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**Exploring Local Perceptions on Visual Media Representations of  
Climate Change and Last Chance Tourism in Tuvalu**

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

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By

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## **Abstract**

This thesis seeks to explore local Tuvaluan feelings and perceptions on the visual representation of Tuvalu in international climate change media stories in conjunction with the island nation's growing status as a last chance tourism (LCT) destination. The study assesses, from a local Tuvaluan perspective, common visual themes that feature in international media stories on Tuvalu, while also investigating the potential connections between climate change imagery and the implications of Tuvalu being seen as a last chance tourism destination by foreign tourists. Using a qualitative research approach, with talanoa-informed interviews in Tuvalu and open-ended questionnaires for individuals who have visited Tuvalu as tourists, the study recorded the feedback of average Tuvaluan citizens representing a variety of educational, professional and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Findings from this research indicate that there are feelings of misrepresentation among local Tuvaluans in relation to visual imagery that features in media stories on climate change. Such imagery contributes to visual narratives that often portray Tuvaluans as powerless victims of climate change. In addition, there is evidence that misrepresentative media imagery, as perceived by local Tuvaluans, plays a role in encouraging last chance tourists to visit due to a perception that Tuvalu's islands are rapidly disappearing, and the country's very existence is under imminent threat.

Although last chance tourism is a potentially viable source of revenue for Tuvalu, locals appear divided as to whether or not it would be an ideal approach due to a range of possible long-term negative implications. Furthermore, interviews with tourists who

have previously visited Tuvalu suggest that pre-travel low expectations for the country are generally not fulfilled once the unique culture and relaxed lifestyle of Tuvalu is experienced firsthand.

While visual media misrepresentations of Tuvalu are commonplace and should be avoided through improvements in professional photojournalistic practices, such imagery appears to be placing additional attention on the country and influencing foreign tourists to travel to Tuvalu. This research shows that these tourists often tend to arrive with expectations of witnessing abject environmental degradation and human suffering as is often portrayed in media imagery, only to discover the presence of a resilient local population who are dedicated to remaining on their islands despite the environmental challenges they face.

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I dedicate this thesis, along with the time and effort that were put into its completion, to the loving memory of my late grandmother, Eunice Marvel.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

International media stories and visuals on climate change (CC) in the Pacific represent Tuvalu as a sinking island nation battling against rising sea levels. The dramatic visual images in particular have led to the phenomenon of *last chance tourism* (LCT) with visitors hoping for a glimpse of the island before it disappears. This thesis examines the modes of representation in the common visual media narratives on Tuvalu and evaluates them from a local Tuvaluan perspective. Interspersing interviews with local islanders and tourists the thesis identifies possible connections between depictions of Tuvalu in the international media and the allure of Tuvalu as a LCT destination.

## 1.2 Background

Since the late 1980s, media and environmentalist campaigns have showcased Tuvalu as the “sinking” or “disappearing” islands (Farbotko, 2010, p. 226), due to their extremely low elevation, geographic isolation in the Pacific Ocean, and their perceived vulnerability to CC. An array of media stories on CC in Tuvalu over the past 20 years has been accompanied by largely negative photographic depictions of the situation in Tuvalu, while at the same time portraying the local Tuvaluan people as “marginalised” or “tragic victims” of CC (Farbotko, 2008, p. 279). The focus on negative aspects of CC, such as disenfranchised communities or environmental degradation, has had little effect on promoting positive behavioural changes for CC mitigation in developed countries (Corner et al., 2016). As Corner et al. (2016) argue, non-sensationalised imagery that depicts adaptation and resilience could potentially be more effective in instilling a sense

of hope and driving people in wealthier countries to alter activities and behaviours that contribute to global CC.

Regardless of the views on the visual narratives on Tuvalu, what is often missing in scholarly discussions on CC impacts and implications for the island nation are the voices of local Tuvaluan people. This study endeavours to gauge local Tuvaluan feelings and perceptions of not only the visuals of their island, but also of the approaches used by visiting photojournalists when collecting imagery for their CC stories.

The outcome of a photojournalist's work is meant to be to deliver "visual truth" that avoids subjectivity as much as humanly possible (Newton, 1998, p. 8). But, establishing the degree to which visuals represent truth in the case of Tuvalu requires obtaining insights of those who reside on the island, rather than merely accepting the version of a temporary visitor as representative truth.

One of the objectives of the study is to understand the influences sensationalised media imagery of CC in Tuvalu may have on encouraging overseas visitors to visit the country as a last chance tourism option. Tourism in Tuvalu is still a very small industry, but visitor numbers have been increasing, especially in recent years. The study examines the topic of LCT with Tuvaluans in order to understand their attitudes towards, and management plans for, it. The study also explores what kinds of tourists are most suited for Tuvalu, and how Tuvalu can cater to these tourists in a way that is least detrimental to the local culture and way of life, while also requiring minimal financial investment. Overall, this research aims to examine the challenges and opportunities for Tuvalu in meeting its tourism objectives and efforts at a time of advancing climate change.

### 1.3 Need for the Study

While there is some research on the perspectives of local Tuvaluans on the topics of tourism and CC (e.g., Paton & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010); Prideaux & McNamara, 2013), there is not much scholarship on local perceptions of LCT specifically. An understanding of locally-perceived benefits and drawbacks of such an approach to tourism development in Tuvalu is necessary because increased tourism in Tuvalu could have profound effects on a country that is both geographically isolated and unaccustomed to the presence of large numbers of outsiders. In addition to local Tuvaluan perspectives on LCT, an integral part of this research is to feature the perspectives and experiences of foreign tourists who have been to Tuvalu. This is important to ascertain the reasons for their travel to Tuvalu and whether visuals in the international media influenced their decisions to travel to Tuvalu.

There is existing research on representations of Tuvalu and Tuvaluans in the form of islographs (Farbotko, 2008), which are described as “coherent suites of island representations and their constitutive roles in relations of power” (p. vi), or “shared, non-static imaginings of islands, mediated through words, images and symbols” (p.5). Islographs include film and photographs which are often used to represent Tuvalu and CC in Western media platforms. Studies on the topic of such representations of Tuvalu and the Tuvaluan people often feature information from interviews conducted with government officials, who may be specialists in a particular field, or representatives of a relevant ministry. However, there is no record of the feelings and perceptions of Tuvaluan citizens from diverse professional, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds on how Tuvalu is represented.

## 1.4 Researcher Context

I have had a long history with the three key elements of this research: Photography, Tourism, and the Pacific Islands. I first travelled from my native Pennsylvania to the Pacific Islands and New Zealand in 2003, and during this time became interested in the movements of human populations and the driving forces behind tourism. Around 2005, I began a long-term self-directed study in the field of documentary photography and have been organically developing my style and approach ever since. I have a particular interest in visual accuracy and representation, and I was recently recognised by receiving the 2019 Sony New Zealand World Photographer of the Year Award.

My interest in Tuvalu as a location for this specific case study stemmed from my many years of experience travelling in the Pacific Islands, and my association with communities in these small and isolated islands. As Tuvalu became more of a focus in the media over the past decade, especially in reference to CC, I noticed that some of the imagery which emerged from Tuvalu seemed to follow certain common narratives.

When I began working in tourism in 2016, I started to notice particular marketing trends in the industry which seemed to project a sense of urgency on to tourists to visit certain destinations such as Cuba, North Korea, Antarctica, or the Great Barrier Reef due to the belief that these places were at risk of undergoing dramatic cultural or environmental changes. Tuvalu's islands are one of the main destinations in the Pacific where tourists are encouraged to travel to "before they disappear" (Trubowitz, 2014).

When I began my master's research, I travelled to Tuvalu in order to put the local Tuvaluan people at the heart of the inquiry and capture their thoughts and feelings on the

way their nation was being represented visually by international media outlets covering the effects of CC.

## **1.5 Thesis Outline**

The thesis comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the topic of visual representations of Tuvalu as a nation sinking under the weight of climate change and the capacity of these images to encourage last chance tourism in an island perceived by outsiders as disappearing. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on CC and tourism and climate change in Tuvalu, the state of LCT (and other similar forms of tourism), and visual media representations of climate change. Chapter 3 discusses the research design, methodology, theoretical underpinnings and approaches used in the research. Chapter 4 outlines the findings of the research, including a presentation of local Tuvaluan responses to CC and LCT, connections between LCT and visual media representations, and the results of foreign tourist survey data. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the overall findings while Chapter 6 ends with the conclusions reached by the study and a set of recommendations for tourism policy makers.

The Epilogue represents a signature element of this research project in which two local Tuvaluans provide direct instructions, feedback, and involvement in the undertaking of a locally-guided photography project. During this exercise, I assumed the role of a photographer who was to document the island of Funafuti through the primary guidance of a local Tuvaluan. The goal was not necessarily to document the effects of CC, but instead to allow a local individual to provide direct instruction as to what should be photographed, how it should be photographed, followed by a detailed explanation as to

why the content of a particular place, or element of a place was chosen to be featured in the photograph. The aim is to be able to compare locally-informed photographs with those that were created by non-Tuvaluan photojournalists for the sake of highlighting key differences.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The low-lying nation of Tuvalu has been recognised as being directly on the ‘front line’ of climate change (CC) impacts (Smith & McNamara, 2015). Research indicates that Tuvalu may potentially have to be completely evacuated within the next 50-100 years due to the adverse effects of CC and the associated sea level rise (SLR) that threatens the islands (Corlew, 2012). If these dire predictions come true, Tuvalu could be the first sovereign nation to have to be evacuated as a result of man-made environmental factors (Corlew, 2012).

For nearly 40 years, international media outlets have helped sensationalise the plight of the Tuvaluan people, labelling the islands as ‘sinking’ or ‘disappearing’ (Farbotko, 2010). People outside the Pacific region often hear of Tuvalu for the first time in the context of its vulnerability to climate change, so much so that climate change tourists have an increasing interest in Tuvalu as a travel destination (Farbotko, 2010). As one of the world’s smallest and least visited nations, Tuvalu had an almost non-existent tourism industry as recently as the 1980s (Prideaux & McNamara, 2013). But, in the wake of sustained media reports of CC impacts in Tuvalu, there has been a marked, albeit small, increase in tourist arrivals. This is possibly because many travellers perceive the present time to be their ‘last chance’ to visit the islands (Prideaux & McNamara, 2013, p. 591). Such ‘last chance’ tourism is often driven by visual depictions of ‘exotic’ island locales seen in media reporting as well as tourism promotional materials.

This chapter reviews the literature on CC and tourism in Tuvalu, the current state of tourism in Tuvalu, the ‘last chance’ tourism trend, visual media representations of CC in Tuvalu and CC photographic documentation practices, in an attempt to map the connections between them.

## **2.2 Climate Change in Tuvalu**

Throughout pre-human settlement history, the Pacific Islands have experienced a wide range of natural environmental and climatic changes and variations (Isaack et al., 2017).

The first humans to settle in the islands of Remote Oceania around 3000 BCE, the ancestors of today’s Polynesian people, were skilled navigators who, over time, developed highly specialised skills and knowledge of how to survive (and thrive) on small, geographically isolated islands (Matisoo-Smith, 2015).

Ancient Polynesians recognised changes in weather patterns and conditions on their islands, and they had the ability to abandon one island in favour of migrating to another when necessary. For example, early Polynesians had at one time settled on and subsequently abandoned Norfolk Island for reasons unknown (McEvoy et al., 2010).

The same form of mysterious Polynesian abandonment took place in Eastern Polynesia’s Henderson and Pitcairn Islands after what is estimated to be 600 years of occupation (Preece, 1998). All three of these islands were completely uninhabited at the time of European arrival in the Pacific. The reasons for abandonment of these established settlements are debatable, but climatic variations cannot be ruled out as a factor. Climatic changes have been recorded in the Pacific as far back as the Holocene (pre-human settlement) (Isaack et al., 2017), and it is possible that islands such as Norfolk,

Henderson, and Pitcairn were abandoned in response to observed changes in the environment that affected food or water availability.

In modern times, however, climate change has been accelerated by human activities, primarily through colonisation, capitalism, the use of fossil fuels, unsustainable resource extraction, a profit-driven economic system, and large-scale pollution caused by the world's industrialised nations (Fisher, 2011; Klein, 2015; Agarwal and Narain, 1991). There is strong evidence that these changes in climate are worsening at an alarming rate, and the effects are currently being experienced around the world (Fisher, 2011). Fisher (2011) states that this represents an increase in biophysical and societal hazards and stresses, while also advocating the need for increased place-based research initiatives on the topic. In doing this, researchers can better comprehend the future implications of CC on local populations, and the nature of subversion of human security.

CC places pressure on economic and political systems, but Fisher (2011) argues that emphasis should be placed on first understanding the key CC factors that exacerbate human security, especially in low lying Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Tuvalu. Fisher (2011) goes on to detail the potential loss of Tuvaluan cultural elements as a result of CC and reduced national autonomy as a result of top-down international responses to the issue. Fisher (2011) does not, however, mention the historical elements of Tuvaluan (and wider Polynesian) culture, or the traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), which could give Pacific Island societies an advantage in effectively adapting to CC (McCubbin, Smit, & Pearce, 2015).

Climate change scientists estimate that just a one metre rise in sea levels may result in many low lying islands around the world being rendered unsuitable for human habitation (Nurse et al., 2014). Some experts predict that this level of ocean rise is likely to occur within the next 50-100 years (Corlew, 2012). In the specific case of Tuvalu, a SLR of just 20 - 40 centimetres will be likely to result in widespread saltwater contamination of soil that could devastate vital pulaka (swamp taro) plantations, while also causing serious damage to houses and other infrastructure on the islands (Patel, 2006). As this could be devastating, discussions are currently taking place around the possibility of an eventual forced migration from Tuvalu if CC is not properly addressed on a local and international scale (Corlew, 2012). The issue is further complicated by the fact that Tuvalu is a sovereign nation, and there is no obvious country where all Tuvaluans could go if a large-scale forced migration were to eventuate. This could result in the breaking up of the Tuvaluan community, and the potential extinction of the distinctive language and culture of the islands (Corlew, 2012).

Throughout history, the inhabitants of Tuvalu's nine low-lying coral atolls have been at the mercy of the variable sea and weather patterns. However, in more recent times issues such as severe coastal erosion, sustained king tides, salt water inundation of crops, extreme weather patterns, high winds, and flooding have been more prominent than in the past (McCubbin et al., 2015). In recent years, Tuvalu has experienced severe salt water inundation of arable soil and coastal erosion (Corlew, 2012). The country has also been at the mercy of major droughts and cyclones, which the local people have adapted to surprisingly well, but the looming threat of rising sea levels brings with it new challenges that the Tuvaluan people must adapt to and overcome (see e.g., *Tuvalu's*

*Views on the Possible Security Implications of Climate Change, in the report of the UN Secretary General to the UN General Assembly 64th Session, 2009*). The livelihoods of people who live in Tuvalu and other Pacific Island Developing Countries (PIDS) have been identified by The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to be under extreme threat of CC-related environmental changes and it is even feared that some low-lying nations will become uninhabitable if current environmental trends do not decelerate (Corlew, 2012).

Actions are underway to find potential solutions to Tuvalu's current range of issues, and the Tuvaluan government has been very outspoken in international discussions around CC and its effects on low-lying islands (*Tuvalu's national adaptation programme of action, 2007*). There are already a number of scientists and international committees considering possible solutions to Tuvalu's current and future matters regarding food security, access to clean water, resource protection, human migration, and sovereignty, as well as threats of cultural loss, conflict, natural disasters and disease (*Tuvalu's views on the possible security implications of climate change to be included in the report of the UN Secretary General to the UN General Assembly 64th Session, 2009*). A report by the International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative (ICCAI) (2011) predicts that the temperatures in Tuvalu will continue to rise in accordance with observed trends; rainfall patterns will continuously change and will result in more extreme rainfalls; cyclones will decrease in frequency while also increasing in intensity; the ocean will further acidify as the result of high global emissions; and sea level will continue to rise.

The topic of forced migration as a response to CC itself opens up several issues that are difficult to address. For example, what happens to Tuvalu's status as a sovereign nation if forced migration becomes a reality? Where would a displaced population of more than 10,000 (and growing) people go? How can a culture and language of a translocated population be preserved? To date, no country has shown a committed willingness to accept CC refugees, and it appears that some world leaders are simply waiting to see how the situation unfolds before making any plans or promises on the issue.

Importantly, many Pacific Islanders have expressed feelings of disapproval to being classified as refugees due to the negative associations that are embedded in the term itself. Instead, the issue must be approached in a way that considers their desire to either make adaptations and continue residing in their home islands, or an option to 'migrate with dignity' to another country rather than ignoring the issue until it becomes so serious that forced migration is the only response ("Pacific Islanders reject 'climate refugee' status, want to 'migrate with dignity', SIDS conference hears," 2014). The discussion around forced migration and the potential of future CC or environmental refugees has become a major topic of discussion in political circles, educational institutions, and in the international media (Constable, 2017). However, it is essential to have a greater focus on the feelings and perspectives of the inhabitants of environmentally vulnerable island nations, and the governments that represent them, in order to understand the most appropriate CC responses in those countries.

For example, Bedford, Bedford, Corcoran, & Didham (2016) point out that the governments of Tuvalu and Kiribati currently do not show interest in relocating their

entire populations off of their islands, even if it is a last resort response. Undertaking such a mass, forced migration would be extremely problematic primarily because of the excessive associated economic expenses, as well as the complex and strong connections that Pacific Island people have with their ancestral lands (Bedford et al., 2016). The governments of Kiribati and Tuvalu are not inherently anti-migration in their stance, but Bedford et al. (2016) explain how a more desirable approach from a local perspective is to instead encourage voluntary “migration with dignity” (p. 107). This would mean that citizens of vulnerable countries such as Tuvalu and Kiribati should have increased residence and employment options in larger neighbouring countries such as Fiji, New Zealand, and Australia. This form of migration has already been happening for several decades in Tuvalu and Kiribati, as a number of citizens have left to work in phosphate mines in Nauru, or as maritime workers on board merchant ships around the world (Bedford et al., 2016).

