

Exploring the Role and Nature of 'Visiting Friends and Relatives' Tourism in Niue

Ilona Laskai

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Supervisor: Dr Hamish Bremner

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Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Ilona Laskai

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Ethics Approval

As this thesis used a survey and interviews that included human participants, ethical approval was required from AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Approval was received on 24 April 2012 with Ethics Application Number of AUTEC, 12/85 on 24 April 2012.

Abstract

Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) tourism is a segment of tourism that suffers from neglect, an absence of true recognition and a lack of appreciation.

In order to find out the validity of these concepts in regards to the situation of Niue, a case study was conducted based on primary research that encompassed a thorough collection of secondary and primary data through field research. This field research included surveys, and semi-structured and non-structured interviews. This was combined with an analysis of secondary data from statistics, literature, websites, magazines, brochures and the media. Participants of the survey were selected from VFR travellers in Niue. The interviewees who participated in the in-depth interviews were selected from a diverse range of sources such as accommodation and service providers, local residents, officials from government and tourism authorities, and VFR travellers from New Zealand. This method of data collection was intended to gather important information from different points of view, in order to achieve a broad overview of the issue.

The aim of the study was to cover the gap in the academic literature about the nature and role of VFR tourism in Niue. Furthermore, it was intended to investigate the nature of economic contribution to sustainable economic development and the role of VFR travellers in the preservation of the fading culture in Niue.

In the case of Niue, this study found that VFR tourism not only plays an important role in the survival of the culture and language, but also, because of the nature and continuity of motivational factors and the purpose of travel, it could contribute towards the sustainability of tourism in the long term. Furthermore, the non-measurable economic contribution, such as the skills and knowledge brought in by VFR to the livelihood of the population, is an important factor in the economic development of Niue.

Keywords: Niue, VFR, diaspora, SIDS, Pacific

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the past decades, tourism has achieved wide recognition as being a viable option for sustainable economic development in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Moreover, in some cases it is referenced as the only alternative solution for a country to sustain its existence. SIDS are generally located in geographic and economic isolation from developed countries, carrying the weight of other disadvantages such as dependence on airline capacity, poor connectivity and expensive access. Furthermore, they are vulnerable to natural disasters, as their weather patterns are highly dependent on the surrounding ocean and seriously affected by climate change.

With the evolution of transport technology, the modern era has provided easier forms of travel compared to earlier times, which also implied an increasing level of migration from those countries for people who were looking for something else in their life; being it more financial security, education or seeking a better living standard. As historical patterns have demonstrated, those immigrants are frequently returning to visit their country of origin, by visiting friends and relatives (VFR). This segment of tourism is a pervasive form of tourism, but compared to the main tourism sector it is less mentioned in academic writings and is neglected by marketing organisations; its significance seems to be underestimated and inadequately understood and for a long time it was an under-researched area by academics. Nevertheless, recently the number of academics writing has increased and is mainly focused on the areas where historical immigration has significantly caused transnationalism. Therefore VFR tourism could occupy a unique position in the case of Niue, where the off-shore population is over fifteen-fold of the inhabitants of their country of origin. To date no academic research has been conducted to examine the role and the nature of VFR in Niue, in particular in regards to its irreplaceable economic contribution to sustainable development, in a country where the economy is heavily dependent on tourism.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This thesis intended to cover the gap in academic research of VFR tourism by researching the role and nature of VFR in the smallest Pacific Island state of Niue. It

also aimed to examine the power and strength of cultural ties as the motivation and purpose of VFR travellers, along with the feeling of connection and the urge of reconnection with their country of origin. Furthermore, this research was looking for the extent of VFR tourism's contribution to Niue's sustainable economic development.

1.2 Research Questions

The research explored the nature and the role of VFR tourism in Niue, with consideration of its contribution to sustainable economic development. The research question was directly related to the methods that were applied. Hence, the formation and the character of the research questions largely determined a qualitative approach to data collection. The research question also indicated the importance of the right timing for data collection methods. The main question, “What is the nature and the role of VFR tourism in Niue?” generated a number of sub-questions to be explored:

- What form of economic contribution can be identified through VFR tourism to the Niuean economy?
- How can the motivation of VFR tourists influence sustainable economic development?
- How is cultural identity maintained by VFR tourism?
- How do the local people in Niue perceive VFR tourism?

1.3 The Aim of the Study

The aim of this thesis was to explore the nature and the role of VFR in Niue, and also to draw attention to, and emphasise the importance of VFR tourism in Niue. It was anticipated, that the research findings would contribute towards the better understanding of this multifaceted phenomenon and gain deeper insight of VFR related issues and difficulties in the case of Niue.

1.4 Design of the Study

Within the social sciences, tourism studies are one of the more complex disciplines. Due to this characteristic of tourism studies, the research methods used embrace a

diverse range. Whether a strictly 'scientific' oriented quantitative approach or one based on a more exploratory qualitative methodology, in order to better understand the diversity of research problem, an eclectic approach to choosing the appropriate research methods and tools is commonly applied in the past (Walle, 1997). In addition, generally qualitative research focuses on relatively small samples which are purposefully selected (Patton, 2002).

Firstly, to achieve comprehensive background knowledge, identify data sources, and collect and analyse the available literature, a secondary data collection was conducted. This was followed by fieldwork focusing on primary data collection through a questionnaire-based survey. The fieldwork was carried out on Niue Island where the VFR travellers were assumed to be easiest to identify at the time of their departure. The fieldwork in Niue incorporated semi-structured and non-structured interviews. The participants in those interviews were selected from local people, government officials and tourism operators. Fieldwork and observation as an important characteristic of a case study were incorporated in the design of this study. Furthermore, fieldwork and observation require personal participation in the activities to understand better the participants' responses and gain deeper insight of the topic (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The fieldwork in this study included taking field notes, photographs, some videos, visiting cultural events, and interacting with the local communities and community life. Further fieldwork was carried out in Auckland and information gathered through semi-structured interviews from selected VFR travellers who had recently visited Niue and at the time of filling out the survey form voluntarily offered to be interviewed. This produced 11 formal semi-structured interviews with people aged between 40-65 and evenly distributed between females and males. Furthermore, 33 non-formal interviews such as personal interactions, conversations with VFR travellers and people from the local communities were conducted during the research period in Niue.

The semi structured interviews, based on an interview guide, were conducted to get in-depth knowledge from local people about their perception of VFR and from VFR tourists about their experiences and motivation to travel. The interview guide included introductory questions to 'melt the ice' to make the interviewee feel

comfortable to answer further questions. The interview questions followed from the broad questions narrowing to specific, research related questions. The interview guide took into account any potential relevant language issue and it was designed to elicit more details as well as to be flexible to follow the interviewee's direction of information provision.

1.5 Research Environment

1.5.1 Niue Island and its Climate

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Figure 1. Map of Oceania - Niue. [Map]. Source: retrieved from <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/oceania/nu.htm>

Located in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean (*Figure 1*), a long distance from any large landmass and in isolation from the world, Niue is the smallest politically independent country. It has only a small landmass, which is better described as a 'rock-mass', of raised coral; therefore in the modern era it has been titled as the 'rock of Polynesia'. It consists mainly of limestone, has no surface water, lakes, rivers or creeks, but countless number of limestone caves and chasms. The entire coastline consists of 26-30 metre cliffs surrounded by 60-100 metre of reef terraces rich with marine life, crystal clear water and swimming holes (*Figure 2*). In the absence of any surface water, lakes, streams or creeks, the water supply is provided from a

freshwater aquifer underneath the island, and the fresh water is pumped to the surface with a series of bores (Internet Niue, 2012). Today nearly all (466 of 477) households are connected to the public water system (Statistics-Niue, 2011).



Figure 2. Cliff and reef - Niue [Photograph]. Source: Author's collection (2012).

Niue has a tropical climate, with a mean daily temperature of 25 °C all year round (Barker, 2000). It has exceptional natural scenery and its elevation is high enough above the ocean not to be significantly affected by sea level rise (Anonymous, 2008). However, there is a potential harm that climate change could cause to the marine life, of the surrounding reef, such as coral bleaching (Brown, 1997). Consequently, any negative impact would affect tourism, and thus the economy, because the natural resources are the main tourism products that Niue has to offer, therefore the consequences of climate changes shouldn't be left out of consideration.

1.5.2 Politics

Niue, as with other Pacific Islands, has been colonised by Europeans and it was a British colony until 1901, when its governance was taken over by New Zealand. It remained a New Zealand dependency until October 1974, when it officially established political independence and became a self-governing nation in a free association with New Zealand (The World Factbook - Niue, 2012). The political independence was formally granted by The Niue Constitution Act 1974 (Niue, MFAT website, 2012) while New Zealand retained responsibility for external affairs and defence (The World Factbook - Niue, 2012) and continued economic support (Barker, 2000). The country is governed by a parliamentary democracy that represents 14 villages (*Figure 3*).

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Figure 3. Detailed map of Niue Island - villages. Source: retrieved from http://www.vidiani.com/maps/maps_of_australia_and_oceania/maps_of_niue/travel_map_of_niue.jpg

The Constitution ensured automatic New Zealand citizenship for all Niueans, with the right to work and reside, while New Zealand also remains responsible for defence and external affairs. The government is based on the Westminster system, with 20 members in the Assembly, who elect the premier every three years. Throughout its democratic history, Niue has had only one political party, the Niue People's Party 1977-2003; and since no political party has been established - was told by local residents.

1.5.3 History of Migration

Niue possesses many unique attributes that differentiate it from the other Pacific Islands and the changing pattern in the population size is a significant factor. According to Tregear (1893), the population at the time of his writing tallied 5,070, with 508 men absent, and Churchill (1908) reported a population of 4,576, recorded by the mission census in 1899, which had further declined to 4,015 by the start of the new century (*Figure 4*).

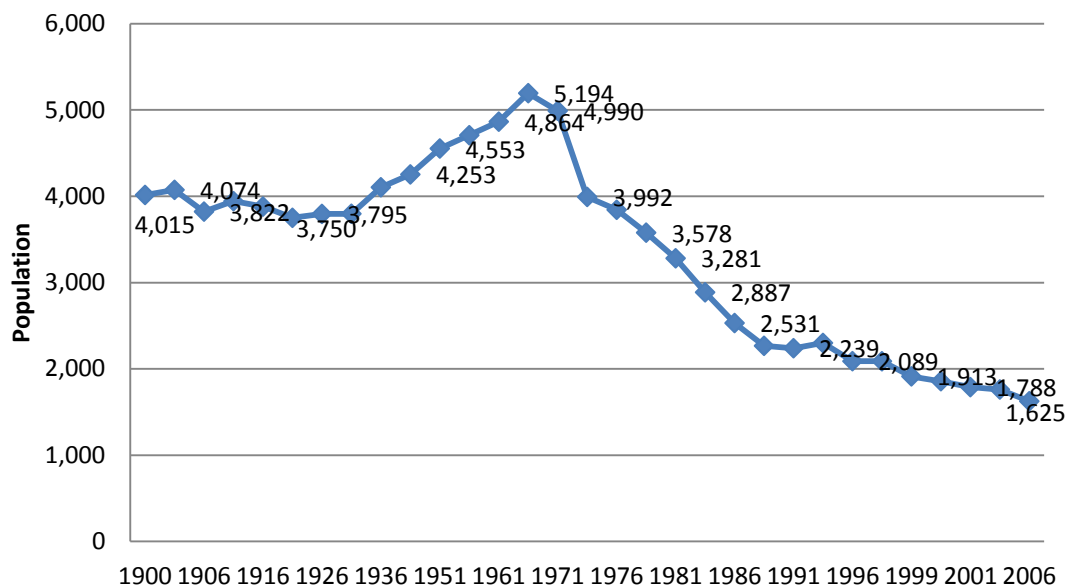


Figure 4. Population Niue 1900-2006. Data sourced from <http://www.spc.int/prism/Country/NU/stats/SocialPopulation/Popstats.htm>

The constant fluctuation in population has a history more than a century old, when Niue became a country with a 'culture of migration' (Connell, 2008). The early tendency of a decline in population seemed to be stamped on Niue for the years following the year 1900, all through until the 1930s, which was followed by thirty years of hope for a growing population. While on other Pacific Islands the increasing populations were causing concerns (Zurick, 1995), the population in Niue - since its peak in 1966 - started to decline and continued with a dramatic fall after 1971. As the direct consequence of independency, the population dramatically decreased between 1971 and 1974 as they emigrated to New Zealand. With the best intention of creating easier access for tourism, with an anticipated boom of the industry and the expected easily earned revenue to the island, the international airport was opened in 1971 (Connell, 2008; de Haas, 2002). Such development is usually the 'take-off' point for island tourism (Wilkinson, 1989) and thus economic development, but instead of the expected tourism boom, an unexpected but not unfamiliar adverse effect resulted in Niue. Compared to the inbound flights, the outbound flights constantly had less empty seats because all were taken by the large number of migrants. Since the opening of the airport, several hundred people have left Niue every year, most of them attracted by the opportunity to take the three hours' direct flight to New Zealand to seek better education, work opportunities, a more secure future and with a hope

for a better life. This has resulted in nearly 25,000 Niueans living off shore; 22,473 in New Zealand (Human Rights Commission, 2012). While the Niuean community in New Zealand has experienced intensive growth year after year, the population in Niue has undergone a steady decline. This tendency has been continued, and is still continuing today, as is shown in the latest population count, where 1,460 people lived in Niue (excluding 147 absentees) on the census days 9-11 September 2011, leaving Niue to retain the status of being one of the smallest self-governing states (Connell, 2008).

Furthermore, it is important to note that in recent decades the ethnic constitution of the Niuean population has shown a changing pattern. According to the latest census in 2011, people of foreign ethnicity make up more than 20% of the total population compared to the Niuean population (including the Niueans with mixed descent) (Statistics-Niue, 2011). Even if the population with a foreign ethnic background remains steady or shows slight increase, their ratio is increasing due to the continuous migration of the Niuean population, which happens mainly because family members are already living overseas, or they move for better education and employment opportunities (Connell, 2008) with the promise of a better future offshore. The growing population with a foreign ethnicity seems to be replacing the slowly disappearing Niuean labour force (*Figure 5*).

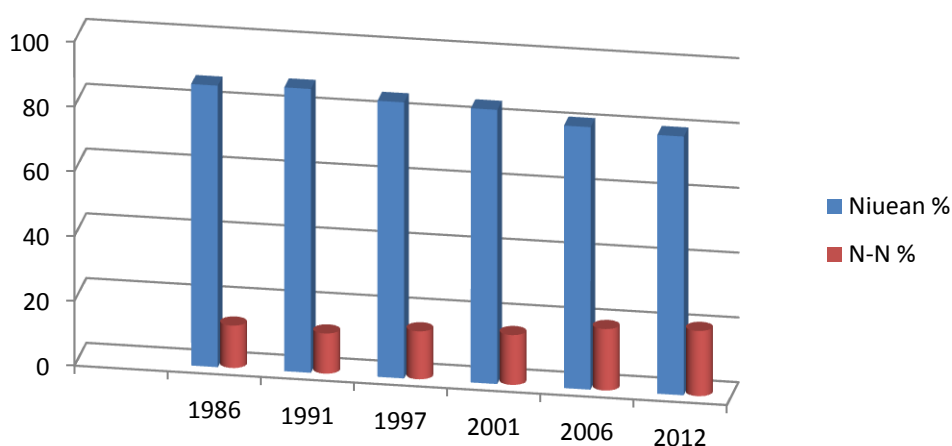


Figure 5. Niuean and Non-Niuean population mix 1986-2012. Data source: Niue population profile based on 1997 census, 1997; Niue population profile based on 2006 census, 2006; Niue Census of population and households 2011, 2011.

Niue, as with many other South Pacific Islands, has traditional land ownership rights. Explicitly, the land must stay within the family and is not allowed to be sold, therefore the western concept of real estate is not known as a practice on the island. While this concept has its historical and traditional value, it is in some degree it might hinder the island from gaining potential revenue and among other factors seems to create barriers for Niueans to return permanently or non Niueans to relocate to Niue which expectedly would not only have some effect on the population numbers, but also would increase the skilled labour force numbers.

1.5.4 Economy

Niue is one of the smallest island states and due to its significant characteristics, such as the absence of any industrial production or manufacturing (Niue, MFAT website, 2012) and the limited agricultural production (which is below the level of the essential self-sufficiency), the country is heavily dependent on imported goods which means that the initial expenditure leaks from the country before it generates income, employment and government revenue (Milne, 1992b).

Niue's economy suffers from the usual disadvantages of SIDS, such as geographic isolation, limited resources and a small population. Export production is likely to reach a tentative level, but is not enough to provide sufficient income to the country (de Haas, 2002). Efforts to increase GDP are continuously made by trying to develop tourism, which has consistently failed (Connell, 2007). The economy is largely dependent on aid, mainly from New Zealand, but also from Australia, the United Nations and Asia as well.

Furthermore, the fragile economy in Niue faces both external and internal difficulties, among them cyclic distraction of natural disasters; thus all disadvantages of SIDS are present. The small-scale agricultural activity is limited to growing bananas, papaya, breadfruit, mangoes, and yams; with marginal exporting of noni, taro, vanilla and honey (Niue, MFAT website, 2012). Despite the isolation, poor airline capacity, limited local attractions, inadequate exposure in distant potential markets and intervening opportunities, expensive access, and the status of tourism seeming to remain as an 'infant industry' (Connell, 2007; Milne, 1992b) on the island,

tourism is still anticipated to be the only viable option for earning foreign exchange sustainably and decreasing the economic dependency on foreign aid.

1.6 Tourism Development in Niue

Recognising the value of tourism development, over time Niue has incorporated tourism into its formal development plans since the early 1970s. Tourism development has constantly fluctuated, precipitated by governmental decisions made in the past such as a short-term ceiling on tourist numbers and other extra-cautious measures taken because of concerns about the negative social impacts of tourism (Connell, 2007), a shortage of available accommodation has significantly influenced the numbers of tourism arrivals. For example, according to Ryan et al. (cited in Connell, 2007), governmental strategic plans in 1993 had a target of 20,000 visitors by the year 2000, which was then reduced in 1994 to 10,000 (de Haas, 2002); than later on the Niue Planning and Development Unit (1998) anticipated a 'tourism boom'. Furthermore, the Strategic Plan for 2005-2015 set the target at 28,000 tourists by 2010 and 50,000 by 2015 (Connell, 2007). These targets seem to be an over-optimistic expectation, compared to the more realistic aim of increasing the number of tourists from 5,000 to 10,000 per year by 2014 (Joint Commitment, 2011).

This anticipated growth entails a significant demand and pressure on the hosting destination in terms of services and infrastructure, although it necessarily could bring improvement and development in those and all the sectors involved. As Scheyvens and Momsen (2008) argue tourism development by itself will not solve poverty, and a broad approach that values social and environmental sustainability and economic development is also necessary. Correspondingly, it has been highlighted that destinations specialising in the promotion of VFR tourism need not face those physical environment dilemmas that confront areas promoting other tourism types with regard to the concepts of carrying capacity and environmental regulations (Asiedu, 2008). Evidently, locations with an enhanced quality of environment will enjoy increasing competitive advantage (Farrell & Twinning-Ward, 2005).

Since tourism became a popular industry worldwide for earning foreign exchange, tourism development in some form has been frequently integrated in Niue's

development plans. It has been incorporated from the time of the first *National Development Plan* (NDP) for 1980-85, then in the *Niue Concerted Action Plan* (NCAP) for 1988-1990, and in the *Niue National Strategic Plan* (NNSP) 2009-2013 until the latest, the *Joint Commitment between New Zealand and Niue 2011-2014*. Tourism has been recognised as the best, maybe the sole opportunity for Niue to achieve sustainable economic development and it is expected to flourish, based on the attractions that the unique environment of Niue has to offer. Undoubtedly, Niue possesses a unique and pristine environment, that can attract tourists, such as the caves and chasms: namely Togo, Matapa Chasm, Avaiki Caves, Talava Arches, and many more along the coastline; most of them just a short walk from the road or the parking sites (*Figure 6*).



Figure 6. Variety of caves and chasms. Avaiki caves (left top), Matapa chasm (right top), Palaha caves (both bottom). [Photograph] Source: Author's collection (2012).

Numerous sea-tracks can lead to either a cave or a chasm, or purely to the reef. There are swimming holes suitable for snorkelling as well, to explore the rich marine life. Furthermore, Niue is only one of three countries where tourists can swim with whales in their own habitat.

