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Representing and evaluating the travel motivations of Pacific islanders

Alexander Trupp¹  | Stephen Pratt²  | Marcus L. Stephenson¹  |
 Iliaspeci Matatolu²  | Dawn Gibson² 

¹School of Hospitality and Service Management, Sunway University, Subang Jaya, Malaysia

²School of Business and Management, The University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji

Correspondence

Alexander Trupp, School of Hospitality and Service Management, Sunway University, Subang Jaya, Malaysia.
 Email: atrupp@sunway.edu.my

Abstract

The mobility patterns and travel motivations of Pacific Islanders have largely been neglected by discourses and discussions on Asia-Pacific tourism. To examine the travel preferences and travel motivations of Pacific Islanders, we administered surveys ($n = 1100$) across the five Pacific Island States and Territories of Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands. The research offers a comparative analysis across national boundaries by highlighting commonalities and differences among the five groups. Family, kinship and religious dimensions stand out as shared and crucial factors influencing travel preferences and travel motivations across the region. Nonetheless, the research identified differences between the Pacific communities which can be explained with each country's level of socioeconomic development, political structure, geography, cultural context and globalisation. The study advances knowledge on the mobilities and travel motivations of non-Western tourists by conceptualising the Pacific Islands from the perspective of a tourism-generating region.

KEYWORDS

outbound tourism, South Pacific, tourism mobilities, travel motivations

1 | INTRODUCTION

The Asia-Pacific region experienced rapid growth of both its inbound and outbound tourism market (UNWTO, 2020), especially until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. The region received 362 million international visitor arrivals in 2019, representing 25% of global arrivals. For the years 2010–2019, the region had the highest average annual growth rate (6.3%) of inbound tourism worldwide. Outbound tourism from the Asia-Pacific has also gained importance. In 2019, the region accounted for 25% or 362 million trips worldwide (UNWTO, 2020).

Outbound travellers from Asia and (to a lesser extent) from Pacific countries began to attract increased scholarly and media attention since the mid-2000s, reflecting the need to better understand the travel motivations and consumption patterns of 'non-Western' tourists (Adams, 2021; Chen & Chang, 2015; Cohen & Cohen, 2014; Gibson et al., 2020; Winter et al., 2008). Such perspectives have been

conceptualised under the mobility paradigm which have recognised the blurred boundaries that have pre-existed between tourism and other forms of mobility, particularly as these forms of mobility can represent work, culture or education. A review of tourism mobility research in or from the Asia-Pacific region showed that existing studies are largely focused on the Asian continent whilst the Pacific part of the region is limited to Australia and New Zealand. Research into motivations and preferences of Pacific Islanders as tourists is scarce. Existing research on tourism in the Pacific Islands has almost exclusively been examined from the perspective of a tourism-receiving destination and not from the viewpoint of a tourism-generating region.

One notable exception is Scheyvens's (2007) study in Samoa, highlighting the importance of two distinct types of Pacific travel: beach *fale* tourism as a form of domestic travel motivated by a need to relax, meet other people, participate in sports and appreciate the environment (p. 318), and diaspora tourism, where migrants return to their homelands to reconnect with their families and engage in

TABLE 1 Tourism and economic context of PICTs

	Population	Int. visitor arrivals (2019)	Outbound tourism (2019)	GDP per capita (USD)	Human development index	Remittances inflows (% of GDP)
Cook Islands	17,548	171,606	14,214	21,603.0	0.789	n/a
Fiji	889,960	894,389	173,612	6175.9	0.743	5.2
Kiribati	117,610	7906	n/a	1655.1	0.630	10.3
Samoa	197,090	173,920	65,203	4324.1	0.715	17.2
Solomon Islands	669,820	28,930	n/a	2344.2	0.567	1.6

Source: UNTO (2020); UNDP, World Bank (2020).

discretionary travel. More recently, Gibson et al. (2020) explored the contemporary tourism mobilities of Samoans, finding that cultural and familial elements such as traditional obligations and visiting friends and relatives form the main driver for Samoans to participate in domestic and international travel.

Pacific Islanders in the context of this study refer to citizens of small Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs). While most PICTs share certain commonalities regarding colonialism, introduction of Christianity, and geographical insularity, they also significantly differ concerning their political, economic and sociocultural development (Pratt & Harrison, 2015) as well as their tourism and migration intensity (Cheer et al., 2018). While the five selected PICTs cannot represent the entirety and diversity of such a large region, they constitute different regions such as Melanesia (Fiji and Solomon Islands), Polynesia (Cook Islands and Samoa) and Micronesia (Kiribati). The five PICTs also differ in relation to population, inbound and outbound tourism and their socioeconomic development (Table 1).

The countries of the Pacific Islands region (excluding Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea) have a population of about 2.3 million people and cover around 30,000 square kilometres of land, though the region is scattered across the Pacific Ocean, covering an area which is equivalent of 15 percent of the earth's surface (West, 2020; World Bank, 2020). In terms of overall tourist arrivals, the region received approximately 2.2 million international tourist arrivals annually (SPTO, 2019), though the COVID-19 pandemic placed international travel significantly on hold since March 2020.

Consequently, there is a lack of research concerning Non-Western and Non-Asian as well as indigenous peoples as tourists and their motivations (Chang, 2021; Peters & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2012; Scheyvens et al., 2021). Accordingly, this study pursues two main objectives: First, to examine the differences in travel preferences and travel motivations among Pacific Islanders; and second, to profile Pacific Islanders with regards to their travel preferences and travel motivations. Based on quantitative survey data from the five Pacific Island States and Territories of Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands, the research offers a comparative analysis across national boundaries. This study addresses the imbalance in tourism studies, especially as there has been an overwhelming emphasis on the mobilities and travel motivations of Western (and more recently Asian) tourists. This research enquiry aims to provide an alternative

perspective of Pacific Island tourism, one which considers those communities that have been the object of the 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 1990) rather than tourist subjects themselves. Such research is thus of interest to PICTs interested in developing regional and domestic tourism where detailed comprehension of these markets is crucial, and especially in the context of the post-COVID-19 pandemic.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW: TRAVEL MOTIVATION IN A PACIFIC CONTEXT

2.1 | Travel motivation and preferences

Travel motivation as a theoretical concept aims to explain why people travel, providing reasons for their actions, interests, desires and needs (Farmaki et al., 2019; Pearce & Lee, 2005). Motivation operates consciously and unconsciously (Tran & Ralston, 2006), and is considered a critical force behind tourist behaviour (Fu et al., 2017; Gnoth, 1997; Hsu & Huang, 2008). The literature on travel motivation is rather fragmented and consists of many individual studies and approaches since the 1970s. The notion concerning quests for authenticity or authentic experiences implicates the idea that the tourist seeks genuine experiences in a simpler and seemingly unchanged world, one that differs from one's own overly structured and industrialised society (Carreira et al., 2022; MacCannell, 1976; Olsen, 2002). Boorstin (1977), however, stressed the opposite and noted that tourists rarely look for authenticity whilst other scholars argued that holidays are a form of escapism from the paramount reality of everyday life (Cohen & Taylor, 1976; Rojek, 1993).