While CC in Tuvalu is closely monitored domestically and internationally, there is no recognised immediate need to abandon the islands at this time, and responses within the country continue to focus on building national economic self-reliance. Taupo, Cuffe, & Noy (2018) posit that CC in Tuvalu adds to economic hardship, which in turn, limits opportunities for migration and the ability to respond to the negative environmental effects of CC. Tuvaluans who are on the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum also tend to live in the geographical areas that are most prone to environmental catastrophes, such as low-lying and eroded coastal areas (Taupo et al., 2018). An interesting feature of socioeconomic hardship in Tuvalu, and some other Pacific Island nations, is the general absence of abject poverty despite an overall lack of monetary resources and government-

run support services (Taupo et al., 2018). This is partly thanks to strong cultural traditions and community structures that ensure support through the distribution of food and wealth within communities and families. There are also considerable amounts of overseas remittances flowing back into Tuvalu from family members abroad (Prideaux & McNamara, 2013).

Economic sustainability and the ability to be able to generate income is very important, especially on the island of Funafuti where many people have migrated to from outer islands in search of better employment, education and healthcare opportunities, but where they do not necessarily have rights to customary land ownership (Farbotko, 2008). The ability to pay rent and purchase increasingly expensive imported food is a primary concern for such residents in the capital (Taupo et al., 2018), and innovative solutions to diversify and develop economic opportunities in Tuvalu are currently needed. One response that has the potential to improve the domestic economic environment (and one that this paper is primarily concerned with) is the potential development and promotion of Tuvalu as an attractive destination for intrepid and environmentally-aware international tourists.

### **2.3 Tourism in Tuvalu**

The 2017 South Pacific Tourism Organisation's (SPTO) *Annual Review of Visitor Arrivals in Pacific Island Countries* defines a 'tourist' as "a person visiting a country other than that in which he/she has his/her usual place of residence for any reason other than following an occupation remunerated from within the country visited." A tourist stays in a given place for at least one night, but not exceeding a period of one year

(Ragimana & Butukoro, 2018). In terms of tourism, Tuvalu has been described in the past as one of the world's least visited countries, only receiving 100 – 150 bona fide tourists per year as of 2008 (Farbotko, 2008) however, in 2018 there were a recorded total of 2,082 tourist arrivals representing 90 different nationalities (*Tuvalu Tourism Office 2018 quarterly reports, 3rd quarter arrivals tables*, 2018). Most arrivals into Tuvalu are there for visiting friends and relatives (VFR), various international aid agency work or business purposes (Prideaux & McNamara, 2013). Prideaux and McNamara (2013) point out that “leisure tourism is almost nonexistent relegating the country to the status of a ‘nontourism destination’” (p. 583).

There is a growing international awareness relating to Tuvalu's susceptibility to climate change and sea level rise, which compounds the other issues faced by the country because of its geographically remote location, low gross domestic product (GDP), and paucity of natural resources for self-sustainability (Prideaux & McNamara, 2013). Despite this international attention, Prideaux and McNamara (2013) claim that Tuvalu still does not seem to appeal to a great number of international tourists, but they believe that tourism represents a significant opportunity for the country to achieve a higher degree of economic diversification. While actual tourist numbers are small, and the country currently only appeals to a certain type of tourist, Tuvalu could expand these numbers through carefully considered marketing campaigns. Contrary to the 2013 report by Prideaux and McNamara, Farbotko (2010) focuses on the growing phenomenon of climate change tourism in Tuvalu, and the potential that the country has to market itself as a destination for voyeuristic tourists to view the effects of climate change firsthand.

Farbotko (2010) advocates for Tuvalu to be heralded as a model for renewable energy, while pointing out that “Pacific islanders are heroized as climate change saviours when environmentalists attempt to locate ethnocentric notions of environmentally harmonious, ‘traditional’ culture on disappearing islands” (p. 224). In this perspective, Tuvalu could benefit by seizing the opportunity to fulfil a unique position in the world of international tourism as a place where tourism and environmentalism come together harmoniously. If this vision of Tuvalu as a model for environmental stewardship is to be realised, then there is a great deal of work to be done in preparation. The main island of Funafuti, where most of the country’s tourism activity is centred, is overcrowded, and over half of the country’s 10,000 inhabitants live on the narrow 2.4 square kilometre atoll (Gay, 2010). Wind and solar energy stations have been installed on the island, but these technologies are prone to technical faults. There are also other issues relating to fossil fuel pollution, sanitation and waste management on Funafuti that will need to be addressed (*Tuvalu’s national adaptation programme of action*, 2007).

If Tuvalu were able to fully realise a goal of being a “showcase of renewable energy” as described by Farbotko (2010, p. 226), it would surely send a powerful message to the rest of the world, and this could potentially bring exponential increases in international tourist arrivals. Currently, any increase in international tourism to Tuvalu will be likely to usher in significant economic improvement for the country, simply because the industry is so underutilised (Gay, 2010). However, as stated above, there are current barriers to overcome in terms of making this vision a reality. Gay (2010) points out that matters relating to climate change and environmental sustainability are crucial to the evolution of tourism and business development in general. To address and overcome

these issues, it is of the utmost importance that local Tuvaluans improve and develop more environmentally sustainable behaviours relating to fossil fuel use and waste disposal, while at the same time maintaining the important elements of their culture that uphold their identity as Tuvaluans (Gay, 2010).

Close attention to local environmental interactions, and cultural elements will help increase the gratification of CC tourists who come for a glimpse of Tuvaluan life on the front lines of climate change. Importantly, as Gay (2010) points out, while a great deal of opportunities currently exist, any tourism initiatives that are created in Tuvalu must be undertaken using a culturally appropriate approach that is responsible, manageable and sustainable. What Gay (2010) does not mention is the degree to which this approach would involve the direct input of local Tuvaluans in determining how much they should develop tourism on their islands. Planning, implementation and development of approaches that are culturally acceptable from a primarily local perspective are very important to take into consideration. Special attention must also be given to the intentions, desires and goals of local people beyond achieving economic gains through the promotion of tourism in Tuvalu. The development of climate change tourism in Tuvalu could have consequences which would only be understood from the perspectives of average Tuvaluan citizens and it is therefore crucial to give priority to the opinions and concerns of native Tuvaluans.

If international CC tourists were to visit Tuvalu in greater numbers, it will be necessary to conduct further investigations into the local attitudes and perceptions relating to international tourists and the development of tourism in the country. As Ward and Berno (2011) highlight, “Perceptions of tourists, attitudes toward tourism

development, and relations between tourists and hosts have been identified as key factors in the tourism industry and critical issues for governments, policy makers and industry” (p. 1556).

Although research on attitudes and perceptions towards tourists and tourism development have been undertaken in other parts of the South Pacific, such as the Cook Islands and Fiji (Berno, 2002), it cannot be assumed that the results and findings these studies would be applicable to Tuvalu. The Cook Islands and Fiji have had a much closer relationship with tourists and tourism for a sustained period of time (Berno, 2002). In contrast, Tuvalu’s tourism industry is both younger and far less developed than other nearby Pacific Island nations. Out of the 18 Pacific countries that are monitored by the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) on their Annual Review of Visitor Arrivals, Tuvalu’s international tourist arrival numbers totalled just 2,530 in 2017 (Ragimana & Butukoro, 2018) with a slight drop in 2018 to 2082 arrivals (*Tuvalu Tourism Office 2018 quarterly reports, 3rd quarter arrivals tables*, 2018).

Even though Tuvalu’s visitor arrivals increased 2.6% from 2016 to 2017, the country’s ranking is well at the bottom of the list for tourist arrivals, falling just below Nauru (whose total was 3002 arrivals in 2017) (Ragimana & Butukoro, 2018). The economies of many of the other countries listed on the SPTO annual report are closely tied to tourism, and the livelihoods of many individuals of those nations rely on continued interest from, and interactions with, tourists. For example, Fiji, which all travellers had to transit through en-route to Tuvalu before March 2019 (when Air Kiribati established direct flights), recorded 842,884 for the 2017 statistical year (Ragimana & Butukoro, 2018). This is by far the highest number of tourist arrivals for any Pacific

Island nation, with French Polynesia (198,956 arrivals) and the Cook Islands (161,362 arrivals) occupying second and third places respectively on the 2017 list (Ragimana & Butukoro, 2018).

It is possible that Tuvalu could effectively utilise its direct connection to Fiji to its advantage if it intends to usher in larger numbers of tourists. However, one of the major barriers for many tourists is the prohibitive cost of the Suva – Funafuti flights that currently operate only three times a week (Farbotko, 2008). Prideaux and McNamara (2010) point out that Tuvalu’s international airstrip on Funafuti (a tourist attraction in its own right) is only suitable for the 30-seat propeller aircrafts that Air Fiji uses to service the route, and it is unlikely that the airport would be upgraded to be able to receive larger capacity jet-propelled aircraft due to a lack of land and resources. It is also presumably unlikely that airfares would undergo a price reduction as long as Air Fiji is the only airline servicing the island in planes with relatively low passenger seating capacity. Seats on these flights are often unable to be sold due to weight restrictions due to the large amount of air cargo that is flown in from Fiji on the weekly flights (personal communication, February 22, 2019).

Despite the fact that Tuvalu’s tourism industry is currently very small, there needs to be more of an understanding as to the future of tourism using methods that take into account the desires of both tourists and local people at the same time. There are a range of factors that currently limit the number of tourists Tuvalu can host, such as availability of accommodation, food and water security, the state of the basic infrastructure, and climate change related environmental issues (*Tuvalu’s national adaptation programme of action*, 2007). Research has been undertaken in order to

identify the potential benefits and pitfalls of tourism in Tuvalu (Farbotko, 2010; Hübner, 2014; Prideaux & McNamara, 2010, 2013), but it is necessary to obtain more insight from local Tuvaluan communities and individuals in terms of their feelings and perceptions of increasing tourism in their country.

## **2.4 'Last Chance' Tourism**

Last chance tourism (LCT) is a form of tourism that stands in stark contrast to the explorers of last century who aimed to be the first visitor, or at least the first foreigner, in destinations that were perceived to be exotic or adventurous. LCT instead focuses on being among the last to visit particular places of interest before they change, or vanish completely (Dawson et al., 2011). LCT is defined by Dawson et al., (2011) as “a phenomenon whereby, ‘tourists explicitly seek vanishing landscapes or seascapes, and/or disappearing natural and/or social heritage’” (p. 251). The term LCT was first referenced in relation to increased tourism interest in the polar regions where CC and environmental devastation is widely reported on in the international media (Dawson et al., 2011). Similar to the way that the polar ice caps are reported to be melting, the islands of Tuvalu are represented as ‘disappearing’ beneath the sea, so it is easy to understand how the development of LCT as a tourism trend could apply to the case of Tuvalu. Before this approach to tourism development is applied, however, it is important to understand the specific benefits that it could have for Tuvalu while also carefully considering possible negative consequences it could present.

The concept of LCT as it relates to destinations that are dealing with the threats of critical environmental issues (such as Tuvalu) places this approach to travel in a similar

category as that of ‘dark tourism’ (Dale & Robinson, 2011) and ‘voyeuristic tourism’ (Farbotko, 2010). Piggott-McKellar & McNamara (2017) explain that the publically documented decline in health of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) has led to its labelling, in media and academic literature, as a last chance tourism destination. That is, a place tourists travel to experience before it is gone. While the GBR has been labelled as such, no empirical evidence has identified that it is actually occurring. This article explores the degree to which tourists are motivated to visit the GBR to see it before it’s gone, and examines the level of concern have about the range of issues that are threatening the GBR. Drawing on 235 questionnaires with on-site tourists, the results indicate that tourists are seeking to travel to the GBR in a bid to see the reef before it’s too late. These tourists – identified as seeking “a last chance experience” (p. 397) – were also found to be more environmentally conscious, with a higher level of concern about the overall health of the GBR. In terms of threats to the GBR, respondents indicated that they were mainly concerned about coral bleaching and CC, while the effects of tourism were of less concern.

Piggott-McKellar & McNamara (2017) explain that dark tourism is related to LCT and generally represents a niche market that often goes by other names such as “climate change, disappearing or vanishing, doom, dying, endangered or ‘see it before it’s gone’ tourism” (p. 399). The terminology for this approach to travel is fairly new, but humans throughout history have displayed an interest in visiting places that were perceived as threatened by natural or human causes (Piggott-McKellar & McNamara, 2017). Around the 1990s the idea of LCT became prevalent in a variety of media, and there are a number of websites, books, blogs and television shows that focus on the idea

of visiting a particular destination before it changes or disappears forever (Piggott-McKellar & McNamara, 2017).

In assessing the potential of LCT in Tuvalu, Prideaux & McNamara (2013) note that Tuvalu's potential tourism offer is based on its tropical island setting, cultural traditions, palm-fringed beaches, an 'off the beaten track' location, voyeuristic 'last chance' tourism because of climate change concerns and the potential for high-quality water-based activities including snorkelling, diving, swimming and sailing (p. 583). They put forward the idea that a focus on LCT might suit Tuvalu because it would involve minimal monetary investment. It would also take advantage of the perceived sense of urgency for tourists to visit because "climate change-driven sea level increases may result in the long-term relocation of families from parts of the country" (Prideaux & McNamara, 2013, p. 591).

There are, however, a number of ethical concerns associated with LCT, some of which are presented by Dawson et al. (2011), including the following:

- There are currently no specific LCT management models.
- How is LCT justified in vulnerable locations or in destinations with fragile ecosystems?
- The inherent long-term effects of LCT are not fully understood yet.
- Tourists' primary concern when visiting a last chance destination may be to elevate social status or to satisfy self-interests rather than focusing on the preservation and wellbeing of the environment species within that environment.

Lemelin, Dawson, Stewart, Maher, & Lueck (2010, p 489) also highlight the important question of whether or not “profiting in the short term from disappearing, dying, vanishing, or irreversibly changed landscapes and species” is an acceptable approach to tourism. Furthermore, there are a number of potentially problematic factors that cross between LCT and ‘dark tourism’ which tends to focus on disappearing indigenous cultures, death of people and wildlife, sites associated with death, and areas that display portrayals of anthropogenic environmental degradation related to CC (Lemelin et al., 2010).

While environmentally focused eco-tourism has been shown to have potentially positive effects on the attitudes and ethical values towards the environment among participants (Vila, Costa, Angulo-Preckler, Sarda, & Avila, 2016), it is not the same with LCT. It is potentially likely that tourists would not treat a place they perceive as doomed or disappearing with the same amount of respect and consideration they would if they visited a dedicated conservation area where active preservation methods were enacted. Hindley & Font's (2018) research finds that many tourist values and motivations for the pursuit of LCT are essentially egocentric in nature. The desires they have as tourists, to experience and learn from a particular place that is under threat, contain intrinsic negative environmental consequences due to the carbon costs of travelling there in the first place (Hindley & Font, 2018).

## **2.5 Visual Media Representations of Climate Change in Tuvalu**

There is an abundance of CC-related imagery in a variety of media including online, in magazines, newspapers and television. CC imagery in the media often depicts appalling

environmental degradation and frequently includes visualisations of the proverbial starving polar bears, melting sea ice, and pollution-filled skies above smokestacks (Corner, Webster, Teriete, et al., 2016). Even though such well-known and clichéd images would most certainly not have been taken in Tuvalu, a fair amount of visual imagery depicting CC in Tuvalu falls into the category of environmental degradation. Coastal erosion, flooding, and people standing in floodwater tend to be common themes for the media to focus on when reporting on CC in Pacific Islands, including Tuvalu.

While this form of devastating CC imagery may have a high degree of shock value for readers, there is also evidence that it actually does very little to foster positive environmental behaviour changes (Corner, Webster, Teriete, et al., 2016). This kind of imagery may even contribute to feelings of hopelessness, powerlessness, and apathy, which effectively goes against the goals of many NGOs and other agencies whose primary concern is CC (Corner, Webster, Teriete, et al., 2016). There is also a potential issue of how people who are featured in images that accompany CC stories in the media are portrayed, and there is a concern that the Tuvaluan people themselves have been made to look like helpless victims of CC who are in dire need of international assistance (Farbotko, 2005). The Tuvaluan people will not be likely to benefit from labels that uphold stereotypes of marginalisation and dependency in the minds of people in larger, industrialised nations (Farbotko, 2005). In addition, imagery that portrays Tuvaluans as CC victims can negatively influence the perceptions they have of themselves as a people. Farbotko (2005) mentions that Tuvaluan government officials have been involved in the fabrication of media portrayals of Tuvaluans as victims. Whatever the justification was

for these Tuvaluan government ministers to perpetuate the CC victim theme, it is important that there is an understanding of the consequences of such actions.

A primary concern for photographers and photojournalists who are covering CC topics in Tuvalu (and elsewhere) should be to prioritise the accurate representation of the people and places they are photographing. For a photojournalist to approach an assignment with a pre-determined goal of solely capturing images of degradation, destruction and poverty is irresponsible and potentially dangerous to the way viewers will perceive the content of the photographs. A more holistic and ethical photographic approach is necessary in order for photojournalists to deliver images that are as close to the truth as possible (Newton, 1998). Through research on CC visual images, (Wang, Corner, Chapman, & Markowitz, 2018) have produced a set of guidelines for CC photographers, photojournalists, and other media personnel to use as a reference when creating engaging and representative visual CC stories. These principles are:

1. Show 'real people' not staged photo-ops.
2. Tell new stories.
3. Show climate causes at scale.
4. Show emotionally powerful climate impacts.
5. Show local (but serious) climate impacts.
6. Be very careful with protest imagery.
7. Understand your audience.

Contrary to this view, researchers (and casual observers who have visited Tuvalu) have been known to find the opposite. For example, Tuvaluan participants in Paton &

Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2010) study “did not share the sense of urgency and fear about their futures as is well expressed in the international media and reports” (p. 691).

