategic marketing activities to appeal to a wide-ranging segment of international tourists. Another responsibility would be to provide prospective travellers with comprehensive information on the island’s attractions, services and activities.

The emerging tourism industry in Nauru is currently at full capacity due to the recently introduced RPC centres. The RPC project is now the main priority for the Nauru government, employing more than 1000 locals in various jobs and creating high demand for all the accommodation facilities. Many government officials are, however, predicting a decelerating of RPC activities, which would result in a dramatic decrease in visitor numbers. The future of the RPC is not known, and therefore poses many questions surrounding tourism development in Nauru, such as the viability of maintaining regular flights and necessary infrastructure.

Conclusion and Future Research

This paper evaluated the current situation of tourism development on Tuvalu and Nauru and explored the potential for future tourism growth. The findings of the SWOT analysis highlighted that both Tuvalu and Nauru have largely undeveloped tourism industries due to a large number of challenges faced by isolated, small-island nations. However, both islands possess fascinating and unique features that have the potential to attract niche tourism markets. These results contribute to the growing body of work related to tourism and Pacific island nations (Pratt & Harrison, 2015) by offering a snapshot of tourism development in two similarly obscure, South

Pacific destinations. This research builds upon knowledge on previous explorative studies on Tuvalu by Prideaux and McNamara (2013) and earlier works on Nauru by Fagence (1996, 1999, 1999).

The paper extends on current understandings by contrasting the influence of two disparate phenomena (the environmental phenomenon of climate change in Tuvalu and the anthropogenic phenomenon of the RPC in Nauru) on tourism development. A key finding of this paper is that it offers a divergent outlook on current mass tourism development in the South Pacific (Panakera, Willson, Ryan, & Liu, 2011) by highlighting that the tourism stimulus or potential attraction can also be the chief threat to the island's economic survival. For example, in the case of Tuvalu, due to increasing climate change impacts, there is a real fear that the nation will no longer exist in 50 years. This unique situation presents creative opportunities for "last chance tourism" (also identified by Prideaux and McNamara, 2013, p. 591), where tourists seek to experience threatened sites before they vanish (Eijgelaar, Thaper & Peeters, 2010; Lemelin, Dawson, Stewart, Maher & Lueck, 2010; Dawson, Johnston, Stewart, Lemieux, Lemelin, Maher & Grimwood, 2011) and "bucket list tourism", which involves individuals ticking off as many countries on their list as possible (Thurnell-Read, 2017).

A drawback of this study was the reliance on the SWOT analysis. Helms and Nixon (2010) note that, although the SWOT analysis has been popularly utilized when assessing industries in two different countries, the technique is not without its limitations. They conclude that the biggest weakness of the SWOT analysis is that it lacks a theoretical basis and needs continual improvement due to the constantly changing environment (Helms & Nixon, 2010, p. 239-240). Helms and Nixon (2010, p. 240) recommend that the SWOT analysis should generate a strategic plan and be linked with other research methods. Both recommendations were achieved in this study. Similarly, the research provided the foundation for strategic tourism plans for both Tuvalu and Nauru, and the SWOT analysis was supported by academic literature, in-depth interviews and multiple stakeholder workshops.

A key focus for future research in both Tuvalu and Nauru is an in-depth assessment of the main threats associated with the early termination of the RPC project by the Australian government and accelerated effects of climate change on Tuvalu. In Nauru, an early withdrawal of the RPC would generate overcapacity of accommodation and other tourism facilities, an oversupply of national airline services and a large decrease in revenue. These forecast impacts could have disastrous ramifications for Nauru's long-term economic survival. Another area

requiring more investigation is the effect that increased tensions between refugees and the local community could have on Nauru's destination image and ability to attract international visitors. In Tuvalu, the impending impacts of climate change on the vulnerable atoll, and subsequent influences on the tourism industry and livelihoods of the local population require in-depth examination.

Concepts of tourism and climate change (Belle & Bramwell, 2005; Dickinson, 2010; Weaver, 2011) have been a focus of research for over 15 years. However, climate change adaption in tourism (Wong, De Lacy, Jiang, 2012; Kaján & Saarinen, 2013; Wong, Jiang, Klint, Dominey-Howes, & DeLacy, 2013) has only recently started to receive more attention from academics. This paper calls for further targeted assessments that incorporate Tuvalu's unique set of characteristics. Lastly, this paper has outlined the major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in isolated small island nations, laying a foundation for further research centred on tourism development in the South Pacific.

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