In the past, experiencing the natural beauty doesn't seem to have been enough to promote tourism in Niue to desired levels, therefore tourism-focused development

programmes, such as the *Halavaka ke he Monuina Arrangement, 2004* (HKHMA) and the latest agreement, *Joint commitment between New Zealand and Niue 2011-2014*, supported by significant aid in 2011 (M\$18.4) from New Zealand, gives the island a new hope and chance to raise tourism to a level that would provide sustainable and sufficient income. According to Niue Statistics (2012), the number of tourists grew until 2009, where the visitors' numbers reached 6,380, then slightly decreased in 2010 to 6,214 and further declined in 2011 to 6,094.

1.7 VFR in Niue

Where else could VFR be expected to have a significant influence, other than in a country which has more than a fifteen-fold of its population residing overseas? Despite emigration being a continuous phenomenon in Niue, the importance of cultural preservation has been recognised (Taoga Niue, 2013), due to the fact that the language, local culture, and skills to make art crafts such as carvings and weavings are slowly fading away. According to the available data, the numbers of VFR travellers are declining (*Figure 7*).

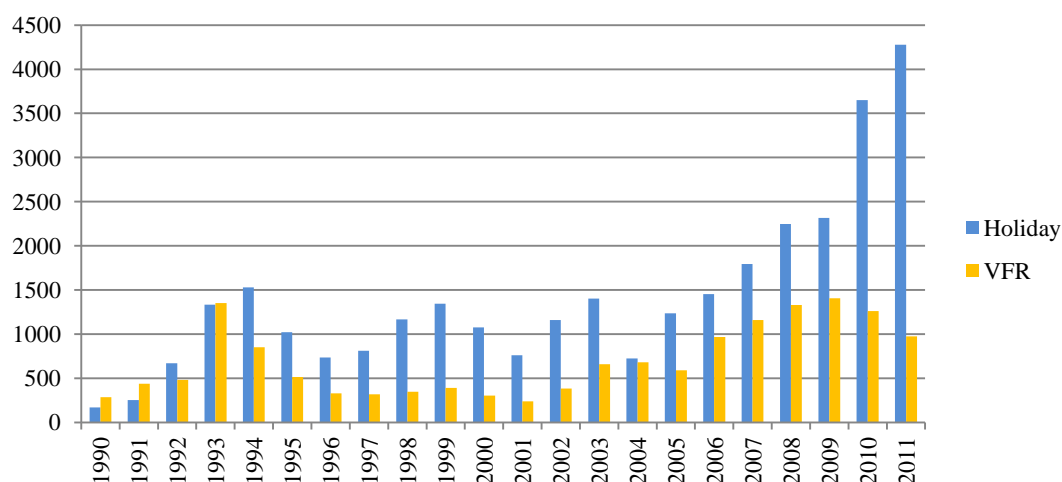


Figure 7. Holiday makers and VFR travellers - Niue 1990-2011. Source: Statistics Niue, 2012.

Furthermore, according to more recent data, as indicated by travellers on the arrival card as purpose of visiting Niue, in the first quarter of 2012, 32% of the total visitors were VFR (n=211), although in the second quarter VFR visitor numbers increased to 249 (Statistics Niue, 2012). Due to the increase in the numbers of leisure tourists to Niue, explains that VFR tourists expressed as a percentage of total numbers of

visitors still show a declining tendency. Concerns should be raised about the rather static nature of VFR tourism in Niue.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters: the introduction including the section of research environment, review of relevant literature, methodology, findings and discussions part one and part two, and conclusion. The first chapter introduces the VFR phenomenon related to Niue, the research problem and the questions it has generated, the purpose, the aim and the design of the study. This chapter also includes a section that provides a detailed overview about the research environment and basic information about Niue. It is based partially on the researcher's fieldwork observations and reveals detailed information about Niue, its climate, politics, history of migration, economy, language, culture, religion, tourism and VFR tourism to describe the holistic environment as best as possible.

The second chapter is a comprehensive literature review that covers a diverse range of literature related to the topic. Niue being a typical (1) Migration, Remittances and Bureaucracy (MIRAB) economy, therefore it deserves research and understanding. The literature review continues to include information about (2) tourism, diasporas, transnationalism and cultural, social identity in tourism. In addition, a literature review was carried out to gather a general overview of (3) VFR tourism itself. To achieve a clearer understanding and provide answers to the research question, literature was reviewed in relation of (4) tourism and sustainability.

Chapter three presents the research methodology used to explore the nature and role of VFR in Niue. This chapter explores research design, introduces the research target participants, and explains the data collection and data analysis methods. Furthermore, it also discusses the ethical issues related to this research. The chapter ends with a review of the research limitations and implications.

Chapter four and five presents the research findings and a discussion of those findings. The chapter also encompasses the results of field research. It provides a detailed presentation of the survey findings integrated tables and graphs, and confirmed or disconfirmed theories according to the evidence derived from the

interviews. Survey responses are combined with interview responses and previous findings, and are used to pinpoint issues or similarities between the data.

Chapter six is a concluding chapter that presents a summary of the combined findings, connecting the research to prior studies and theories presented in the literature review. This chapter also includes a summary of findings in conjunction with answering the research questions and incorporates recommendations and the research limitations.

Chapter 2: Literature review

In this chapter, in order to provide background knowledge of the topic, a broad literature review is encompassed in several sections. The complexity of the topic opened up a vast spectrum of material. Thorough research was carried out by studying articles, books, web sites, and written and non-written materials such as photographs and listening to stories to gather information about tourism in general, sustainable development and sustainable tourism development, VFR tourism, the South Pacific region and MIRAB, cultural preservation, and Niue Island and its history. The literature review was expanded to include further readings associated with climate change, and diverse contemporary articles to familiarise and keep up with the past and present life in Niue and investigate the role and the nature of VFR tourism in it.

At present most tourism literature refers to the fact that the tourism industry has been long recognised in the global economy as the most dominantly growing, and also frequently stated, as the leading industry in the world (Hunter, 1995; Sharpley, 2009; Wall, 1997). A significant number of journals, case studies and other academic literature refer to the development and significant growth of tourism in the last century and emphasise its continuous expansion in the new millennium.

2.1 MIRAB Economy

South Pacific SIDS economies in isolation suffer considerable economic disadvantages that make them struggle to maintain economic development (Tisdell, 2006). The distance from the world market creates very high costs in the transportation of goods. Furthermore, being situated on the edge of the market where there is a lack of competition in international transport and shipping services, transportation services are often monopolised, consequently high charges may apply to such transport. According to Tisdell (2006) nearly all Pacific Island countries have higher import levels compared to their export activities. Sustaining the economy in those islands is sourced in different ways, such as remittances from family members living and working offshore, rent incomes, tourism and overseas aid from western economies. Small island nations of the South Pacific have acquired a trademark of

being a traditionally high aid-receiving region over the last several decades. These type of economies, as theorised by Bertram and Watters (cited in Bertram, 2009) are known as the MIRAB. This acronym stands for the key attributes these economies rely on, as in overseas migration (MI) that in exchange generates remittances (R) to the families left behind; and receiving foreign aid (A) that supports their government bureaucracies (B). This model is based on the Pacific experience (McElroy & Parry, 2010), where a selection of countries share the attributes of a common heritage of colonial welfarism and the exclusive right to easier immigration to work and live in New Zealand. While the South Pacific struggled through decades with MIRAB economies, other parts of the world cashed in on the booming phenomenon of the tourism industry. Those economies were modelled by Baldacchino (2006) as the 'PROFIT model', which was based on North Atlantic experiences. Other tourism manifesting SIDS in the Caribbean were modelled by McElroy (2006) as Small Island Tourist Economies (SITE). These models have been developed following decades of experience of engaged researchers in the topic, who have been studying and analyzing the models in practice, where the available information hasn't been hindered by insufficiently long time-series and gaps in the coverage of economic data (Pavlov & Sugden, 2006). Unfortunately, because of these hinderances, Niue has been omitted from their research, although it could reveal important information, because their research has been conducted to examine the aid-growth relationships in Pacific Island countries. Pavlov and Sugden's (2006) study identified a positive relationship between aid and growth, but it also has been recognised that it is subject to decreasing returns.

In addition, the possibility of so called Dutch disease style effects has been identified by Bertram (2009) that can be seen as a harmful consequence of the sudden inflow of high levels of aid and remittances. In particular, according to the MIRAB model, large aid inflow and high remittances might cause sudden growth with adverse consequences for international competitiveness and economic structure (Laplagne, Treadgold & Baldry, 2001).

Furthermore, there is a concern that Pacific Island countries which are dependent on remittances of migrants endure foreign exchange shortages and declining living

standards as remittance levels fall due to lower migration rates and the belief that migrants' willingness to remit drops over time (Brown R. P., 1997). However, as Brown's study demonstrates, there is much less cause for pessimism and this needs to be addressed concerning consistency of remittance levels. Firstly, as the remittance level lowers, the need for a new wave of migration develops. Secondly, the migrants' motivations are based on self interest, asset accumulation and investment in their country of origin (Brown & Ahlburg, 1999). On the positive side, they also point out, migration has reduced unemployment in island states and remittances have contributed to higher living standards; however countries closely related with increased emigration have experienced a growing dependence on the return flows of remittances. MacPherson (1999) confirms that remittances are part of, and partly constitutive of, the evolving, diverse range of various diasporas. Therefore, Marsters, Lewis and Friesen (2006) emphasise the importance of understanding remittances in MIRAB in terms of the social, cultural and economic aspects, because while migration and remittances are only one set of flows at the macroeconomic level, they are central to the model at microeconomic level. Academic writings suggest remittances vary in their importance at different times and at different places (Macpherson, 1999).

Niue annually receives millions of dollars of aid from New Zealand (de Haas, 2002) and from other countries and organisations, to supplement its economy. After a decade, immense inflows of aid led to the growth of an uncontrolled bureaucracy and extensive wage labour with security of income (Barker, 2000). The idea of tourism development ought to have been served by the opening of the international airport, but instead of booming tourism as a result, Niue experienced an excessive outflow of migrants (Statistics Niue website, 2012), due to easier travel and the immigrational priority rights to New Zealand. Studies show that, as early as the late 1970s, among the Polynesian groups in New Zealand, Niueans were the least likely to send remittances, due to the perception of permanent residency in New Zealand (Connell, 2008). Furthermore, it is noted that cash remittances were usually only sent on request, since the remaining islanders were assumed as having generous incomes through government salaries and secure income (Connell, 2008). This led to an adverse scenario, where remittance flows turned in the opposite direction and started

to stream from Niue to the migrant family members in New Zealand (Barker, 2000). Unlike other small island states, Niue became a 'government island' that is more likely to be a MIAB (Migration, Aid and Bureaucracy) economy (Connell, 2008), greatly depending on international aid which ensures economic stability as long as it is received. Therefore, expectedly, the second wave of the worldwide recession could highly influence the volume of aid that Niue would receive in the coming years.

2.2 Diasporas, Transnationalism and Cultural Identity in Tourism

The relationship between immigration and tourism became widely acknowledged, with families and their children being identified as diasporas, but studies in both fields - tourism and diasporas - have avoided integrating with each other in the academic literature as a subject matter (Coles & Timothy, 2004). Coles and Timothy have also argued, although 'diasporas' as a word has a significant historical lineage, because of the new forms of travel in the 21st century, the tourism and migration stimulated by globalisation has supported the notion of its intrinsic reproduction. This idea underpins the concept that migration and tourism are closely related, in the way that tourism can often lead to permanent migration (Jackson, 1990) and migration generates tourism. According to Butler (2003), the word 'diasporas' was used in the meaning of dispersion of the Jews from Palestine, although its origin can be traced back to the Greek word for 'dispersion' (Coles & Timothy, 2004). They also conceptualized it as:

"Diasporas are groups of people scattered across the world but drawn together as a community by their actual (and in some cases perceived or imagined) common bonds of ethnicity, culture, religion, national identity and, sometimes, race. (p. 3).

Furthermore, as discussed by Coles and Timothy (2004), the diasporas' identities are complicated and have a complex combination of ethnicity, religion and ancestry. Davis (2000) has declared identity as a problem because of the related philosophical and ethical obligations. In addition he stated, personal and social identities are looked on as issues because of the "destabilizing and uprooting social forces of modern life" (p. 1). Nevertheless, the importance of racial and ethnic identities in modern societies shouldn't be neglected. As Nagel (2000) has emphasised, the social assimilation of

second, third and subsequent generations in ethnic families can be identified in language loss, and decline in traditional cultural and religious practices. Therefore diasporas' travel to their country of origin could play an important role in maintaining not only personal identity but cultural, social, ethnic or religious identities. In addition, Gershon (2007) has reiterated the crucial role of families and their transnational relationships in sustaining diasporas, which is particularly applicable to the Pacific Rim diasporas because the Pacific is not only the sea of islands but has been long known as the sea of families. Gershon (2007) has further argued that culturally specific traditions are how families circulate knowledge and resources, which makes families and diasporas intertwined to such a scale where diasporas cannot exist through generations without families sustaining them. Macpherson and Macpherson (2009) emphasise that strong family ties are important, for example, in the Samoan community, which their society is based on. They illustrate the Samoan life and discuss the effect of migration, technology and global forces on the evolution and transformation of the traditional way of living with its challenges to maintain the core cultural identity in Samoa. Furthermore, within the diasporas, ties are also forming and creating ethnic groups such as 'Pacific Islander' or 'Polynesian' (Morton Lee, 2004) that might act not only as an ethnic, but also as a cultural identifier.

Academics agree that culture is evolving, moving, adapting and changing (Hopper, 2007), which is evidence of the significant role of tourism in culture formation, because travel is not limited to human movement; it is carried by the motion of ideas, ideologies, images, sounds and symbols that shape the culture and keep it in movement. This dynamic nature of culture seems to highlight the crucial role of diaspora tourism, that is those tourists are most likely to be familiar with the original traditions in their home country and travel to reunite with - or either travel to seek for - their cultural identity, something that has been missing from their life. In fact, not every migration happens voluntarily (Lynch, 1972); there can be people who were not consulted such as children, elderly people, and other dependent individuals, followed by the second or third generation diasporas. With rapidly evolving technology, increased mobility and easier travel this happens at a faster pace and puts great challenges on identity preservation, recognition of identity and identity-

formation. These raise the questions not only about how to manage cultural preservation in an evolving culture, but also how to create and maintain a stable cultural identity in it (Hopper, 2007).

According to Duval (2004) the relationships between the diasporas and their external homeland incorporate and revolve around multiple identity structures, where individuals may identify themselves with more than one ethnic group, nationality or social consciousness. In order to better understand, the relationships between diasporas, migration, place and identity could also be observed through the concept of transnationalism. Return visits, identified as a 'transnational exercise' (Duval, 2004) have shown evidence of strengthening, restating and consolidating identities and social relationships between diasporas and their 'second' homeland, nestled by tourism occurrences. By doing this, in some cases a return visit represents the physical connection between diasporas and the external homeland, while transnationalism could be used as a conceptual framework that emphasises such links as socially important exercises.

Transnationalism as a cultural concept also allows for an understanding of how multiple identities function. Duval (2004) concludes that individuals of diaspora groups may perform a return visit as a transnational exercise to maintain identity structures and such a movement restores, restates and solidifies social networks and the cultural values and means transmitted by individuals.

2.3 Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)

While tourism itself could be the largest migratory power in human history (King, 1994), the visiting friends and relatives (VFR) is a form of tourism that is depicted as being the most closely related with migration patterns (Jackson, 1990; Hu & Morrison, 2002; Lehto, Morrison and O'Leary, 2001; Seaton & Palmer, 1997; Shani & Uriely, 2011; Uriely, 2010) because the stronger the tradition of immigration of a country, the larger the VFR market (Müri & Sägeser, 2003).

Nearly all VFR-related academic writings cite Jackson (1990) as a pioneer researcher in this worldwide phenomenon who recognised the lack of knowledge about VFR tourism. One of the main points of his findings was that VFR is closely related to the

history and evolution of international immigration patterns that in recent years became more permanent in nature. Therefore, VFR also can be looked equally upon as a cause and effect of this form of migration. Conclusively, according to Jackson (1990), changing patterns in such immigration will generate a permanent pattern of changes in the nature of VFR travel that would suggest a permanent source of tourism for the future. His study expanded to three particularly prominent countries that possess the most significant international immigration history: Canada, Australia and New Zealand; but these conclusions seem to be valid in most locations.

In most cases, immigrants always remain emotionally attached to their country of origin which makes them frequently visit their home country (King & Gamage, 1994), but also leads to their relatives visiting them in their new home. Consequently, migrants generate a two-way stream of tourists (Jackson, 1990). Travellers who are visiting their country of origin have been identified by Scheyvens (2007) as being part of 'diaspora tourism' and labelled by Duval (2003) as making a 'return visit', while King (1994) preferred the term 'ethnic tourism'. Although all those terms are valid, each of them carries slight differences in terms of understanding the phenomenon of VFR tourism. Fundamentally, Backer (2012) preferred to use 'VFR travel'; as a term to identify the segment of visiting friends and relatives. Tourism itself is a complex industry; there have been many different attempts to define its components and identify accepted forms of that tourism and tourists, therefore - in some definitions - VFR 'travellers' may not qualify as VFR 'tourists'. However, using the idiom of VFR travel might provide better lucidity in terms of identifying this segment, which will be adopted in the rest of this work.

It has also been noted, in a holistic view, that people who are visiting their country of origin are not only a consequence of immigration, but are also a migratory power and can be a trigger for a new wave of such movement (Potter, 2005) which can be seen in two ways. Firstly, which is a common occurrence, it can be experienced among friends or relatives who are visiting a destination with tourist status as an immediate phase prior to permanent migration (Shani, 2011), because through their visit and by their experiences they could be influenced in their decision to immigrate. Secondly, the immigrant themselves could also evaluate his/her own decision (Duval, 2003)

and immigrate back to their home country which could be triggered by a diverse range of reasons, for example a sense of belonging, identification with the homeland (King, 1994), re-establishing old ties and reaffirming blood ties (Asiedu, 2005, 2008), and changes and transformations over time in the native country (Duval, 2003). Therefore, VFR is not only a consequence but also a trigger of immigration (Shani, 2011).

VFR travel has always been an important social activity, therefore it is not only most likely to be the oldest form of travel (Backer, 2011) but also the largest form of tourism worldwide, and it is less likely to be influenced by the destination's image and political instability problems (Asiedu, 2008). VFR travel was assumed to happen 'naturally' (Seaton & Palmer, 1997), therefore it didn't draw attention from destination marketers, neither from tourism organisations nor academic researchers. This phenomenon suffered historical ignorance and underestimation which has been highlighted through previous research (see, for example Jackson, 1990; King, 1996; McKercher, 1994; Seaton, 1994; Seaton & Palmer, 1997). Three perceived reasons for the neglect of the VFR market segment have been noted by Seaton & Palmer (1997) including: firstly, VFR travellers were perceived as an insignificant spending group with low economic impact on the hosting destination; secondly, this segment can not be influenced by tourism planners and thirdly it can also not be attracted by marketing. Expanding on this notion, Backer (2009) developed an eight point 'excuse list' of what could be the rationale behind the multi-sector negligence of VFR. Those are: lack of conceptual definitions; lack of data reliability; difficulties of measurement; lack of lobbying; perception of minor economic impact on the destination; poor representation in textbooks; perceived difficulties to influence VFR travellers decision makings; and according to Scheyvens (2007), VFR is the 'poor cousin' and not 'sexy' enough.

To find out the reasons for the multi-sector negligence towards VFR travel, a large platform for academic researchers has opened up. The assumption that VFR travellers are not using the commercial accommodation and tourism facilities which the holiday makers use, and derives the highest revenue for the host country's economy, opened a wide platform for debate amongst academics. Nearly all research and

studies related to VFR travel and its economic impact recognise that the value and the size of VFR travel is underestimated (Backer, 2007) and VFR travellers have a significant share in using commercial accommodation (Backer, 2010; Lee, Morrison, Lehto, Webb & Reid, 2005; Lehto et al., 2001). A study by Moscardo, Pearce, Morrison, Green and O'Leary, (2000) confirmed that VFR travellers have a significant economic impact on commercial tourism operations by using commercial accommodation. Also a study by Morrison, Hsieh and O'Leary (1995), showed the majority of VFR travellers in Queensland chose commercial accommodation during their stay and frequently ate at restaurants, visited casinos and nightclubs, and went to bars or hotels for a drink. Lockyer and Ryan (2007) study highlighted that VFR travellers eat at food outlets, visit bars and nightclubs, and share the same tourist attractions as other segments of tourism and participating in tourism activities.