Other early conceptualizations distinguished between 'push' and 'pull' factors (Aebli et al., 2022; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977) whilst other conceptualizations are based upon Maslow's (1981) hierarchical needs arrangement and the progression towards fulfilment and self-actualization. The model of the Travel Career Ladder (TLC) and its subsequent modifications described travel motivation through different levels of needs aligned with a traveller's experience or 'career' in travelling (Pearce, 1988; Pearce & Lee, 2005; Song & Bae, 2018). Therefore, it is argued that the desire to travel is fundamentally associated with personal and individual gain (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983), and likened to a desire for self-completion through a quest for the

mind, body and spirit to be replenished through the touristic process (Jafari, 1987; Lykoudi et al., 2020).

Traditionally, most of the tourism motivation studies and theories have been based on samples of Western tourists or Western observations respectively. However, over the last two decades a significant number of Asian tourism research enquiries have emerged to provide 'insights on places, processes and people from an Asian perspective' (Chang, 2021). In 2019, 26% of tourism outbound trips originated in the Asia-Pacific region (UNWTO, 2020). Given the rise of Asian tourism (and Chinese tourism in particular) in recent decades, researchers have paid most attention to the Chinese outbound tourism market (Arlt & Burns, 2013; Li (Robert, 2016; Lau et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2021), and to other Asian source countries and subregions (Bui & Trupp, 2020; Chang, 2015; Singh, 2009; Winter et al., 2008). Tourism certainly ceased to be a primarily Western phenomenon (Cohen & Cohen, 2014), where existing concepts of tourist motivations have been applied and further developed to other geographical and cultural contexts (Fu et al., 2017; Kau & Lim, 2005; Park & Yoon, 2009).

Theoretical advancements in tourism studies have further questioned the sharp division between 'home' and 'away'. They have rebuked the idea of tourism as a complete escape strategy, conceptualising tourism as an integrated everyday activity rather than being opposed to everyday life and work (Cohen & Cohen, 2019; Edensor, 2001). This has led to a provocative argument that tourism can be 'experienced in one's own living room, at the flick of a switch; and it can be repeated time and time again' (Urry, 1990, p.100). This critical turn in tourism studies also led to a dismantlement of tourism as a quest for 'authenticity' or the 'exotic other', which had long been regarded as a major and long-established motive of the modern Western tourist (Cohen & Cohen, 2019; Evrard & Leepreecha, 2008).

Recent studies focussing on Pacific Island mobilities further highlighted the crucial role which families and kinship, cultural ceremonies and traditional obligations (e.g. marriages, deaths, significant birthdays and reunions) play in the formation of travel motivation (Gibson et al., 2020; Trupp & Stephenson, 2018). Some progressive enquiries have implicitly or explicitly implied that literature on traditional travel motivations has mainly been dominated by Western (though more recently Asian) scholars and based on their corresponding markets, where the tools and concepts developed may not apply to other regions (Chang, 2021; Cohen & Cohen, 2014; Gibson et al., 2020; Hazbun, 2009).

2.2 | The travel of Pacific islanders

The region of Pacific Islands and Territories (PICTs) has mainly been understood as a tourism-receiving destination (Berno & Douglas, 1998; Cooper & Hall, 2005; Pratt & Harrison, 2015), despite having a long history of travel and migration where 'peoples and cultures moved and mingled, unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers' (Hau'ofa, 1994, pp. 153–154). Travel between islands to foster kinship relations and trade goods, or

respond to natural hazards or confront conflicts with other groups was a regular feature during pre-colonial times (Cangiano & Torre, 2016; Hau'ofa, 1994).

During the colonial period, voyaging, trade and the church were the main drivers of domestic and international mobility (Cave & Hall, 2015). Under European and American imperialism, Pacific Islanders travelled to work on ships or at plantations and port towns in Australia, New Zealand, different Pacific Island states and even South America (Lee, 2009; Maude, 1981). While some of these movements were voluntary, the forced migration of 'blackbirding' was a 19th and early 20th century practice of enslaving Pacific Islanders onto plantation work (Mortensen, 2000). In the late 19th and early 20th century, the Pacific Island region also experienced an influx of new migrants from Asia, particularly indentured labourers from India and China (Munro, 1993) as well as small traders and unskilled workers from different Asian countries (Crocombe, 1973). Europeans increasingly entered the region in the early 19th century, mainly to extract resources and profits from whaling and trade or in the context of participating in missionary activities. Colonialism and subsequent nation-building also transformed a once borderless world into Pacific Island (Nation) states and territories where people can no longer move as freely as they used to (Hau'ofa, 1994).

The development of commercial air travel since the 1960s and the expansion of low-cost carriers thereafter, increasingly connected the PICTs with Australia, New Zealand, USA and beyond and has further contributed to the labour (and leisure) mobility of Pacific Islanders (Taumoepeau et al., 2017). Such advancements in transportation and technology especially stimulated the emigration growth from countries such as the Cook Islands, whose inhabitants retained citizenship on their progression to self-government in the 1970s (Bedford et al., 2017). However, due to the 'free association' relationship that Cook Islands has with New Zealand, Cook Islanders are New Zealand citizens with all the related privileges such as working and living in New Zealand or having visa-free access to a variety of countries.