There is currently a need for local Tuvaluans to view and provide feedback on the imagery that represents them in international media, while also having a chance to provide input on how they feel these photography and other visual media campaigns should be conducted. This will allow for greater international understanding of CC issues, the needs of Tuvaluans, and the adaptations that they are currently making to CC in their country. It is also necessary to investigate the potential links between LCT and negative CC imagery of environmental degradation, or of Tuvaluan people who appear to be desperate victims of CC urgently wanting to migrate overseas. There exists a possibility that these images are driving last chance tourists to travel to Tuvalu ‘before it disappears’.

## **2.6 Gaps in the Literature**

An aspect that is often absent from the academic literature are the voices of local Tuvaluans on their own feelings and perceptions about the issues faced by their nation. Paton & Fairbairn-Dunlop (2010) rightfully point out that the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities is dependent on “having your voice heard and your actions counted” (p. 688). A diversity of local perspectives on the CC situation in Tuvalu will help improve understandings of the unseen structures that govern Tuvaluan communities, while also building more in-depth knowledge, fostering innovative solutions to issues, and facilitating cooperation between outside agencies and local communities (Paton & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010). Any responses to CC in Tuvalu, in terms of potential

migration, adaptations, initiatives, economic development plans or tourism development must be closely formulated with the consultation of not only the Tuvaluan government, but with communities and individuals in order to ensure that the needs and concerns of locals are taken into consideration. There appears to be a distinctive gap in the ways Tuvalu is perceived internationally and the way it is perceived (and experienced) locally. An overseas media consumer in an industrialised nation may assume by seeing photos of Tuvaluan children standing in water in front of their homes, or of a partially submerged road on Funafuti during a king tide, that Tuvaluan citizens must be desperate to migrate permanently off of their islands, while research has shown that many Tuvaluans either do not wish to migrate, or they choose to do so for education or employment rather than CC-related purposes (Farbotko, 2008).

Hindley & Font's (2018) research on the motivations and perceptions of last chance tourists contains details of some very important factors to consider, but what is currently missing from the research are voices of local people in places, such as Tuvalu, where LCT has the potential to increase in years to come. This identified gap in the literature possibly stems from the fact that, to date, most LCT has taken place in the Arctic regions of the globe where there are fewer local communities that will be impacted by it. However, as LCT grows into more parts of the world where indigenous people reside, there will need to be a greater understanding of its potential ramifications on local communities. While LCT has been identified as a potentially ideal tourism development approach for Tuvalu by Prideaux & McNamara (2013), it is clear that this strategy should also be approached with an air of caution and the long term effects of LCT could be devastating to the future of the Tuvaluan people. For this reason, it is imperative for

Careful consideration to be given to the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of local Tuvaluan people in terms of how their islands are presented and marketed to international tourists. This is an issue that will be discussed in later chapters of this thesis.

Another form of leisure tourist that Tuvalu is potentially targeted by are those known as *country collectors*, defined by Woodside, Li, & Muniz (2014) as “international leisure travelers who have visited 6+ countries within the five most recent calendar years primarily to pursue leisure activities” (p. 98). Casual inquiries into this approach to travel reveal that there is an extensive network of country collectors online, and many host travel-themed blogs that detail their experiences. Some country collector community websites contain rules for what constitutes an acceptable ‘visit’ to a country, and there is even a list of territories that collectors can visit once they have completed the country list. The ultimate goal of most country collectors is assumed to be visits to all of the world’s nations, and as Tuvalu is a sovereign nation, it represents a destination that must be visited. If, for example, Tuvalu surrendered its sovereignty and became part of Fiji, the need for country collectors to visit Tuvalu would inevitably cease. Relatively little academic research appears to have been done on the goals, views, backgrounds, and interests of country collectors. In the case of Tuvalu, it would be particularly interesting to know whether or not country collectors are prioritising travel to the country because of a perception that it may be disappearing as a result of CC.

Following on from the above discussion on visual media representations and LCT in Tuvalu, it is necessary to try to establish a potential connection between these two topics in order to establish the degree to which foreign tourists may or may not be drawn to Tuvalu by imagery that is featured by international media outlets. If tourists are

attracted to Tuvalu by this imagery, how does it fare from their perspective? This form of inquiry will reveal whether or not visual imagery of Tuvalu that accompanies CC media stories is accurate from an outsider's perspective. By focusing on tourists who have already travelled to Tuvalu, either for LCT or otherwise, a better understanding of Tuvalu's attributes and downsides relating to its suitability as a tourism destination. By focusing on the individual characteristics, experiences, and expectations of tourists who have been to Tuvalu, better insight can be obtained on what variety of tourism is best suited for the country in its current state. It is necessary to understand how Tuvalu can potentially benefit from tourism in a way that requires the least possible amount of investment or development. While several low-risk schemes, including LCT, have been identified by Prideaux & McNamara (2013), it is important to also understand which category of tourist best fits both the specific needs of Tuvalu and the desires of tourists in a sustainable and beneficial way.

## **2.7 Research Questions**

Considering the above discussion on the topics of visual media representations of Tuvalu in CC media stories, and LCT in Tuvalu, three research questions have been outlined to guide this research project. The first two research questions relate primarily to the feelings, perceptions and experiences of local Tuvaluans on the topics of visual media representations of CC in their country, and LCT as an acceptable approach to tourism development. Question three is aimed at understanding tourist expectations, desires, and experiences from the perspective of foreign tourists who have visited Tuvalu for tourism purposes. These questions were formulated with the intention of being able to draw

parallels and explore possible connections between visual media representations of CC in Tuvalu and LCT from Tuvaluan and foreign perspectives.

1. How do local Tuvaluans perceive visual media representations of CC and LCT in Tuvalu?
2. What are the implications of promoting Tuvalu as a last chance tourism destination from a local Tuvaluan perspective?
3. What factors influence tourists to visit Tuvalu, and are experiences consistent with pre-travel expectations?

## Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

### 3.1 Overview

In keeping with the study's focus on the personal experiences, feelings and perceptions of local Tuvaluans and international tourists on the representation of the island through visual images, the project is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is especially useful in tourism studies that aim to address questions and problems that focus on the experiences of individuals or communities (Mars, Arroyo, & Ruiz, 2016). Furthermore, the increased use of qualitative research in tourism studies has "helped the field towards a deeper understanding of the social, cultural and political connectivities within and for tourism" (Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015, (p. 30). This movement towards qualitative research comes at a time when more traditional quantitative research methods are being regarded as being inadequate in terms of producing a high degree of authenticity in exposing the holistic nuances of tourist-related experiences (Willson & McIntosh, 2007).

This study draws especially on an interpretivist paradigm, which allows the researcher to understand participant perspectives, beliefs and experiences while taking a variety of other factors into account (Mack, 2010). A paradigm has four foundational elements: Ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods (Scotland, 2012). Ontology or "the study of being" (Scotland, 2012, p. 9), is concerned with claims and meanings relating to existence (Mack, 2010). The ontological assumptions employed in this research posit that reality is based on the indirect and subjective interpretations of individuals, and the view that people form their own interpretations and meanings from individually experienced occurrences (Mack, 2010). This interpretivist ontological

conjecture in turn leads to the interpretivist epistemological assumption which relates directly to the nature of knowledge itself (Scotland, 2012), and the supposition that knowledge is created and obtained through empirical personal experiences and specific situational circumstances as interpreted by the individual (Mack, 2010).

Mack (2010) explains that the primary objective of interpretivist researchers is to “understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants” (p. 8). The main objective of this study is to obtain insights of the perspectives, behaviours, and experiences of local Tuvaluans and tourists in a way that places research participants themselves at the centre of the inquiry.

### **3.2 Talanoa**

Interviews with local Tuvaluans in Tuvalu followed the *talanoa* research methodology as outlined by Vaioleti (2006). Talanoa is “talking about nothing in particular, and interacting without a rigid framework” and is “a personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and aspirations” (Vaioleti, 2006, pp. 21-23). This informal approach to collecting qualitative research data allows for a more authentic exchange of information between researcher and participant than is yielded by other methods that have been utilised in past Pacific-focused research. Despite originating in Tonga, it is seen as a credible and appropriate research approach for a number of other Polynesian cultures including Samoa, Fiji and Tuvalu (Vaioleti, 2006).

There are some limitations to talanoa with some arguing that the concept in its entirety cannot be applied across all Pacific cultures outside of Tonga, Samoa and Tokelau where the word talanoa is present in the native language (Laumua, 2016). A

number of Tuvaluan respondents noticed and understood that talanoa lacks a stringent or directed conversational structure and is instead free-flowing in nature. Despite these reservations, incorporating the talanoa approach was relevant and appropriate for this research project. Vaioleti's (2013) assertion that "talanoa is a culturally appropriate means through which Pacific peoples can describe their own experiences in research" (p. 193) embodies the main goal of this research project in drawing authentic experiential information from local Tuvaluans in a culturally relevant and respectful manner.

The five principles of talanoa, outlined in the Tongan language but considered applicable to wider Pacific cultural settings are described by Vaioleti (2006, pp. 29-31) as follows:

- *Faka'apa'apa* - Respectful, humble, considerate.
- *Anga Lelei* - Tolerant, generous, kind, helpful, calm, dignified.
- *Mateuteu* - Well prepared, hardworking, culturally versed, professional, responsive.
- *Poto He Anga* - Knowing what to do and doing it well, cultured.
- *'Ofa Fe'unga* - showing appropriate compassion, empathy, aroha, love for the context

Although of non-Tuvaluan origin, I upheld a high degree of cultural competency and sensitivity at all times while engaging with participants in Tuvalu. The application of talanoa to this research allowed for culture itself to occupy a central position where

appropriate cultural etiquette, hierarchy, respect and formalities are followed (Vaiioleti, 2013). The talanoa approach adequately complements qualitative research methodologies in the context of research with Oceanic peoples while also integrating well with a range of theoretical approaches and analytical methods utilised in qualitative research (Vaiioleti, 2013).

### **3.3 Case Study**

Case studies in social science research often stem from a “simple hunch or general curiosity” about a particular set of circumstances, situation or occurrence (Miller, 2018, p. 393). A case study engages “in intensive analysis of one or several phenomena, outcomes, or processes and is aimed at gaining as full and complete an understanding as possible of the object under study” (Miller, 2018, p. 382). This research project explores and analyses the seemingly unrelated topics of LCT and visual media representations of Tuvalu in CC-related media stories, while simultaneously investigating their respective processes and interactions, therefore making it appropriate as a case study. Indeed, the case study approach has been used in several important research projects on tourism and climate change (see e.g., Catlin, Jones, Jones, Norman, & Wood, 2010; Farbotko 2010; Hein, Metzger, & Moreno, 2009; Kamat, 2011; and Lemelin, Dawson, Stewart, Maher, & Lueck, 2010).

Miller (2018, p. 385) highlights three central features that make case studies especially relevant and able to serve as foundational elements of social science research:

1. Theory: Construction, challenge, and revision.

2. Concepts: Formation, clarification, and refinement.
3. Causal mechanisms: Definitions, linkages, and gaps.

The use of case studies in the domain of tourism research works because, as Hyde, Ryan, & Woodside (2012) point out, “case-based research corrects for substantial – and often fatal – flaws in variable-based research if the researcher seeks to understand the behavior of individuals. The prior sentence has profound implications for the study of tourism, hospitality, and leisure” (p. 2).

This case study operates on a multiple bounded system as a result of the split focus on Tuvaluans and foreign tourists in Tuvalu. The intention of this double-bounded case study structure is to effectively address the research questions while simultaneously drawing parallels and making connections between the two sample groups relating to visual media representations and LCT in Tuvalu.

### **3.4 Locally-Guided Photography Project**

One of the primary goals of this project is to create a series of photographs that accurately represents life on Tuvalu’s main island of Fongafale from a local perspective. The visual results of the locally-guided photography project will be utilised for the purposes of comparison with current visual narratives that have been identified as misrepresentative by local respondents. Key similarities and differences between photographs that actively incorporated local input will be compared with photographs that have been featured in international media stories on CC in Tuvalu. Ideally, this project will help identify and differentiate the ways in which local Tuvaluans see

themselves, their islands, and the CC situation in comparison with the perspectives of individuals who lack familiarity and authentic connection to Tuvalu.

This project involved two separate local Tuvaluan respondents who agreed to participate in this activity as guides. Their involvement was similar to that of local fixers who are often utilised by professional photojournalists working in foreign countries. However, these participants were given complete freedom in terms of documentation locations and content, and they were required to specify exactly what to photograph and how to photograph it. Once a place or object was photographed at their direction, a comprehensive discussion and explanation was carried out on the visual elements and the purposes behind them. Participants were not required to showcase only areas that are directly affected by CC, but instead were asked to showcase whatever they believed is unique, special, problematic, or representative of their country. It was essential that participants understood that the photos produced from this activity had no boundaries except to represent the island, culture and lifestyle from their own personal perspective. This project was important because it identifies key differences between local and foreign visual perspectives of Tuvalu, while at the same time bringing attention to current photojournalistic practices that largely ignore meaningful local input resulting in instances of visual misrepresentation.

### **3.5 Sample**

The two groups of people interviewed were local Tuvaluans and tourists. Local Tuvaluan respondents were adults who were not required to be of a particular age or have any educational or professional background, but they must have lived in Tuvalu for at least

the last two years and intended to remain in the country on a permanent basis. Tourist participants could be from anywhere in the world but were required to have travelled to Tuvalu at some point in the past, ideally in the last five years, for tourism. Local Tuvaluan and as well as tourist interviewees shared a range of experiences that addressed the research questions while highlighting valuable themes.

During my field trip to Tuvalu, between 22 February and 3 March 2019, 12 local Tuvaluan respondents participated in the research project. Eleven of them participated in audio-recorded talanoa sessions, of whom two also advised on a locally-guided photography project, while one respondent chose to participate solely in the locally-guided photography project. In addition, one local Tuvaluan talked at length about her experiences of operating guesthouse in Funafuti and agreed to meet me again the following day to continue the talanoa and sign the necessary forms. This meeting was unfortunately unable to be realised due to her husband being sick and requiring hospitalisation. One interesting and valuable piece of information that she provided relating to LCT marketing in the initial pre-talanoa meeting will be specified in section 4.4 of the findings. However, her details are left off of table 3.1 as she was unable to complete the interview, nor did she sign the necessary consent forms.

The participants were chosen through convenience sampling, which allowed an adequate number of respondents to be located and surveyed within a limited timeframe. Convenience sampling is a common and accepted sampling method in tourism research projects with similar designs and intended outcomes (Willson & McIntosh, 2007). There are, of course, limitations of convenience sampling due to the potential of inherent biases (Upchurch & Teivane, 2000), and as such the findings of this study cannot be attributable

to Tuvalu's wider demography, or across the entire population in statistically representative terms.

Alongside the interviews with the local Tuvaluans, 13 tourists were reached via online questionnaires. Of them, 12 had been to Tuvalu in the past. One participant was actively planning a future visit to the country, but I excluded her responses from the study in favour of concentrating on respondents who had already completed travel to Tuvalu. The tourist respondents fell into the following categories: Leisure travellers, business travellers, country collectors, and tour operators. Survey questionnaires were adapted to appropriately reflect the represented category of each respondent in order to obtain adequate and detailed information. Out of the 12 tourist respondents, five were individual leisure tourists, two business/leisure tourists, four country collectors, and one was the owner of a tourist operation that leads an annual excursion to Tuvalu.

As Tuvalu is considered to be one of the world's least visited destinations (Farbotko, 2008), there were no clear expectations to recruit suitable tourist participants in Tuvalu. Instead, individual personal contacts, and internet searches for websites/blogs detailing visits to Tuvalu were utilised to locate potential respondents. Pate (2015), an advocate for the use of social media as an instrument for successful recruitment of research participants, explains that the utilisation of social media is advantageous in facilitating access to a large number of potential respondents who can be easily directed to online surveys through the use of hyperlinks. This approach can be likened to convenience sampling due to specific individuals being higher on the list of social media search results, making those who are at the top more convenient for a researcher to reach out to (Pate, 2015).

### **3.6 Description of the Sample**

The tables below present the relevant biographic and demographic information for both sample groups. Table 3.1 below provides details relating to the local Tuvaluan respondents that were interviewed in Tuvalu between 22 February 2019 and 3 March 2019. Local Tuvaluan sample group responses are featured solely in the findings sections and sub-section 4.4 within this chapter. Table 3.2 presents information relating to the tourist sample group who completed online questionnaires relating to their experiences while visiting Tuvalu, and their perceptions of the country pre and post-visit.

Please note that on tables 3.1 and 3.2, pseudonyms have been used in order to protect the identities of all research participants, whether they specified to remain anonymous or not. Respondents were informed as to the goals and outcomes of this study and both verbal and written consent to participate in this research project was provided by all participants.