Moreover, there is also a misconception that VFR travel cannot be stimulated (Morrison, Woods, Pearce, Moscardo, & Sung, 2000) or influenced by marketing campaigns (Seaton & Palmer, 1997), which might be a provision for the multisectoral neglect. It is also argued by Morrison and O'Leary (1995) that VFR is poorly documented, under-researched and the lack of data availability causes difficulties in studying this segment. Since VFR travellers do not necessarily assess themselves as such and are often considered as general holidaymakers or vacationers, their numbers could be often understated. Nevertheless, in the last decades the number of academic writings and scholarly articles show a growing tendency of increased interest in the topic, although the complexity of this type of tourism will provide a research platform for a long time to come to discover - if it is ever possible - the real value of VFR as a market segment of tourism.

A longitudinal research study was conducted by Seaton and Palmer (1997) to seek an understanding of VFR travellers behaviour in the United Kingdom. Their findings indicate that VFR is an important segment in several sectors such as transportation, services and retail. Their research shows a number of VFR travellers also use commercial accommodation at their destination. A study by Morrison et al. (1995) challenged the assumption of VFR being a homogeneous market and they carried out a segmentation by past holiday activity participation among VFR travellers. The

findings of their research are compatible with those of Jackson (1990) and also Seaton and Palmer (1997), as VFR travellers have been found in each of those studies to make significant use of the same tourism facilities and attractions as other segments of tourism.

Furthermore, VFR is commonly characterised solely in terms of accommodation rather than motivation or behaviour, unlike other forms of tourism (King, 1994) which also adds to the difficulties of understanding this phenomenon. Thus, Morrison et al. (1995) argued that to achieve a better understanding of VFR travel, it should be viewed as a 'trip activity' rather than a 'trip purpose'. Moscardo et al. (2000) explored the association between VFR travel forms and mainstream tourism and identified that VFR can be a primary motive or part of activities and visiting local attractions. In saying that, if VFR was the primary motive of travel it could include, for example, participating in other activities during the time of visiting a relative, but a visit to a relative can also be a sub activity to a business trip or an extension to a holiday trip.

A study was carried out by Hu and Morrison (2002) to understand the VFR segment's travel behaviours from a marketing perspective in the United States of America (USA). Their study focused on analysing the differences between VFR and non-VFR travellers from their socio-demographic and trip characteristic aspects. Their findings show that when comparing British and US study findings, there are socio-demographic differences between VFR and non-VFR travellers in respect of age, education and household income. Among US domestic travellers, VFR travellers were proportionally more evenly distributed between age groups, compared to the non VFR travellers. The findings by Hu and Morrison (2002) also show that less educated people had a higher tendency to choose VFR travel, possibly because a VFR travel is a more affordable long-distance travel option for those who probably also have lower income. Moreover, there are also different trip characteristics possessed by VFR travellers (Asiedu, 2008; Hu & Morrison, 2002; Lehto et al., 2001; Moscardo et al., 2000). For instance, Hu and Morrison (2002) discuss the different tripographic characteristics of single and multi-destination VFR trips and recognise that most multi-destination VFR trips are a 'hybrid type',

integrating several purposes within one trip. However VFR travel is a multifaceted phenomenon (Hu & Morrison, 2002), therefore it is difficult to integrate the research findings (Moscardo et al., 2000).

An international analysis has been carried out by Morrison, Woods, Pearce, Moscardo and Sung (2000), researching four large countries with high volumes of VFR: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA. Other international studies considered in this review (but not reviewed here in detail) from related publications to the ones reviewed here included research into the economic benefits and contributions of VFR travel to the destinations in France by Lee et al. (2005); in Ghana by Asiedu (2008); in Switzerland by Müri and Sägger (2003) as well as studies researching VFR expenditures at destinations in the USA by Lehto et al. (2001); and in Australia by Backer (2008).

Moscardo et al. (2000) developed a typology for better understanding the phenomenon of VFR travel. They suggest that VFR often is not a single reason for travel, but rather involves a combination of motives, which consequently lead to participation in a variety of activities and tourist attractions at the destination. Therefore, they emphasise, the VFR travellers cannot be viewed as a homogeneous market. It is thus important to comprehend that the motivations and travel behaviours of VFR travellers differ within this segment and the 'one size fits all' approach is not suitable (Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele & Beaumont, 2009). Moscardo et al. (2000) utilised a five point segmentation of VFR in their research and highlighted the importance of these variables in analysing the VFR market segment. Namely, they concluded there are characteristic differences between: the VFR activity and travel type or motives; domestic and international travel; short distance and long distance travel; accommodation choice (accommodated by friends or relatives or non-accommodated by friends and relatives) and focus of the visit. Due to these segments' different marketing needs and behavioural differences, they suggest making a distinction between visiting friends (VF), visiting relatives (VR) and visiting friends and visiting relatives (VFVR).

The VFR segmentation research approach developed by Moscardo et al. (2000) has been considered in several studies in the years following their work (Hu & Morrison,

2002; Lee et al., 2005; Lehto et al., 2001; Lockyer & Ryan, 2007). Thorough research and analyses to describe the differences between the characteristics, profiles and use of industries between VFR and non-VFR travellers has been conducted by Backer (2009) and the importance of the segmentation from the marketing point of view has been also emphasised in her later academic writings. A recent study by Pearce (2012) discusses a new segment of visiting home and familiar places, which he identifies as being linked but conceptually independent from VFR. Uriely (2010) defines "VFR tourism as a complex and multidimensional experience that may involve both feelings of 'home' as well as a sense of being 'away' (p. 855).

Jackson (1990) also argues that VFR travellers, compared to international travellers, may travel shorter distances and consequently, there is an increase of importance of the geographical proximity to the country of destination, but VFR travel is also recognised as 'seasonal compensation' (Asiedu, 2008) because it is more evenly distributed throughout the year. In respect to the purpose of a VFR trip, they are usually less expensive than with other forms of travel purposes, which could be due to the cost of the nominated accommodation (Thrane & Farstad, 2011), but at the destination VFR travellers consume more locally produced goods and make more use of local services compared to main stream tourism (Asiedu, 2008). Cave, Ryan and Panakera (2003) emphasise the importance of tourism attractions in social functions, where VFR travel shows more community involvement, and participation in local events and activities (Morrison et al., 2000). Therefore VFR travel expenditure is not only more direct and localised with less economic leakage (Backer, 2010) but there is less investment need to cater for (Morrison et al., 2000) and consequently, there is less stress on infrastructure (Jackson, 1990) and the net benefits to the domestic economy as a whole are more direct. Significant differences in the usage of energy and the fresh water supply has been reported by Becken et al. (cited in Scheyvens, 2007), according to those studies, international tourists in New Zealand use four times more energy than domestic tourists.

The socio-cultural aspects of VFR travel have been researched by the likes of Duval (2001) in the context of returning visitors from Toronto, Canada in the Eastern Caribbean Islands, and in another study by Scheyvens (2007) in Samoa; in his

research about VFR travel in Ghana, Asiedu (2008) emphasises that the VFR traveller is less likely to have socio-cultural conflict between host and visitor, because they are already familiar with the local traditions. However, there were only a limited number of studies that detected which would had the primary or peripheral aim of researching VFR travel volumes in the Pacific, and its impact and influence on the Small Island Development State (SIDS) economy and cultural preservation, although Hall and Duval (2004) highlight the importance of family ties in the travel patterns among the Pacific Islands population.

Socio-cultural influence is unavoidable in tourism interactions, therefore it is also important that ethnic communities safeguard their intellectual and cultural heritage through cultural tourism (Cave, Ryan, & Panakera, 2007). Cave et al. (2007) highlight the importance of culture, as it is central to the understanding of human relationships and it acknowledges the fact that members of different cultural backgrounds have distinctive systems of how they perceive and organize the world around them. In their study Cave et al. (2007) also emphasise the economic benefit, job creation, education and skill development, community wealth creation, development of cultural capital, and cultural or heritage preservation as important motivations clusters in the cultural tourism industry. In addition, Scheyvens (2007) says, VFR travel revitalizes social and cultural ties between extended family and community groups.

Brown and Cave (2010) argue that, alongside cultural preservation, cultures continue to evolve and despite the cultural isolation in the case of island states, there is a higher possibility of becoming vulnerable to changes by increasing tourism. Those changes depend upon the shared values, positive and negative attitudes and prior experiences of different cultures. In particular, third world societies are emphasising the economic development of tourism and ignoring the importance of cultural awareness among the local population, and neglecting the development of social values (Francis-Lindsay, 2006). This could lead to an assumption that third world societies tend to perceive tourism as solely a means of obtaining foreign exchange. Along these lines, McNulty and Wafer (1990) reiterate the view of tourism as a vehicle for economic development in declining economies and stimulative in

developing regions. However, Burns (1999) states that tourism should never be viewed purely as a 'business' that produces revenue for individuals and/or countries, but it must be considered as part of an effort to understand the complexities, social interactions, regulations, traditions, attitudes towards unfamiliar behaviours, belief systems and a mass of other elements that create culture.

Nevertheless, the significance of VFR travel seems to be underestimated (Jackson, 1990), inadequately understood (Morrison et al., 2000), greatly ignored by marketing organisations (Backer, 2008; Morrison & O'Leary, 1995) and under-researched by academics (Seaton & Palmer, 1997). Hence, there are not enough empirical studies which would reveal the true value of international VFR travel in any destination (Lee, et al., 2005; Morrison et al., 2000). Although, it is important for ethnic communities to safeguard their intellectual and cultural heritage through cultural tourism (Cave et al., 2007), studies were rarely found which discuss or research the role of VFR travel in cultural preservation and its impact on economic sustainability or sustainable development in the Pacific, or specifically in the case of Niue. Up to this point, the true value of VFR travel did not achieve academic attention in Niue as a research topic, although the volume of the offshore residing Niuean population and consequently, the volume of potential travellers, is a well known issue.

2.4 Tourism and Sustainability

The phenomenon of the last few decades, referred to as 'sustainable tourism', and more accurately expressed as 'sustainable development of tourism', has brought to the surface a new platform and large area for debate among academics. Hardy, Beeton and Pearson (2002) argue that the concept of sustainable development has been triggered by the publication of literature in the tourism industry prior to the official birth of the concept. Nevertheless, by the last decade of the twentieth century the importance of sustainable tourism had been recognised (Sharpley & Telfer, 2002) leading to a significant amount of academic literature related to its concept being published. Wall (1997) criticises that despite tourism being acknowledged as one of the largest industries, *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), the most referenced document on sustainable development, does not even mention tourism. Sharpley (2009) argues that the pioneer publication

of the concept of sustainable tourism was *The Green Light: A Guide to Sustainable Tourism* (1991) which led the concept onto the platform from where it attained the spotlight in academic studies and policy and planning processes related to tourism and sustainable tourism development.

The concept of sustainable tourism development has emerged and seems to be an inevitable consequence of the degradation of the natural environment caused by human activities (Müller, 1994); specifically, by not considering the natural and psychological limits; ignoring the complexity of the industry in terms of interacting services; neglecting the time delay in natural reactions and the adaptation period to new situations. According to Müller (1994) the aim of sustainable tourism development is strongly related to the concept of ‘qualitative growth’, which could be described as “any increase in quality of life (i.e., economic health and subjective well-being) which can be achieved with less use of non-renewable resources and less stress on the environment and people” (p.132).

However, the economic importance of tourism and its contribution to the global economy offer sufficient justification to continuously monitor the concept and implementation of sustainable tourism development (Hunter, 1995). In addition, he argues, it should be considered that: tourism directly and indirectly relies on a broad range of resources; tourism is regularly perceived as potentially degrading on the quality of the environment; and the constant attention on ‘environmental issues’ and the need for sustainable tourism development in its term became considered a ‘dominant paradigm’.

Despite the growing number of publications in the last twenty years, there is still an absence of definitions and theoretical underpinning of the concept of sustainable tourism, but it is also lacking in practical strategies which could guide tourism operators in the process of planning and management, argues Sharpley (2009). He also emphasises the lack of adoption of the principles of sustainability and sustainable tourism management amongst individual businesses and the distance between the theory and practice in tourism development. This gap is different in size and form from business to business and location to location, and also depends on many factors, such as political, social, economic, and climate dissimilarities and the

interpretation of the concept at both a local and governmental level. It is also noticeable that the concept of sustainable tourism seems to reach the small scale operators at a faster pace (Sharpley, 2009). Such forms of tourism include eco-tourism, responsible tourism, adventure tourism, green tourism and marine tourism. The fine line between those concepts seems to be indefinable, therefore often misunderstood. It is also argued that those forms of tourism are not guaranteed to be sustainable just because of their title, and the implementation of the concept should be carried to their operational practices. Nevertheless, there are some large operators making steps towards sustainability by implementing environmental and socio-cultural awareness in their development strategies.

According to other views, sustainable development could also be observed in terms of a philosophical approach, a practical approach or a product (Wall, 1997) and it should be perceived as an “evolving complex system” (Farrell & Twinning-Ward, 2005, p. 110) that is still evolving (Clarke, 1997) because it is an ongoing process. Clarke also says, sustainable tourism is not an intrinsic characteristic or type of any present form or situation, but a goal that all tourism operators must strive to achieve. Therefore, it could be tailored to the special characteristics of each environment where the tourism operations occur. Each destination has its own characteristics and those vary from place to place (May, 2002) in size, forms, facilities, services and many other internal and external variables. Tourism involves humans, land and activities in a complex system, therefore sustainable development in tourism can never be standardized.

Nowadays, tourism is widely recognised as a complex, multi-dimensional sector, within which conflicting objectives are involved. Therefore to define its development as a “thorny path” (Müller, 1994., p. 131) might be very close to the practical reality. He suggested conceptualising the sustainable tourism development concept in the form of a ‘magic pentagon’ (*Figure 8*).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.

Figure 8. Müller's 'magic pentagon'. Source: Tourism development and the environment: Beyond sustainability? (Sharpley, 2009)

This conceptualisation fundamentally relies on the equal domination of each objective, where economic health, the well-being of the local population, the satisfaction of the visitors/tourists, the protection of natural resources and the health of the local culture are all in balance. Any inequality within the objectives of the 'magic pentagon' would mean a distortion which would negatively impact on every other factor.

However, the fundamental concepts of sustainable tourism are: to be ecologically sustainable, such as minimising environmental impacts; to be culturally sensitive in regards to tourism imposing minimal impact on the local culture; and to maintain economic viability. This concept implies the 'three pillars' approach: the environmental, the economic and the social dimensions of sustainability (Mundt, 2011) and agrees with the notion that "sustainability remains a prerequisite of tourism development" (Sharpley, 2009, p.58).

In the long term it is in the best interest of the tourism industry to sustain the resources which it depends on (Wall, 1997), which immediately raises the question about the sustainability of those irreplaceable resources. Nevertheless, the supply of human, cultural and natural resources is not limitless, nor is there unlimited demand for the tourism product, therefore careful management of both supply and demand is required (Brown & Cave, 2010). The tourism industry is one, that is mainly

dependent on natural resources (Gössling & Hall, 2006), and the realisation of the irreplacability of those resources should be recognised (Schumacher, 1993).

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2011), the international tourism receipts exceeded US\$900 billion in 2010, compared to the US\$851 billion in 2009, showing a 5% increase. The rapid and advanced technological development in the industries providing goods and services has greatly contributed to this trend of tourism growth. Faster and better transportation options and the rise of new low-price airlines have made travel cheaper for tourists and travellers; moreover accommodation providers compete to offer more and better services with the latest technology for the best comfort for their guests. A diverse range of businesses are selling products and services in the tourism system and within it both the supply and demand can be affected by political, economic, social, cultural and other factors (Sharpley, 2009). Tourism not only has an economic impact on the destination but it interacts with other industries from the location of origin, through the transit region to the destination area and within the surroundings that tourism has been created.

International tourism also contributes significantly to government revenues, such as taxes and fees. Moreover, tourism development is usually accompanied by the improvement of infrastructure, such as roads, telecommunication, airports, and communal services which not only serve the tourists, but improve the well-being of local people and living conditions (Neto, 2002) and the national economic growth.

Furthermore, the tourism industry is not only generating foreign exchange by consuming the products and services, but by doing so it is generating employment opportunities. In many countries tourism has become the largest employment provider (Neto, 2002). This is mostly relevant in the case of small island developing states and third world countries where other sectors are unable to provide enough revenue to the economy to maintain people's well-being and the country moves into a stage where it is largely reliant on the tourism industry. The debate around tourism in developing countries has been widely discussed by Scheyvens (2011a), in particular from the aspect of the tourism contribution towards poverty elimination in third world countries. Despite the trend of growing tourism showing a promising

future for those countries, the heavy reliance on tourism exposes their economy to becoming vulnerable (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008) and sensitive to any unexpected and negative impact on the tourism industry at either an international or regional level. It could be a war and/or political insecurity; for example Fiji's continuous political instability, that influences tourists' choice of destination. It could also include natural disasters, such as the earthquakes that have devastated Christchurch in New Zealand and Japan, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and cyclones.

One of the main areas of the environmental impact of tourism is the demand on natural resources. For example, in the case of a small island state, the tourism pressure is not only on the limited food supply of food, energy and basic essentials, but also on the land, fresh water and marine resources (Neto, 2002). The extensive use of land for example to build a new resort could increase the land prices and destroy the natural landscape, causing deforestation, beach erosion, loss of estuaries and non-reversible damage in the ecological system on the site. In many destinations the rapidly growing tourism industry can place significant pressure on the water supply. This problem is emphasised in SIDS, where the scarcity of fresh water can also have an adverse effect on future tourism development (Scheyvens, 2011b). The rapid growth of coastal and marine tourism also has a significant impact on the environment. There are immediate damages, for example the damages of boat anchors, groundings on a coral reef area (Hall, 2001), pollution and fatal destruction of marine life, which can be noticed promptly. Those impacts and damages could be minimised with well-managed operations (Edgell, 2006), but there are also non-immediate damages, and the consequences of the disturbance on the marine life and the long term impact of activities which cause ecological imbalance are still under-researched and the questions related to these problems are unanswered.

Furthermore, with the growing number of tourists the amount of generated waste and the scale of pollution are significant. This is extremely noticeable in the - also booming - cruise ship industry and the hotels and marinas which are discharging chemicals and sewage into the ocean, which causes damage to the marine ecology and water pollution. Additionally, the used energy and fuel consumption for transport in urban areas significantly contribute to air and noise pollution (Neto, 2002).

Sustainable tourism development also involves consideration of the importance of the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in terms of the livelihood of the local people and creating cultural-consciousness among visitors. Specifically, sustainable tourism involves the idea of minimising impact on the culture and traditions of the local communities. Obvious cultural differences are present between the wealthy tourists from Western countries and people from the local communities, which could be a source of cultural clashes. Therefore the issues around the cultural impact of tourism on the local communities are very complex. Visitors inevitably bring their own culture to the destination (May, 2002), and they might be attracted by the local cultural traditions and in many cases the initiative of their travel is to discover indigenous traditions. Through interaction with the local culture at the destination, tourists display their own beliefs, value system and way of life, which might differ from the local culture. Furthermore, the local traditions might become a tourism product and might lose their original meanings, which could lead the local communities to adopt the visitors' culture to accommodate their demand (Griffin, 2002). However, tourism can also have a positive socio-cultural influence on local traditions and could create a strong compassion towards conservation of their cultural heritage. This positive effect has been experienced for example in some cases of the Australian Aborigine people (Lansing & De Vries, 2007). Due to international pressure spread by tourism, in many areas the indigenous people could regain their land and are actively involved in conservation of the environment, their culture and providing education for the tourists (Lansing & De Vries, 2007).

Tourism, as a multi-activity sector, is one of the industries that is able to provide employment for the low-skilled labour market (Neumayer, 2004) therefore the industry is also the largest employer internationally (Narayan, 2003). According to Bricker (2003), less developed countries usually possess the attributes that make them attractive tourist destinations, primarily 'sea, sand and sun', but also those countries, due to low levels of education, are most likely to have access to low-skilled labour, the presence of great diversity in financial wellbeing, weak and corrupt governance and political instability.

The lack of development strategies and poor management in other sectors should be taken into consideration, because tourism involves products and services from other sectors such as accommodation, food and beverages, souvenirs, art and craft products and many others (Narayan, 2004). Therefore, in comparison to other industries, a well-managed tourism sector could be more ecologically sustainable in the coastal industries (Hall, 2001), which must involve strong planning and management strategies to maintain the good quality of resources (Farrell & Runyan, 1991).