Following the decolonisation in the Pacific region from the 1960s onward, PICTs kept various forms of relationships with the former colonisers. However, Pacific Islander do not only migrate to the countries by which they were colonised (Cave & Hall, 2015). PICTs have experienced growing outward migration, particularly to Australia, New Zealand and the United States—and in smaller numbers to Canada, the United Kingdom and the Middle East (Barcham et al., 2009; Connell, 2006; Keck & Schieder, 2015). Opportunities for Pacific Islanders to participate in international labour migration has further opened up through short-term labour visas and managed labour migration schemes, such as various seasonal worker programmes for the agricultural industry in Australia and New Zealand (Gibson & Bailey, 2021). In addition to seeking employment in agriculture and beyond (e.g., sport, nursing, seasonal work and caregiving), other such factors as education, traditional obligations and enjoyment of different lifestyles marked the main drivers of international mobility for Pacific Islanders (MacLellan & Mares, 2006). Simultaneously, there has been an increase in intra-island travel in the

TABLE 2 Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

	Cook Islands		Fiji		Kiribati		Samoa		Solomon Islands	
	Sample (%) N = 194	Census (%)	Sample (%) N = 280	Census (%)	Sample (%) N = 151	Census (%)	Sample (%) N = 308	Census (%)	Sample (%) N = 167	Census (%)
Nationality										
Cook Islander	97.9									
Fijian	2.1		100.0		0.7		0.3			
Kiribati					99.3					
Samoan							99.7			
Solomon Islander									100.0	
Gender										
Male	34.6	49.3	48.0	50.7	42.7	49.1	39.7	51.5	55.6	51.3
Female	65.4	50.7	52.0	49.3	57.3	50.9	60.3	48.5	43.8	48.7
Other	0.0		0.0		0.0		0.0		0.6	
Age (years)										
16–24	40.5	19.8	30.7	23.6	40.5	28.2	38.3	29.1	29.0	31.5
25–44	24.2	33.2	45.6	41.1	45.3	42.4	41.6	36.3	44.4	44.7
45–64	26.3	33.2	19.0	27.3	12.8	23.6	17.2	25.5	22.2	17.9
65+	8.9	13.7	4.7	8.0	1.4	5.8	2.9	9.0	4.3	5.9
Marital status										
Single	49.2	31.9	37.4	53.2	38.2	52.9	49.5	59.3	45.2	34.4
Married/in a relationship	45.5	57.7	55.9	41.5	55.6	41.8	46.5	34.5	49.0	60.1
Divorced/widowed	5.3	10.3	6.7	5.3	6.3	5.3	4.0	6.2	5.8	5.5
Highest level of education										
Below High School	2.1	32.2	4.9	34.8	5.4	17.9	9.2	44.3	11.4	41.8
Secondary/high school	66.1	55.5	43.0	30.2	67.6	73.6	30.8	42.8	43.0	27.4
Vocational college	17.5	5.8	24.0	12.5	10.1	3.7	21.0	9.1	12.7	14.6
Bachelor	10.1	4.9	25.1	22.5	11.5	4.4	33.2	2.8	29.1	15.4
Post-graduate	4.2	1.7	3.0		5.4	0.5	5.8	1.1	3.8	0.7
Current occupation										
Professional	18.1		17.6		3.3		9.9		16.3	
Government official	11.4		13.6		18.7		27.8		15.1	
Self-employed	8.3		23.5		6.7		7.6		17.5	
Student/pupil	28.5		12.5		17.3		22.5		25.9	
Domestic work	5.2		5.9		1.3		9.9		3.0	
Skilled occupation	9.3		14.0		3.3		7.3		12.0	
Labourer	3.1		3.3		14.0		4.6		1.8	
Between jobs	1.6		1.1		27.3		4.3		3.0	
Retired	6.7		2.9		4.0		0.0		1.8	
Other	7.8		5.5		4.0		6.0		3.6	

Source: Sample data is Authors' calculations; Census data is from Solomon Islands National Statistical Office (2009); National Statistics Office: Republic of Kiribati (2016); Ministry of Finance and Economics Management: Government of the Cook Islands (2017); Samoa Bureau of Statistics (2017); Fiji Bureau of Statistics (2018).

TABLE 3 Early mobility and financial situation

	Cook Islands (%) N = 194	Fiji (%) N = 280	Kiribati (%) N = 151	Samoa (%) N = 308	Solomon Islands (%) N = 167
Area where grew up					
Urban/city	10.8	20.3	25.9 ^C	23.4 ^C	25.2 ^C
Suburban/city outskirts	11.8	11.8	6.1	19.7 ^K	13.5
Rural/village	77.4 ^{SA,SI}	67.9	68.0	56.9	61.3
Area where currently live					
Urban/city	4.3	17.5 ^C	29.7 ^{F,C}	26.2 ^C	45.6 ^{C,F,K,SA}
Suburban/city outskirts	6.4	26 ^C	15.5	24.2 ^C	27.5 ^C
Rural/village	89.4 ^{F,K,SA,SI}	56.5 ^{SI}	54.7 ^{SI}	49.7 ^{SI}	26.9
Self-reported financial situation in country of residence					
High income	4.2 ^K	5.2 ^K	5.3	8.5	2.5 ^K
Higher middle income	30.9	24.7 ^K	12.6	20.7	31.5
Lower middle income	42.9	46.8 ^K	29.8	35.6	42.6
Low income	22.0	23.2	52.3 ^{C,F,SA,SI}	35.2 ^{C,F}	23.5
Asset ownership					
Credit card	23.7	20.7	7.3 ^{C,F,SA,SI}	29.2	19.2
Debit card	42.8 ^{K,SA,SI}	37.9 ^{K,SA,SI}	17.3	19.2	15.6
Car/minibus	50.0	28.6	19.2	39.9 ^{F,K,SI}	17.4
Scooter	64.9 ^{F,K,SA,SI}	1.4	17.2 ^{F,SA,SI}	3.2	3.0
Paddle boat/canoe	16 ^{F,SA}	7.5	10.6	6.8	39.5 ^{C,F,K,SA}
Motorised Boat	17.5 ^{F,SA}	5.7	9.3 ^{SA}	2.6	16.2 ^{F,SA}
Disposable income expenditures*					
Saving	61.3	66.4	59.5	55.3	64.0
Shopping beyond necessities	33.5	26.1	23.6	31.9	32.9
No money	24.1	28.7	34.5	27.5	32.3
Dining out/partying/alcohol	23.0	16.0	21.6	17.6	17.1
International travel	15.2	8.6	7.4	9.2	6.7
Domestic travel	11.0	17.5 ^{SA}	12.8	7.3	21.3 ^{SA}

Note: A mean score with a superscript indicates that this mean is statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence from the adjacent mean score of the denoted country [Cook Islands (C), Fiji (F), Kiribati (K), Samoa (SA), Solomon Islands (SI)]. * Multiple responses allowed meaning total > 100%.

Pacific. For example, Fijian nurses and teachers have moved to Palau and Marshall Islands and tourism hospitality workers from Fiji migrated to the Cook Islands and Samoa (Connell, 2006; Iredale et al., 2015).