Table 3.1: *Local Tuvaluan Research Participant Demographics*

Participant name	Age Group	Gender	Education	Profession	Years living permanently in Tuvalu
Mele	18 - 29	Female	Secondary Level	Tertiary student	10 +
Isaia	50 - 59	Male	Tertiary Level	Banking	10 +
Nui	30 - 39	Female	Tertiary Level	Tourism	10 +
Ana	18 - 29	Female	Tertiary Level	Tourism	5 - 9
Maikolo	40 - 49	Male	Tertiary Level	Land management	10 +
Tavita	30 - 39	Male	Tertiary Level	Secondary education	10 +
Ma'ata	30 - 39	Female	Tertiary Level	Banking/ Tourism	10 +
Mose	50 - 59	Male	Secondary Level	Unemployed	10 +
Afemai	30 - 39	Male	Tertiary Level	Banking/ Musician	5 - 9
Abdurrahman	30 - 39	Male	Unknown	Religious leader	2 - 4
Ioane	40 - 49	Male	Secondary Level	Unemployed/ Entrepreneur	10 +

Table 3.2: *Tourist Research Participant Demographics*

Participant name	Age Group	Gender	Education	Traveler Type	Country of Citizenship	Elapsed time since last visit to Tuvalu (Approx.)
Sarah	18 - 29	Female	Tertiary Level	Business/Leisure	Canada	1 - 2 Years
Brenda	Unknown	Female	Unknown	Leisure	Norway	1 - 2 Years
Emily	18 - 29	Female	Tertiary Level	Leisure	New Zealand	1 - 2 Years
Jessica	18 - 29	Female	Tertiary Level	Leisure	New Zealand	1 - 2 Years

Hinata	Unknown	Female	Tertiary Level	Business/Leisure	Japan	3 - 6 Months
Timothy	30 - 39	Male	Unknown	Leisure	USA	1 - 2 Years
Charles	40 - 49	Male	Unknown	Country Collector	Norway	1 - 2 Years
Robert	30 - 39	Male	Tertiary Level	Leisure	USA/ New Zealand	3 - 6 Months
James	40 - 49	Male	Tertiary Level	Country Collector	Norway	1 - 2 Years
Richard	40 - 49	Male	Tertiary Level	Country Collector	USA	1 - 2 Years
Tony	30 - 39	Male	Tertiary Level	Tour Operator	UK	1 - 2 Years

### 3.7 Processes and procedures

#### 3.7.1 Data collection

All interviews with local Tuvaluans took place in Tuvalu at a location of the participant's choosing, ranging from places of work and homes to public areas under the thatched roofs of traditional Tuvaluan *fale lau* structures. Conversations during the locally-guided photography project took place at various locations or while in transit from one location to another by motorbike. Interactions with past or prospective tourists to Tuvalu were via the use of online questionnaires and email correspondence.

Research instruments used in the data collection processes included a mini digital voice recorder, notepad, pen, printed copies of CC media stories and visuals, a digital mirrorless camera with multiple lenses (for the locally-guided photography project), a

laptop computer with photo editing/organisation software, a mobile phone, and a portable hard drive to backup voice recordings and photographs.

A key feature of the research in Tuvalu was the evaluation of photographs published by online and printed media outlets on the topic of CC in Tuvalu. I presented these photographs to local Tuvaluan participants during interviews to observe how they perceived the visuals used to represent their country and its struggles with the effects of CC. Morris & Saylor (2014) point out that “there is something deceptive about the illustrative image when it comes to climate change. While all photographs are, in a sense, evidentiary, what they verify is fundamentally limited only to what can be seen in the image without textual or con-textual supplement” (p. 302). Potentially, therefore, an individual who lives in Tuvalu and has ties with Tuvaluan culture may perceive the visual media representations differently from an individual who has no relationship with the islands.

As many as 58 photographs were selected for presentation at the talanoa-based interview sessions in Tuvalu. Of these, 47 had been featured online alongside written articles in the *New Zealand Geographic* (2004), *Smithsonian* (2014), *Public Radio International (PRI)* (2014), *Japan Times* (2016), *The Guardian* (2017), and *The Atlantic* (2018), while the remaining 11 photographs featured in the top results of a Google Images search for the phrase “climate change in Tuvalu”. The photographs, presented to participants as high-quality colour prints, were not altered, labelled, or arranged in any particular order. Those published along with written features were accompanied by the writing that they were displayed with at the original source. Care was taken not to select

an overwhelming number of photographs, and to present them as a manageable collection in order to make it convenient for respondents to explore the collection.

Respondents were also free to read the articles if they chose, but no pressure was placed on them to undertake this task. The majority of respondents took the opportunity to at least skim through the written articles, but subsequent conversations focussed primarily on the visual images in the articles. Extra copies of the published stories or website addresses to access the online sources were made available if any of the respondents wished to access them later. Some of the featured articles also contained images of Tuvalu's neighbouring country, Kiribati, whose CC situation is very similar to Tuvalu, a fact that all respondents in the research were well aware of thanks to the close ties that exist between the two nations.

There was no set time limit for a discussion on the photographic collection during the talanoa sessions, but the topic was addressed once an opportunity arose within the natural flow of the conversations. While respondents viewed the photographs, they were asked for verbal feedback on the images. The respondents were free to rearrange and categorise the photographs if they wished. Questions led to in-depth discussions on CC and Tuvalu during the conversations.

A questioning technique known as 'laddering' was used in the process of discussing the photographs. Willson & McIntosh (2007) advocates for the use of laddering in research for its ability to facilitate emotion, depth and analysis in responses. A recent development that has origins in the realm of personality psychology, it has been particularly useful for the 'knowledge elicitation' method that is applied to advertising

and marketing research, but it also offers a range of benefits to other forms of research as well (Miles & Rowe, 2004). There are three important parts to utilising the laddering technique in research as described by Miles & Rowe (2004, p. 308-309): (1) Elicitation of concrete attributes, (2) using those attributes to isolate ‘attribute-consequence-value’ chains, followed by (3) representation and analysis of the results. For this technique to be effective, the respondent’s position as the expert must be maintained, and they must feel comfortable in sharing in-depth information relating to their personal feelings, experiences and perceptions on the topic of inquiry (Miles & Rowe, 2004). In the case of this study, the laddering approach was useful in facilitating meaningful discussions around the photographs of CC in Tuvalu, especially when used in combination with talanoa principles.

Engagement with tourists was primarily through the use of online questionnaires because it was impossible to locate a suitable number of tourists in Tuvalu during the 7-day field trip to Tuvalu. Extensive online searches were carried out and a number of potential respondents were isolated based on evidence available online which indicated that they had travelled to Tuvalu for tourism purposes. Many of the individuals located via this method were avid travel bloggers, several of who maintain prolific public profiles online and maintain travel blog websites or Instagram profiles with thousands of online followers. Beginning in November 2018, standardised initial emails and Instagram direct messages were sent in order to briefly introduce the research while explaining the intended goals and outcomes of the project. Out of the total of 26 initial emails and Instagram direct messages sent, 19 individuals responded to express interest in participating, and a total of 12 went ahead to complete their questionnaires within the

agreed timeframe (one month from the time of the initial distribution of the questionnaire). Questions and open-ended responses were adjusted to reflect the particular kind of travel that a respondent reported taking part in Tuvalu.

### **3.7.2 Data Analysis**

The data was analysed through the use of inductive thematic analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). This technique provides an organisationally minimalistic approach that is capable of providing ‘rich’ details relating to the data set, while also potentially expounding themes that are inherently present within the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis “does not require the detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of approaches” while offering a “more accessible form of analysis, particularly for those early in a qualitative research career” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81).

In the context of thematic analysis, a theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). The identification and analysis of themes for this project was based on data from the interviews and questionnaires collected during the research. The process followed the “six phases of analysis” as detailed by Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 87):

1. Familiarisation with the data (Transcribing, reading, taking notes).

2. Generation of preliminary codes (Coding aspects of the data across the data set).
3. Searching for themes (Organisation of codes into possible themes and collecting data that connects to those themes).
4. Review the themes (Investigation of themes to find out if they function adequately in relation to the codes, and creation of a thematic framework for analysis).
5. Define and name emergent themes (Hone the particular details of each of the themes and provide clear definitions for them).
6. Produce the scholarly report (Last chance to conduct analysis and select key illustrations and extracts that have the ability to tie back in to the research question(s) and literature).

Although these phases are listed in numerical order, Braun & Clarke (2006) stress that thematic analysis is by no means a sequential process and often require a ‘recursive’ approach. This project adhered to all the six phases. Soon after recording talanoa interviews in Tuvalu, I transcribed the interviews, making initial observations ahead of the thematic analysis of the data. Information from written journals was also transcribed as were responses from tourists extracted from the online survey template. The original responses on [www.surveypalnet.com](http://www.surveypalnet.com) remain in their original locations within a private account which is securely password protected.

The next phase of the thematic analysis process involved the creation of the initial codes by isolating various key words and phrases relating to thoughts, feelings, ideas, perceptions and opinions related to the key topics of the research for both local Tuvaluans and tourists. Codes were extracted through an inductive process so that codes and subsequently developed themes maintain strong associations with the actual data. The process of identifying the initial codes commenced with a deep-reading of a printed copy of the collated data while highlighting codes and making hand-written notes in the column next to the data. Initial codes were isolated for as many perceived patterns as possible as suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006), which resulted in a total of 312 codes extracted from the 11 local Tuvaluan talanoa transcripts, and 215 codes from the 12 transcripts of survey data from tourists (527 codes in total from both sample groups). Exhibited in Table 3.3 below are two selections of talanoa interviews – the left column displays quotes from the transcribed interview data, while the right column features the codes that were extracted after the process was completed.

Table 3.3: *Initial Coding*

Data Extract	Codes
<p>Ana:</p> <p><i>“I feel like they always make the Tuvaluans look helpless, or maybe it’s just my Pacific blood, like I never like the Tuvaluan image of looking like helpless people because we are not helpless, we can do something about it. It’s just that the media portrays it otherwise. They can never take that side of Tuvaluans, like despite all of this happening, they are rising above the water, you know they are rising above the water and making a stand that we should save Tuvalu, we should save our identity.”</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tuvaluans are portrayed as victims of climate change in the media.</li> <li>2. The media does not always have the best interests of the Tuvaluan people in mind.</li> <li>3. Tuvaluans view themselves as climate change survivors.</li> <li>4. Media portrayals of the Tuvaluan people can have negative impacts on the Tuvaluan identity over time.</li> </ol>

<p>Mose:</p> <p><i>"In reality, I think here in Tuvalu, culture is something that we have too, so, to me, something that we belong to and we own it. And sinking Tuvalu, it's not something for me that I have to accept, the fact that we are Tuvaluans. We are proud to be Tuvaluans and I think that we should find some way that we can market this type of thing."</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tuvaluan culture is itself a tourist attraction.</li> <li>2. Tuvaluans view themselves as climate change survivors.</li> <li>3. LCT is an opportunity for Tuvalu.</li> <li>4. Tourism development is a survival tactic for Tuvaluans to overcome the effects of climate change.</li> </ol>
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When possible, similar codes were combined in order to bring the total number down to a more manageable size. The process of combining codes resulted in the identification of 45 codes from the local Tuvaluan sample groups, and 25 codes from the tourists (70 in total). The number of times a specific code was referenced by respondents was recorded, and the codes with the strongest representation and relationships to the research questions were selected for the next phase of pattern development. In order to develop a set of observed patterns, the collection of initial codes were compiled on a separate document and grouped together under related headings which, once completed, yielded 12 sub-themes, which were further combined in order to establish a total of six sub-themes (two sub-themes under each main theme). Table 3.4 below illustrates the ways that various sub-themes were assigned to the combination of data extracts and initial codes, followed by table 3.5, which demonstrates the grouping of sub-themes and the assignment of themes to those groups, and finally, table 3.6, which showcases the finalised list of the main themes and their associated sub-themes.

Table 3.4: *Development and attribution of sub-themes*

Data Extracts	Codes	Sub-themes
<p>Nui:</p> <p><i>“I think because it’s (CC tourism and LCT) and it’s happening. Maybe that’s another side we can take a look at, if it’s marketable and then we can. Some of the international visitors, when we ask why they come to Tuvalu, that’s most of them, their reason is CC.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuvalu should be marketed as a last chance tourism destination.</li> <li>• LCT is an opportunity for Tuvalu.</li> <li>• CC tourism is already happening in Tuvalu.</li> <li>• Specific types of tourists are attracted to Tuvalu.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. LCT and CC tourism as potential opportunities for Tuvalu</li> </ol>
<p>‘Ana:</p> <p><i>“It’s sad to market climate change, but it can also be our chance to secure our homeland. Who knows, maybe through these stories we can call people to help us with our negotiations at the world stage.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LCT is an opportunity for Tuvalu.</li> <li>• Tourism can help enhance awareness about Tuvalu’s struggles with CC.</li> <li>• Tourism development is a form of adaptation for Tuvaluans to overcome the effects of climate change.</li> <li>• Visual media portrayals of climate change can increase tourism in Tuvalu.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. LCT and CC tourism as potential opportunities for Tuvalu</li> <li>2. The effects of promoting Tuvalu as a last chance tourism destination</li> </ol>
<p>Timothy:</p> <p><i>“[Seeing Tuvalu before it disappears] was the initial reason why I visited Tuvalu in the first place. Then I learned more about the Polynesian language and culture which drew me in some more.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourists are visiting Tuvalu to witness the effects of CC.</li> <li>• Tourists view Tuvalu as a last chance destination.</li> <li>• Tourists come as LCTs but learn about other attributes of Tuvalu while visiting.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pre-visit versus post-visit tourist perceptions of Tuvalu.</li> </ol>

Table 3.5: *Example of sub-theme and theme identification*

First Codes	Sub-Theme	Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visuals of CC lack accuracy.</li> <li>• Visuals of CC are often clichéd.</li> <li>• Tuvaluans are often portrayed as victims of CC.</li> <li>• Tuvaluans are often portrayed as desperate to migrate.</li> </ul>	Misrepresentation in visual media representations of CC in Tuvalu.	Local perceptions of visual media representations of CC in Tuvalu.

Table 3.6: *Finalised list of themes and sub-themes*

Themes	Sub-themes
<b>Local perceptions of visual media representations of CC in Tuvalu</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Misrepresentation in visual media representations of CC in Tuvalu.</li> <li>2. The effects of visual misrepresentation of CC in Tuvalu.</li> </ol>
<b>The relationship between visual media representations of CC and LCT in Tuvalu</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The influence of visual media reports on CC tourism in Tuvalu.</li> <li>2. Pre-visit versus post-visit tourist perceptions of Tuvalu.</li> </ol>
<b>Tuvalu as a last chance tourism destination: a local perspective</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. LCT and CC tourism as potential opportunities for Tuvalu.</li> <li>2. The effects of promoting Tuvalu as a last chance tourism destination.</li> </ol>

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

The project was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Participant information sheets were

made available to respondents, with separate information sheets created for local Tuvaluans and tourists to reflect the differences in topics that would be discussed, as well as intended research outcomes. Ample time was provided for participants to review and ask any further questions before accepting or declining an invitation to participate in an interview or complete an online questionnaire. It was also made clear to respondents that their participation in the project was entirely voluntary and that they would be under no obligation to answer all questions or provide information that they may feel uncomfortable with. Participants were not coerced in any way or asked to provide intrusive personal details. All of them were guaranteed confidentiality as research participants.

An extremely important element of the research conducted in Tuvalu was the observance of local cultural protocol and expected behaviour. If there was any doubt as to appropriate standards of cultural behaviour, consultation was undertaken with a local informant who agreed to provide assistance on such matters before I arrived in Tuvalu.

All respondents, both local Tuvaluans and tourists, were given the opportunity to withdraw their responses within three weeks of their participation. Data from the recorded interviews was stored digitally on a password-protected computer that only I could access, and printed copies of transcripts and questionnaires were stored in a locked drawer. Printed transcripts and completed questionnaires were given assigned codes in order to further ensure the confidentiality of participant identities in the event of a security breach.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter provides a justification of the selected paradigm for research and explains the social constructionist and qualitative methodological approach for this research. It provides detailed descriptions of the methods, protocols and procedures associated with the collection and analysis of data in this research project and lays the foundation for the presentation of the findings in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter collates the thoughts, perceptions and experiences of local Tuvaluans on the visual media representations of climate change and LCT in Tuvalu. As individual perceptions relating to the topics of tourism and the accuracy of CC imagery in media stories is highly subjective (Metag, Schäfer, Füchslin, Barsuhn, & Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2016), I have taken a structured approach to isolate and identify commonalities and patterns across different groups and individuals. It is important to note that the findings of this study do not necessarily represent the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of all local Tuvaluans, but only those who willingly participated in the talanoa research sessions. The patterns and themes discussed in this chapter emerged from a systematic process of thematic analysis of the raw interview data.

The chapter begins with an outline of the findings of the talanoa interviews that took place with local Tuvaluans on the topics of visual media representations of Tuvalu in general and as a last chance tourist destination in particular. The second half of the chapter focuses on survey responses from tourists who have been to Tuvalu in relation to their reasons for visiting Tuvalu, and their personal experiences while travelling in the country.

### **4.2 Local perceptions of visual media representations of CC in Tuvalu**

There were varying levels of awareness among local Tuvaluan respondents in relation to media reports on CC from Tuvalu (and the visuals that accompany those reports) that

have featured prominently in international media over the past decade. Interestingly, three respondents explicitly stated that they had not seen, nor had an awareness of any international media reports relating to CC in Tuvalu. However, when shown the printed copies of example media images and the accompanying written stories during talanoa sessions, these respondents all felt compelled to offer insightful feedback in relation to their personal feelings and perceptions of the visual imagery showcased in those stories.

It is unsurprising that these respondents had not been previously aware of any media reports on CC in Tuvalu, as printed publications are not widely available in the country, and until recently Tuvalu's internet connectivity was inaccessible to most people due to lack of infrastructure and exorbitant connection costs ("Affordable, faster connectivity for Tuvalu," 2019). One respondent stated that the lack of internet accessibility effectively serves to subdue the voices of Tuvaluans on online platforms in terms of what is actually happening in the country from a local perspective. According to Abdurrahman, "many of the wrong information the media gave to us, but we can't give more feedback from us because [of] the lack of internet." The level of internet accessibility in Tuvalu is set to change, however, as The World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) has issued a USD \$29 million grant in order to upgrade the country's internet service as part of its Pacific Regional Connectivity Program. The goal of this programme is to enhance internet access for citizens of some of the Pacific's poorest countries in order to improve international communications, disaster responses, and business initiatives such as tourism ("Affordable, faster connectivity for Tuvalu," 2019).