In a general economic view, the growth in production and consumption is considered as the best possible option for the wellbeing of the society (Wall, 1997) however the "growth is an essential feature of life" (Schumacher, 1993, p. 129) view overlooks the importance of qualitative determinations. Furthermore, sustainable development is often criticised as being rather a 'political slogan' and a 'marketing gimmick' (Wall, 1997). Those expressions can be initiated by the imperfect elaboration of the human needs in the context of sustainability.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This literature review discovered important concepts. It has been reported that VFR expenditure is more direct and localised with less economic leakage. Furthermore, it has been revealed VFR travel incorporates more community involvement, use of local events and activities and consumption of more locally produced goods and services. Tourist attractions are utilised by VFR travellers as much as other tourists and VFR tourists also choose commercial accommodation for their stay. In addition, diaspora tourism has a constructive role in building social capital because has the underpinning rationale of individuals gathering and enjoying time with their families, friends, church and community groups which has an important role in the Pacific nations. VFR travellers show less dependency on seasonal factors, so is able to compensate for seasonality because it is more evenly distributed throughout the year. This segment is also less likely to be influenced by image and political instability problems of the destination, and they are familiar with the local and socio-cultural traditions, therefore expectedly would lessen the conflict between host and visitor caused by cultural disparities, thus lessen the cultural impact. Evidently the VFR segment of tourism revitalizes the social and cultural ties between extended family

and community groups. Furthermore, the VFR segment of tourism requires less investment in infrastructure, as VFR tourists consume less energy and fresh water which contributes to the sustainability of tourism and tourism products.

However, the significance of VFR segment of tourism seems to be underestimated (Jackson, 1990), inadequately understood (Morrison et al., 2000), greatly ignored by marketing organisations (Backer, 2008; Morrison & O'Leary, 1995) and under-researched by academics (Seaton & Palmer, 1997). Hence, there are few empirical studies which reveal the true value of the international VFR segment of tourism in any destination (Lee et al., 2005; Morrison et al., 2000). Thus, it is important for ethnic communities to safeguard their intellectual and cultural heritage through diasporic tourism, but there are few studies which discuss or research the role of VFR - diasporic and non-diasporic - in cultural preservation and its impact on their sustainability in the Pacific.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter contains a discussion of the methodological approach and research design applied to examine the aims and objectives of the research. The aim for the chapter is to explain the research methods, instruments and specific processes of data collection and analysis as well as the ethical issues involved. The chapter concludes with a discussion of research limitations and implications.

Tourism as a whole is a complex phenomenon (Przeclawski, 1993) and is heterogeneous (Ren, Pritchard & Morgan, 2010) and within it the VFR segment of tourism furthermore encompasses characteristics that are diverse from those of other forms of tourism (Lehto et al., 2001; Moscardo et al., 2000; Seaton & Palmer, 1997). It involves a diverse range of factors for the academic researcher to identify within this multi-sector industry, thus it seems to be poorly understood and understudied field. Therefore, to use more than one method was deemed to be justified, in order to find out the role and nature of VFR travel in Niue more comprehensively in regards to its contribution to sustainable economic development. In order to provide the reliability and validity of the findings, and furthermore, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation and issues, a wide range of information needed to be gathered. The choice of applying multiple research methods is justified in order to complement and compensate for the weaknesses and strengths of one another. In addition according to Hartman (1988) a combination of different field methods is a powerful heuristic tool. Hence a case-study method was chosen which could accommodate a mixed method approach for research and data analysis.

Furthermore, the research was supported by the principles of Q methodology, because Q methodology can provide useful information in critical tourism research (Stergiou & Airey, 2011). The aim in applying Q methodology is to produce an in-depth interpretation of the patterns of subjective perspectives that exist in a specified situation (Steelman & Maguire, 1999). Furthermore, Q methodology allows the participants to form their opinions in respect of a sample set of incentives: these can be statements or images. As Dewar, Li, and Davis (2008) argue, the objective of Q methodology is to methodically illustrate and compare viewpoints among people, not to determine the distribution of viewpoints within a population. Moreover, Q

methodology does not search for the recognition of relationships between variables; rather among respondents. In addition, as Stergiou and Airey (2011) state, Q methodology relies on methods of impression to discover the subjective meaning or significance items have for respondents and it may open up opportunities for modern tourism researchers to improve the nature and increase the variety of the methodological options for developing tourism knowledge.

3.1 Quantitative Approach

Research methodologies distinguish two primary approaches to data collecting: the quantitative and qualitative methods (Veal, 1997) but also mixed methods of both (Jennings, 2001). A quantitative research process is generally guided by a deductive approach, which often begins with a hypothesis related to the research phenomenon, followed by the gathering and analysis of data to arrive at the research findings which either supports or rejects the hypothesis (Jennings, 2001). The quantitative research process is also objectively constructed (Jennings, 2001) and involves statistical analysis and numerical evidence by gathering a large amount of data to provide statistical strength to the reliability of findings (Veal, 1997). The most frequently used data collection tools in quantitative research are surveys, but quantifiable data can be collected from observations, experiments and also through structured interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.2 Qualitative Approach

In contrast, qualitative research methods generally collect information and aim to acquire in-depth insight into the social reality from and about a relatively small number of people (Veal, 1997) who are purposefully selected (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, qualitative research is commonly chosen in situations where little is known about the subject matter to be analysed (Melkert & Vos, 2010). Qualitative research methodology is the heart of the interpretive social sciences, and possesses an inductive approach to build understanding from the data collection through analysis to arrive at the findings in regards to the researched phenomenon (Jennings, 2001). In qualitative research the most frequently used data collection tools are: in-depth interviews; focus groups; participant observations; analysis of text and

documents; and ethnography (Veal, 1997). Among those tools ethnography holds unique attributes by encompassing a variety of the other methods. Hence ethnography defined by Angrosino (2007) as "the art and science of describing a human group - its institutions, interpersonal behaviours, material productions and beliefs" (p. 14).

A multi-method approach mixes both qualitative and quantitative approaches in different ways and to a different extent (Jennings, 2001) with a belief that it will enhance the validity of findings (Clark, Riley, Wilkie & Wood, 1998).

3.3 Research Design

The purpose of this research was to collect pioneering data and gain a deeper understanding of the nature and the role of the VFR segment of tourism and investigate the extent of its contribution to sustainable economic development in Niue. Therefore a qualitative research methodology intertwined with quantitative data collection was deemed to be appropriate; accordingly, a mixed research method was thus applied in this study. The researcher decided to structure the project in stages and utilise the mixed methods for data collection. The first part of the research was designed to provide a contextual 'snapshot' of VFR tourists to Niue and this part of the research focused on collecting quantitative data through a questionnaire based survey.

The second part was designed to embellish the snapshot by gathering in-depth data by collecting qualitative data through individual semi-structured and non-structured interviews, such as daily conversations with stakeholders. To achieve deeper insights and valuable and reliable data, the adopted conceptual framework was identical to that used by Macpherson and Macpherson (2009), using many conversations with families, friends and the public in general.

3.3.1 Case study

In social sciences one of the most challenging research methods is the use of case study as a research method (Yin, 2009) where the goal is to design, gather, supply and analyse data reasonably. By utilising the mixed methods of questionnaires, semi

structured interviews and non-structured interviews, quantitative and qualitative data are provided. The case study is the most common design in qualitative and mixed methods approach. Case studies are an empirical approach that explores a current phenomenon within its real life environment where the borderline between the context and phenomenon are not obvious (Jennings, 2001) and deals with the 'how' and 'why' questions to achieve a better understanding of the real life phenomenon in depth (Yin, 2009). The term 'case studies' is sometimes used interchangeably with ethnography and participant observation, however they are not the same, but case studies may include those methods for data collection (Jennings, 2001). Furthermore, a case study is often chosen due to its practicality to contribute to the knowledge of the related phenomena (Yin, 2009). Moreover, case studies can go beyond using a single method and can include a mix of both qualitative and quantitative evidence, which allows for methodological triangulation.

3.3.2 Triangulation

Data triangulation entails the use of different data sources. There are four different triangulation distinguished: data, method, investigator and theory triangulation (Denzin, cited in Decrop, 2004). Among the four basic forms of triangulation, other types are identified: informant, multilevel, longitudinal and interdisciplinary triangulation. This research used two of the main types; data and methodological triangulation for three main reasons: Firstly because of the complexity of the research topic a single method might not adequately solve the problem. Secondly, because triangulation sets limitations for personal and methodological biases (Decrop, 2004); and thirdly, it enhances the validity of findings (Munsters, & Richards, 2010). In addition, informant and interdisciplinary triangulation was also considered due to its relevance in tourism research, as tourism is a multidisciplinary phenomenon and its research placed on several scholarly pillars such as economics, geography, history, psychology, sociology and anthropology (Melkert & Vos, 2010).

3.3.3 Research target

The aim was to achieve as many as possible participants for the survey. The calculation of targeted number of participants was based on the number of visitors to Niue according to the available data at the time of deciding on the research design. According to Statistics Niue, in the second quarter of 2010 the numbers of VFR tourists were 259 and that was 24% of the total numbers of visitors. From the 259 visitors there were 180 people above age of 20. The field research was anticipated to be conducted in the second quarter of 2012, which suggested a similar number of VFR tourists in Niue. A 50% response rate was hoped for, which would provide a reasonable validity for the data collection, therefore the aim of the research was to survey approximately 90 people in Niue. The actual field research was delayed to the third quarter of the year, when the VFR visitor' numbers is the lowest. According to Statistics Niue, in July 2012 the VFR visitor numbers were as low as 62, the period when the information on the questionnaire-based survey was mainly collected. In order to achieve sufficient number of respondents and success of the research, the field research period needed to be revised and extended. In any case, 59 surveys were collected.

The second stage of the field research aimed to achieve what Geertz (1973) calls 'thick description', an ethnographic method that proposes the practice of illustrating in as much detail as possible not only the surface expression of a given behaviour, but also the symbolic context in which the behaviour exists, therefore the aim was to conduct 15-20 in-depth interviews that may be sufficient for this to occur. Generally, qualitative research focuses on relatively small samples which are purposefully selected (Patton, 2002).

The targeted participants were the VFR travellers, but to achieve a broader and more valid view about the topic, the range of interview participants was extended to local government officials, local people and tourism operators.

3.3.4 Profile of the research participants

The recruited participants for the interviews were selected from VFR travellers who had recently visited Niue. Those participants were approached by the researcher at

the venue of the survey collection. The participants were provided with a brief description of the research by verbal communication and were given an information sheet about the research (Appendix C.) The interviews were extended to participants including Niuean government officials, and conversations with local people and tourism operators. All participants were aged 18 and over.

3.4 Data Collection

The first stage of data collection was carried out in Niue. According to Richards (2010) the chosen locations can have an important impact on the results of the survey because there are several factors that could influence the achievable number of participants, such as time of the day, day of the week and also the weather. Thus, the most suitable venue for data collection was chosen as the Niue airport, where people are gathered in larger numbers before they depart from Niue. The once per week flight was a simplifying factor of time and venue selection, but also put limitations on the chances to collect sufficient amount of data. The airport's waiting area outside of the check-in is a public area where the previously obtained country approval legitimated the data collection. This venue is also utilised by the Tourism Niue for similar purposes for their customer satisfaction surveys. The area is in the open air but has a roof for shade and has some benches to sit on. Departing visitors assemble in this area and wait in long queues to check in their luggage. Targeting this venue was deemed and proved to be the best opportunity to meet potential participants and interact with people who met the requirements of the research sampling criteria.

The questionnaire-based survey forms were handed out to potential participants. After completion of the surveys, the participants folded and returned them to the researcher, who was safeguarding their confidentiality and safety, by storing them in a specific folder.

3.4.1 Survey

Quantitative research often facilitates qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and can prepare the ground for further qualitative research, for example through selection of participants for the follow up interviews. Furthermore, surveys are useful tools to collect demographic information, and those factors are practical for classifying the surveyed individuals into key groups (Tkaczynski et al., 2009). In addition, combined use of qualitative and quantitative research methods is commonly used in case study research (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and was applied in this research.

A questionnaire-based survey of 20 questions was conducted among 59 VFR travellers in Niue. Due to the long delay of responses from the Niuean authorities to provide the country's approval for the research, the survey was carried out in the 'low' VFR season, when other types of tourists, mainly holiday makers, dominate the industry. According to Statistics Niue, in the period July-September 2012 the number of VFR visitors were: July -51, August - 62, and September - 88. In total for the third quarter in 2012 there were 201 VFR visitors in Niue including children. One of the criteria of the research design was that the survey participants must be aged 18 years or above. Applying the latest data available at the time of the research design for the ratio between adult-children VFR travellers in the second quarter 2010, was 69.5%, giving an estimated of potential number of 139 adult VFR travellers. Respectively, the average weekly adult VFR was estimated at 10.7 people. The survey was carried out in August, and also some parts of July and September, covering seven weekends of opportunities to distribute and collect surveys. Applying the calculation above for the corresponding period, it added up to a pool of 75 VFR travellers to be surveyed, with a result of 59 returns, which produced nearly an 80% response rate.

The survey included questions to collect important demographic information about VFR travellers but also did seek a range of qualitative information about their stay in Niue. Appendix A contains the actual survey instrument used in this research.

The respondents by gender were nearly equally distributed, and responses were received from 28 males, 30 females and one survey form contained missing data.

Most of the respondents were aged 45-54 years, representing more than 30% of the total sample and the rest was again nearly equally distributed in different age groups.

3.4.2 Semi-structured and non-structured interviews

In the second phase of data collection the information were collected by semi-structured interviews, based on an interview guide (Appendix B), to obtain in-depth knowledge of the research topic. In order to maintain accuracy, a digital sound recorder was used as well as note-taking. The recordings were partially transcribed by the researcher to filter any side tracked conversations. Furthermore, during the field research period a large amount of non-structured interviews were undertaken, collecting valuable data through everyday conversations with local people, officials and tourism operators. In addition, a modest participation in the everyday life and culture provided a source of information that couldn't be gathered through any other approach.

An interview is a word exchange between the interviewer and interviewee (Jennings, 2001); a conversation that gives insight into the peoples' minds about what and how they think about the topic of the interview. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Unstructured interviews are often longer, and deeper and can also be called in-depth interviews, and have different format than a questionnaire-based interview (Veal, 1997). Unstructured interviews can be led by a single question from the interviewer (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and the control of the conversation is typically led by the thoughts of the interviewee. Furthermore, in-depth interviews are often combined with other methods, for example participant observation, in order to discover any misrepresentations or divergences so that a triangulation of methods may be achieved (Jennings, 2001).

Semi-structured interviews in contrast with the unstructured interviews, are guided by the researcher with a series of questions, but the questions are more general than in the structured interviews, allowing the researcher to alter the questions according to the interview flow (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are commonly used in social sciences and in qualitative research, due to its flexibility, convenience, comprehensibility, but particularly it is often the most effective way of collecting valuable data that wouldn't be achievable in any other

means (Qu & Dumay, 2011) In addition, semi-structured interviews also often employ open-ended questions, which are useful tool to encourage the participants to provide more in-depth information. Therefore, semi-structured interviews and in-depth interviews are contextually often interchangeable (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Participants for the semi-structured interviews were selected after they voluntarily indicated their interest in being involved in the interviews. Participants for the non-structured interviews, which were based on personal interactions and daily conversations, were chosen among the local population, VFR visitors, and tourism and accommodation operators. 11 formal semi-structured interviews and 33 non-formal interviews such as personal interactions, conversations with VFR travellers and people from the local communities were conducted. The majority of the participants were between 40-65 years old, evenly distributed between males and females. The venues for semi-structured interviews were decided by the participants.

The debate over the segment of VFR encompasses a diverse platform in terms of its economic, cultural and environmental aspects. These interviews were designed to find some answers to the research questions and provide pioneering information towards understanding the VFR phenomenon that is uniquely shaped to Niuean conditions.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected via questionnaire based surveys was analysed using SPSS version 19. Tables and graphs derived from the analysis have been used in this thesis.

The data collected in the second stage and derived from the interview transcripts was qualitatively analysed by utilising thematic analysis. The data were sorted by recurring themes to arrive at the research findings. Themes were identified and inductively generated through the process of analysing the data provided by the partially transcribed interviews.

In identifying themes the process of an interpretivist approach was utilised. This method employs a technique where the data closely represent itself in the results because different individuals may experience differently a specific event at different

points of time (Wignall, 1998). There are not always sharp differences between qualitative and interpretive research (Klein & Myers, 1999), however, the two concepts are not the same, but purely determined by the researcher's epistemology. Interpretive research focuses on the subjective significance of social action (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and uses inductive thinking to build a theory (Andrade, 2009). Themes, as defined by Boyatzis (1998) are a "pattern found in the information that a minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (p. 4.). With no intention of testing any hypothesis, the research was dominated by inductivity. "Induction is the process whereby the exploration and analysis of related observations leads to the construction of a theory that systematically links such observations in a meaningful way" (Clark, Riley, Wilkie, & Wood, 1998, p. 13).

The research findings, such as the survey findings, interview responses, the secondary data findings and the researcher's field experiences underwent a combined analysis as outlined above. By utilising a combination of research tools and integrating the research findings provided the possibility of confirmation and complementation between findings. With careful orchestration of these tools and methods more sophisticated information could be achieved (Hartman, 1988).

3.6 Ethical Issues

Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were assured and no identifying data were revealed in the final report. In the first stage of data collection each survey participant received a 'Participant Information Sheet' (Appendix C), which explained the aim of the research and the participants' rights through the process. This document also assured the participants about total confidentiality of information they released.

The second stage of research involved semi-structured in-depth interviews among interviewees who voluntarily participated. In order to declare a mutual agreement and understanding about the process a Consent Form (Appendix D) was signed by each participant. This form also bound the researcher to total confidentiality and safeguarded the anonymity of the participants and information they released.

This research project was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC, 12/85) on 24 April 2012.

3.7 Research Limitations and Implications

This research had some limitations to be kept in mind. This research was intended to be a pioneer step towards the recognition of the cultural and economic value of VFR travel in Niue. There has been no study or research conducted in the past related to the segment of VFR travel in Niue. More specifically, the motivational factors of this segment, consequently the causes of returning in the long term, and by that, its potential sustainability hasn't been looked at the academic level and has been broadly abandoned by tourism marketers, organisations and authorities. This lack of interest, in part, could be a result of the continued 'infancy' state of tourism (Milne, 1992b) as Connell, (2008) also referred to, and the micro size of the whole industry in Niue compared to other parts of the world, and consequently the anticipated financial benefits the segment brings to the island's economy does not seem to be sizeable enough to draw attention.

Furthermore, VFR travel benefits have only been looked at in economic terms and overlooked the cultural input that this market segment could bring and could contribute to the sustainability of the tourism product in Niue, and thus economic development. Furthermore, the lack of interest in studying the VFR situation in Niue may have resulted from the remoteness of its location and the monopolised transportation there, which therefore have impacted on the cost of visitation. In addition, in some situations, for example in management of businesses and decision making, the dominant approach of 'island time' in Niue does most likely not favour efficiency. While the application for approval seems to be an easy process by emailing the specific authorities, the waiting time to receive the approval, was much longer than anticipated. Specifically, this research was hampered by a delay of three months in receiving official country approval to begin the field research, therefore the period of surveying necessitated an extension and shifted to the off peak time of VFR traveller arrivals. This had a crucial impact not only on the anticipated number of surveyed VFR travellers in Niue, consequently putting strain on the collection of reliable data, but also accumulated delays in further study progress.

This research also has limitations with the availability and reliability of secondary data already collected. Travellers arriving to Niue are obligated to fill out an arrival card, where they indicate the purpose of their travel. These options are limited to 'holiday', 'business', 'visiting family' or 'other'. To fill out these forms is the responsibility of the travellers who might have a conjoint travel purpose. Furthermore there is no option for visiting friends. The structure of collecting and analysing data has undergone several changes over time, which has caused difficulties in analysing historical data within a similar format. The Niuean authorities also collect information on departure cards, such as the amount spent during a visit. To fill out this form is also the responsibility of the travellers, who might provide an inexact amount thereby providing data which may not be accurate.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion - Part One

This chapter discusses the findings from the questionnaire-based surveys, combined with the responses from the interview participants as well as incorporates the observations from the fieldwork by the researcher. After the overview of the demographics of VFR travellers in Niue the chapter looks at the travel frequency, the length of the stay and their volume of spending. VFR travellers are differentiated from other forms of tourists by their direct economic contributions to the local economy, which is discussed along with the skills transfer. The next section includes the findings about the VFR usage of commercial accommodation and services in Niue. The final section in this chapter talks about why VFR travellers in Niue are budget conscious.