It has been argued that 'although there is increasing mobility in terms of education and employment in the Pacific, travel as a tourist for the purpose of leisure is still a relatively uncommon practice' (Gibson et al., 2020, p. 2). Existing studies on Pacific Islanders' tourism mobilities highlighted the potential of domestic tourism, especially where low-cost accommodation was developed as the case of Samoa's beach *fales* demonstrates (Scheyvens, 2007). Moreover, kinship ties and cultural and religious forms of travel, especially in relation to church and youth gatherings, constitute big events involving thousands of visitors from different provinces (Trupp & Stephenson, 2018). Regional forms of mobility for purposeful and intrinsic reasons, including high levels of Pacific outbound migrations

and forms of diaspora and roots tourism (Hall & Duval, 2004), have been significant for the lives of Pacific islanders. Alexeyeff (2009) researched the '*tere pati*' (travelling party) in the Cook Islands, which concerned the movement of large groups of Cook Islanders travelling to other locations within and between the Cook Islands and New Zealand, and to other locations in the diaspora. The *tere pati* is a 'culturally specific style of travel' (2009, p. 99) helping to maintain cultural and familial obligations, as well as involving the exchange of money, gifts and emotions and sustaining relationships with the family and community members.

3 | METHOD

Due to the nature of the research question aimed at comparing mobility patterns and travel motivations of Pacific Islanders across five

countries and territories, a quantitative approach was deemed most appropriate to address the research objectives. While much of the mobilities research has often favoured the use of qualitative methods (Gibson et al., 2020; Stephenson, 2002), this research undertook a quantitative approach to better understand the travel preferences and travel motivations of Pacific Island communities.

3.1 | Survey instrument

The survey broadly covers domestic mobility and outbound travel of Pacific Islanders. Two broad sections of the research instrument were introduced. The first section contained a set of standard demographic questions, such as age, income, gender, marital status, religious background, the highest level of education and occupation (Table 2). This section also captured details relating to the proclivity of mobility such as current financial situation, passport ownership and transportation ownership (Table 3). The second section of the survey instrument asked about Pacific Islanders' travel incidence and their domestic and international travel behaviour over the previous 12 months. Moreover, the respondents were asked to rate a set of 20 travel motivations and activities of interest on a 5-point Likert scale, where '1' was Strongly Disagree and '5' was Strongly Agree. Furthermore, a set of five agreement statements were asked about travel preferences. The questionnaire items and statements were formulated and adapted based on an awareness concerning the key elements derived from the literature review concerning Western and non-Western travel motivations (e.g., Kau & Lim, 2005; Park & Yoon, 2009). Hence, there was an emphasis on the cultural dynamics of travel, including the role of family and religious dimensions. Prior to the administration of the survey, a panel of three academics of a regional university in the Pacific reviewed the measurement items and agreement statements. Questionnaires were further pretested and revised accordingly.

3.2 | Sampling

Five Pacific Island communities (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands) were chosen as contexts in which to conduct the research. These five PICTs covered Melanesia (Fiji and Solomon Islands), Polynesia (Cook Islands and Samoa) and Micronesia (Kiribati). Popularised representation of PICTs, created by first European contact of explorers, traders and missionaries and reinforced by destination marketing organisations, have depicted the islands as practically interchangeable so that the Pacific has been commonly construed as a single world (Pratt, 2013). The representation was one of a tropical paradise with sandy white beaches and swaying coconut palms with welcoming happy islanders (Sturma, 1999), reflecting a very colonial view of the Pacific. However, the region is characterised by cultural, environmental and geographical diversity and features different economic characteristics, travel volumes and tourism intensities (Table 1). For example, the ratio between international tourist arrivals to the population for the Cook Islands was almost 10:1 while for Fiji and Samoa it was almost parity and for Kiribati and

Solomon Islands the ratio was 0.07:1 and 0.04:1 respectively. These numbers demonstrate the different levels of exposure to international tourism for PICTs. The five PICTs were at different levels of economic development, as shown at the national level by indicators such as GDP per capita and the HDIs (Table 1) and at the individual respondent level (Table 3 indicating respondents' Self-Reported Financial situation), which influenced outbound tourism. Economic and tourism development differences justify research focussing on the comparative differences between these five PICTs.

In each country/territory, data collection took place at two distinct destinations—one located in the main city/area/island close to the international airport and the second at a distance from the airport. This approach enable a wider socio-geographic assessment of travel motivations. Purposeful sampling for the survey took place at specific data collection points, including tourism accommodation, shops, offices, hospitals, universities, schools and marketplaces, as well as other communal areas and private homes in villages.

The data was collected from the Solomon Islands and Cook Islands in August and September 2017, Samoa in October and November 2017, Fiji in December 2017 and January 2018, and Kiribati in August 2018. Data collection was staggered due to the authors' university teaching commitments. At the end of the data collection period, a total of 1100 completed surveys were available for analysis. The sample size for each PICT was as follows: Cook Islands 194, Fiji 280, Kiribati 151, Samoa 308 and Solomon Islands 167. Apart from the Factor Analysis, the results in Tables 2, 3, 5 and 6 are disaggregated and reported by country. Weighting the results (by population or outbound tourism) would only be applicable if we were reporting an overall 'Pacific' total in these tables.

3.3 | Respondents' profiles

Table 2 shows the profile of respondents across the five Pacific Island communities. For each PICT, the first column shows the sample characteristics, and the second column indicated the respective Census data. Such data were included to assess the degree of representativeness of each Pacific Island sample. Nationality, gender, age, marital status, the highest level of education, and current occupation are displayed. For the most part, each sample is generally representative of the overall population. The Cook Islands and Samoa sample was skewed somewhat towards females. Additionally, most samples skewed somewhat towards the younger and more educated than the overall population; this can happen in research of this nature as the elderly and less educated were more difficult to reach (see Table 2).

Pacific Islanders already demonstrate a significant amount of mobility regarding rural–rural and rural–urban movements in their formative years. Increasing urbanisation was reported among the Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands cohorts. For example, 25.2% of Solomon Islanders reported growing up in urban areas but now 45.6% were currently living in urban areas with a corresponding decrease of those who grew up in rural areas (Table 3). Modes of transportation among Pacific Island Countries and Territories were determined by a mix of geography and

TABLE 4 Principal components analysis of travel motivations

Factor	I like to travel to...	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Eigenvalue	Variance explained
Exploration and evaluation of self	Visit religious sites and/or practise religion	0.689	0.842	5.88	34.6%
	Study or for educational purposes	0.689			
	Search for deeper meaning and self-fulfilment	0.680			
	Visit cultural attractions	0.623			
	Learn about different cultures and lifestyles	0.620			
	Work or find work	0.610			
	Visit natural attractions	0.608			
	Experience the genuine, real, or authentic life elsewhere	0.569			
Adventure and escape	Experience adventure	0.736	0.748	1.58	9.26%
	Experience rest and relaxation	0.699			
	Break out of boring routines of work or home life	0.610			
	Meet new people	0.607			
Sensory	Enjoy food and drinks	0.768	0.742	1.23	7.24%
	Shop for goods I may not get at home	0.714			
	Have fun and entertainment	0.618			
Family-driven	Meet family commitments/obligations	0.782	0.450	1.10	6.44%
	Spend time with friends and relatives	0.659			
	Total variance explained				

the level of development. Most of the interviewed Cook Islanders owned motorised vehicles such as cars or scooters to travel around the small main island of Rarotonga. The higher-income countries like Fiji and Samoa are geographically larger and more compact and thus necessitated travel by car and buses while the nearly 1000 islands that make up the Solomon Islands necessitated travel across water by motorised boat or paddle boat/canoe.