The remainder of respondents were aware of and had seen international media stories on CC in Tuvalu either online or in print, but it was also apparent that some respondents engaged more critically with these stories than others. While several stated that they felt the visuals they had seen in the past were accurate in terms of portrayals, a distinctive theme relating to feelings of visual misrepresentation had emerged. This trend was hardly surprising, as Farbotko (2008) has pointed out, these media stories on CC are not created for audiences in Tuvalu or other countries where the content is collected, but instead for Western viewers who tend to respond to drama, sensationalism, and the plight of others in ways that serve only to boost ratings, and subsequent profits from advertising revenue for media corporations.

#### **4.2.1 Perceived visual misrepresentations**

During talanoa sessions with local Tuvaluans, six respondents initially felt that CC related depictions of their country often contain elements of misrepresentation. None of the participants wrote all of the photos off as misrepresentative, and most took the time to review and carefully organise them into various categories depending on their own personal interpretations and judgments. There were varying degrees of participation in this activity, with some respondents fully engaging in the task of organising, while others sorted them quickly or did not categorise them at all. In accordance with the talanoa protocol, there was no pressure to enforce a particular level of interaction in the associated research activities, and respondents were free to partake as much or as little as they wanted to. Those with more critical views on the level of representation inherently present in the photographs generally took more time and put more effort into categorising the photographs, and then discussing their reasons for a particular hierarchy of

organisation. Through this exercise, and the discussions that took place around the photographs, several common themes of visual misrepresentation from a local perspective were identified.

The most common criticisms related to various clichés that had been identified throughout the visuals that were presented for discussion. One of these clichés was the visual focus on water: Tuvaluan people standing in water, sitting in water, swimming in the sea or houses surrounded by water. One respondent, Afemai, was very outspoken about his view that the media is unnecessarily fixated on depicting Tuvaluans in water by stating, “I don’t like it. I dislike those kind of photos because we don’t sleep in water every day, and maybe once a year we have those kind of floods, but not every day you see that”. Another respondent, ‘Ana provided details about an online video she had seen in the past which had a strong focus on Tuvaluans and water:

They made these kids go in the water, I know they obviously made these kids go in the water and hold up papers. I was really angry when I saw it, I was like ‘why are they doing this?’ What I don’t like about media sometimes, is they try to cook up a really good story that they can take to sell.

‘Ana went on to state that she had in fact witnessed a foreign media crew which was utilising methods that are not in line with acceptable photojournalistic principles, saying

They made the kids stand in the water with the rubbish. I thought that was really bad because we don’t use those areas” and, “I’m not saying just to portray the

beautiful side of Tuvalu, but I think each country, like a person, should have their right to privacy with what goes on in their country.

Afemai had not reported seeing such photo shoots taking place at the direction of foreign-based media crews, but he had noticed the prevalence of media photographs depicting Tuvaluans, especially children, standing in water. During review and discussion of the visual content of media stories, he commented:

Myself, I don't like it that much you know because it makes us shy and embarrassed in front of the whole world. Maybe they should have taken photos of something else that could help contribute to our country. For example, they can take the photos of the disappearing islands, but not those kind of photos (Referring to a sample media photo of children standing in water), but some of those photos are not well presented.

These quotes clearly illustrate that some local Tuvaluans have either observed photojournalists operating under questionable professional practices while in Tuvalu or are able to identify photographs where such practices have been employed. Visuals that result from unethical photojournalistic practices have been identified by several respondents as artificially exaggerated, sensationalist, and visually misrepresentative of the lifestyles that the majority of Tuvaluans currently lead. If indeed, the observations of the islanders are true, the practices of the media outlets in which a visual journalist directs or stages his or her subjects, especially in an overbearing or coercive manner (Newton, 1998), would be a clear violation of photojournalistic protocol.

Six respondents also made specific mention of their observance of an influx of tourists in Tuvalu around the month of February during king tide season. Two of these respondents mentioned seeing an increase in the number of photographers on the island during this time of year when Tuvaluans are most likely to have to deal with an abundance of surface water on land that is usually dry. Referring to a time of year when locals are most likely to be found wading in surface water, Isaia said “This happens during king tides. King tides, the highest one, is in February.” Mose was an advocate for the establishment of a yearly king tide festival to be held in Tuvalu “for the sake of promoting Tuvalu to the outside world.” He continued, “we have to be proud that we are Tuvaluan.”

‘Ana reported that she observed a well-known internet blogger and country collector, with a network of over one million online followers, who had visited Tuvalu in the month of February 2019 (approximately one week prior to her participation in this research project) for the purposes of shooting photographs and producing a short video piece on CC in Tuvalu. This particular blogger stayed in Tuvalu for three days and reportedly spent a significant amount of time shooting photographs and aerial drone video footage at the narrowest part of Fongafale island. Known locally as ‘the causeway’, this thin strip of land is only between 10 and 15 metres wide and is frequently submerged by waves during king tide season. Accounts such as these indicate that photographers and filmmakers may be actively and strategically timing their travels to Tuvalu in such a way as to better their chances of obtaining CC-related imagery with the right amount of ‘shock value’ for Western audiences.

Another visual theme that was detailed by a significant number of respondents was the depiction of Tuvaluans as CC victims who are desperate to migrate permanently overseas. While there are Tuvaluans who do migrate abroad for work, family or educational purposes, there are also many who wish to remain in Tuvalu. Referring to the 'CC victim' narrative, Abdurrahman makes the point,

We have been facing the climate change, we feel the differences between 10 to 20 years before, and I have heard from the people that there are many changes from the climate change before. But the Tuvaluans will not be helpless people, we all live here happily.

The portrayal of Tuvaluans as climate change victims in the media has been detailed at length by several researchers including Farbotko (2005) and Chambers & Chambers (2007), but a number of statements were made by respondents that referred directly to the Tuvaluan culture and spirit of survival as an alternative and overall more beneficial focal point to be featured in media stories on CC. Mose, one of the older participants in the study, voiced his opinion on this approach.

I think that is the best way. To promote that we are Tuvaluans. A race that should exist, no matter what, whether it is sinking, or the sea is rising, but we have to promote that we are all human beings. That's what I am trying to... And the other thing, promote that we are Tuvaluans, that we are human beings, and also promote the ways that we can survive. What are the reinforcements factors, or ways that we can overcome this? Because we understand, we are not the ones who made this happen.

Mose's statement illustrates the position that many Tuvaluans maintain in their wish to remain in Tuvalu and undertake whatever measures are necessary to survive in their islands. Other respondents displayed a degree of anger towards media portrayals of Tuvaluans as helpless victims of CC. For example, 'Ana said:

To be honest, for me, most of the pictures that I see online of what the media try to portray, sometimes it's pretty exaggerated because, like especially the way they make the people of Tuvalu look like they are really sad or how they have no other... well of course we don't have any other choice, but it comes to our island being submerged but actually it's not a good term to use – sea level rising. Sometimes I feel like they portray the people of Tuvalu as if, I don't know, like you know when you feel like they can't do much. Yeah, they pretty much make us look like victims of CC. Well, we are to some level. Yes, helpless is the word! Like they make us sometimes, say what the media portray, well for me, I feel like they always make the Tuvaluans look helpless, or maybe it's just my Pacific blood, like I never like the Tuvaluan image of looking like helpless people because we are not helpless, we can do something about it. It's just that the media portrays it otherwise. They can never take that side of Tuvaluans, like despite all of this happening, they are rising above the water, you know they are rising above the water and making a stand that we should save Tuvalu, we should save our identity. I feel like they should focus more on that rather than just looking at... They always take images of areas where people don't really live there. It's just like those places, they just go there to pass time, that sort of thing. They make Tuvalu look like one very very very very poor country.

The media's fixation on portraying Tuvaluans as desperate CC migrants has been referenced by Farbotko (2008) as a main point of interest by Western media outlets as it evokes thoughts of CC migration crisis situations in viewers. Previous research has shown that most Tuvaluans do not feel compelled to migrate as a result of CC, and it is more likely that they would migrate for economic or educational reasons (Farbotko, 2008). This sentiment was also echoed by several respondents, especially Ioane who lamented the media's portrayal of Tuvaluans as hopeless and trapped on a sinking island, "Apart from February (king tide season), life is just as normal as it is in Tuvalu. They (the media) exaggerate it, they try to make it like Tuvalu is disappearing. I mean thanks, but life goes on in Tuvalu. We are not living here with our luggage already packed in bags ready." Despite Ioane's evident frustration with media narratives that he feels are projected onto his country and people internationally, he still finds a positive angle for which to view the situation from: "I am proud to be a Tuvaluan, and what happened in the media because of the climate change thing, I am proud of that too. That brings my little country up on the map."

'Ana indicates that the CC victim narrative can have potential negative implications on the Tuvaluan identity itself, a sentiment that was also referenced by other respondents in the study. 'Ana's mention of the differences in the visual portrayal of the islands of Tuvalu as 'sinking' or 'submerging', as opposed to the alternative view of the islands being threatened primarily by SLR leads to the final topic of visual misrepresentation that was a significant theme in a number of talanoa discussions. 'Ana, among others, was overwhelmingly concerned that many of the visuals used in media stories on CC served primarily to uphold the sinking island narrative:

When they say sinking, all I am thinking is like a sinking island is saying that maybe we are too heavy on the land. They would be like that's your problem, not our problem. You know the land is ours so they say 'sinking island', it's like the island is theirs (the Tuvaluans) so it's their problem. But if you say 'sea level rising', we are all connected by the sea so that becomes a global issue, like everyone should have a part to play. But if they say 'sinking' that's our fault! It's your responsibility to look after your island to make sure it doesn't sink but if you say 'sea' it connects everyone.

This perception is an interesting and important element of this research. The simple shift in the perspective of Tuvalu's CC issues stemming from 'rising sea levels' to that of 'sinking islands' can add to feelings of guilt, isolation, victimisation and powerlessness from a local perspective. 'Ana's statement about the sea connecting everyone is in line with Hau'ofa's (1993) position that it was not a natural tendency historically for Pacific Island people to view their islands as small and isolated due to the expanse of the ocean in which they are located. The sea was instead viewed as the key connector between distant islands, while serving as a form of highway for people, ideas and material goods, as opposed to a barrier. Therefore, SLR, or any other issues that may be present in the ocean, are more likely to be viewed as a worldwide issue of concern from a Tuvaluan or Polynesian perspective. Visuals which imply that the CC issues currently faced by Tuvaluans are simply the result of their isolated and unstable islands could have a range of negative consequences for the Tuvaluan people as specified by various local Tuvaluan respondents.

Some participants voiced their opinions on how they felt the visual media representations of Tuvalu and the Tuvaluan people could be made to be more accurate. Aside from suggestions that visual journalists altogether avoid staging photos, or perpetuating the CC victim and sinking island narratives, there were a range of specific suggestions including the strict observation of respect for privacy and local customs in relation to land access. ‘Ana explained the way she considers many visual journalists to be “disregarding the privacy of a country and the family itself, because I know some of the families were angry because they didn’t know that their areas were being filmed” and, “I think that’s my issue with media, well some of them take, they really disregard the privacy and the reputation.” Following ‘Ana’s statements on the respect of privacy, Nui, who was a research participant in the same talanoa session, displayed wholehearted agreement by asking in a disgusted and disapproving tone “why do they have to take these kind of photos?”

‘Ana was also adamant that there should be a concentrated focus on displaying natural scenes that are visually accurate representations of everyday life in Tuvalu, as opposed to showcasing exceptional environmental situations as if it is the norm. She declared that “if they are to talk about CC, they should go to the natural areas and take photos”. The particular photos preferred by ‘Ana depicted what she considered to be Tuvaluans taking part in everyday activities in a way that represented them as real people participating in normal activities that did not portray them as helpless victims. ‘Ana’s feelings towards the photographs were also shared by Nui, and the images they set aside as being acceptably representative of life in Tuvalu also largely adhered to the *Seven*

*Principles for Visual Climate Change Communication* put forth by Corner, Webster, & Teriete (2016).

The portrayal of Tuvalu as ‘disappearing’ by the media was another topic that was referenced as extremely problematic. Immediately after stating his view that Tuvaluans probably don’t take CC seriously enough, Afemai said:

When you talk to any Tuvaluan, they hate people saying that Tuvalu will be disappearing. They hate people saying that, and then they don’t like it and they maybe, most of them will say ‘I will die here in my country on my land, my land. God knows this is God’s land.’

Considering the strong ancestral and cultural connections that Tuvaluans, and all Polynesians, have with their land, it would be ideal from a local perspective for visuals to avoid sending messages which imply that Tuvalu’s islands and people will ‘disappear’ as there are many potential social and cultural consequences that could arise from this. Afemai continued on to talk about the ways Tuvalu’s situation is perceived by his family back in Samoa, where he was born and raised,

They want me to move back to Samoa. They always feel scared because I am staying on the island that is all over the media, that will be gone in 10 or maybe 15 years. My family keeps calling me to pack my stuff and come have a job in Samoa.

Despite the geographic advantage that the structure of Samoa’s large and hilly islands have over Tuvalu’s islands, Samoa is still significantly threatened by CC (Kelman

& West, 2009), but the perspective that Afemai's family has of the situation in Tuvalu is informed in part by foreign media outlets, many of which are not based in the Pacific. Samoa only lies approximately 1,300 kilometres away from Tuvalu, but as there are no direct flights or regular maritime links between the two nations, news about Tuvalu comes indirectly to Samoa as well as many other Pacific Island nations.

Afemai was also vocal about the number of photos that he has seen in the media which appear to be pointless from a local perspective, and he pondered the ways that such photos might be interpreted by viewers overseas. He provides an example of such a photo:

There's one picture I saw it, there was a dog running on the runway and there's no meaning connected to climate change, that's a dog. It's useless. So, they are just saying that the Tuvalu runway is open and it's not safe, and there's a dog there, and people playing rugby in the evening? They always take photos of things like that.

From this statement, and other points he made during the talanoa, it is clear that Afemai is concerned with negative messages that may arise from the photographs of Tuvalu that are published by the media. Whether the messages behind these visuals are intended or unintended, some Tuvaluans are clearly concerned with the representations they convey, and there is a sense that depictions should serve a valid and clearly defined purpose in working to build international CC awareness while also serving as a call to positively influence a change in the unsustainable lifestyles of larger countries.

Tavita suggested that more of a focus should be made on CC issues only in “parts of the island that are being affected, the eroded areas, especially the shorelines that have been affected by seal level rise” and “places where the crops are not growing very well.” In this statement, Tavita implied that fewer Tuvaluan people should be featured in visual campaigns, because while Tuvaluans often suffer from the effects of CC, they are not the ones who ultimately cause it. He continued, “it should be everyone’s problem, or everyone’s concern because everybody is contributing to the impacts of sea level rise.”

Ma’ata felt that it is acceptable for Tuvaluan people to be featured in visuals for CC media stories, but there should be more of a priority in featuring Tuvaluan cultural values, alongside sustainable lifestyles and CC adaptations which could serve as an example to the rest of the world, and subsequently inspire people to have more environmental consideration in their purchasing and consumption habits. Ma’ata acknowledged that many Tuvaluans still have to make progress in order to serve as a perfect example of sustainable living practices, but she believed that a concentrated effort should be made in achieving this goal: “imagining what we are trying to tell the bigger countries, that, to me, involves all the Pacific countries and the bigger countries.” Evidently, there is a desire for Tuvaluans to work towards exemplary status in terms of CC adaptation and survival against the odds, and that this initiative is something that is worthy of international support.

#### **4.2.2 Perceived visual representation**

There was a smaller, but still significant, number of participants who stated that the visual representations they had seen were mostly representative from their perspective. An

interesting commonality among these individuals is that they did not often offer an explanation as to the specific reasons why they felt the representations were accurate, even when attempts were made to prompt further discussion. When asked a question such as “do you feel that the photographs you just saw are visually representative of the situation and people of Tuvalu?”, replies were generally very short: “Yeah I think so”; “I think generally it does capture Tuvalu”; and “Sometimes they take pictures of the water rising and the rubbish, to me that’s a fact and I cannot deny that. It’s because of the effect of CC”. The conversation on the topic following these responses tended to be relatively short and limited when compared with responses from those who expressed personal feelings of misrepresentation in relation to the featured photographs.

Tavita, one of the three participants who reported having no awareness of, or previous experience with media stories on CC from Tuvalu, initially stated his position that the sample selection of media imagery was generally accurate before proceeding on his own accord to discuss elements of the photographs that he started to perceive as being misrepresentative after taking time to think critically about them. Tavita stated

I might say that they (the photographs) don’t really represent what is really happening in terms of the impacts of CC. They should show what areas or parts of the island that are being affected, the eroded areas, especially the shorelines that have been affected by sea level rise.

During a talanoa session when the printed selections of photographs were being reviewed, Tavita said he did not want to offer criticisms of the photographs, perhaps fearing that he might cause offence. An effort was made to make participants aware of

the fact that the photographs were not the personal work of myself, and that my primary concern was to understand the perceptions of these visuals from a local perspective.

Afemai, who is originally from Samoa, referenced and confirmed the local Tuvaluan trait to avoid negative discussion as something that he recognised after moving to Funafuti from Fiji with his Tuvaluan wife.

Several of those who viewed the selection of photographs as generally representative referred to imagery of environmental devastation in Tuvalu as having value for increasing international awareness of the plight of Tuvalu in a way that would increase aid money and other projects. According to local Tuvaluan respondent, Ioane:

Those kind of scenes have been flying around in the world, like Tuvalu, during high tides in Tuvalu and they are showing pictures of our children playing in water, and there are places where they once had a playground but now they're covered in water. Those are on the news, and I thank the media for accelerating that kind of news for the world, so the world can have interest in Tuvalu because otherwise we will remain as it is.

Ioane clearly acknowledges the visual misrepresentations that are taking place in the media, but he also welcomes them because of his opinion that such images will serve to further build Tuvalu's international profile as a nation in distress, which may ultimately result in more international attention and possible financial aid for CC adaptation projects. This sentiment was also shared by Mele, a Tuvaluan student in her first year of tertiary studies:

There are some islands in the world which people don't even know they exist, but Tuvalu is lucky to have that attention. It's a good thing. Older people don't really like it because that's when all the *palagis* (foreigners) come in and everyone starts, especially the kids, getting influenced. You know how people are starting to change, when culture starts to change.