The main focus of this study was the VFR travellers in Niue, primarily the nature and the role of this segment in regards to aspects of sustainable tourism development. In the following two chapters the reported research findings include quotes from the partially transcribed interviews; those are added with narrative comparison and contrasted with the existing writings in the literature, combined with the findings of the questionnaire based surveys.

4.1 Demographics of VFR Travellers

In order to assure data validity and fulfil the research criteria, the questionnaire based survey included demographic questions. According to the questionnaire based survey among the responds received from 28 male and 30 female respondents (Table 1).

Table 1. Gender of Survey Respondents - VFR Travellers, Niue.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	28	47.5	48.3	48.3
	Female	30	50.8	51.7	100.0
	Total	58	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
Total		59	100.0		

VFR travellers indicated their place of birth as Niue, New Zealand or "Other" country. It was found, that respondents were born either in New Zealand (44.8%),

Niue (39.7%) or in other countries (15.5%) (Table 2). This ratio allows the assumption that diasporas of the first, second or further generation, are the most likely to travel to Niue, therefore it could be assumed that this segment could have an important role within VFR in Niue.

Table 2. Place of Birth of Survey Respondents - VFR Travellers, Niue

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	New Zealand	26	44.1	44.8	44.8
	Niue	23	39.0	39.7	84.5
	Other	9	15.3	15.5	100.0
	Total	58	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
Total		59	100.0		

Among the surveyed VFR travellers, the majority of respondents were between 45-54 years old (33.9%) (Table 3). In respect of this it is important to note, the large scale of emigration after the opening of the international airport at Niue in 1971, which caused an extensive movement of the population to New Zealand and other countries.

Table 3. Age of Survey Respondents - VFR Travellers, Niue

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	9	15.3	15.3	15.3
	25-34	7	11.9	11.9	27.1
	35-44	9	15.3	15.3	42.4
	45-54	20	33.9	33.9	76.3
	55-64	8	13.6	13.6	89.8
	65 +	6	10.2	10.2	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Findings from the questionnaire based survey showed that 32.8% of respondents had a yearly income of NZD \$40,001-\$60,000 (Table 4), which is proving to be the dominant group.

Table 4. Yearly Income of Survey Respondents - VFR Travellers, Niue

NZD		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	\$1-\$20,000	4	6.8	6.9	6.9
	\$20,001-\$40,000	11	18.6	19.0	25.9
	\$40,001-\$60,000	19	32.2	32.8	58.6
	\$60,001-\$80,000	4	6.8	6.9	65.5
	\$80,001-\$100,000	3	5.1	5.2	70.7
	\$100,000 +	7	11.9	12.1	82.8
	Prefer not to state	10	16.9	17.2	100.0
	Total	58	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
Total		59	100.0		

4.2 VFR Travel Frequency, Length of Stay and Spending

According to Asiedu (2008) VFR travellers are likely to provide a seasonal replacement for the mainstream tourism. When the destination is less popular for that segment, VFR travellers are still visiting their family members. Survey findings showed VFR travellers visited Niue in various frequencies. It was found they mostly travelled less than once per year (44.1%) and a large percentage of travellers visited Niue at least once every year (30.5%), but a visitation of two or three times per year was also noteworthy (18.6%) (Table 5).

Table 5. Travel Frequency of Survey Respondents - VFR travellers to Niue

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 1x per year	26	44.1	44.1	44.1
	1x per year	18	30.5	30.5	74.6
	2-3x per year	11	18.6	18.6	93.2
	More than 3x per year	4	6.8	6.8	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

According to the survey responses, most VFR travellers stayed in Niue for two weeks, but there were a significant number of visitors who stayed for three or four weeks and some stayed longer (Table 6). However, it could be surmised that travellers with work and other commitments would not be able to stay for a long period of time.

Table 6. Length of Stay of Survey Respondents - VFR Travellers, Niue

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	One week	18	30.5	32.7	32.7
	2 weeks	20	33.9	36.4	69.1
	3-4 weeks	14	23.7	25.5	94.5
	More than 4 weeks	3	5.1	5.5	100.0
	Total	55	93.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	6.8		
Total		59	100.0		

During their stay most VFR travellers (42.4%) spent less than \$1,000.00, but the spending group of \$1,000.00 - \$2,999.00 (37.3%) was also substantial (Table 7). Several factors could contribute to these spending levels, such as the yearly income and the chosen type of accommodation, because people who stay with family or in their own home might spend less.

Table 7. Average Spending during the Visit of Survey Respondents - VFR Travellers, Niue

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than \$1,000	25	42.4	42.4	42.4
	\$1,000-\$2,999	22	37.3	37.3	79.7
	\$3,000-\$4,999	10	16.9	16.9	96.6
	More than \$5,000	2	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Furthermore, SPSS 19 software was utilised to conduct a cross tabulation to see the correlation between the Niuean and New Zealand born VFR travellers, the diaspora, and their length of stay. The finding showed New Zealand born VFR travellers mostly stayed for one or two weeks, and the three or four weeks stay was more common among Niuean born VFR travellers (*Figure 9*).

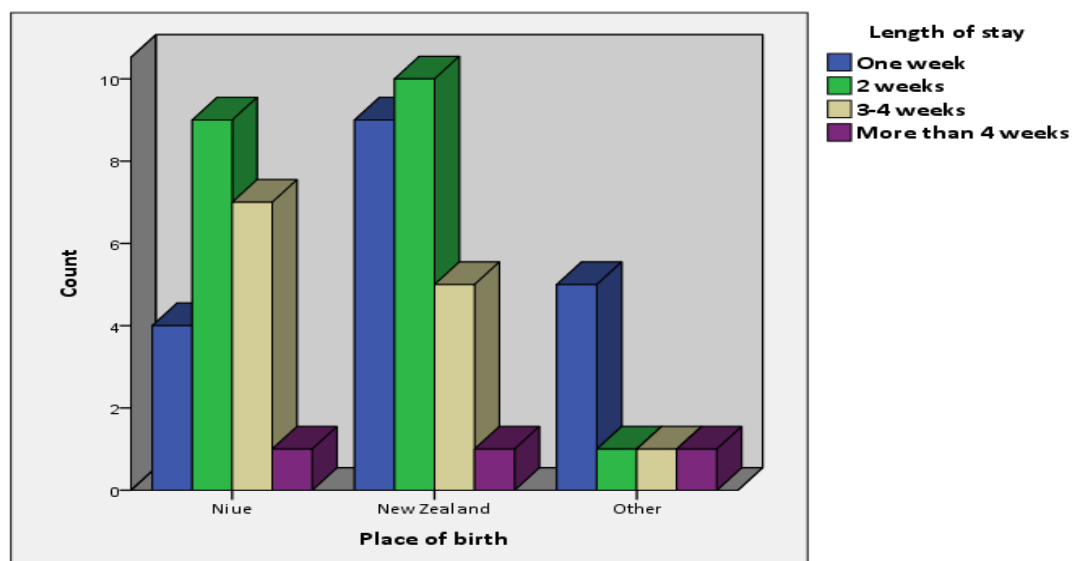


Figure 9. Cross tabulation: Place of birth – Length of stay. Source: Questionnaire based survey.

This might allow the assumption that the second and third generation diasporas, which might not have family or friends to stay with, were staying for a shorter time.

The following chart shows that the middle income earners (\$40,000-\$60,000) most likely stayed for one and two weeks, consequently, it might be assumed the second and third generation diasporas earn between \$40,000 - \$60,000 (*Figure 10*).

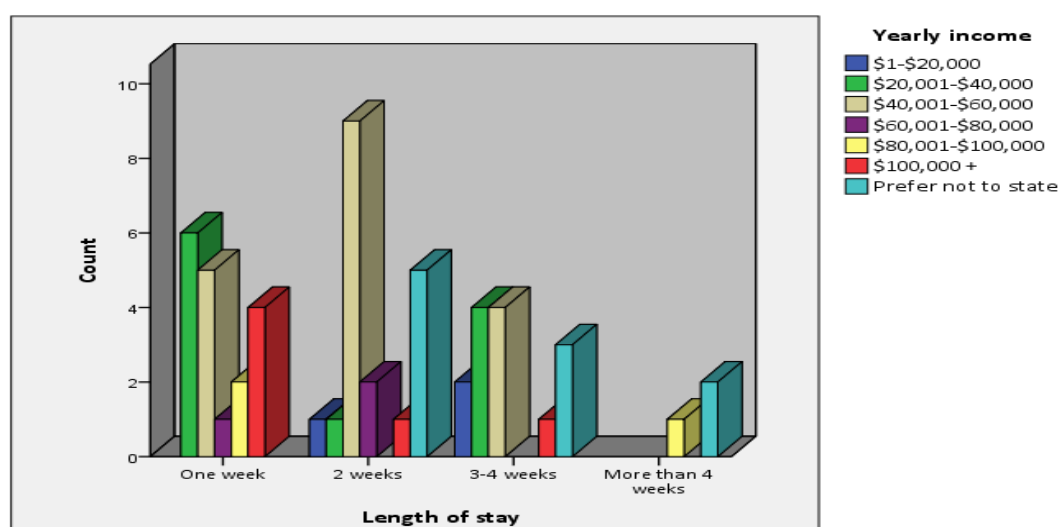


Figure 10. Cross tabulation: Length of stay - Yearly income. Source: Questionnaire based survey.

Based on the previous assumption, it could then be extrapolated that the middle earners participating in the survey most likely were New Zealand born and whom were probably second or third generation diasporas, chose to stay one or two weeks

(as shown in *Figure 9*). This might be because this group is grown up and educated in New Zealand, therefore might earn more than the Niuean born first generation immigrants.

VFR visitors with a middle range income of \$40,000 - \$60,000 indicated a visit of once per year, but more likely less than once per year. Interestingly, the low income earners \$20,000 - \$40,000 were travelling two or three times per year (*Figure 11*).

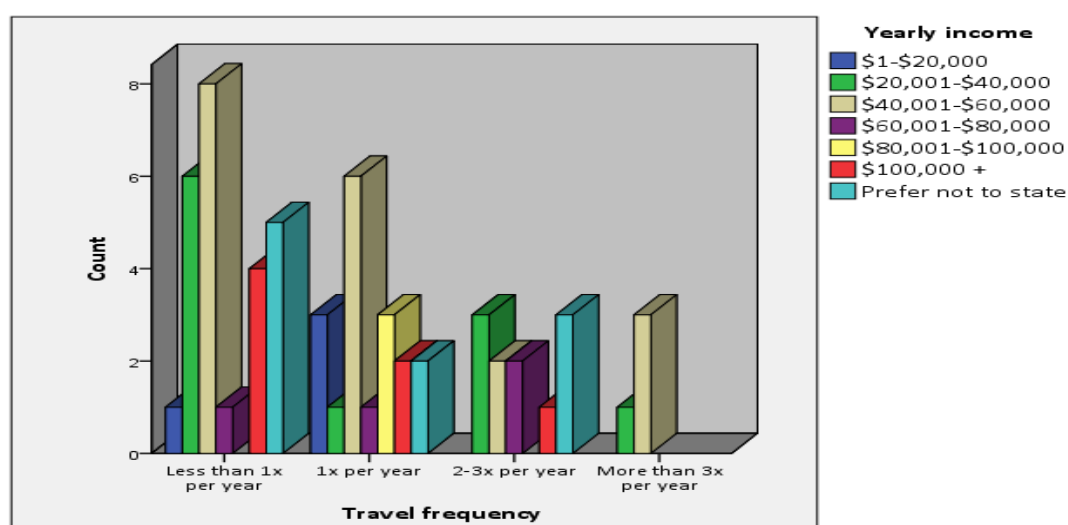


Figure 11. Cross tabulation: Travel frequency - Yearly income. Source: Questionnaire based survey.

It could also be assumed, neither the high end nor the low end of income earners would be travelling more than three times per year.

4.3 Direct Economic Contributions

Among VFR travellers in Niue who participated in the interviews, evidence was found to confirm that VFR expenditure was more direct and localised with less economic leakage (Backer, 2010; Morrison et al., 2000). VFR travellers to Niue used their money by giving it to relatives and buying local products that they shared with, or gave away to the local people. For the question on how they contributed to the island the following responses were given:

...mainly spending the money, and give the money away. Giving money away, donating to the church and to old people...

The literature review reported in chapter three indicated that VFR tourists consume more locally produced goods and use local services than other forms of tourists (Asiedu, 2008). This was confirmed in the comment of one respondent:

...I visited the market and spent money, bought stuff that I didn't really needed, just bought to give money back to the locals...then went around and gave these what I purchased to someone else...like uga, taros and whatever, because we had all that stuff you see, so we not really needed it, but it is good to give something, rather than give someone money...

Not only VFR visitors but a local tourism official also mentioned:

VFR spending is lower and static. But at the same time it is important because that is a focused spending, they spending into the community, more koha [gift] and you know X amount to the church, and they more likely to go and spend money on the market.

Most of the respondent in the survey brought food and drink with them and brought money for their relatives. Some mentioned clothing, household and high technology items (Figure 12).

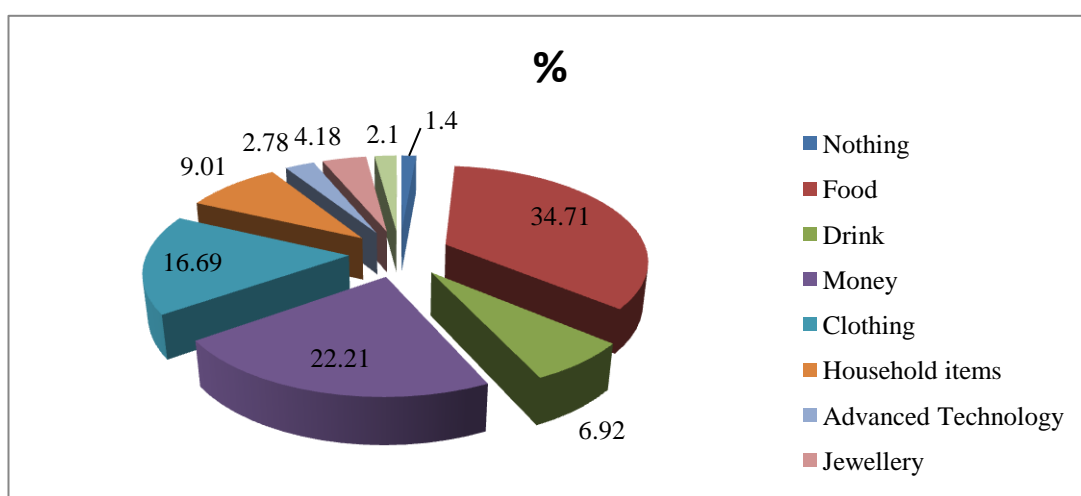


Figure 12. Goods brought by VFR travellers - Survey respondents, Niue. Source: Questionnaire based survey.

VFR travellers in this study not only spent money, they brought *koha*, - such as food, technology, and other items that are not available on the island - to support their families, but a local tourism operator says:

...bringing with them their enthusiasm and they just want to learn (mainly those who are visiting first time, but others too). I think probably that is the most important, their enthusiasm, and they

wanting to learn about Niue, and just open to what could happen to them on the island...

According to the literature reviewed, VFR also incorporates more community involvement in local events and activities (Morrison et al., 2000) which was supported by one respondent who said they helped with family projects:

...well... at last visit I had, I just mainly spent my time on the roof...building, helping my brother...we built a pergola around his deck, to sit outside, when it is hot or when it is raining...

Furthermore, VFR travellers enjoy the people and social aspects of life in the host community (Lee et al., 2005), that was also articulated by a VFR traveller from New Zealand:

...When we go there, we always go to the market and meet friends and talk and eat the Niuean porridge...

In addition, as the academic literature review suggested, VFR travellers are also very much involved with local and ethnic cultural events and festivals, which was detected in the interviews among VFR travellers in Niue. One of the most known cultural events in Niue is the village show days, which are organised by each village through the year. According to one interview participant:

...Show days are good. I didn't participate this time, because I was too busy to help and it takes a lot of time to prepare a show day. I used to go there because it is good place to meet people. The problem is with the word: 'everyone'... because not many people left on the island now...

This response was received from a respondent who visited Niue frequently, but the last time of his visit family obligations took a priority, and such obligations are not an expectation but an inner motivation to provide help and support for a family member who lives in Niue.

4.4 Skills Transfer

Bringing in technical knowledge and skills is an important factor of VFR's intangible economic contribution. Migrants who left the country at a young age or diasporas who were already born overseas, being second or third generations, had a chance to receive their education and to learn their skills overseas. They are more familiar with

modern technologies and have access to skills, work ethics and morals that the local people might lack. One interviewee, who helped with a building extension on the family home, displayed a problem solving skill to help his family:

...that type of construction I have never done before, so I went on the internet, asked a few questions, visited a few similarly built homes on there... I mean kiwi style homes, to get an idea about how to put it together... and good... that it was good... The internet was a good source for it...

These comments confirmed that VFR travellers want to share the skills, knowledge and information that they have obtained, This idea was suggested by Scheyvens (2007) who said that "diaspora tourism helps to build social capital providing a means for individuals to come together and enjoy leisure experiences with their families and friends, church or community groups " (p. 322), which in this case went further and involved economic contribution. The aspiration to provide help and support also sensed through the comment of another respondent:

...I have got some projects in particularly for gardening... the opportunities are huge... I want to go into villages and look at opportunities that we can create and form, creating educational projects, there we can go and teach them those skills... I have learned a lot of skills, people skills, communication skills, administration skills, management skills, finance... my way is not telling about it, but doing it...

Within this comment the intention was not necessarily to Westernise, but rather the aspiration was to revoke the 'old school rules' and return the country back to its original traditions, the life that they left behind. Besides from the individual contributions, the groups and church groups have significant impact on the local community. It is a very common situation that church groups arrive in Niue in an organised group. According to a local tourism operator, group visits and their involvement in the local community, and the way of the villages hosting them, is around food and gathering, music and dancing:

...a church group, or a culture group or a school group... they are big groups... sometimes 20-30... And often they are hosted by the village they come from and the village feeding them, entertaining them, showing around the island, getting them to like a fea-fea night..." "fea--fea night is lots of food, music and dance

According to a local interviewee, these groups are usually organised by the Niuean communities in New Zealand or Australia, in most cases for the diasporas, especially for those who have no relatives left on the island, therefore they commonly abstain from travel as an individual. In this concept peer influence and word of mouth seems to have crucial importance. This interviewee also told, the culture or church groups are organised and led by someone who is familiar with Niue and has local knowledge and contacts. Usually they visit those people's village of origin and the village hosts them, either by allocating them with families, or providing accommodation in the community hall. While the group stays in the community hall, the people of the village provide them with food and all they need. In exchange those groups visit the church ceremonies and donate money to the church and to the village council. It is also very common, that the church groups visit other villages, and the church there and also donate money to them. A local tourism operator also said:

...VFR supports the local churches, and there the churches are getting their money from. And I know the Australian and New Zealand church groups are very generous with them...

By bringing their enthusiasm the VFR travellers in Niue who took part in this study seemed to seek more than a tourist experience, they wanted to find their roots, and in order to find their way there, they tried to fit into the community identifying themselves within it. The tourism operator continues:

...the enthusiasm could benefit the island, when they are enthusiastic about the island, then they look at it how they could fit in here on the island, what they can do here for the island, which is a lot different to a tourist here, they just want to be here and look at the island, but for a Niuean, especially if they were here on the first time, I think they are coming open minded...

This notion was confirmed by a VFR traveller, as he went to Niue with 'open minds' but also with an intention to give, to help and support:

...when I went to Niue, I saw the 'nothing', like a blank piece of paper, I looked that and say, wow... I can do this and I can do that... a lot of plans I have...

Being involved in the communities and being part of the social life is one of the main characteristics of VFR travellers and by doing so, revitalizing and strengthening

social and family ties (Scheyvens, 2007) and re-establishing old ties and reaffirming blood ties (Asiedu, 2005, 2008).

4.5 Use of Commercial Accommodation and Services

The generalisation of VFR travellers not using commercial accommodation has been debated in previous studies elsewhere (Backer, 2008). This was also confirmed through the findings from the survey and through the interviews from the participants in this research. According to the findings among the surveyed VFR travellers, the largest proportion of travellers stayed with family or in their own house, however the number of people who stayed in rented accommodation was also substantial. Although the survey sample was relatively small, 24.6% of those surveyed VFR travellers chose commercial accommodation for their stay (Table 8), which shows consistency with the results of research undertaken in Australia (Backer, 2010; 2012).