Disposable income was one of the prerequisites for tourism, especially for international travel. This could be a barrier to travel for Pacific Islanders, along with the issue of obtaining a visa to travel. The five Pacific Island Countries and Territories sampled in this research were at different stages of development. This is reflected in the responses in Table 3 regarding the respondents' self-reported financial situation and asset ownership. The Cook Island and Fiji cohort report a higher level of income allowing the possibility for international travel while the Kiribati cohort report lower levels of income. Higher levels of income also contributed to higher ownership of credit and debit cards, making it easier to undertake international travel.

4 | FINDINGS

4.1 | Travel behaviour

Pacific island citizens reported a high degree of mobility within their own country and a moderate degree of outbound international travel. Across the five PICTs about four in five citizens (78.6%) have ever

travelled to a domestic destination (other island/province) within their country of residence. There were minor differences across countries/territories. However, there were differences with outbound international travel. Cook Islanders had the highest incidence of international travel with four in five Cook Islanders (81.4%) having taken an outbound international trip. Next about half of Samoans and Solomon Islanders surveyed had taken an international trip (57.5% and 49.1% respectively) while only about a third of Fijians (31.4%) and i-Kiribati (33.1%) had ever taken an international trip.

4.2 | Travel motivations

To understand the underlying latent factors of travel motivations for these Pacific Island communities, an Exploratory Factor Analysis via a Principal Components Analysis extraction of the 20 motivations was undertaken. Using a varimax rotation procedure and after omitting three items because they either had low or similar factor loadings on several factors, the EFA produced a four-factor solution (Table 4). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is 0.892 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, which measured the degree to the underlying correlation matrix was different from the identity matrix, and was significant ($p < 0.000$), indicating the factor analysis was appropriate on this data set.

The four-factor solution to the EFA (eigenvalues greater than one) explained 57.54% of the total variance. A factor solution accounted for around 60% of the variance and was generally

TABLE 5 Travel motivations by Pacific Island communities (mean scores)

	Cook Islands N = 194	Fiji N = 280	Kiribati N = 151	Samoa N = 308	Solomon Islands N = 167
Exploration and evaluation of self	3.38	3.74 ^C	3.73 ^C	3.95 ^{C,F,K}	3.93 ^C
Visit religious sites and/or practise religion	3.29	3.62 ^C	3.55	3.94 ^{C,F,K}	3.85 ^C
Study or for educational purposes	3.47	3.67	3.74	4.13 ^{C,F,K}	4.34 ^{C,F,K}
Search for deeper meaning and self-fulfilment	3.02	3.47 ^C	3.25	3.55 ^C	3.66 ^{C,K}
Visit cultural attractions	3.49	3.89 ^C	3.89 ^C	4.10 ^C	3.97 ^C
Learn about different cultures and lifestyles	3.72	4.12 ^C	4.16 ^C	4.07 ^C	4.24 ^C
Work or find work	2.97	3.41 ^C	3.76 ^{C,F}	3.96 ^{C,F}	3.70 ^C
Visit natural attractions	3.59	3.91 ^C	3.86	4.00 ^C	3.93 ^C
Experience the genuine, real, or authentic life elsewhere	3.47	3.72	3.56	3.83 ^C	3.74
Adventure and escape motivation	3.79	3.99	3.97	4.01 ^C	4.06 ^C
Experience adventure	3.93	4.04	3.96	4.06	4.19
Experience rest and relaxation	3.84	4.05	3.95	4.12 ^C	4.12
Break out of boring routines of work or home life	3.64	3.78	3.82	4.05 ^C	3.90
Meet new people	3.73	4.04 ^C	4.15 ^{C,SA}	3.80	4.02
Sensory motivation	3.87 ^{K,SI}	3.65 ^{SI}	3.53	3.88 ^{F,K,SI}	3.38
Enjoy food and drinks	3.80 ^{SI}	3.58 ^{SI}	3.67 ^{SI}	3.58 ^{SI}	3.16
Shop for goods I may not get at home	3.94 ^{F,K,SI}	3.55	3.32	3.88 ^{F,K,SI}	3.42
Have fun and entertainment	3.89 ^{SI}	3.80	3.58	4.16 ^{F,K,SI}	3.53
Family-driven motivation	4.15	4.04	4.07	4.33 ^{F,K,SI}	4.00
Meet family commitments/obligations	3.82	3.82	3.88 ^{C,F,SI}	4.13	3.82
Spend time with friends and relatives	4.48 ^{SI}	4.25	4.24	4.54 ^{F,K,SI}	4.17

Note: A mean score with a superscript indicates that this mean is statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence from the adjacent mean score of the denoted country [Cook Islands (C), Fiji (F), Kiribati (K), Samoa (SA), Solomon Islands (SI)].

TABLE 6 Travel preferences by Pacific Island communities (mean scores out of five)

	Cook Islands	Fiji	Kiribati	Samoa	Solomon Islands
I prefer to visit places where I have family or friends	4.28	4.30	4.40 ^{SI}	4.52 ^{C,F,SI}	4.06
I prefer to arrange my bookings for hotels and trips before I leave my home country	3.94	3.70	4.03 ^F	3.89	4.02 ^F
I prefer to visit places that are familiar to me	3.65	3.58	3.87 ^{SI}	4.05 ^{C,F,SI}	3.49
I prefer to visit places where not many other tourists go	3.24	3.41	3.21	3.41	3.46
I prefer to stay at luxury accommodation	3.07	3.00	3.11	3.26	3.54 ^{C,F,K}

Note: A mean score with a superscript indicates that this mean is statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence from the adjacent mean score of the denoted country [Cook Islands (C), Fiji (F), Kiribati (K), Samoa (SA), Solomon Islands (SI)].

considered satisfactory (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, Hair et al. (2010) noted that factor loadings are considered practically significant at 0.5 or above, as met in this model. The first factor, titled 'Exploration and evaluation of self', which included eight items, accounted for 34.6% of the total variance. The items that have the highest factor loading on this factor were related to religion/spirituality, education and culture, namely 'Visit religious sites and/or practise religion', 'Study or for educational purposes', 'Search for deeper meaning and self-fulfilment' and 'Visit cultural attractions'. The internal validity of this factor (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.842, suggesting excellent internal validity (Tabachnick et al., 2007).