The perspectives of Ioane and Mele seem to indicate that inherent exaggerations or misrepresentations do not matter as long as they are bringing attention, and much needed aid money to Tuvalu. Mele's comment also indicates that imagery of CC effects plays an inadvertent role in attracting foreigners to Tuvalu, and she considered that these outsiders would potentially include international researchers and workers, but also last chance tourists.

#### **4.2.3 Tuvalu as a last chance tourism destination: A local perspective**

The potential benefits of the LCT trend have been investigated by Prideaux & McNamara (2013) and Farbotko (2008), among others. In this study, I explore how LCT in Tuvalu ties in with media representations of the island as 'disappearing' and highly vulnerable to the risks of CC.

When asked why tourists might be coming to Tuvalu, factors relating to CC or LCT were often implicated in the responses. For example, Isaia said

I was talking to a tourist, sitting with him, I asked him why did you want to come to Tuvalu? Just for sightseeing or...? He said he wants to witness the signs of CC.

According to another respondent, Maikolo,

I would think maybe CC or interest in extreme events. I know tourists from Japan come visit from a certain period of the year, like February, when we have the king tide. That's when the road is flooding. And I also know tourists coming in, with interests in CC and extreme events. Tourists from Japan, when they visit, I meet up with them, sometimes they discuss what will I do if Tuvalu is sinking.

This feedback from local Tuvaluans demonstrates that they have had experiences in not only seeing, but also interacting with foreign tourists who, whether they realise it or not, appear to be attracted to Tuvalu by the perception that Tuvalu is in danger of disappearing as a result of CC.

Some local respondents believed tourists may be discovering Tuvalu through imagery used in media stories on CC, and then making their decisions to travel to Tuvalu. For example, according to Mele, “Obviously CC is affecting Tuvalu, but I think they (tourists) would have heard it in the news or the radio. They would have seen pictures if they do research on CC and stuff in Tuvalu.” This illustrates that some Tuvaluan perspectives tie in closely and form a connection with information in section 4.5.1 relating to the visual media representations of CC in Tuvalu that are featured in international media reports.

#### **4.2.4 LCT as a potential opportunity for Tuvalu**

There were a significant number of local respondents who felt that LCT could be an opportunity for Tuvalu to benefit economically in the future if it was marketed and

administered in an appropriate manner. Specific mention was made to the utilisation of increased revenue from LCT for improving CC adaptation, education, food, and water security initiatives in Tuvalu, and several respondents, despite being previously unfamiliar with the terms themselves, felt that CC tourism and LCT was already taking place to a certain extent in Tuvalu.

During a talanoa session, Ioane talked at length about a particular Japanese tour group which makes yearly trips to Tuvalu. These popular annual tours apparently commenced after a Japanese man developed an affinity for Tuvalu many years ago and began marketing it as a tourism destination back in his home country. They “love seafoods, and they love the sea” Ioane said, “it’s a small place and about the sea, so all the Japanese, they come here.” Ioane also said that CC tourism “is a recent development in Tuvalu”, before indicating that he has noticed that various international tourists, including the Japanese tour group, show increased interest in areas of the island that display evidence of the effects of CC. He claimed that he has plans to operate organised tours to places in the offshore islands where coastal erosion is evident in order to prove “this is the impact of climate change on Tuvalu”.

All local Tuvaluan respondents indicated that in recent times they had noticed a distinctive increase in foreign tourists visiting Tuvalu. ‘Ana, who lived outside of Tuvalu for a significant number of years noted changes which occurred during the time in which she had been away:

If I was to compare with the other years that I was here, yes, there’s a big difference. Before there’s not many yachts, because the lagoon is here and I was

right next to the beach and it's not a usual sight to see a yacht so when we'd see it all the kids would run down to the water, but now since I got back it's normal, and there have been more yachts and also tourists visiting. They fly in and come by boat.

'Ana's observation illustrates that the arrival of foreigners in Tuvalu is something that locals are increasingly growing used to. The increase in Tuvalu's tourism is not something that is only recorded on official tourism statistical documentation but is also recognised by local Tuvaluans.

Some respondents indicated that they regarded foreign workers who come to Tuvalu on a behalf of a variety of NGOs, international governments, or aid agencies as tourists in their own right. Foreign workers have had a constant presence in Tuvalu for many years and may be in the country on long or short-term assignments. Mele stated that she has seen foreign aid workers engaging in sightseeing activities that she believed were linked to a local tour operator, and Ioane identified foreign workers as a main source of business for his start-up tourism operation that specialises in visits to the islands that surround Fongafale Lagoon. Afemai explained how he met foreign workers who specified that they had chosen to come to Tuvalu because of their perception of it as an LCT destination:

These 2 guys from Poland who worked here as advisers for the government, and they came here and I asked them 'why are you not going to other countries like Tonga?' and they said they want the job, the package is good, and plus, they want to be here before Tuvalu sank. So they took a chance to come to Tuvalu.

Afemai's statement serves as evidence that foreign workers are perhaps choosing to undertake assignments in Tuvalu over other posts due to their belief that Tuvalu is disappearing. The respondents suggest that non-Tuvaluan workers and researchers, who represent a large proportion of foreigners in Tuvalu, could provide a valuable market for local tourism operators.

The reasons provided by respondents for why Tuvalu is an attractive tourism destination from a local perspective included several factors such as the local culture, favourable weather, isolation, and the novelty of traveling to an isolated destination. However, roughly three-fourths of the participants indicated their belief that LCT plays a significant role in making Tuvalu attractive to international tourists. If tourism in general is growing, and a significant proportion of tourist motivations for traveling to Tuvalu are dictated by LCT, then this opens up questions about marketing the nation. While some respondents advocated marketing Tuvalu as a LCT destination, others were in favour but still hesitant, and some others vehemently against it. Nui stated her position that LCT is "real and it's happening. Maybe that's another side we can take a look at, if it's marketable and then we can. Some of the international visitors, when we ask why they come to Tuvalu that's, most of them, their reason is this."

Maikolo explained further that the Tuvaluan government is also beginning to see the potential benefits of LCT and tourism in general: "they realise that this is a growing market, a growing trend. Visitors are coming in and the rooms are booked out, so people (local Tuvaluans) are building rooms. This is a trend." Ma'ata, who works in finance, confirmed Maikolo's statement by indicating that she has seen an increase in local loan applications for the purposes of building tourist guesthouses. Afemai took a stance that

the Tuvaluan government should seize the opportunity to grow tourism for the benefit of local Tuvaluans: “I propose for the government to, if we are successful with tourism, we utilise this money and put it back into banks, to financial institutions. From there the local people can get loans, get money financially to create business to cater for that market, for the tourism market.”, but he also exercised a degree of caution: “I think Tuvalu should control tourism, not tourism control Tuvalu, because it might change our culture and the way we live.”

Other respondents shared Afemai’s view on the marketing of Tuvalu as a LCT as being a potential opportunity, but one that must be approached with a degree of caution. On the one hand LCT itself might serve to bring further attention to the plight of Tuvalu not only by virtue of any international marketing schemes themselves, but also from the assumption that tourists who have visited Tuvalu will share their experiences to others back in their home countries. Ioane, who described negative CC imagery as beneficial because it brings additional international attention and potential aid, also felt strongly about marketing Tuvalu as a LCT destination: “We have nothing to offer except to tell the rest of the world that we are in dying help for some kind of miracle I think, to save us from climate change.” ‘Ana voiced a similar opinion:

It’s a sad fact, if we are to use CC as a marketing tool but you know resource for Tuvalu, but I think we can also look at a positive side of marketing climate change, because at the same time we make more people aware that it is real, it is happening. It’s a way we can not only benefit from it economically, but at the

same time it can also show the world the reality of what the small islands nations are experiencing due to this manufacturer's ignorance.

In addition to reluctantly advocating for Tuvalu to be marketed to CC tourists, 'Ana's reference to "manufacturers ignorance" reflects a position also voiced by several other respondents that the issues faced by Tuvalu are the results of unchecked industrial activities in larger nations, and the belief that many residents of those nations simply do not know or care about the far-reaching environmental impacts their daily activities can have. A 'see it before it disappears' marketing campaign for Tuvalu as a LCT destination could potentially serve the purpose of attracting tourists but also create international public awareness.

There was a sentiment displayed by many respondents that the development of a tourism industry based on LCT in Tuvalu could provide much needed revenue for the country's infrastructure and CC adaptation initiatives. A range of propositions were put forward by respondents in terms of how additional financial income from tourism could be spent by the Tuvaluan. The most common suggestions were related to the general improvement of infrastructure that is needed by local Tuvaluans and tourists alike, and included the development of food and water security, educational initiatives, better internet connectivity, sanitation, more accessible inter-island transportation, and the re-investment of funds to continue developing Tuvalu's tourism industry. Other suggestions came in the form of CC adaptation initiatives such as the development and implementation of specialised housing for Tuvalu's unique and rapidly changing environment, the construction of additional of sea walls, the purchase of land in Fiji, and CC education programmes for local Tuvaluans to live more sustainably and efficiently.

Some felt that CC tourism and LCT could also provide much needed jobs for local Tuvaluans who, as Ioane considers, would be naturally suited to hosting tourists due to the friendliness and hospitality that is inherent in the local culture. There are also opportunities to showcase various cultural aspects of life in Tuvalu that are lesser-known but unique in the region. Ioane believes an education programme could be designed and funded to enhance the already natural abilities of local Tuvaluans to host and understand the needs of foreign tourists. Ioane hopes to seize this opportunity by personally venturing further into CC and ecotourism:

The thing is that I would like to do something for my people, in Tuvalu, and that is by offering them skilled kind of jobs. Most of the Tuvaluans, their educational background is not that good. They might be early dropouts from early forms, and education in Tuvalu is very very difficult to pursue because what the Tuvaluans can offer is primary school level, secondary school, that's it.

It is clear that Ioane and others are hopeful in terms of what an approach to LCT and CC tourism could potentially do for Tuvalu in terms of long-term benefits in providing self-sufficient financial stability for the country.

#### **4.2.5 Potential drawbacks of promoting LCT in Tuvalu**

While most local respondents entertained the possibility of LCT bringing a degree of financial stability, there was also a degree of caution in terms of expressing wholehearted support for it. Although some Tuvaluans with a stake in the tourism industry can see the potential of a supposedly 'sinking island' to attract tourists, several average Tuvaluan citizens are not willing to accept this label being placed on their home islands. One

guesthouse owner (who had verbally agreed to participate in talanoa, but then backed out because her husband went into hospital) explained how she had recently renovated and upgraded her establishment. She went on to detail an account relating to her attempt to attract more tourists to Tuvalu by placing the sign “*Tuvalu, see it before it disappears*” on the homepage of her website. As a result of this action, there was a serious fallout with several fellow Tuvaluans who voiced disapproval with her directly and on social media, forcing her to remove the sign.

Some locals are clearly not willing to see their country described as a ‘sinking island’. According to Afemai, “This last chance tourism, to attract people to come to Tuvalu before Tuvalu disappears, (is) very offensive ... it makes our children scared and think negatively of Tuvalu.” Afemai, who did acknowledge that the marketing of LCT could have short-term benefits, asserted that “in the long run this is not good to promote Tuvalu like that.” There was also the view that Tuvalu may have to utilise LCT as a form of survival response despite the potential drawbacks. ‘Ana, for example, said: “I think it’s sad that we have to do that, but it’s not our fault that it’s happening but it’s the only way that we can face it or survive it so it will be good to market climate change (tourism).”

LCT was seen by some as a threat to the Tuvaluan culture itself and the identities of future Tuvaluans. Talking about a traditional Tuvaluan dance called *fatele*, ‘Ana said:

Here it’s more local and it’s more traditional, but our fateles, we only have fatele for special events. They haven’t looked at it as a business venture. I think that’s part of protecting the integrity of our culture as well, that we cannot put a price to

it, but you know it has to have a special event or a special meaning. If we turn it into a business venture, I think it just demeans the whole concept of our culture.

‘Ana’s concern is that dances performed for the primary purpose of making money by entertaining tourists could affect the sanctity of these dances. Afemai, a father to two young children, also worried about the future of their perceptions of themselves as Tuvaluans if LCT was to become the norm:

It would be an embarrassment to Tuvalu, it can affect our children’s mindset, in setting their goals in future, to support Tuvalu in future. The only thing on their minds is climate change and that we have to move out.

As displayed by all of the respondents, Tuvaluans are fiercely proud of their culture and history, and public support for an initiative that marketed LCT would be unlikely to gain public support unless there was assurance that the integrity of the indigenous culture and lifestyle would be preserved.

Mele pointed out that Tuvaluans are not great examples of living sustainably themselves, and there are issues on the island with refuse and a dependence on fossil fuels, primarily for transport on motorbikes. There was a concern that this would be unacceptable for any tourists to see, but especially LCT and CC tourists as they might see Tuvaluans as being responsible for the supposed demise of their islands. Mose felt like a strong movement towards sustainability was already happening in Tuvalu, and Ma’ata suggested that government initiatives should promote the use of bicycles instead of motorbikes, and then they could “take it to a community level and they start seeing that it

should be done, and then people buy bicycles. In that way it will actually help, that is just one way.”

### **4.3 Presentation of Tourist Survey Data and Results of the Analysis**

This section outlines the online survey responses from the tourist sample group about their reasons for visiting Tuvalu and their perceptions of the country before and after their trip was completed. Feedback from tourists who have been to Tuvalu in the past was integrated as part of this study in order to draw parallels between responses from tourists and responses of local Tuvaluans (from section 4.2) on visual media representations of CC in Tuvalu and the possibility that these visuals are encouraging the growth of LCT in Tuvalu.

#### **4.3.1 Tourist perspectives of LCT in Tuvalu**

The tourists, whose responses are detailed in this section, come from a variety of ethnic, national, occupational, and educational backgrounds. They travelled to Tuvalu for a variety of reasons, including solo backpacking and work-related travel, and considered themselves to have participated in leisure tourism activities during their time in Tuvalu. As displayed by the chart in figure 4.3 below, just over half of the tourist respondents surveyed indicated that their initial decision to visit to Tuvalu was inspired by the assumption or belief that future travel to Tuvalu might be restricted by CC and SLR. The other respondents either stated that LCT was not a factor, declined to answer, or were country collectors whose sole purpose of travelling to Tuvalu was to add one more to the list of countries visited (one country collector respondent also referenced LCT factors). Half of the respondents surveyed indicated a belief that Tuvalu would not exist as a

sovereign nation in 100 years, while the other half indicated that they were unsure. None of the respondents in the country collector category indicated that they felt a sense of urgency to visit Tuvalu as a result of perceived CC threats to the nation.

That six out of ten respondents cited factors relating to LCT as their primary reason for traveling to Tuvalu serves as an indication that this is a growing tourism trend in Tuvalu. The following sub-sections will detail the influence of visual media reports on LCT, followed by tourists' expectations and perceptions of Tuvalu before and after having been there.

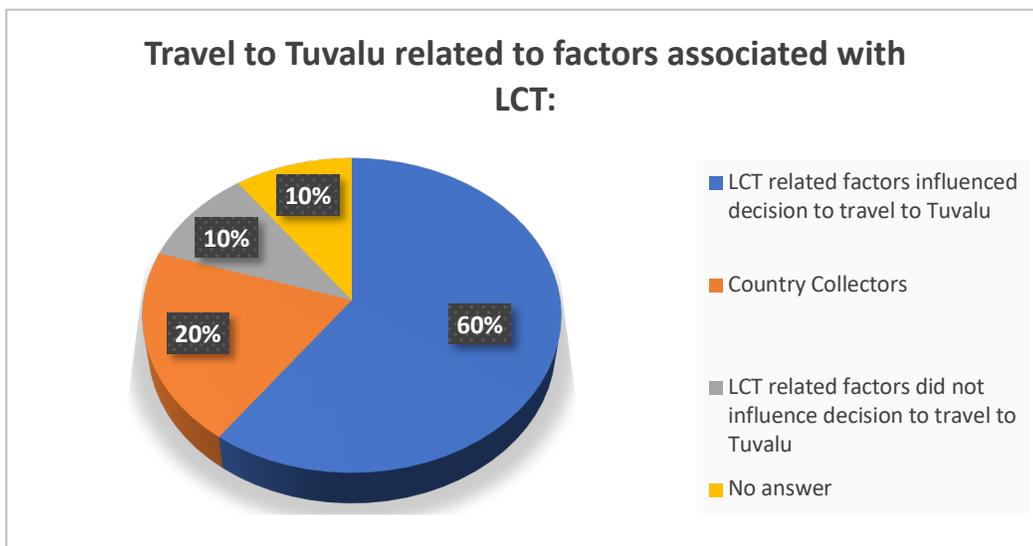
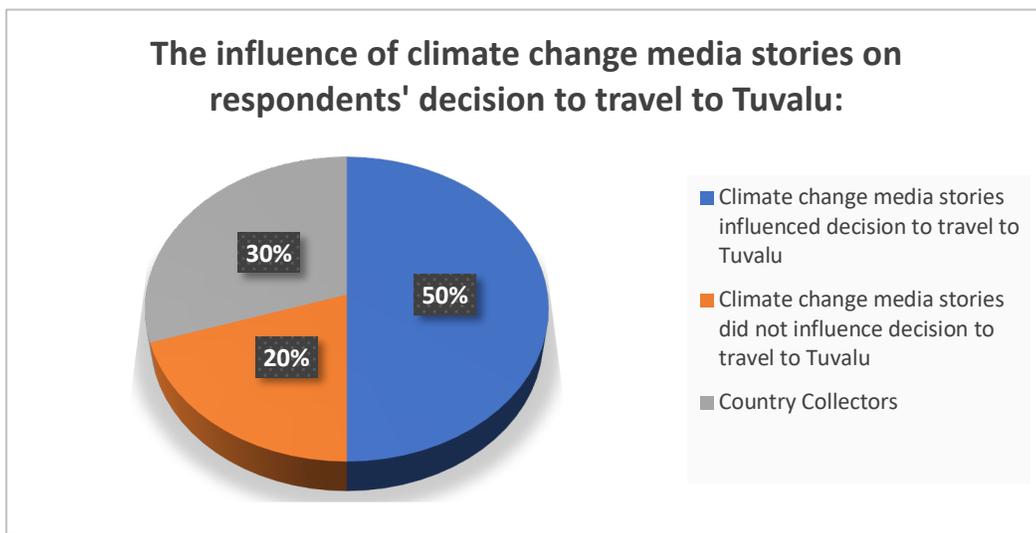


Figure 4.1: Travel to Tuvalu related to factors associated with LCT

#### 4.3.2 The influence of visual media reports on LCT

There was a reasonably strong connection between familiarity with visual media reports of CC in Tuvalu and a sense of urgency to travel to Tuvalu. As depicted in figure 4.4 below, five out of ten participants indicated that they were heavily influenced by media

reports and imagery that showcased CC-related content from Tuvalu, while two stated that media reports were not influential. The three respondents who identified themselves as country collectors all expressed familiarity with current media reports about CC in Tuvalu, along with a belief that these media reports were accurate, but these reports played no role in influencing their plans to travel to Tuvalu.



