Republic of Fiji

14th Asia Pacific Executive Training Program

Tourism and Rural Development:
Building Opportunity for Sustainable Growth and Job Creation

Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport
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Agenda

- Introduction
- Challenges of Rural Tourism in Fiji
- Fijian Government Policies & Frameworks
- Fijian Government Programmes & Initiatives
- Successful Rural Tourism Areas in Fiji
- Reasons behind Success
- Developing Rural Tourism Areas in Fiji
- Benefits of Rural Tourism
- Recommendations
Introduction

TOURISM AS AN ECONOMIC SECTOR

• Tourism has been the largest sector of the Fijian economy for the past three decades.

• A multi-dimensional tool to achieve our socio-economic ambitions.

• Contributed over FJ $3 billion in 2019 to the economy in total earnings (IVS, 2019) and close to 40% of GDP.

• 894,389 total international visitors in 2019

RURAL TOURISM IN FIJI

• Development phase (Incorporated in our National Development Plan and Fijian Tourism Plan 2021).

• Mostly composed in outer islands, maritime regions and inland.
Challenges

- **PRODUCT IDENTIFICATION & FEASIBILITY RESEARCH**
- **LINKAGES WITH OTHER SECTORS** e.g. AGRICULTURE & MANUFACTURING
- **SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESSIBILITY**
- **ACCESS TO FINANCE**
- **BUSINESS COMPLIANCE**
- **INDIGENEOUS CONSENSUS ON COMMUNALLY OWNED LAND FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**
Challenges Cont.

MARKETING CHALLENGES

- ACCESS TO DIGITAL PLATFORM
- E-COMMERCE GATEWAY
- LINK WITH TRAVEL AGENTS & WHOLESALERS
- SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT
- TECHNICAL CAPACITY

Product Development and Commercialisation of Tourism Experiences in Rural Areas
Challenges Cont.

- Partnership with large tourism operators
- Maintaining consistency of supply
- Compliance with standards
- Changing demands
Fijian Government Policies & Frameworks

BUSINESS REFORMS
- Removal of business license
- Eased registration processes

TAX REFORMS
- Removal of Service Turnover Tax (STT)
- Reduction and relaxation of Environment and Climate Adaptation Levy (ECAL) for business operators
- 150% Tax deduction on tourism properties hiring local artists

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
- Stronger rural economy

FIJIAN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN (FT 2021)
- Focus on tourism infrastructure and rural tourism

Source: Chris McLennan (Tourism Fiji)
Fijian Government Programmes & Initiatives

TOURISM AWARENESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

BUSINESS MENTORING, TRAINING, CAPACITY BUILDING & UP-RESKILLING

ON-GOING EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

FACILITATING PARTNERSHIP WITH DONOR AGENCIES AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

CONCESSIONAL LOAN PACKAGES & INCOME GENERATING PROJECTS

Source: Chris McLennan (Tourism Fiji)

Product Development and Commercialisation of Tourism Experiences in Rural Areas
Successful Rural Tourism Areas in Fiji

- **Yasawa groups of islands** - archipelago in Fiji with over 20 islands (135 km²).

- Have involved in sustainable tourism ventures over the past 30 years (pioneers).

- Tourism Experiences offered: Boutique and homestay accommodation, cultural activities, village tours, water and land activities, manta ray experiences, etc.

Yasawa Island Aerial view
Source: Tourism Fiji Images

Budget Homestay Accommodation - Yasawa Islands
Source: Tourism Fiji Images

Pristine View - Yasawa Island Group
Source: Tourism Fiji Images
Successful Rural Tourism Areas in Fiji

• **Mamanuca groups of islands** - archipelago in Fiji with over 20 volcanic islands.

• Have dedicated to providing authentic Fijian hospitality on island settings.

• Tourism Experiences offered: Boutique island style accommodation, cultural activities, village tours, water and land activities.
Successful Rural Tourism Areas in Fiji

- **Levuka** - a town in the island of Ovalau (old capital of Fiji).
- Have involved in offering cultural/heritage tourism.
- Tourism Experiences offered: Homestay accommodation, historical sites, village tours, snorkeling and historic town walking tours.

Levuka Historical Port Town (UNESCO
Source: Dep’t of National Heritage Gallery

Rainforest Village
Source: Levuka Tourism Images

Homestay Accommodation
Source: Levuka Tourism Images
## Reasons behind Success

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<tr>
<th>YASAWA ISLAND GROUP</th>
<th>MAMANUCA ISLAND GROUP</th>
<th>LEVUKA TOWN</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Greater percentage of local ownership and control over operations</td>
<td>• Have maintained its greater stock of lush eco-forests</td>
<td>• Preserving its authenticity</td>
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<td>• Involve sustainable tourism activities as part of tourism offerings</td>
<td>• Highly involve locals in daily operations</td>
<td>• Declaring attractions as a world heritage site</td>
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<td>• Strong links with cruise companies to ensure accessibility to the island group</td>
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<td>• Tourism offerings pose less risk to the natural environment</td>
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<td>• Major focus on conservation of natural environment</td>
<td>• Continuous identification of new tourism products and activities that are of low risk to the environment</td>
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<td>• Specialize in boutique and budget accommodation rather than clustered resorts</td>
<td>• Major focus on conservation of natural environment</td>
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Developing Rural Tourism Areas in Fiji

- **Namosi Eco Retreat** – located on the main island of Viti Levu.
  - Offers eco-tourism experiences in one of the interior provinces of Fiji including Village style accommodation, village tours, horse riding, river rafting, Fijian cooking classes and etc.

- **Talanoa Treks Fiji** – located in the interior Ra province of Viti Levu.
  - Offers tailor-made hiking tourism experiences to tourist to Fiji’s pristine forests, mountains, remote villages.
Benefits of Rural Tourism

• Viable tool for achieving rural development in Fiji.
• Creates direct, indirect and induced employment opportunities for locals.
• Ensures triple bottom line effect in communities.
• Brings local communities to the forefront of tourism development in the nation- inclusive growth and recovery.
• Huge potential to complement current tourism product offerings of the nation.
• Encourages sustainable tourism development.
• Encourages innovation, entrepreneurship and sectoral linkages.
• Puts greater emphasis on environment, cultural and socio-economic conservation.
Recommendations

• Strong reflection of rural tourism development to be in the national agenda items.

• Extensive community engagement with rural communities that have potential for rural tourism development.

• Situational analysis research on local communities in Fiji to identify rural tourism priorities and assist accordingly.

• Securing donor funding and mapping with relevant rural tourism development goals.

• Continuous assistance to rural operators and communities to gain visibility in the international market.

• Incentivising local tourism businesses and easing on business start-up requirements.
Thank you

Source: Tourism Fiji Images