The second factor, 'Adventure and Escape' with four items, accounted for 9.26% of the variance. The highest loading items on this factor were 'experience adventure', 'experience rest and relaxation' and 'break out of boring routines of work or home life'. This factor too exhibited high internal validity with a Cronbach alpha of 0.748. The third factor, 'sensory' motivation, accounted for 7.24% of the variance. It had an acceptable internal validity statistic ($\alpha = 0.742$), comprising of three items: a culinary tourism motivation ('enjoy food and drinks'), a unique shopping motivation ('shop for goods I may not get at home') and a general hedonic motivation ('have fun and entertainment'). The fourth factor, 'family-driven', accounted for 6.44% of

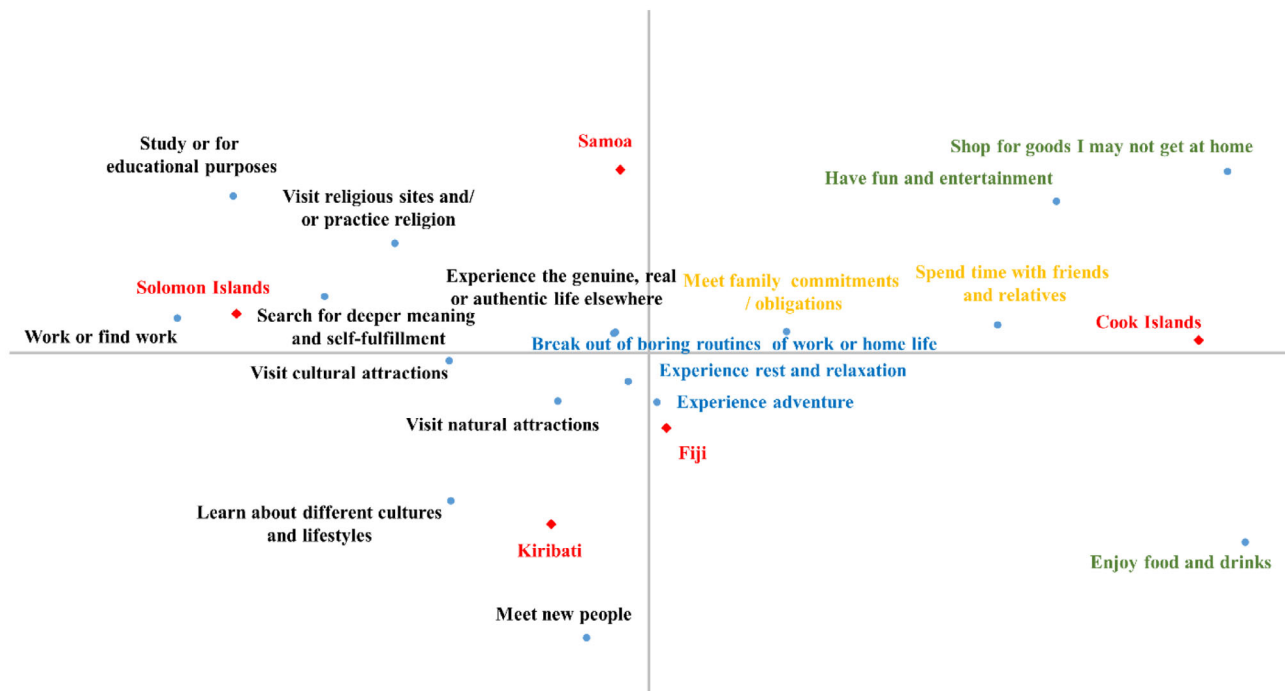


FIGURE 1 Perceptual map of travel motivations by Pacific Island community [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

the variance and included two items: 'meet family commitments/obligations' and 'spend time with friends and relatives'. Whilst the internal validity measure was relatively low ($\alpha = 0.450$), the VFR market was noticeably important for these Pacific Island communities and thus this factor had been retained.

Table 5 shows the mean scores for travel motivations on a 5-point Likert scale across the five Pacific Island Communities segmented by motivation factors from the EFA. The highest mean scores on average were for the family-drive motivations: 'meet family commitments/obligations' and 'spend time with friends and relatives'. These two motivations average above four out of five for all five communities. However, there were differences across communities. Samoan residents rated 'spend time with friends and relatives' significantly higher than residents from Fiji, Kiribati and Solomon Islands. Kiribati residents gave a significantly higher rating for 'meet family commitments/obligations' than Cook Islands, Fiji and Solomon Island residents.

The next highest rating factor was Sensory Motivations. Again, there were differences across Pacific Island communities. Residents from Samoa and to a lesser extent from the Cook Islands were significantly more likely to rate 'shop for goods I may not get at home' and 'have fun and entertainment' higher than residents from the Solomon Islands and to a lesser extent, those residents from Fiji and Kiribati. The Adventure and Escape motivations did not vary greatly across Pacific Island communities. In general, residents from both the Solomon Islands and Samoa gave higher ratings for these motivations than other communities, especially Cook Island residents and Kiribati residents, although Kiribati residents were particularly motivated to 'meet new people'. As with the Adventure and Escape motivations,

the motivational factors of Exploration and Evaluation of Self saw few differences across communities although residents from the Solomon Islands, Samoa and Fiji were more motivated (higher mean scores) than Cook Island residents on many of these motivations. Travelling to study or for educational purposes was the highest-ranked motivation for residents from the Solomon Islands. For the other four communities, the highest-ranked motivation was 'spend time with friends and relatives'.

The travel motivations could also be displayed as a perceptual map. Perceptual maps, created using correspondence analysis, a multi-dimensional scaling technique, show brands (destinations) on the same two-dimensional space as brand attributes (travel motivations). The closer the destination is to the travel motivation the more associated that destination is with the travel motivation. In marketing parlance, destinations are said to 'own' that perception. The tourism literature is replete with examples (Claveria, 2016; Evren & Kozak, 2018; Pratt, 2013). For example, Pratt (2013) used a perceptual map to show the motives of Australian tourists for wanting to visit or revisit South Pacific destinations.