*Figure 4.2:* The influence of climate change media stories on respondents' decision to travel to Tuvalu

Before traveling to the country, respondents viewed Tuvalu as a cluster of small islands with limited infrastructure, poverty, little or no sanitation facilities, and an underdeveloped tourism industry. Eight out of ten respondents (including country collectors) described specific media stories that had influenced their desire to travel to Tuvalu. These included an online podcast, documentary films on CC, books on the topic of CC and academic articles. Sarah specified that she had been inspired to travel to Tuvalu after the Tuvaluan Prime Minister, Enele Sopoaga had a “presence and influence

at COP 21 (the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Paris, France) and subsequent climate conferences.” Sopoaga had been the keynote speaker at COP 21, where he made a strong plea to other world leaders to consider the plight of Tuvalu when addressing the issue of CC. Sopoaga ended his speech by proclaiming “a new, comprehensive treaty on climate change is in our reach. Let’s do it now. Let’s do it for the future of humanity. Let’s do it for Tuvalu. For if we save Tuvalu we save the world” (*Tuvalu Tourism Office 2018 quarterly reports, 3rd quarter arrivals tables, 2018, p. 3*).

In comparing their pre-travel visual perceptions with their actual experiences, some respondents saw an alignment with some elements of visuals used in media reports of CC in Tuvalu. They reported seeing ineffective waste management, narrow landmass, coastal erosion, king tides, surface flooding and blackened coral, possibly due to *black band disease* caused by rising ocean temperatures (Miller & Richardson, 2015). One respondent reported seeing no signs of CC while in Tuvalu. There were, however, no reports from tourists of witnessing local Tuvaluan people living in helpless, squalid conditions or of seeing individuals or their properties completely inundated with flood waters as is commonly depicted in media reports on CC in Tuvalu.

### **4.3.3 Perceptions and expectations of Tuvalu as a tourism destination**

The majority of respondents indicated that media (online and print), social media, or internet-related factors were their primary sources of information about Tuvalu. They talked of being exposed to Tuvalu “from media as the first state to go underwater,” and it being very small and isolated. One respondent reported to have discovered Tuvalu by chance, while on the Google Maps application online, while another learned about

Tuvalu's existence from a European board game. These initial chance discoveries were followed up with further personal research, and eventually led to a physical visit to Tuvalu.

When asked what kind of specific imagery of Tuvalu caught their attention, the most common response from participants was about aerial shots of Tuvalu which showcased the narrowness of the main island, followed by references to beaches, the island's famous international airport, and the Tuvaluan culture. All tourists surveyed had visited Tuvalu at least once, with three out of ten respondents reporting that they had been there twice. All respondents showed a high degree of interest in traveling to Pacific Island nations other than Tuvalu. Six out of ten respondents also indicated strong interest in visiting Nauru and Kiribati specifically, two countries in the same region that are also heavily featured in media stories on CC. Most of the reasons cited by respondents for initially wanting to travel to Tuvalu included a desire to visit the islands out of a belief that the islands were disappearing. Six out of ten respondents confirmed that perceptions of Tuvalu as disappearing influenced their decisions to travel there, while two respondents claimed that this was not a factor, and two participants as country collectors would have travelled to Tuvalu regardless.

Country collectors were sectioned off as a unique category of tourists who participated in this research because of the nature of their travel and tourism endeavours. Three respondents in this study identified themselves as such and shared common traits that set them apart from other travellers who may visit Tuvalu for specific reasons relating to various influencing factors. The country collectors surveyed in this study have a strong desire to visit every independent nation in the world. Charles, a country

collector from Norway, said he discovered Tuvalu on the internet and that it was his country number 103 out of 198. Richard, another Norwegian country collector, had literally travelled to every country in the world twice, while the other two respondents were still in the expensive and time-consuming process of checking countries off their expansive lists.

All the country collector respondents had relatively large numbers of social media and other online followers, and generally take their jobs as influencers seriously. Piecing responses from country collectors in with the feedback from other respondents was challenging because sentiments relating to LCT-related factors were often held by country collectors but the ultimate characteristic that influenced their travels to Tuvalu was the country's very existence as a sovereign nation. If, for example, Tuvalu's status as an independent nation was lost, then interest in Tuvalu from this group of tourists would likely decrease exponentially.

Most tourist respondents overall reported a number of perceived barriers that could affect tourism development in Tuvalu. The most significant of these included an overall underdeveloped infrastructure, lack of land, lack of ability to market tourism, an absence of tourist-specific amenities and information, scarce entertainment and nightlife, lack of interisland transport, food and water security, expensive and often inaccessible internet and telecommunications network, and an overall inability for Tuvalu to compete with neighbouring countries such as Fiji for the tourism market. Despite these issues, tourist respondents were generally optimistic about promoting Tuvalu as an ideal travel destination for a very specific type of 'off the beaten path' tourist. When asked if they would recommend Tuvalu as a travel destination to other travellers, 100% of the

respondents indicated that they would, but it would depend on the type of tourists and their specific tourism goals. Ideal tourists for Tuvalu, they suggested, would be “cultural and eco” tourists, “adventurous” travellers who “prefer being isolated and disconnected from the world” or “love to see the different ways in which people live.” They did not look at Tuvalu as a suitable destination for luxury or resort tourism.

All the respondents surveyed indicated a strong desire to return to Tuvalu for tourism purposes. This includes country collectors who would normally visit a country only once. Four out of ten respondents said that they would return to Tuvalu to explore the other islands that make up the country. Several respondents indicated that they had, in fact, initially visited Tuvalu with full expectations of witnessing abject poverty and hardship as a result of CC related issues as reported in the media. However, after physically visiting Tuvalu, meeting local people, and having firsthand experiences with the local culture, a variety of unique and special attributes became overwhelmingly apparent. Specified attributes included the culture and language, friendliness of the local people, safety, a relaxing atmosphere, natural beauty, and abundant seafood.

#### **4.4 Summary**

This chapter highlighted the various complex relationships and connections between visual media representations of CC in Tuvalu and LCT from the perspectives of both local Tuvaluans and tourists who have been to Tuvalu. From the data it is apparent that there exists some degree of perceived visual misrepresentation in the media from a local perspective. Those who do not see current media narratives as problematic consider that this type of imagery could potentially keep Tuvalu in the international spotlight of CC

topics which, in turn, could lead to additional aid money for the country to fund CC adaptation projects. There is also some evidence to suggest that negative visual media representations of Tuvalu are possibly encouraging LCT to the country.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses and analyses the findings of the study in relation to the research questions. The discussion provides an interplay between the existing literature on climate change in the Pacific Islands (Chapter two) and the perspectives of everyday Tuvaluans on visual media representations of their country and trends in LCT to Tuvalu.

A prominent theme that comes through the research is the general depiction of Tuvaluans as isolated victims of CC who are looking to escape an island that is supposedly sinking rapidly. While acknowledging that some media outlets are more conscious than others in producing accurate visual representations, a number of local Tuvaluans who participated in this study feel that the above narrative has been created and perpetuated by the international media for the purposes of creating sensationalist content. Tourists to Tuvalu also revealed that these visuals play a significant role in encouraging LCT to Tuvalu, which from a local Tuvaluan perspective, have the potential of bringing financial and employment benefits to the country. The media stories and the visuals that accompany them create a sense of urgency for intrepid tourists to visit the islands, often to see supposed poverty and environmental degradation.

### **5.2 Analysis of the results**

Analysis of the findings reveals seven key points, each of which is discussed below.

### **5.2.1 Visual media representations of Tuvalu are often misrepresentative**

The overall local Tuvaluan response to existing visual media narratives was one of general disapproval, largely because a considerable amount of media imagery posits Tuvaluans as helpless victims of CC. This result is mostly in line with pre-research expectations and confirms that locals feel that their country is being visually misrepresented.

The association of Tuvaluans with CC victimisation in the media has been covered by Dreher & Voyer (2015) and Farbotko (2005), who draw attention to the various ways media outlets construct these portrayals. Media imagery of CC in Tuvalu often features visual elements that appear to be designed to play into the CC victim narrative. As detailed by Tuvaluan respondents, there is a strong visual media theme emphasising and often exaggerating the complexities of human-water relationships in CC stories on Tuvalu. Such a theme tends to focus on surface flooding, king tides, or photographs of people standing or lying down in (sometimes polluted) bodies of water. There is a belief that such photos are often staged at the direction of visiting photographers, and some respondents even claimed to have witnessed staging take place. This type of imagery is considered to feature events or situations in Tuvalu that are serious, but not commonplace from a local perspective. While occurrences such as king tides and surface flooding do cause damage in Tuvalu, they occur mostly at a certain time of year, and are the exception, not the rule.

Going by the findings, many Tuvaluans feel the depiction of these events suggest that extreme environmental events are the norm, while portraying the Tuvaluan people as

incapable victims of CC. From a local perspective this is generally perceived to be unacceptable, misrepresentative and clichéd. While many CC scientists do express an overall unfavourable long-term outlook for the future of Tuvalu (*Report of the UN Secretary General to the UN General Assembly 64th Session.*, 2009), sustained representation of the islands as sinking could potentially lead to a situation of a self-fulfilling prophecy: a concept that is derived from the Thomas Theorem which states “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Kippenberg, 2010, p. 104). Under this assumption, if Tuvaluans are constantly told, either explicitly or indirectly, that they are victims of CC and their changing environment then over a long period, their behaviours could begin to mirror the beliefs that have been projected on to them by outside influences.

Despite being seen as misrepresentative, several local respondents felt that these images could be beneficial to Tuvalu because of the potential for increased international attention and financial aid. The complex CC situation in Tuvalu, and how to mitigate the situation, is already a significant topic of discussion at many international summits, and additional media coverage depicting CC-related environmental degradation could perhaps enhance Tuvalu’s chances of receiving additional financial aid and funds for CC adaptation projects. Tuvaluan respondents who approved of the existing visual narratives generally admitted to being overall less familiar with the media stories and accompanying imagery. On the other hand, those who were more vocal in expressing disapproval tended to be intimately familiar with existing narratives and had firsthand observations of a number of media stories. This points to the possibility that those who have had more time to view and process the images were more likely to have developed

critical views. The experience of traveling overseas to countries where such media publications are distributed, and access to devices with internet connectivity are both factors that enhance opportunities for Tuvaluans to become familiar with current media content.

As media stories, and their associated visual elements, continue to be produced and shared, there exists increased potential for misinterpretations of the CC situation in Tuvalu to develop among foreigners who view the content. As Tuvalu's internet connectivity continues to improve, it is potentially more likely that local Tuvaluans will have immediate access to media content about Tuvalu, but the degree to which inaccurate content will be identified, criticised, or accepted as truth by local Tuvaluans is not known. This is especially relevant to younger generations who grow up in Tuvalu while being exposed to media and news features that portray their islands as vulnerable, sinking, and undergoing a slow process of human abandonment.

### **5.2.2 The effects of visual misrepresentation**

Visual misrepresentations in the media have the potential to damage not only the perceptions that the international community has of Tuvalu, but also the perceptions and feelings Tuvaluans have towards themselves as indigenous people of the land. Concerns have been raised by local Tuvaluans over the ways in which younger Tuvaluans may deal with the issues of how to sustain a strong cultural identity and place in the world as citizens of an island widely perceived to be disappearing. This is an issue that has been presented in previous discussions and summits on CC (*Report of the UN Secretary General to the UN General Assembly 64th Session.*, 2009)

The protection of the Tuvaluan identity, culture and lifestyle is a priority to Tuvaluans, some of whom are not concerned with how the rest of the world views Tuvalu, but instead how Tuvaluans view themselves. Despite media narratives that portray Tuvaluans as urgently seeking largescale overseas migration opportunities, there is very little evidence that this is the case among respondents who participated in this study. Overall, there was a high level of concern for visual accuracy to be improved regarding Tuvalu's portrayal in the media. Local Tuvaluans were also committed to making necessary adaptations in order to remain in Tuvalu despite the dangers presented by CC.

There is local concern over the visual narratives that frame Tuvalu as a 'sinking island', as opposed to placing the focus of attention on the effects of sea level rise on Tuvalu's islands. The current focus on the image of the islands as sinking, rather than the oceans around it rising, seems to put the blame for Tuvalu's current CC issues primarily on the Tuvaluan people. The sinking island narrative serves to isolate Tuvalu and the Tuvaluan people from the wider global community. From a Polynesian perspective, a focus on sea level rise is more balanced, as the sea is perceived as an element that connects all of the earth's islands and continents, rather than divides them (Hau'ofa, 1993). Simple switching of these two epistemological perspectives can serve to shift the responsibility of addressing and adapting to climate change from the local people (and other people who inhabit low-lying islands), to the global community. The sinking island narrative also shows Tuvaluans as unfortunate victims of environmental factors which in fact are way beyond Tuvalu's control. The sea level rise narrative, on the other hand, has

the potential to bring about a collaborative effort through a sense of solidarity and shared responsibility.

### **5.2.3 Local Tuvaluan suggestions for improving visual representations**

Tuvaluans observed violations of photojournalistic protocol by some visiting foreign photojournalists who planned visits to Tuvalu at specific times when flooding and king tides are most likely to occur. Many provided reports of apparent photo staging, along with a disregard for local protocol, cultural practices, and privacy by fly-in/ fly-out photojournalists and media crews. This is, of course, not to suggest that all photojournalists and media crews conduct their work in Tuvalu for the sake of producing exaggerated and sensationalised media content, but those that do choose to operate in this way serve to perpetuate visual misrepresentations, while also building a deep sense of disapproval and mistrust within the local population.

The quest for exaggeration, or “maximum dramatic effect” in CC media stories on Tuvalu observed in this study are similar to the ones noted by Farbotko (2008, p. 195) in a description of a professional news videographer’s dubious and overly assertive methods of directing an on-camera interview in a Tuvaluan home which resulted in the interviewee knowingly providing misinformation relating to overseas migration plans as a means of escaping the effects of CC. The respondent in question later admitted to Farbotko that her response was simply a nervous reaction because she felt that’s what the filmmaker wanted her to say. When Farbotko spoke to the videographer after filming, he explained that “the Western audience for his program would respond to things that they are fearful of – in this case, tides of immigrants into his Western nation state”, adding that

he had been instructed to build the foundation of his story on that premise in order to be “dramatic and newsworthy” (p. 199). This account by Farbotko (2008) ties in with statements made by several Tuvaluan participants in this research and confirms that acceptable standards of professional photojournalistic principles are not always being adhered to among visiting visual journalists in Tuvalu.

The emphasis on producing sensationalist content is common throughout Western media outlets, and features on CC are no exception. This rhetoric is also echoed by other institutions such as governments or NGOs (Mortreux & Barnett, 2009). It is clear that this approach is often misrepresentative from a local perspective, and a number of measures can be taken in order to mitigate such instances while ensuring that visual information is approached and created in a way that is thoughtful and accurate as possible. Whether or not a reduced emphasis on sensationalised content will harm profits for media outlets is a factor that is not a concern in this context, but it is important to uphold the primary and universally accepted goal of photojournalists to provide accurate representations of truth (Newton, 1998). As any visitor to Tuvalu can attest to, there is enough of a range of visual content to provide balanced visual representations of the CC situation without the need to violate photojournalistic guidelines by partaking in questionable ethical practices.

An ideal guideline for approaching photography campaigns on CC in Tuvalu would closely relate to the Seven Principles for Visual Climate Change Communication as proposed by Corner (2016), but with several custom additions that relate to the actual practice of working specifically in Tuvalu as a foreign photojournalist. The first, and perhaps most important, consideration is in relation to the Tuvaluan culture that is based

upon customary principles of respect, humility, relationships, and family values. The practice of talanoa, which was used during interviews in Tuvalu on this project, could serve as a useful and appropriate tool for photographers to obtain valuable insight into local Tuvaluan perspectives. The concept of talanoa is not complex, but it does require time and effort in cultivating authentic relationships. The importance of meaningful and productive consultation between local people and photographers is another suggestion, which would improve the accuracy of visual imagery. Many photojournalists arrive to their assignment destination with tight deadlines and draw on the services of local fixers to get their jobs done. However, as so many Tuvaluan respondents pointed out, prominent media narratives of CC in Tuvalu were not necessarily created under the guidance of locally-based experts.