Table 8. Choice of Accommodation of Survey Participants - VFR Travellers, Niue

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	My own house	14	23.7	24.6	24.6
	Stayed with family	26	44.1	45.6	70.2
	Stayed with friend(s)	3	5.1	5.3	75.4
	Rented	14	23.7	24.6	100.0
	Total	57	96.6	100.0	
Missing	System	2	3.4		
Total		59	100.0		

One factor in determining commercial accommodation is the ability to pay. It was supposed that the level of income was the determining factor, therefore a cross tabulation between income and accommodation was conducted. SPSS 19 software was utilised to compare the income level and the chosen accommodation among VFR travellers in Niue. The findings showed that, the middle (\$40,000-\$60,000) and very high earner (\$100,000 +) VFR travellers most commonly chose commercial accommodation for they stay (*Figure 13*).

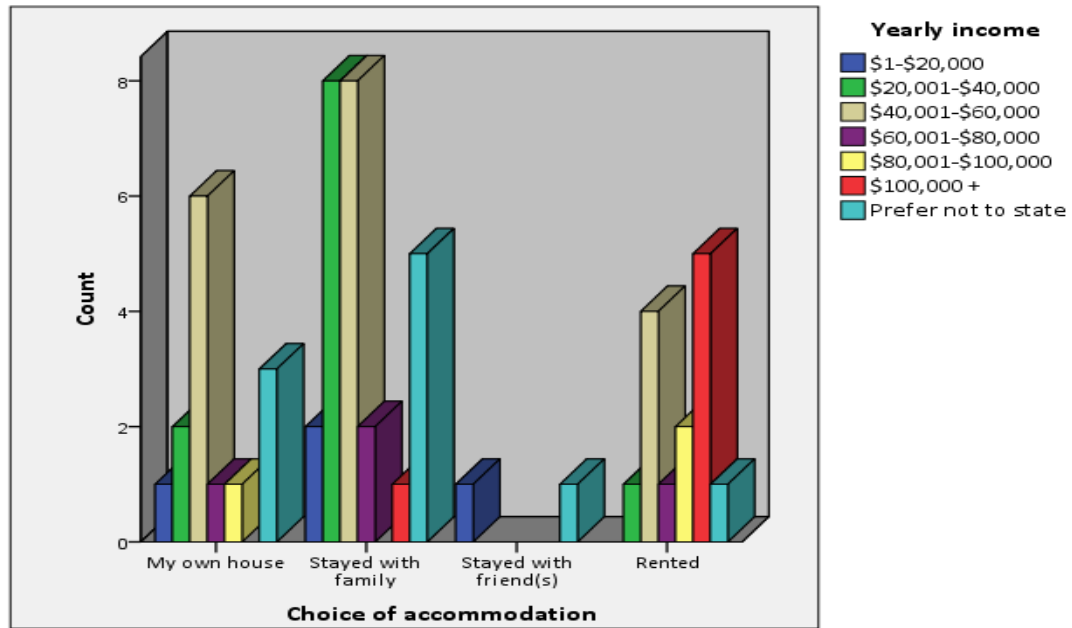


Figure 13. Cross tabulation: Choice of accommodation - Yearly income. Source: Questionnaire based survey.

Responses through interviews also supported the survey findings and other studies conducted in different locations, such as Sunshine Coast and Ballarat in Australia (Backer, 2010), that VFR travellers use commercial accommodation. VFR travellers' decision making in regards of place of stay might be influenced by several factors. It could be because they commonly have mixed travel motives (Lehto et al., 2001) or take part in a range of activities, termed 'hybrid tourism' (Hu & Morrison, 2002), within the same trip.

In addition to findings by Lehto et al., (2001) and Hu and Morrison (2002), VFR travellers in Niue can also prefer and choose to stay in commercial accommodation because if they were travelling in a bigger group that would have put extreme pressure on the hosts, or they might choose to stay in commercial accommodation in the case if the potential host is a very distant relative. As one respondent mentioned:

...we visited a few family members, but we were staying in a motel... well actually in a guesthouse. It was quiet, central, laid back, nothing flash, but it had everything, kitchen, bed... It was for four of us, with other couple...

This group of VFR travellers was not a large group, however because the second couple were not relatives to the local family members they chose to stay in commercial accommodation, which could be for several reasons, such as to avoid

cultural conflict, having freedom to come and go, and thus maybe fewer obligations; or just to spend relaxing time with the couple's friends.

For the multi-choice question in the survey about the purpose of their travel, several respondents had two or even three options selected. The majority had visited Niue to visit relatives, but nearly half of them indicated wanting to have a holiday or relaxing time. This confirms the 'hybrid' trip characteristics concept again, proposed by Hu and Morrison (2002), for example some survey participants connected their work/business visit with visiting their relatives too, or vice versa, but many of them indicated a VFR visit with a purpose of having a holiday. This finding underpins the theory of difficulties with reliable data collection (Backer, 2009; Morrison, et al., 2000) as probably the visitor by him or herself is confused to which information to provide on the arrival cards and how the information is then used.

Survey findings showed that most of the respondents either travelled with family, representing 68.4%, or alone (24.6%) (Table 9). These findings underpin the importance of the family in the South Pacific nations (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2009) but also suggest the role of diasporas in revitalizing social and cultural ties between extended family and community groups (Scheyvens, 2007) which contributes towards to finding social and cultural identity, thus personal wellbeing (Pearce, 2012).

Table 9. Travelling Parties of Survey Participants - VFR Travellers, Niue

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Travelling alone	15	25.4	26.3	26.3
	Travelling with friends	3	5.1	5.3	31.6
	Travelling with family	39	66.1	68.4	100.0
	Total	57	96.6	100.0	
Missing	System	2	3.4		
Total		59	100.0		

VFR travellers not only used commercial accommodation but were also eating out in restaurants, went to cafes for lunch and purchased food at the local shop:

...We went to restaurants as well to eat. We probably were out on the first couple of nights and the last night, on lunches also, to taste the local food...

It is a common custom in Niue for VFR travellers, to practise a farewell dinner shared with the family members, usually eating out in a restaurant on Thursday nights, and it is also commonly practised to have a family lunch on Fridays, before the flight departs to New Zealand. The findings of cross tabulation between the VFR travellers' yearly income and frequency of eating out showed that during their stay, VFR travellers in all income categories had eaten out a few times (*Figure 14*).

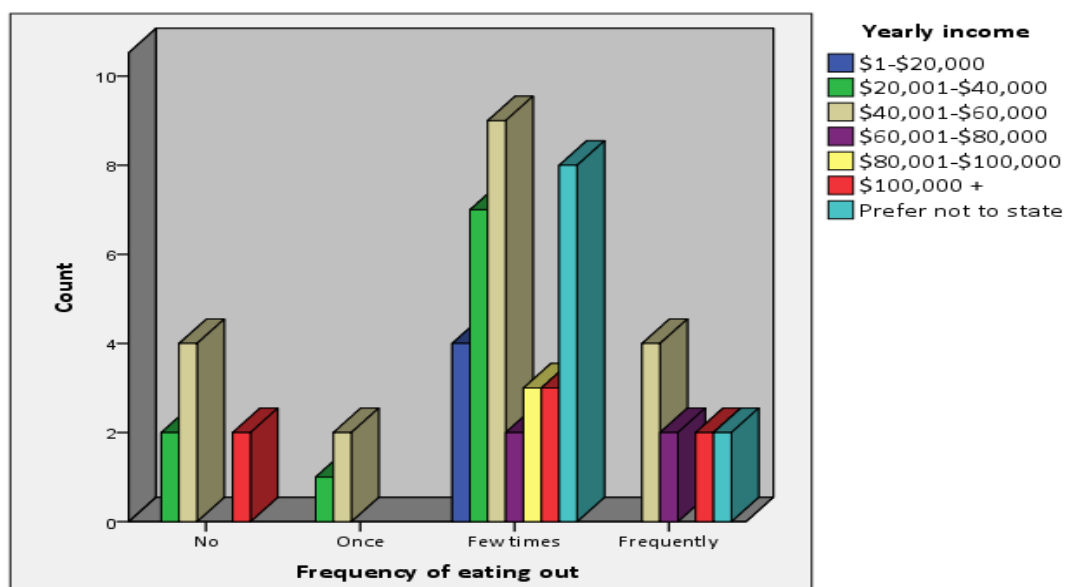


Figure 14. Frequency of eating out - Yearly income of survey respondents - VFR travellers, Niue. Source: Questionnaire based survey.

The survey findings indicated that travellers who stayed with family or in their own house were eating out a 'few times' in restaurants or visiting cafe's (*Figure 15*), but generally VFR in all chosen forms of accommodation ate out 'frequently', which is more than 2-3 times during their stay.

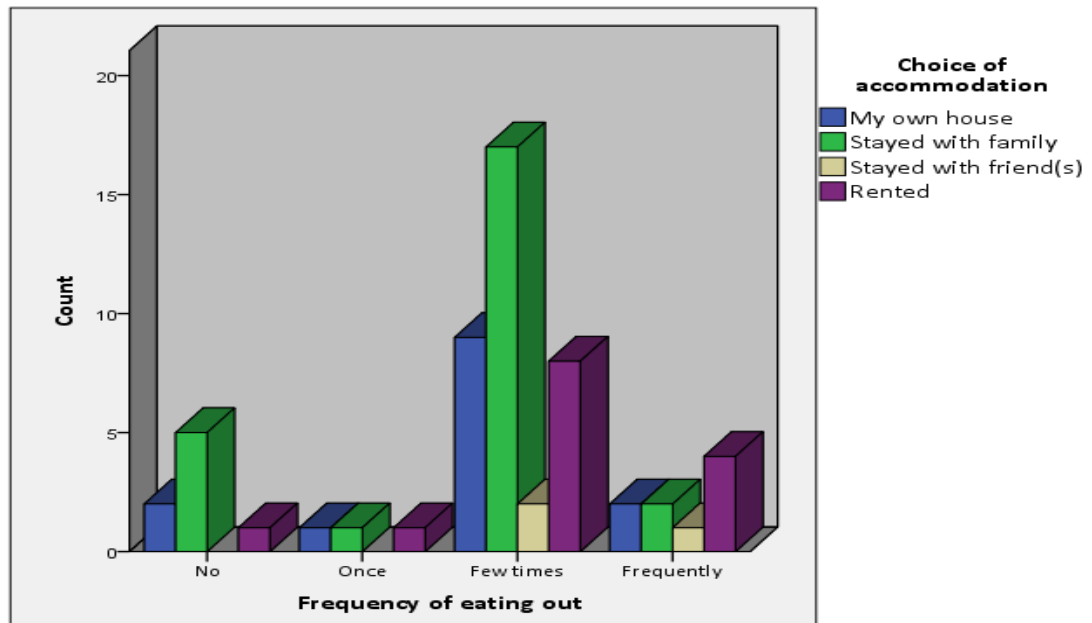


Figure 15. Frequency of eating out - Choice of accommodation of survey respondents - VFR travellers, Niue. Source: Questionnaire based survey.

The respondents who were frequently eating out could be classified as low or middle earners with the majority of yearly income indicated as \$40,001 - \$60,000 (*Figure 16*) and they were most likely staying with family or in their own house (*Figure 15*).

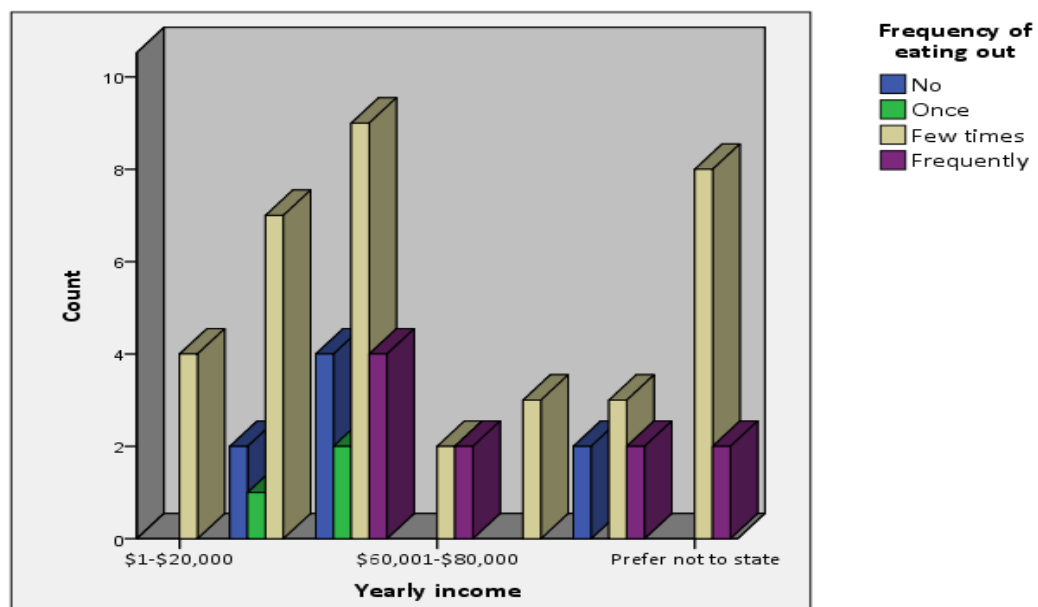


Figure 16. Cross tabulation: Yearly income - Frequency of eating out of survey respondents - VFR travellers, Niue. Source: Questionnaire based survey.

This finding confirmed again the theory of the importance of family ties and the concept that the focus on family life and culture is around the food, as indicated by Macpherson and Macpherson (2009) and also mentioned by an interview participant:

...when they [VFR] are here at the end of the year, they are here maybe for a wedding, hair cutting, ear piercing big family celebrations, also 21st birthdays, all held around that time. Even if the event [birthday] happened earlier in the year, they come here to celebrate it with the family.... lots of food, music and dancing...

The comment above not only highlights yet again the importance of family and food, which is fundamental in the Niuean culture, but also confirms that VFR travellers participate in local events and activities.

4.6 Budget Consciousness

Nevertheless, the notion of VFR travellers not spending much on accommodation was identified in responses in the interviews, such as previously indicated by an interviewee about the commercial accommodation of their choice: *"nothing flash, but it had everything"*, but also in a comment by another interview participant:

Looking for a very-very cheap option because often it is the whole family or two families are travelling together - so quite a large group -...

Travelling in groups can accumulate high costs and could be one of the reasons VFR travellers look for a cheaper options. Although, upon further investigation, nearly all interview participants got down to the point of the high costs of travelling to Niue: *"I would like to visit more, but the dollar stops us... you know..."* but the willingness to travel remained as another respondent expressed it:

Sometimes I go on the net, and if there is a cheap fare, I just go...

The comment above suggests that VFR travellers are conscious about the costs of travel and are looking for cheaper options. To purchase their ticket the survey participants chose the internet as their first preference, where promotional tickets are often available with cheaper and a less expensive price tag than at travel agencies.

One VFR traveller in her early 80's said:

...they say I have lot of money, because I am coming many times every year, but I don't, Air New Zealand used to have deals and I only travel when it is cheap...

According to the survey findings, to purchase the tickets through the internet seemed to support the assumption that is a cheaper option that is more likely to be affordable for the VFR travellers in Niue (Table 10). The table shows that 52.5% of surveyed VFR travellers chose internet to purchase their ticket, which was also told by interviewees, that they choose that option, when promotional fares are available.

Table 10. Source of Purchasing Ticket of Survey Respondents - VFR Travellers, Niue

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Internet	31	52.5	53.4	53.4
	Travel agent	26	44.1	44.8	98.3
	Other	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	58	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
Total		59	100.0		

These comments contribute to the assumption that VFR travellers are budget conscious travellers, however a similar assumption could be drawn based on the success of promotions of cheap or discounted package deals offered for holiday makers that are tailored for that segment of tourism. Although, according to the academic literature, VFR travellers might be less likely to take advantage of and spend less on holiday packages, but the participants in this study were active visitors in Niue, using tourist attractions and facilities same as the holiday makers:

...yes, I did rent a car. My brother lives over there, I also used his, unless the vehicle was busy, which was very rarely, but then I rented a car while I was there [four months]...

Thus this might be a unique situation in Niue where tourism is built on the natural resources, which are usually free, such as visiting landmarks, sea tracks, caves and chasms, but the island is lacking of purpose-built tourist attractions.

4.7 Chapter Summary

Respondents in the survey either never lived in Niue and were diasporas, or left more than 10 years ago and came back as root tourists, and there were very few responses from participants who had been living away for a shorter time. Most of the

respondents were born in New Zealand (44%), with less than one quarter in Niue (23%) or somewhere else (15%) (also see Table 2). It can be noted, the VFR travellers seem to be budget conscious. In relation to this notion, VFR travel also involves a fulfilment of family and social obligations, which is discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion - Part Two

The following chapter discusses the findings regarding the VFR travellers motivations to travel and their emotions towards their homeland in the search for cultural and social identity in Niue. Through several sections the chapter presents the mixture of feelings as interview respondents revealed them, which is followed by sections discussing the VFR resilience towards the mainstream tourism season, natural disasters and health epidemics. The next section discusses the VFR travellers role in the local culture and its preservation in Niue, which is closely related and followed by the topic of family and social obligations. The relationship between VFR travel and the environment, thus sustainable tourism also will be examined in the following sections and integrated with the interview participants' responses, academic literature and fieldwork observations. The chapter finishes with the most common theme derived from the interview responses; feelings about relocating to Niue.

5.1 Being 'Home Away From Home'

The responses to both the survey and the interviews not only indicated the involvement of the tangible use of commercial accommodation and food outlets but also supported the concept and feeling of Niue being a 'home away from home'. As emphasised by Uriely (2010), VFR travel is a complex and multidimensional experience that may involve both feelings of "home" as well as a sense of being "away". Accordingly, the comfort and the feeling of security by visiting home and familiar places (Pearce, 2012) where the feelings of being calm and peaceful were the most frequently reported emotions in his study. This notion is supported by an interviewee when talking about his feelings of security and comfort:

...Niue is one of those places; everyone can visit there and feel at home... That is what the Niue people are about. Niueans are generally nice, warm, genuine people... only places there you can leave your home unlocked, and you know, leave the keys in the vehicle and come back tomorrow and pick it up, not even problem with that...

Travellers, VFR or non VFR make choices regarding their accommodation and it is a rule of a thumb that disappointed guests usually were not returning customers:

...when the first time I went over there, I stayed at a hotel, I was disappointed, because I went to the hotel and was expecting to see local practices to be approached, but it didn't happen...

This response may lead to the assumption that the VFR traveller is travelling with an image of a familiar place, with an expectation, that when failed to be fulfilled, might lead to disappointment and maybe influenced this particular traveller to stay with family on a following visit. Moreover it also confirmed as Pearce (2012) has argued, that physical and environmental reminders initiate mindfulness and confront tourists and visitors with identity issues and images of change, which is based on the assertion by Lynch (1972) that our identity and well-being are linked to our image of time.

5.2 Reconnecting and 'Visiting Familiar Places'

Besides visiting the same natural attractions as other types of tourists, VFR travellers are also aware of some of the 'inside' stories that are passed down from father to son, from old to young and carried through generations. The following comment confirmed Pearce's (2012) concept of travellers visiting familiar places, where the geographical location is entangled in their personal and historical biographies as it is voiced by an interviewee:

...Togo cave is a long cave, and the other side is taboo. I understood from my family, they used to live near there, one of the cave have skeletons in there. That is the one of the places you don't disturb. The cave in Togo, there is eels there in the water, but that goes right through to the other side. I was told there were some kids way back in the 80's, they went for a swim on other side, and - they were kids from some other village - and one of them drowned in the knee deep water. They took that it as a warning, because of the fact they were disturbing an area where they shouldn't be and I don't know if anyone is ever gone back there again...

Therefore, this finding suggested that the Niuean VFR travellers are not only more familiar with the places than tourists in general visit, but they can have physical access and knowledge about places that are not exposed to tourism yet, either

because they are difficult to access or because they might have a less emotional impact on non-VFR as opposed to VFR tourists. But in the case of a VFR traveller, the emotional impact and feeling of reconnection with the place and time brought back memories:

...when I went down to our water at my village, the memories came back. Like: I used to swim here, when I was little. And... I used to fish here when I was little...

The feeling of reconnection was not only detected once, but repetitively appeared through the interviews:

...it is the life... time to go back home... it is the life... you can't really explain how you feel, you just get ... mmm... excited...

VFR travellers in Niue interviewed in the study visited Niuean landmarks and sea tracks just as with other type of tourists, and even visiting places, not usually exposed for tourists:

...we just were sightseeing, no shopping because no shops, lazing around. Went to some places I've never been, it was exciting. I went to the bush to different places, out of the villages, to the sea tracks. Togo, I have been a few times, but I enjoy going down on the hill [cliff] and backing again...