Figure 1 shows the 17 travel motivations and the five PICT destinations. The destinations are colour-coded red and the travel motivations are also colour-coded by factors derived from the factor analysis. The horizontal axis could be interpreted as being utilitarian on the left-hand side and hedonistic on the right-hand side. The bottom of the y-axis is associated with meeting new people and experiencing new cultures while the top of the y-axis is associated more with the familiar. Accordingly, Cook Islanders' travel motivations could be categorised as more hedonistic emphasising shopping, fun, entertainment and enjoyment of food and drinks whilst for Solomon

Islanders travel was strongly related to work, education and religious practices. For Samoan respondents, religious travel and family obligations were important whilst Fijian and especially i-Kiribati respondents could be classified as more allocentric, especially in the sense of meeting new people.

4.3 | Travel preferences

Pacific Island residents were asked a series of statements about their preferred travel styles. Table 6 shows the mean scores across five statements for the five Pacific Island Communities. On a five-point agreement scale, all communities ranked 'I prefer to visit places where I have family or friends' as the highest. In fact, Cook Islands, Fiji and Kiribati rated the statements in the same rank order with 'I prefer to arrange my bookings for hotels and trips before I leave my home country' as second highest, 'I prefer to visit places that are familiar to me' as third highest, 'I prefer to visit places where not many other tourists go' as fourth highest and 'I prefer to stay at luxury accommodation' taking the last place. Ranking for Samoa and Solomon Islands were similar although not exactly the same. Nevertheless, Pacific Islanders made use of their familial contacts when travelling and VFR travel was a strong driver for them. They also preferred to have the travel itinerary set before they leave home. In general, there was a rather low preference to stay at luxury accommodation and to visit less touristy places.

In terms of differences across communities, Samoans were significantly more likely to prefer to visit places where they had family and friends and visited places that were familiar to them, compared to those from the Cook Islands, Fiji and Solomon Islands. Both i-Kiribati and Solomon Islanders were more likely to prefer to arrange their bookings for hotels and trips before they left their home country, compared to Fijians. Solomon Islanders were relatively more likely to prefer to stay at luxury accommodation than Cook Islanders, Fijians and i-Kiribati.

5 | DISCUSSION

Family and kinships within the dynamics of Pacific Islanders' mobility patterns and behaviour represented a significant factor in terms of travel preferences and motivations. It was noted that kinship ties and community relations for Pacific Islanders are historically and traditionally rooted in culture, tradition and society (Toren & Pauwels, 2015). Kin connections between high chiefs of Fiji and other parts of Polynesia were established before the Europeans entered the Pacific, connecting indigenous peoples across Oceania until present day (Hau'ofa, 1994). However, since the 1960s, accelerated outbound migration in the search of employment to other Pacific Islands and countries such as New Zealand, Australia and the United States led to the formation of transnational Pacific communities (Connell, 2015). In the present-day Pacific, families and diaspora communities are so strongly interconnected that 'diasporas cannot exist across

generations without families sustaining them' (Gershon, 2007, p. 475). Table 6 exemplifies this dominant theme of kin-related travel when examining the travel preference results for each of the countries and territories: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and the Solomon Islands. Therefore, the travel preference to visit places that have family and friend connections and also visit places of familiarity was strongest among respondents from Samoa followed by Kiribati, Fiji, Cook Islands and Solomon Islands.

Overall, travel preferences for Pacific Islanders were strongly influenced by family and friendship connections. In the Pacific, the maintenance of family ties is 'integral to being, belonging and identity', transcending borders and frontiers (Cave & Hall, 2015, p. 187). This was also echoed in Table 5 where the mean score for family-driven motivation was highest when compared to other motivations. While this finding reaffirmed Crompton's (1979) push factor relating to the desire to strengthen family and kinship relationships, it also forced us to probe deeper into the notion of travel as a primarily western phenomenon to create space for other geographical and cultural contexts (Cohen & Cohen, 2015; Park & Yoon, 2009). The study's findings also question the dominant positions in tourism studies that the desire to travel is fundamentally associated with personal and individual gain (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983), as well as being commonly associated with desires for authentic encounters with material culture and genuine experiences in other societies (MacCannell, 1976; Olsen, 2002). For many Pacific Islanders, however, authentic encounters and experiences may well be localised within a familiar landscape, determined by kinship, ethnicity and culture.

The motivation to meet family commitments and obligations and spend time with friends and relatives was therefore a dominant aspect of the findings, including travel to attend marriages, births, deaths and family reunions. Pacific Islanders are inherently communal in nature and the motivation for travel was predominantly undertaken for family, cultural ceremonies and traditional obligations. Subsequently, it was quite clear from the findings that self-centred and rather hedonistic preferences for travel were not as high on the tourism and travel agenda for Pacific Islanders than for tourists from the 'Global North'. Pacific Islander tourism mobility strongly intersects with culture, migration and diasporic movements and is shaped by communal orientations rather than individual aspirations.

The study highlighted the dominant religious dimensions of Pacific Islands travel, where the items indicating the highest significance in relation to 'Exploration and Evaluation of Self' were related to religion/spirituality, visiting religious sites or practising religion. This aspect of the findings reaffirmed that major dimensions of the mobilities of Pacific Islanders concerned domestic and regional travel patterns. Trupp and Stephenson (2018) posited that cultural and religious forms of travel, particularly in relation to church and youth gatherings, often dominated Pacific Islanders' tourism mobility patterns. These religious events, normally annual in nature, involved travel from major provinces. The church shaped Pacific Islander mobilities since colonialization (Cave & Hall, 2015) and continues to play an important role in contemporary travel.

Pacific Islanders' mobility highlighted an overriding preference to travel for VFR purposes. All communities ranked 'I prefer to visit places where I have family or friends' as the highest when it came to travel preferences (See Table 6). This ranking was the same for the Cook Islands, Fiji and Kiribati. This finding suggests that space be made in mobility literature to accommodate these cultural nuances, in particular diaspora and visiting friends and relatives; or VFR tourism (Hall & Duval, 2004). As these islands have witnessed significant levels of out-migration and the long-term establishment of diasporic communities in various destinations overseas, the VFR market provided individuals and families with opportunities to reconnect with one another socially and culturally. In the Pacific, VFR represents a physical expression of the tradition of transnational family relations (Cave & Hall, 2015).

While the Pacific is often portrayed as a unified tropical paradise (Hall, 2013), this research revealed both commonalities and differences regarding mobility patterns and travel motivations. Whilst Pacific Islanders hold strong preferences for visiting places where family and friends live, each country's level of development, geography and exposure to globalisation had an impact on international travel motivations and preferences (Tolkach & Pratt, 2021). With a large diaspora, especially in New Zealand, Samoans were more likely to want to maintain and strengthen their family ties. Cook Islanders, along with their free association with New Zealand, were relatively more likely to be motivated to enjoy such sensory experiences as gastronomic events, shopping and entertainment. At lower levels of socioeconomic development, Solomon Islands and Kiribati residents wanted to travel for study or educational purposes, or work. This finding was not that surprising as it was clear that both countries experience difficulties in accessing quality driven education (Binns, 2015; Kesselring, 2017). Many of the Pacific Island Countries and Territories could be described as MIRAB states, characterised by migration, remittances, foreign aid and public bureaucracy (Bertram & Watters, 1985). Such economies also have a relatively large public sector which, at times, enabled public sector servants to travel internationally for conferences and meetings.

6 | CONCLUSION

6.1 | Theoretical and practical implications

The study advances knowledge on the mobilities and travel motivations of non-Western tourists by conceptualising the Pacific Islands from the perspective of a tourism-generating region. By contextualising the travel patterns and preferences of Pacific Islanders from Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands, this research has attempted to address the imbalance of the extant literature which has been predominantly Western/Eurocentric orientated and more recently Asian influenced. Findings show how cultural and family factors shape the tourism mobilities of Pacific Islanders. Whilst Western tourists are often motivated by seeking

cultural difference or personal gain and experiences, Pacific Islanders are often propelled to travel because of cultural events and communal obligations such as funerals, weddings, church unions, birthday celebrations or chiefly installations. Travelling to such cultural and kinship-related events facilitate and maintain social and interpersonal relationships and represent important dimensions of place attachment (Prayag et al., 2018). The strong focus on VFR travel further reflects the intersecting terrain between tourism and migration in the Pacific context.

Consequently, the study contributes to recent discussions aimed at overcoming the 'binary between tourism and migration that have plagued classic Western models of travel' (Adams, 2021, p. 6), encouraging us to move away from the propagation of colonial tourism knowledge where western epistemologies have continued to be privileged (Chambers & Buzinde, 2015), especially in an endeavour to move towards retrieving both localised and regionalized tourism knowledge to produce alternative perspectives concerning tourism motivation and behaviour.

In the post-COVID-19 era, regional and domestic forms of tourism are predicted to have increasing importance, especially with closed travel borders or limited involvement in regional tourism 'bubbles' (Hall et al., 2020; Rogerson & Baum, 2020). Pacific Islanders are strongly motivated to travel to visit friends and relatives who have migrated, and increasing development in the Pacific means that this market could have the disposable income to travel. This represents opportunities for Pacific-based businesses such as travel agencies to target Pacific outbound tourism, as such demand could surge after the pandemic. VFR destinations with a larger number of Pacific Islander populations are Australia (especially Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney), New Zealand (especially Auckland and Wellington) and the United States (especially Hawaii, Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, San Francisco and Seattle). This VFR segment is thus projected to grow as people look to reinforce meaningful connections and rekindle personal relationships. This is a key managerial implication from this research. Another policy recommendation is for destination marketing organisations in Australia and New Zealand to see Pacific Islands residents as viable source markets. It is worth noting that while VFR is a strong common motive across the region, there are differences within the region too. Cook Island residents are more likely to seek sensory activities while travelling, while Samoans and Solomon Islanders are more likely to seek adventure and escapism. Moreover, whilst Cook Islanders (who are in free association with New Zealand) are more likely to be motivated to enjoy a sensory experience where they participate in a gastronomy activity, shopping and entertainment, Solomon Islands and Kiribati residents rather travel for educational purposes or work.

The study of the travel behaviours and motivations of residents of developing countries is becoming increasingly important in a post-COVID world where VFR and diaspora tourism is being prioritised over long-haul travel. The lack of mobility arguably separated families and thus the significance of VFR travel could well be a valued form of travel.

6.2 | Limitations and future research

This quantitative study has limitations, with an obvious recommendation concerning the need for a qualitative or mixed-method study. This would help to not only attain a statistical and formal profile of tourism and travel patterns of Pacific Islanders but would also help to sociologically contextualise the value systems, cultural ideologies, social behaviour patterns and attitudinal perceptions of such travellers. Future research could be extended to other Pacific Island countries and territories to identify similarities and differences, which would continue to advance an understanding of specific factors influencing the mobilities and immobilities of islanders. The selection of Tonga, for instance, would facilitate an understanding of how the accumulation of natural disasters significantly affects national development, local employment and hence disposable incomes to travel, especially in light Cyclone Gita (2018) and Cyclone Harold (2020) as well as the recent volcanic eruption of Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai and the subsequent regional tsunami (2022). Moreover, the selection of Palau and Marshall Islands would help to understand more the role of economic geography as a key determinant of travel and tourism patterns of Pacific Islanders, especially as these to countries operate in Free Association with the United States. Accordingly, the geo-political context of travel and tourism by Pacific Islanders representing particular countries is also an area of enquiry that warrants empirical investigation, especially with regards to colonial and postcolonial circuits of mobility.

Opportunities also existed to study Pacific Island diaspora in such countries as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United States and the United Kingdom, especially to consider such people's travel motivations and behaviour patterns and examine whether their 'new' lifestyles and 'homes' have had an impact on their travel behaviour and motivations. A comparative study of Pacific Islanders in their home countries and the diaspora, concerning religious travel and how they value traditional cultural obligations as a motivation for travel, would be a valuable topic of enquiry. Another study of the diaspora could be a modification of the travel career ladder from a Pacific Islander perspective (Pearce, 1988; Pearce & Lee, 2005). Moreover, with the closing of travel borders during the pandemic era, questions surrounding the needs of Pacific Islanders requires further attention.

It would be fruitful to look more intricately at the socio-demographic dimensions of the travel perceptions and tourism patterns of Pacific Islanders, paying focussed attention to variables of socio-economic status, age, religious background (bearing in mind Fiji has significant Hindu and Muslim populations, for instance) and gender. This endeavour would add more critical depth to the wider enquiry, helping also to understand the socio-cultural, economic and gendered complexities of tourism mobility. Finally, a comparative study of Pacific Islanders in their home countries and in their diasporic communities, especially concerning how they value traditional cultural obligations as motivations for travel, would be a valuable topic of enquiry.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ORCID

Alexander Trupp  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1093-2824>

Stephen Pratt  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6550-132X>

Marcus L. Stephenson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9364-351X>

Ilisapeci Matatolu  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9410-215X>

Dawn Gibson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4537-7472>

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