In Niue, similar to other Pacific Islands, families have an important role, not only in shaping the culture, but to circulate knowledge and resources. In the absence of written history, traditions, myths and stories are rolled from generation to generation, from parents to children and grandparents to grandchildren. This supports the idea that diasporas cannot exist through generations without families sustaining them (Gershon, 2007). One of the participants said:

It began with burying a brother and then something began there... an interest comes... reconnecting... and also through my son, my son influences me... he is my inspiration...

The visiting home experience is not simply emotional, it is also a cognitive process that occurs with such a visit. The place and feelings stir up memories and confront travellers with identity issues and images of change (Pearce, 2012), which produced a cluster of responses in this study such as nostalgia, melancholy and gratitude:

...I remember, last time, in August, I went to an area where I used to go fishing on my area, by myself and looked at it like: 'man... I was young man when I was fishing there by myself, no one knows today that environment, ... but I was so connected, I remembered, one time I was way up on the rocks, and all the sudden the wave came, just, from nowhere, and the wave was almost up to us, because I knew that five waves, the fifth wave is the big one, so I knew to get out from there... and I looked the wave and I see like: a fish!! way more than when I was there, because no one is fishing that area, because it is a long way... and I was watching this fish and thought: Man... big fish!! Lot of fish, fish from big to small and this just bring back that memory. And that what causes more of give me the sense of belong. This is my home; this is the place I am connected to. This is the place, when I am hungry I go and catch fish... this is my home, this is where I grew up, this is where I go fishing to feed the family and it is still there and I want to go back there...

The traveller, visiting home and familiar places, such as VFR, could affirm their social identity and promote their wellbeing if they relive positive memories (Pearce, 2012). Another experience of first visitation was articulated with a nostalgic voice:

...I love the place... It took for me about 38 years to go back on one of those large flights that landed at nights, and when I woke up on the morning, I saw the place, fell in love with it...

The feeling of 'love the place' seemed to be a common motivator for VFR travellers to visit frequently, thus providing a sustainable source of visitors.

5.3 Patriotism, the Feeling of Respect and Pride

Respect, pride and honour were frequently identifiable while participants were talking about the past, creating an impression that it just happened in recent time:

...it was OUR ancestor, who brought the Christianity to Niue in 1846... OUR village show day happens around that day... because we are also celebrating the arrival of Christianity to Niue... it was OUR ancestor... people from our village, in many-many years back on the 26th of October 1846 accepted the pastor, he was training away and our people let him land in OUR village at Ulevi...

The respect for elders and the importance of the family was illustrated in other regards when a participant was telling a story about how respected the leadership was in the villages:

...when I was growing up, the leader need only speak once, the only call, must be the commander's call... everybody... you haven't got a choice... the leader says 'this is the way to go', the nation will go...

Similar to the Samoan society, the family and village frame and define people's social worlds, and their lives and identities (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2009), which was identified in one of the respondent's comments:

...it takes a village to raise a child...

VFR travel as an alternative label for ethnic tourism (King, 1994) involves a sense of belonging, that is not simply emotional but a 'cognitive process' (Pearce, 2012) that faces the traveller with identity issues, because an ethnic reunion implies a strong sense of personal identification (King, 1994), which could be found in a response:

...just living in the paradise there, much laid back, no pressures... it is a different lifestyle, no stress ...

Another interviewee described his feelings as:

...I reconnected back to my roots. It is like electricity, re-plugged in, and the power comes on and WOW...IT IS GOOD!!! It touches the heart. Not just a physical thing, it is a spiritual thing, this is my country, and this is HOME...

This comment confirmed Scheyvens (2007) notion of the importance of a return visit for the diaspora to maintain their strong sense of pride and national identity.

5.4 Criticism

Through the VFR traveller's social interactions with locals it is inevitable that some criticism develops from both sides. The visitors in the study seemed to compare their understandings and expectations with what they are experiencing based on what they have learned and how their life has been shaped. All those childhood memories, all those skills that have been learned for life and have been engraved in their mind and memories, were compared with the present Niue:

...When I talk today's generation, they talk to me in English, when I ask them 'do you know about this and that?' they don't, 'do you know about how to do such and such?' they don't, 'do you know about the history?'... No. So something there has been not passed down and that is a big concern...

...When I went to dinner, I was expecting to see the local dinner menu... and I saw a kiwi menu... I was really disappointed, you know...

...the opportunities are huge, but the people... are lazy. I am not meaning the lazy as a word, but the lack of 'know how', lack of confidence...

But criticism arrived from both sides, a local resident said:

...I had my grandson here to help me because I am old. But he was only smoking and drinking, so I sent him back home [New Zealand]. I don't need him here...

The creation of criticism might be a result of cultural disparities because of the time elapsed or the misinterpretation between visitors' and hosts' intentions. However, VFR travellers are already familiar with the socio-cultural and local traditions (Asiedu, 2008) they know about 'to do'-s and 'not to do'-s which lessens the potential conflict between the host and visitors caused by cultural disparities, which was expressed by one of the interviewee:

...we are quite familiar with the Niuean culture. We are quite familiar with the 'do-s' and 'not to do-s'; when you go there like don't make noise, not going around and yahoo... like parties and... you make noise in a better sense... yeah... but... In my time it was a respect for Sunday, you know nobody was working, but today things are changed... In our time Sunday was very sacred, we didn't do any work... Sundays was for doing nothing, nothing was open, just staying home and respect Sunday... But in our time, even the kids playing couldn't make a noise, they were not allowed to play...

The responses in this section showed the development of criticism within the VFR travellers towards their homeland. Such a criticism might be a consequence of being able to make a comparison between their present living environment, life experiences and the homeland. It also could be a consequence of the discovery of the differences between the reality they are facing during a visit and the image the VFR travellers are carrying in their mind about their homeland, either if those images originate from their childhood memory as expatriates or a built image as diasporas.

5.5 Seasonal Resilience

VFR segment of tourism is recognised as being able to compensate seasonality, because it is more evenly distributed throughout the year (Asiedu, 2008). Travellers participating in the study who were visiting friends or relatives displayed that their choice of time for travel is not affected by the season in the same way as it does in the case of the holiday makers' decision making for time to travel. *"...Season? It doesn't affect me at all, I would go all the time..."*. Neither were they affected by the 'whale season', where Niuean tourism is at its highest peak: *"...Whales? We saw them all the time when we were kids...that big fish..."*. Often they embraced multi-purpose travelling, for example, visiting relatives as well as having a holiday, confirming the findings of Hu and Morrison (2002). In the case of VFR travellers the meaning of 'having a relaxing time' was intertwined with the concept of spending quality time with their relatives in an environment that was familiar for them but away from home:

...I just go. I don't pick a particular time of the year. A couple of times I was there it was a bit uncomfortably humid, you know, that I didn't enjoy that much, but...

While the mainstream tourists visit Niue during the cold months of New Zealand, the highest number of VFR travellers visit from the Constitution day in October, through until Christmas time, and often noted that they enjoyed three months of Christmas. A local accommodation provider said:

...some people stay right through, but they are staying at least 3 weeks. But if they have family here, and stay with family, then they stay at least a month. But I know families coming here at that stage, right through for the constitution week, some stay for Christmas and New Year. They are staying long time here...

In such a small economy changes and impacts could be easier to notice. A local respondent commented:

...VFR has an important role, it is a genuine market for Niue....some time of the year, it is a displacement of other type of tourists, it is actually cost Niue money, as an opportunity cost, while other time of the year it is a bonus... they fill the plane, we otherwise would underwrite anyway...

This response applied two sides of the coin, and recognised the possibility of a negative impact of VFR travellers on the economy, because of their perceived nature as a 'less spending' segment; therefore they might displace a high spending holiday maker due to the limited airline capacity especially in the peak season.

5.6 Resilience Towards Disasters

VFR travellers show strong resilience towards political instability (Asiedu, 2008), environmental disasters but also towards health threatening epidemics. However, there is increasing evidence of a large percentage of serious and potentially preventable travel-related illness among VFR travellers (Barnett et al., 2010), therefore they are under more threat of travel-related health issues than other type of tourists (Zwar, 2007). For the question about their travelling motivation in the case of political, natural disasters or health threatening epidemics, the participants responded correspondingly:

"...no, I don't think it will affect my motivation. It would just be more reason to go there. Last time it happened, when there was a dengue fever, we were just ready to go when it broke out and I was saying to myself: awww... sad, but it is good to go and see what happens over there. People over there were talking about it and I know it is a serious disease, but you got no choice when it comes. We would still go. Just like a normal thing, just a disease that was around the island..."

In contrast, as a local accommodation provider suggested, the recent dengue fever outbreak has diverted holiday makers and they have cancelled their bookings due to the fear of the epidemics. Some had intention to change accommodation to a property where full fly screens were provided on all windows and doors. In addition, VFR travellers are less likely to be influenced by image and political instability problems (Asiedu, 2008), which was confirmed when discussing any political unrest, where in an interview a respondent said:

"...Yes, that is what Niuean should capitalise on, because all the problems around in the political world, should try to create a place for tourist to visit, for them to go there and see the lifestyle you know...Naaah... nothing will happen in Niue... people there .. you know... they argue, but end of the day they sit around go to the pub... you know, everyone is related..."

Niue is located on the tropical cyclone belt and frequently experiences natural disasters (Barker, 2000), although the responses regarding a potential natural disaster were:

"...Everyone would help each other. They had quite a few hurricanes and cyclones. It wouldn't make any difference at all for me to travel. It is no difference to live in the States in a hurricane area, or in Niue..."

A local resident responded:

"...Niue becomes a big family in the case of natural disaster..."

The concept of 'family' and the importance of it reappeared in all forms and understandings in the interviews. Besides the general meaning of family, it was commonly acknowledged on the island, with a slight exaggeration, that nearly everyone was related to each other to some extent, but in a case of emergency the bloodlines were fading in primacy and everyone helped each other.

5.7 VFR and the Evolving Culture

In the case of an isolated SIDS a commonly raised issue is the big concern about the survival of the local culture and the impact of tourism. The extent of VFR travel's role in cultural preservation might deserve wider attention, due to VFR's ability to revitalise social and cultural ties between extended family and community groups (Scheyvens, 2007). In terms of socio-psychological benefits, the happiness of being together with friends and relatives was expressed by most of the interviewees, which confirmed the importance of family ties in the Pacific region reported by Macpherson and Macpherson (2009). A local resident's point of view was:

...Well... we talk about culture, but it is pretty hard now, what is really my culture here? Everything is mixed up. Culture is taken by the development that it is more like a contemporary, rather than an original culture...

One interviewee was asked to identify VFR travellers' motivation in one word:

...I think the 'family' would be the one word. And by that I mean they might not have any family here now, but they are discovering where they came from. Like the feeling that something was missing and filling the gap and come here and find out... or... there are

family groups coming for family reunion, you still got the 'family' one way or other... the key word is 'family'...

Language is an instrument of passing on knowledge about myths, cultural traditions and ideas about the nature and universe (Razak, 2003). Most of the interviewees kept their language alive, speaking Niuean and teaching their children and grandchildren as a VFR traveller explained:

...Yes, we talk Niuean. We have to; we don't want to lose our one. We make sure, we don't lose it. We are teaching our grandson too...

According to the Census 2011, (Niue, 2011), in Niue 45% of the households have Niuean as the main language at home and in the primary school it is compulsory to learn until the age of eight. Besides the importance of keeping the language alive, VFR travellers in the study seemed to feel it is crucial to preserve the Niuean original culture. In some interviews it was even directly mentioned:

...In many cases VFR they are more in touch and more active in their culture, even practising the older techniques, certainly the older generations here still do the weaving and the bush, it's the young generation, like 25 and under, they just not interested. So that comes down to the parents or so... you know... The Arts and Culture festival coming up here and the NZ based Niueans are more interested in it, than the locals. Because the locals live and breathe Niue all day, every day, and they feel that is just normal, they don't feel the need to do that....

While it has important role in the economy, Third World societies are likely to pursue tourism as simply as a mechanism for earning of foreign exchange (Francis-Lindsay, 2006), including the selling of handcrafts and traditional handmade products. During the fieldwork it has been noticed that, in absence of price control via competing markets and with a lack of market knowledge, the monetary value of those items is well overestimated in some cases, or in contrast, sometimes just given away. Niue's handcrafts are most known for traditional weaving and canoe carving, as well as creating jewellery from natural products. As one interviewee commented, creating these can be labour intensive:

...after a big rain, these small shells are growing on the rock, I use those for a necklace... that is taking long time, and it has a hard shell you see, it is hard to put the needle through...

These necklaces can be seen on nearly every VFR traveller when they leave the island. Although people are aware of the evolution of the culture, concerns about the younger generations were voiced by several interviewees:

...I just was on the island, went to buy some alcohol at the wholesaler, and a police pulled up there... I was really surprised...apparently it was a robbery in Alofi centre. It didn't take long to find out who did it... and you know... [they were only kids from New Zealand, Niuean kids born here... you know...] I think that could be an influence that could creep into the country. It is pretty sad, but it is about the world, isn't it?

However, all of the interviewees who mentioned a possibility of negative influence referred to this same story, which reinforces the assumption that there are not many cases of negative influence to mention. The impact of modern technology is already on the island, accepted and adopted into local culture, such as TV, radio, internet, telephone and mobile phones:

...lot of the culture is based around the food supply, and not having TV, not having electricity, so it heads off a cultural thing, that might be gathering a food or singing or dancing... No poverty here, 95 % of homes have TV. Actually this is the highest connectivity of any nation in the world in terms of the size of population... So it is different to any other island how the culture has been evolved. Lot of the dancing not on to the bands, it is all happening now to recorded music and that is how the culture went...

While a VFR traveller had a different perspective:

...The concern is for me, that they lose those values that make up of our life...

In the past traditional clothing was worn and with the arrival of Europeans, the bark clothes (*hiapo*) that partially covered the people's body have been replaced with the dress code of the Western world. Therefore, within the population of Niue, a commonly accepted dress code has been developed and they consider it offensive if tourists are dressed in a bikini:

...After the missionary come to Niue, they taught the people to cover themselves up, that's years ago, and now Niueans are opened up to the world and they see about it on TV and newspaper and I feel that is not many of them liberal people, they are very conservative. And now people start coming here and walking around in bikinis, the people here are very sensitive to that...

In addition to the continuous evolution of culture in any location, the cross-transfer of culture is unavoidable in any tourism interaction. When people travel they are carrying their own culture and interacting with other cultures at the destination, therefore the influence on each other's culture is inevitable.

5.8 Family and Social Obligations

VFR travellers often travel to fulfil family and social obligations, such as weddings, funerals and community ceremonies like the significant celebration in Niue, the Constitution Day. The study findings indicated that VFR visitors in Niue often felt obligated to visit and support those remaining behind, thus a sense of obligation could be, and commonly was, a major factor in the decision to return. Such motivations seem to possess those unique attributes that largely differentiate VFR travellers from other segments of tourism and are most likely to prompt a return visit.

In this study the findings showed that most of the surveyed people travelled to Niue less than once per year and stayed for one week, and that people who travelled every year often stayed for two weeks. Furthermore, the findings indicated that a significant proportion of VFR travellers who stayed for 3-4 weeks travelled 2-3 times per year (*Figure 17*). Those VFR travellers were usually Niuean born, low income travellers (See also *Figure 10*).

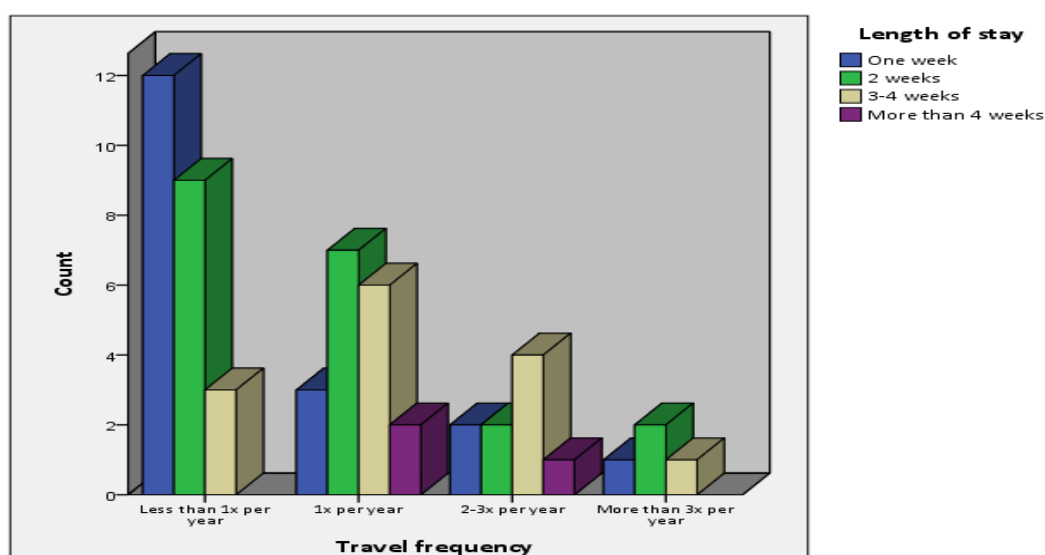


Figure 17. Cross tabulation: Travel frequency - Length of stay of survey respondents - VFR travellers, Niue. Source: Questionnaire based survey.

It is widely understood that people travel to look for something different from their everyday life; more precisely, they search for something that is missing from their life (Butler, 2003). This notion has been confirmed by one interviewee as he displayed a missing connection towards his brother and wanted to balance that feeling with help to his brother in Niue:

I am trying to give him [brother] something back. He came to New Zealand when he was 16, he learned a trade, but what he learned he couldn't apply in Niue. He was a shoemaker... and in Niue, there is no need for that skills....

The importance of families and family connections in the Pacific Island nations has been identified by Macpherson and Macpherson (2003), thus the responsibility to maintain these connections are closely linked with obligations of VFR travellers. As previously mentioned, these could be family reunions for different reasons, such as hair cutting, or ear piercing, or weddings, child birth, birthdays and other celebrations. But in some occasions the family obligation could be a sad event such as a funeral:

...It began with burying a brother and then something began there, an interest come... a reconnecting...

However, in this case that visit gave rise to a reconnection, a revitalization of cultural identity that contributed to the individual's well-being and followed by return visits to Niue.

By visiting familiar places, the sense of being at 'home' involves familiarity with the cultural and social traditions of a specific group life, and especially the local norms of behaviour (Shani, 2011). The feelings of belonging and being home, and the different aspects of the obligation to 'pay', were confirmed by a local resident talking about the VFR travellers' contribution to the local community:

...in the past, before the time we had that many hotel rooms, most of the Niueans stayed with the relatives, so they didn't needed to pay much for accommodation...and some of them contributed to some family projects, buy some food and drinks, so mainly the [local] people benefit of them... and the churches...

Within this response the importance of family ties (Macpherson, & Macpherson, 2009) and religious obligations in the South Pacific again acquired confirmation.

The participants in the survey were asked to indicate on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from "not a priority" to "extremely high priority" what activities took priority during their stay in Niue (Table 11).

Table 11. Activities Prioritised by Survey Respondents - VFR travellers, Niue

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Relaxing With Relatives	59	1.00	5.00	4.1695	1.13187
Sightseeing	58	1.00	5.00	3.3448	1.31858
Participate Show Days	59	.00	5.00	3.2203	1.46297
Taking Children To Relatives	55	.00	5.00	3.1455	1.69332
Participate Community Events	58	1.00	5.00	3.0690	1.49692
Working For Relatives	58	1.00	5.00	2.6897	1.58066
Other Paid Work	56	1.00	5.00	1.5714	1.14188
Valid N (list wise)	53				

According to the responses, most participants prioritised having a relaxing time with their relatives (4.17), it was followed by sightseeing (3.35) and participating in community events (3.22). Those who travelled with families and children also found it important to take children to visit relatives.

5.9 VFR and the Environment

Environmental issues, recycling, widespread problems with domestic waste, rubbish collection and pollution are well known problems in SIDS settings. The limited resources for recycling, the constraints of the physical location, but also a lack of 'know how' combined with lack of technology means rubbish could cause mayhem for a SIDS. Although the worldwide phenomenon of climate change has reached even a small island such as Niue, where every day the radio discusses the possible impacts of climate change in the next 100 years, there are still many opportunities and open channels to get the message through and reach every level of Niuean society about the importance of environmental protection as well as recycling. Visitors from New Zealand are embracing the culture of environment protection, thus possess a demand for it and notice littering and inadequate recycling, in fact the lack of recycling in general. Although some private inventiveness has developed to cater for that purpose, it lacks governmental support and in general the local

residents seem not to be aware of the importance of recycling. Generally, the problem emerges firstly, from the a lack of awareness and education, secondly, from the lack of ability of microstate governments to implement and enforce environmental protection legislation (Wilkinson, 1989) due to not having trained personnel, scientific technology, essential data, regulatory mechanisms, etc. The absence of encouraging programmes and proper infrastructure for recycling could cause issues with the anticipated growth of tourism. As one local tourism operator said:

...eventually, we are recycling, we are separating cans and bottles, papers, it comes nicely sorted, but then.... what are we going to do with it now? So that would be a question of the future...

To strive for, achieve and maintain sustainability it is important to look after and care about the environment especially when the product is the limited natural resource. In general, people who took part in the study - although mostly the local interviewees - expressed serious concern about how one of their native creatures, the coconut crab, is slowly disappearing from the island. Compared to holiday tourism, most commonly VFR travellers take this unique delicacy away from the island in large quantities. There is presently no limitation or tax that could prevent over exportation.

... People are going back with bags, chilly bins full with local delicacies, crabs, fish, all sort of things, that should be consumed locally here. It shouldn't be exported, or maybe it should have uga tax to discourage it and limit it. But this way it slowly destroys the uga population... For the population here it is fine and sustainable, but if the people continue taking it in big quantity, and often undersize, and things like that, it can be an issue, There is more uga consumed in Auckland than in Niue...

Unfortunately there is neither accurate data on fish stocks nor catches available for most Pacific island countries (Zurick, 1995), and this is especially the case for recreational fishing.

5.10 VFR and Sustainable Tourism

The main pillar of the concept of carrying capacity lies in the awareness of the sustainability of the tourism product; therefore it represents a method of conceptualising the association between intensity of use and the management

objectives for the area (Farrell and Runyan, 1991). While it is a crucial problem for many tourist destinations, at present Niue doesn't seem to face such problems in the same respects as others do. Those classical issues occur if an expansion of resource-based tourism causes environmental degradation, thus the destination no longer offers the same experience for the future visitors. Niue is well known for being under-populated and the main tourism products are its natural resources. Although those attractions are pristine, the visitors' numbers are still low; there is no danger of overpopulated beaches in the near future. It rather could be said, the lack of infrastructure and the low population might cause a barrier for further development in tourism, with lack of fundamental factors, such as lack of labour and supplies. The main concern lies in the question of how Niue could cater for more tourists when it has difficulties to provide living independently for its own population. This was a recurring concern from respondents in diverse forms, but they ended at similar conclusion:

...I think they need more people in Niue... All people - I was talking to them - want to go up there and start something. You know... Just need more people who will help and support you there...

With these types of responses, the participants seemed to have been referring, rather than to a concern about supporting more people, to the low numbers of the population, the unexploited opportunities, the aspiration of moving back to their country of origin, and the frustration between those feelings and the potential possibilities.

On the other hand, tourism is a promising solution and a clear indication to ease poverty; furthermore it could result in substantial and positive changes in people's lives in societies where tourism development is integrated to meet their objectives (Scheyvens, 2011a). In this process, combining these incentives with the diasporas' local knowledge, cultural understanding and aspiration to find their cultural identity (Pearce, 2012) might provide a sustainable source from among VFR travellers.

5.11 Reside Back in Niue

One of the most common themes raised was to moving back to Niue. Many of the interviewees mentioned the option to relocate themselves back to Niue. Nevertheless,

a VFR traveller's return visit allows those travellers to observe the changes and transformations that have taken place (Shani, 2011) in their country of origin, because such a visit can enhance a sense of national identity (Scheyvens, 2007) and may ensure continuation of strong social and economic ties:

...I would like to move back, but to ship to Niue is not cheap. If you take your car up there, and when you got there, you have to pay duty, just about like buying another car. Yes, the government should do something about it, to make the people interested to move over there...

The following comment confirmed the findings of Connell (2009) among skilled health workers who returned back to their home island in the Pacific, in that case namely the Cook Islands and Niue, but became dissatisfied with their job there and intended to start a private enterprise:

...I have got lot of ideas, to try to generate money for funding to villages to set up maybe motel units...

Furthermore, one of Connell's (2009) participants expressed a similar attitude about the motivation behind the idea of immigrating back, with the emphasis on the willingness and the comfort of the feeling 'being able to work with and help my own people'. In this study the participant said:

"...I would like to put my roots down, establish and gradually bring something back to life. Rebuild the trade, some of the things that what I learned in my 18 years (I was 18 when I left) ... Something there is missing, and there we need to look at where Niueans been and learn from there, so we can move forward....The thing I want to accomplish there, due to the fact that I have learned there the work that some type of work, understanding the environment that I live in, and how people live and learning how to work, learning how not to depend on England... and not to wait till somebody tells what needs to be done. So that is my way..."

These responses confirmed the important role of VFR as re-establishing old ties and reaffirming blood ties (Asiedu, 2005, 2008), through the focus and importance of family (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2009) strengthening social and family ties (Scheyvens, 2007) to find their cultural identity towards to contribute to their personal well-being (Pearce, 2012).

5.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter proposed that VFR travellers possess different attributes compared to other type of tourists. This is manifested in their search for social identity (Lynch, 1972), reconnection with their roots and their national identity (Scheyvens, 2007), and the feeling of 'home away from home' (Uriely, 2010) which contributes to their personal well-being (Pearce, 2012). These concepts and attributes could be the reasons that VFR shows resilience towards natural disasters, political instability (Asiedu, 2008) but also the interview respondents confirmed resilience also to health pandemics or epidemics. Undoubtedly, tourism and VFR has a role in the evolving culture, however, the VFR travellers already familiar with the local traditions, in which the families are playing important part, revitalize social and cultural ties with extended families and friends (Scheyvens, 2007).

From the interviews the most common themes that were identified for the characteristics of a Niuean VFR traveller were:

- Niuean VFR travellers bring tangible and intangible assets to Niue
- They use the same tourism facilities as holiday makers, frequently visiting cultural events such as village show days
- They have a fundamental feeling of a need to 'give' to support their families financially to achieve a better living standard
- They care for the local people's wellbeing, culture and environment
- VFR travellers seem to be more resilient to natural, political disasters and even health epidemics
- VFR travellers show strong connection with their Taoga
- They feel the importance to maintain their cultural traditions and family obligations
- They are aware of cultural traditions – 'the do's and not to do's'.

These themes were integrated with the survey findings, the researcher experiences and findings of previous academic research to address the aim of achieving a holistic view of the VFR traveller's role and nature in Niue.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Tourism has been frequently cited as a complex, multi-level industry, however, it could be concluded that within tourism VFR is a segment that shows further complexity with its unique attributes. The diverse range of purpose of travel, different motivations, and the activities at the destination; along with the economic, cultural and environmental impact of the VFR market segment creates a chaotic situation for marketers, academics and all sectors involved facing difficulties in usefully conceptualising the idea of VFR tourism. This difficulty could also be because the label of 'VFR traveller' could be attached to a range of other type, purpose, or activities of travel, including cultural tourism, ethnic tourism, and root tourism, diaspora, visiting friends, visiting relatives, and visiting home and familiar places; while it could also be a primary or secondary purpose of travel and by that represent 'hybrid' travel, where travellers often conjoin purposes and activities while visiting friends and relatives. In addition, despite of the limited amount of data, this study also found that VFR travellers can travel with different purposes, and their travel is not homogenous.

This research aimed to contribute to the limited knowledge of VFR travel in the case of the small island state of Niue and intended to cover that knowledge gap in this topic. In absence of earlier literature, no comparison could be made to the previous state of VFR travel in Niue. As Niue encompasses its own attributes, being a unique state in many perspectives, further studies may provide more specific information to this phenomenon which could be compared to this baseline study.

The recent emigration pattern in Niue shows a steady decline and a significant number of the Niuean population has left the island for numerous reasons, but mostly for education, financial security and better living conditions, resulting in the number of Niuean off-shore being more than fifteen-fold of those living on the island. The history of emigration and immigration consequently results in VFR travellers to Niue not only consisting of expatriates, but a number of second and third generation diasporas returning to visit their homeland.

The findings of this research confirmed that VFR travel expenditure is more direct and localised with less economic leakage than other forms of expenditure, because VFR travellers spend their money at local market and donate directly to the churches and families. There was also evidence that VFR travel includes more community involvement and engagement with local events and activities, because VFR travellers are more familiar with the local culture. Consequently VFR travellers also intend to consume more locally produced goods and use of services.

It was found that the extent of the economic contribution of VFR travel was difficult to be accurately identified through the existing data collected for this study. This is due to the nature of the VFR traveller's economic input as being a non-measurable contribution, such as skill transfers, family help, koha and other intangible contributions. In addition, due to the issues of collecting reliable data it makes difficult to distinguish the size and extent of the VFR travellers economic contribution to Niue. Albeit, findings in this study also confirmed the VFR travellers in Niue are using commercial accommodation and services, although in their spending habits they indicated to be budget conscious.

Furthermore, VFR travellers to Niue in this study showed strong resilience towards natural disasters and they will still visit, despite a natural disaster. Due to the size of the country and its population, VFR travellers doubted and felt unlikely Niue to be subject to the chance of any political disasters or instability.

Findings of this study also show VFR travellers seem not to be influenced by the general tourism peak period; however most VFR travels occur during the period of the Constitution Day usually with an extended stay through to Christmas time and beyond, which is not the holiday makers peak time to visit Niue. In addition, this is also the period of time when most family celebrations take place and families are gathering to celebrate.

In the Pacific region generally and particularly in the case of Niue, families play a crucial role in the society, as do the villages which have an important role in the families' lives. VFR travellers in this study mentioned family frequently as being of primary importance in their trip. Accordingly, VFR travellers have an important role

in revitalizing social and cultural ties between extended family and community groups. In addition, VFR travellers enjoy the benefit of being perceived by locals as family and are treated as family, which suggests not only the probability of less cultural conflict but it might be an obligation for the local communities to practise the local traditions while hosting family visitors. However, this research showed an acceptance of the notion that there is a continuously evolving culture among local residents; more so than VFR travellers who returned with an expectation of experiencing the culture as the same as they left it behind.

Through the interviews it was sensed that VFR tourists in Niue generally have strong cultural ties and a need for reconnection was commonly detected; furthermore, the urge for cultural preservation seemed to be stronger in the people's spirits who live off shore. This bond could be a permanent motivational factor for travel and therefore a continuous source of tourists which deserves attention. The cultural contribution as a non-measurable factor driving VFR travel should be taken into account as an important dynamic influencing sustainable economic development in Niue.

The research findings also revealed that VFR travellers do contribute to the local economy by not only bringing money, gifts and donations, but also bringing skills and labour through the help they provide to their close and distant families. Furthermore, as a local tourism operator mentioned, they bring enthusiasm, which most likely secures return visits. Consequently, VFR travels to Niue suggest a sustainable continuity of VFR tourists.

More in-depth research would be beneficial within the VFR segment of tourism with regard to the motivational factors of travel, for example a market segmentation of the purpose of travel and activities undertaken of VFR travellers to Niue. Correspondingly, research into why some Niuean don't return would be invaluable information. Explicitly, research within the NZ Niuean community to investigate the importance of the feeling of their Taoga and the relationship with their recent lifestyle would also be beneficial.

Findings also suggested that tourism in Niue, with significant financial support from New Zealand, could grow out of its 'infancy status' (Milne, 1992b). Observing other SIDS in similar settings, and learning from them, tourism in Niue has an opportunity to be carefully planned and integrated into the local system, to maximise benefits and minimize environmental, economic, and socio-cultural costs. Therefore, with the advantage of cultural awareness, blood ties, emotional bonds, and strong motivational factors to travel, VFR is an important segment of tourism. Thus, with well organised governance, sustainability focused management, education, identification and recognition, VFR travel could be a reliable source for steady tourism arrivals in the future, contributing to sustainable economic development.

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Appendix A



Questionnaire to explore the nature of Visiting Friends and Relatives in Niue

In this questionnaire you will be asked about your recent visit and experiences in Niue. This survey could provide important information towards my research in exploring the nature of VFR tourism in Niue. Completion of this questionnaire will be taken as indicating your consent to participate. Please note the information provided is strictly confidential and will be used only in a combined statistical form.

1. How often do you normally travel to Niue

- ☐ Less than 1x per year
- ☐ 1x per year
- ☐ 2-3x per year
- ☐ More than 3x per year

2. What was the purpose of this visit to Niue? You can choose more than one option.

- ☐ Visiting relatives
- ☐ Visiting friends
- ☐ Work/business
- ☐ Leisure/holiday
- ☐ Other, please state _____

3. On this visit are you:

- ☐ Travelling alone
- ☐ Travelling with friend (s)
- ☐ Travelling with family

4. To purchase your flight tickets are you using

- ☐ Internet
- ☐ Travel agent
- ☐ Other, please specify _____

5. How long do you normally stay in Niue when visiting?

- ☐ One week ☐ 2 weeks ☐ 3-4 weeks ☐ More than 4 weeks

6. What type of accommodation did you use while you stayed in Niue?

- ☐ My own house
☐ Stay with family
☐ Stay with friend (s)
☐ Rented e. g. Guesthouse/motel
☐ Other please state _____

7. When you decide to travel, how important are the following factors in your decision making. Please use the scale below 1-5, where (1) is "Not so important" and (5) is "Very important".

	Not important		Reasonably important	Very important	
	1	2	3	4	5
Cost of airfare	1	2	3	4	5
Season of the year	1	2	3	4	5
Family invitation	1	2	3	4	5
Better climate	1	2	3	4	5
Homesickness	1	2	3	4	5

8. During your stay in Niue did you eat in restaurants

- ☐ No
☐ Once
☐ Few times
☐ Frequently

9. Please indicate during your stay in Niue what activities took priority, using a 1-5 scale (1) meaning "Not A Priority" and (5) is "Extremely High Priority"

Please select that most describe your stay in Niue

	Not a priority		Moderate priority		Extremely high priority
Having relaxing time with my relatives	1	2	3	4	5
Sightseeing	1	2	3	4	5
Working for my relatives	1	2	3	4	5
Taking other paid work	1	2	3	4	5
Taking my children around to see our relatives	1	2	3	4	5
Participating in community events	1	2	3	4	5
Participating in village show days	1	2	3	4	5

10. What did you bring for relative(s)/friend(s). You can choose as many as you like

- ☐ Nothing
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Drink
- ☐ Money
- ☐ Clothing
- ☐ Household items
- ☐ Advanced technology
- ☐ Jewellery
- ☐ Other, Please specify _____

11. At a visit to Niue on average I spend (airfare not included).

- ☐ Less than \$1,000
- ☐ \$1,000 - \$2,999
- ☐ \$3,000 - \$4,999
- ☐ More than \$5,000

12. Please select your gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

13. Please select the place of your birth

- ☐ Niue
- ☐ NZ
- ☐ Other, please state _____

14. Please state your age

- ☐ 18 - 24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 and over
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

15. Annual income (NZ\$)

- ☐ \$1 - \$20,000 ☐ \$20,001 - \$40,000 ☐ \$40,001 - \$60,000 ☐ \$60,001 - \$80,000
- ☐ \$80,001 - \$100,000 ☐ \$100,001 + ☐ Prefer not to state

16. The current highest qualification you have

- ☐ No qualification ☐ Secondary School ☐ University Undergraduate
- ☐ University Postgraduate ☐ Other ☐ Prefer not to answer

17. How long have you lived away from Niue

- ☐ Less than 5 years ☐ 5 – 10 years ☐ 10 years + ☐ Never lived in Niue

18. Which country do you live

- ☐ Nz ☐ Australia ☐ Other, please state _____

19. If you live in New Zealand, which region, please state _____

20. If you live in Auckland, which suburb please state _____

Thank you for your time to fill out this questionnaire, it is appreciated. Please fold and place the completed form as indicated by the researcher. It is important to note your answers to this questionnaire remain strictly confidential.

After you have dropped your completed form in the collection box please indicate to the researcher, if you would like to participate in the second phase of my research that involves a one on one interview.

Appendix B

Exploring the nature and role of Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) tourism in Niue

Semi structured interviews indicative questions

1. Background

Researcher ‘prompts’:

- How long are you living away from Niue?
- When did you have your last visit?
- How long was your last visit?
- Who did you visit?

2. Motivation

Researcher ‘prompts’:

- What was the reason for your last visit?
- How frequently do you travel to Niue?
- Why is in that frequency?

3. Experiences

Researcher ‘prompts’:

- What experiences did you have on your last visit in Niue?
- How would you describe the feeling of those experiences?
- Did you participate any culturally significant event?
- Does the Niuean community in NZ have similar events?
- If yes, what was that, and how it is different in Niue and NZ?
- Did you feel in any form of difference?
- What landmarks/seatracks or tourist attractions did you go while in Niue?
- How would you compare the feelings when you visiting such a landmark in Niue?
- Have you eaten local food? What kind of food was that? Do you know the local suppliers?
- How do you feel after visiting Niue? Does it awakening a feeling of belonging or stronger ties to Niue?

Appendix C

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

15 June 2012

Project Title

Exploring the nature and role of Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) tourism in Niue

Greetings / Fakaalofa Atu,

My name is Ilona Laskai and I would like to invite you to participate in my survey. This voluntary survey is a part of my master thesis in the School of Hospitality and Tourism at Auckland University of Technology. You will be asked to complete the survey about your experiences at your recent visit in Niue. Your decision to participate will be appreciated, however your choice to participate or not will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You may also withdraw any time prior to the completion of data collection. Once you choose to withdraw, all the data related to you will be destroyed.

What is the purpose of this research?

The aim of my research is to explore the nature and role of Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) tourism to Niue. The result of my research will be reflected in my thesis which is expected to provide useful information to the Government of Niue and the NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in their policy making processes.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

This survey is recruiting people who have Niuean origin, and recently visited or on their visit in Niue at the time of the data collection. Your responses are very important to accomplish this project. Your answers guided by honesty and good faith will be appreciated. All information you provide will be strictly **confidential** and will be used only in a combined statistical form.

What will happen in this research?

You simply will be asked to fill out the form and answer the questions. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete this survey. After completion please fold it carefully and place it as indicated by the researcher. By completing the questionnaire you are indicating your consent to participate in this research. This survey is also providing you with an opportunity to participate in the second phase of the research in a follow up interview series. Your willingness to participate in the one on one interview series would be greatly appreciated. Please indicate your interest to the researcher who will contact you to arrange a suitable time and venue.

What are the discomforts and risks?

To participate in this survey and fill out the form is entirely voluntary, and the information you provide is strictly confidential. Your selection to participate in this research and your acceptance to fill out the survey form is an opportunity for you to provide valuable information towards the better understanding of the importance of the VFR tourism to Niue. The questions are structured to be easy to read and answer with no intention to cause any discomfort.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

However, if you feel any hesitation or discomfort in answering a question there is an option for you to abstain. Your information will be only used in a combined statistical form, where you are assured total anonymity.

What are the benefits?

This voluntary survey is a part of my master thesis in the School of Hospitality and Tourism at Auckland University of Technology. By accomplishing this

research and my thesis I will graduate with Master of Tourism Studies. However, the success of this research couldn't happen without your participation. The results of this research will be analyzed in my thesis document which is also intending to provide useful information for the Government of Niue and the NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in their policy making processes regarding tourism development.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There is no cost involved in filling out this survey form, however your time of approximately 15 – 20 minutes will be greatly appreciated.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

By completing the questionnaire you are indicating your consent to participate in this research.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

The results of this research will be available in electronic form. Please indicate if you would like to receive a copy.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Contact details:

Researcher contact details: Ilona Laskai. Contact email: vph3468@aut.ac.nz. For personal safety reasons AUTEK does not allow researchers to provide home addresses or phone numbers.

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Hamish Bremner, PhD. Contact email: Hamish.bremner@aut.ac.nz. Work phone number: 64 9 921 9999 ext 5898

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Dr Rosemary Godbold, rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz Work phone number: 64 9 921 9999 ext 6902.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14th of May 2012, AUTEK Reference number 12/85.

Appendix D

Consent Form



Project title: Exploring the nature and role of Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) tourism to Niue

Project Supervisor: Hamish Bremner, PhD

Researcher: Ilona Laskai

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 15 June 2012.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one):
Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

.....
.....

Participant's name:

.....
.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....

Date:

*Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14 May
2012 AUTEK Reference number 12/85*