#### **5.2.4 The connection between visual media stories on CC and LCT growth in Tuvalu**

There is strong evidence in this research to suggest that visual media stories are, to a significant extent, influencing the travel behaviours of foreign tourists and encouraging them to travel to Tuvalu on the premise of it being a last-chance experience. Local Tuvaluans often meet foreign tourists in Tuvalu who talk openly about what they have learned about the country's plight through a variety of media platforms, and how these media images influenced, or at least partially motivated them to travel to Tuvalu. Furthermore, the majority of tourists surveyed who have been to Tuvalu confirmed that they were drawn to the island nation because of media depictions of CC in Tuvalu. Indeed, a simple internet web search for the keywords "Tuvalu" immediately reveals a number of such stories, many of which have been circulated on travel websites and social

media platforms. The findings confirm the association of Tuvalu with CC and environmental degradation noted in previous research by Farbotko (2005) and Chambers & Chambers (2007).

#### **5.2.5 LCT is a potential benefit to Tuvalu, but a carefully considered approach is essential**

The promotion and marketing of Tuvalu as a LCT destination has a number of potential benefits for bringing both prosperity and increased exposure to Tuvalu's culture.

However, there is also a sense that such an approach to tourism development in Tuvalu must be administered and presented in a very specific way so as to avoid potential pitfalls and undesirable outcomes.

In general, there are strong local views on the growing interest in LCT and CC tourism in Tuvalu. This is not to imply that local Tuvaluan respondents felt that this approach to tourism development is ideal, or that it should take place with little or no regulations to keep it in check. It was instead viewed as another survival tactic that is useful for the generation of income and a means to further develop CC adaptation projects and increase the financial stability of the country.

The ideal outcome to LCT and CC tourism from a local perspective is to involve international tourists, arriving in Tuvalu as last chance tourists, in seeing a more-rounded and authentic version of Tuvalu. This could be achieved by showcasing Tuvalu's easy-going brand of culture, hospitality, and safety that is a rarity in the majority of the world's travel destinations. Geographical isolation, lack of infrastructure and high cost of airfares were identified as major barriers to attracting overseas tourists to Tuvalu, especially when

neighbouring countries such as Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga have much more developed tourism facilities than Tuvalu. Because of this, LCT may represent a valuable selling point that competing countries in the region cannot claim to the same extent as Tuvalu.

### **5.2.6 Approaches to marketing LCT in Tuvalu**

One major issue that arises with LCT as a potential tourism approach is the degree to which Tuvaluans want to explicitly market their country as such. On one end of the spectrum there is support for LCT in Tuvalu, along with the acknowledgement that even if it is not an ideal approach, it could still bring a potentially high degree of financial prosperity to Tuvalu. On the other hand, there exists a level of moral opposition towards explicit statements in tourism marketing schemes that allude to Tuvalu as ‘disappearing’ or ‘sinking’ in an attempt to instil a sense of urgency in potential tourists as a selling point. This was illustrated in the backlash experienced by the guesthouse owner who marketed Tuvalu as ‘disappearing’ on her private accommodation business website.

There are valid concerns about the potential long and short-term impacts that LCT, and tourism in general, could have on wider Tuvaluan society and culture. The primary functional issue that presents itself on this topic is in relation to Tuvalu’s underdeveloped infrastructure along with a lack of sufficient food and water supplies which would naturally limit the number of tourists that the island could sustain at any given time. There is also the lack of tourism-specific infrastructure such as accommodation, interisland transport networks, and tourist-related services, especially outside of Funafuti. If large numbers of tourists were to arrive in Tuvalu and strain existing facilities, then it would either be essential for infrastructural upgrades to be

completed, or for visitor reduction initiatives or tourist-specific taxes to be introduced as they have been in Venice where CC and tourist overcrowding have been causing a number of difficulties for many years (Brady, 2019). This kind of rapid tourism expansion in Tuvalu is highly unlikely given the high cost of air transport to such an isolated geographic location. However, the findings of this research revealed that a significant number of local Tuvaluans are spending their own money or taking out bank loans in order to create or upgrade privately owned and operated tourism amenities in the hope that yearly tourism numbers will continue to increase.

The other issues of concern are in relation to the protection and preservation of the distinctive Tuvaluan culture and lifestyle. The foreign cultural influences that would presumably arrive with increased tourist numbers could have serious impacts on local culture. Similar to other Polynesian islands, Tuvalu has very specific cultural protocol and hierarchy that dictates interpersonal relationships and duties within society, and some local Tuvaluans are concerned that young people may already be abandoning traditional rules of etiquette in Funafuti as a result of outside influences. In addition to this, the marketing and presentation of Tuvalu as a LCT destination may, in turn, influence the ways in which Tuvaluans perceive their own country and fellow citizens. This is an especially valid consideration regarding younger generations of Tuvaluans who may undergo lifelong exposure to the notion that overseas tourists go to great lengths to travel to Tuvalu, driven primarily by the purpose of visiting islands that they expect will be rendered uninhabitable by the effects of CC sometime in the near future. Local Tuvaluan culture may also be perceived as disappearing by foreign tourists, which plays into the ‘endangered species’ narrative that was referenced by one Tuvaluan research participant.

If locals themselves end up being affected by this assumption, then the consequences for Tuvaluan culture itself could be serious.

The marketing of a LCT scheme in Tuvalu can be potentially problematic on a number of levels. Tuvalu could, for example, make explicit appeals in marketing campaigns that would allude to the islands as effectively disappearing. However, such an approach may come at the cost of the dignity, identity and culture of local people. Clearly, decisions regarding the visual portrayal and descriptions of Tuvalu for use in marketing campaigns would have to be deliberated at length with the involvement of a vast array of local stakeholders so as to avoid any unintended visual misrepresentations.

A further factor to consider is that a comprehensive LCT marketing scheme may not be necessary given the current media narratives that exist. Even though some of the media narratives themselves may not be accurate, Tuvalu only has to allow these narratives to continue in the hope that tourists will begin arriving as a result. But, on the whole, if the Tuvaluan people themselves were to confirm the negative images in the international media through tourism marketing campaigns, then international negative perceptions could become even worse. A valuable insight from this study is that a significant number of tourists who had come to Tuvalu with the expectation of witnessing negative situations associated with poverty and CC devastation, actually ended up experiencing quite the opposite

### **5.2.7 Tuvalu's ideal tourist**

If tourism was going to be marketed through the targeting of specific groups, a major point to note is that Tuvalu is generally not a travel destination for beginners. Many

tourists who venture to Tuvalu are intrepid travellers who actively seek unique experiences. Many such travellers maintain significant online and social media personas (particularly country collectors which are discussed in the last chapter) and operate travel blog websites with thousands, and in some cases millions, of followers. There is always the potential for sensationalised information and beliefs of high-profile tourists to feed into negative media narratives. However, the websites of tourist respondents who took part in this project do not display any content about Tuvalu that could be compared to the negative imagery that was isolated by local Tuvaluans as problematic. There is currently a growing trend among tourists to endeavour to visit locations that are isolated, remote, and viewed as ‘off-the-beaten-path’ (Vila et al., 2016), and it can be considered that LCT is closely related to this variety of tourism.

If the tourist demographic mentioned is identified as a target market for tourism in Tuvalu, then changes to infrastructure would be minimised and attention could be focused on only the most basic elements such as food and water security, sanitation, and stabilisation of vulnerable land. Private enterprises would presumably meet the needs of supplying the appropriate shopping, entertainment, and tourist activities as needed. A minimalistic approach to tourism development would significantly lower financial burdens on the government and private entrepreneurs, while at the same time reducing the potential for the Tuvaluan lifestyle and culture to be drastically disrupted. This particular market of tourists is primarily interested in traveling to Tuvalu for the purposes of experiencing largely what is already there: culture, isolation, a pristine ocean and reef environment, safety, and a relaxed atmosphere.

Prideaux & McNamara (2013) identified three different forms of tourism as potential options for Tuvalu: Marine-environment focused eco-tourists, ‘off-the-beaten-track’ tourists who are “likely to be collectors of unique experiences”, and voyeuristic tourists who are in search of “last chance experiences” (p. 591). Based on the overall profiles, feedback, and suggestions of tourists in this study, it appears that there are many overlapping factors between the three “low cost, low impact tourism options” that were put forth by Prideaux & McNamara (2013, p. 591), and an ideal tourist for Tuvalu would most likely fit into a combination of all three recommended tourism approaches. Instead of trying to undertake just one of the tourism proposals suggested by Prideaux & McNamara, 2013), it would be more beneficial for Tuvalu to take a more well-rounded approach and incorporate elements of all three in a way that would provide the most benefits along with the least investment and disruption of local culture.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Overview**

The overall results of this study indicate that visual media representations of Tuvalu as a cluster of islands sinking under the weight of climate change impacts, and the notion of last-chance-driven tourism to the islands are both complex and problematic issues with significant implications for the Pacific Island nation. While locals disapprove of the misrepresentation of the islands in the media, many are willing to accept the media images because of their ability to attract financial aid and more last chance tourists. The findings are similar to those of research conducted in other islands vulnerable to climate change.

### **6.2 Significance of the research**

This study is significant because there is ever-increasing media attention on CC in Tuvalu (and other neighbouring island nations). The rise in popularity of social media, particularly photo sharing applications and websites, are also driving international perceptions and beliefs in relation to the situation in Tuvalu. Many recent publications and social media features appear to uphold visual narratives about a dying nation that a significant number of local Tuvaluan respondents see as misleading and potentially harmful for the survival of the culture and lifestyle of the islands.

The research is also important because it reveals a seeming link between the visual media representations of the island and the rise of LCT in Tuvalu in recent years. This connection was largely confirmed through feedback from interviews with tourists,

many of whom reported that published features on Tuvalu strongly influenced their decisions to travel there.

### **6.3 Key Findings**

This research showed that there have been a number of significant visual misrepresentations of Tuvalu in media stories on climate change, and that certain narratives have emerged which depict Tuvaluans as helpless victims on a sinking island. The sustained use of these narratives by international media and news outlets serve to perpetuate feelings of local misrepresentation. As a result, locals are concerned about the potential long-term repercussions such misrepresentations may have on the ongoing relationship of future generations of the indigenous people of Tuvalu with their homeland. While critical of the misrepresentation conveyed through exaggerated or sensationalised imagery, many believed that such imagery may assist in bringing additional international attention to Tuvalu in the form of financial aid and increased tourism.

It is apparent that some media outlets are intent on developing and maintaining the sensationalised narratives of abject environmental degradation, the victimisation of local people, and transnational migration as a response to climate change for the purposes for their target audiences in developed nations. Furthermore, locals have reported some instances of photojournalistic misconduct and disregard for professional ethics by visiting visual journalists in Tuvalu. Acts such as these can serve to build contempt and mistrust between local individuals and foreign visual journalists, and there can be potentially harmful long-term effects for entire local communities as a result of perceived

misrepresentation. From a local Tuvaluan perspective, a more balanced visual focus is necessary for presenting climate change stories in the media. This means that visual journalists should undertake proper local consultation in order to showcase people in a manner that accurately depicts their culture and identity as Tuvaluans, along with focusing on their resilience in adapting to the adverse effects of climate change.

A by-product of the media focus on climate change in Tuvalu is the rise of LCT, with a small but significant number of international tourists visiting the islands out of an expectation of seeing a disappearing island. A number of tourists who have been to Tuvalu indicated that they were first made aware of Tuvalu's existence through media stories that depicted climate change in the islands. Most tourists surveyed indicated that they had expected to see more negative climate change effects and poverty when they first arrived in Tuvalu, only to find that the scenes that they were exposed to in the media were not as dramatic as they had assumed.

Tuvalu could potentially expect to welcome more LCTs in the future as the country's reputation for being under threat of climate change becomes more well-known with audiences abroad. However, the question remains: What would the potential implications be if Tuvalu chose to actively market itself as a LCT destination? The majority of local Tuvaluan participants indicated their belief that LCT could benefit the country in a variety of ways, even if they did not agree with the negative connotations that are subliminally embedded within the term itself. Some Tuvaluan respondents viewed the presentation of Tuvalu as a LCT destination as a form of survival tactic, or something that gives the country a key point of difference for competing against neighbouring countries for tourism.

From a local perspective, the ideal model for approaching LCT in Tuvalu is to simply allow tourists to be attracted by current media narratives, but then focusing efforts on altering their perspectives by demonstrating Tuvalu's inherent attributes such as culture, safety, and natural beauty. Some local Tuvaluans further advocate for the country to strive for the development of a sustainable living initiative in order for the country to demonstrate climate change resilience and adaptation. This approach would in theory allow Tuvalu to benefit financially from increasing tourism numbers in a way that does not require unnecessarily large investments on nonessential infrastructure or marketing, while at the same time offsetting the media narratives that present Tuvaluans as victims. Increased financial resources that might result from LCT should be utilised for infrastructural improvements that have been identified by local Tuvaluans as high priority. These include food and water security, sustainable living initiatives, housing, sanitation and education. The primary goal of the utilisation and marketing of LCT in Tuvalu should be to enhance the capacity of everyday Tuvaluan citizens in their efforts to adapt and thrive in a changing environment.

This research project has identified distinctive potential tourism opportunities for Tuvalu with the rapidly growing group of tourists. Rather than focusing on different forms of tourism such as marine-based eco-tourism, 'off-the-beaten-track' tourism, and voyeuristic, last-chance tourism (Prideaux & McNamara (2013), respondents in this study suggest that the ideal tourist for Tuvalu would be someone who was attracted to a combination of all these options. This would provide the most benefits to the country along with the least investment and disruption of local culture.

The conversation on tourism in Tuvalu is often focused solely on what Tuvalu can do for tourists, but there is the potential for the opposite to be considered as well: what can tourists do for Tuvalu? As Tuvalu is a small destination that is home to a unique culture and lifestyle, the ideal tourist will arrive with an open mind, be eager to learn and experience authentic local culture, possess a willingness to give back and not just take, find contentment in a slower pace of life and comfort in geographic isolation and solitude, all the while maintaining a sense of respect and humility for the local Tuvaluan people who are determined to maintain their way of life despite the environmental challenges they face as a result of climate change.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the research**

This research could be deeper and more extensive, but time and resources were major constraints. A great deal of additional insights could have been gained if I could conduct fieldwork in Tuvalu for a much longer period of time. This would have allowed me to build larger networks and closer relationships with local people, while also allowing for participant observation to be added to the methodological orientation of the study. More time in Tuvalu would have also increased chances of observing and interviewing foreign tourists. This was the initial intention, but as yearly tourist numbers are so low it was unfortunately not possible to locate any suitable tourist respondents within a seven-day window. In addition to this, tourist respondents were interviewed by online questionnaires as opposed to in-person talanoa interviews that were conducted with local Tuvaluans. In retrospect, it would have been beneficial to interview both sample groups through the same method. Tourist respondents were given the choice of online video interviews or online questionnaires, and as members of this sample group were located in

various geographical regions it was simply more convenient for them to opt for the online questionnaires.

One cultural element present among some local Tuvaluans was a tendency to avoiding any display of negative thoughts and feelings during talanoa interviews. This meant that an additional effort needed to be made at times to encourage participants to speak their minds. As talanoa sessions are never held with just two people (researcher and respondent), there was always at least one other Tuvaluan present during all interviews, even when this person was not acting as an official research participant. The presence of this third person generally helped mitigate the issue and facilitated the process of garnering authentic responses.

## **6.5 Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings from this research effectively point to several other topics as potential points of focus for future research on the topics of visual media representations of CC in Tuvalu, as well as LCT and the general future of tourism in Tuvalu. A possible line of investigation could be to record and critique the approaches that are currently being used by visiting photojournalists in producing visual stories on CC in Tuvalu. This would require that a researcher be based in Tuvalu for a considerable amount of time in order to adequately observe an adequate number of professional photojournalists, filmmakers or bloggers. Local Tuvaluans have confirmed the regular presence of visiting photographers, film crews, and professional bloggers throughout the year, primarily in the month of February when king tides are most likely to occur. Through participant observation and interviews, a researcher could assess the level to which visual journalists

are adhering to acceptable professional photojournalistic principles and working guidelines.

The topic of how to best address local Tuvaluan feelings of visual misrepresentation is also in need of further research. While it was touched on in this study, a more comprehensive inquiry which seeks to establish a plan of action which would more effectively involve local Tuvaluan people in photojournalistic processes is needed. This form of research may be designed in a similar way to the locally-guided photography project that is featured as an epilogue to this research, but the ultimate goal would be for Tuvaluans to have a higher degree of input regarding visual media representations that are featured internationally. Local Tuvaluan photographers could be involved in the research process as local photojournalists, or if there is not a sufficient number of photographers then a short, but adequate photojournalism training programme could be established. It would be interesting and beneficial from a research perspective to provide local Tuvaluan photojournalists with various visual documentary assignments over an extended period of time, and then compare their visual results with those of foreign-based visual media crews undertaken around the same time. The results of each group could then be assessed by a collective of appointed Tuvaluan cultural advisers, and CC specialists to evaluate and compare them on their level of accuracy and representation.

## **Chapter 7: Epilogue – A locally-guided photography project inspired by the research**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This epilogue offers insights into my attempt to undertake a locally guided photography project that allowed local Tuvaluans to have a high degree of input into the nature of photographs that authentically represent life in Tuvalu. The project was undertaken on the island of Fongafale, the most populous of Tuvalu's nine islands.

Two separate respondents participated in this activity as locally-based guides, a role that is not dissimilar to that of a local 'fixer' which is often utilised by professional photojournalists on assignment in foreign countries. The main difference in this instance, however, is that the participants were encouraged to direct photographic attention on places or elements of their choosing. The participant's task was to specify exactly what to photograph and how to photograph it. This was followed by a discussion and explanation as to why a particular site or object was chosen. I did not explicitly ask participants to showcase areas that are directly affected by CC, but instead provided these simple instructions: "Take me wherever you want on the island, and direct me to photograph whatever you think is unique, special, problematic, or representative of your home." It was essential that participants understood that the photos produced from this activity had no boundaries except to represent the island, culture and lifestyle from their own local perspective.

Travel around the island was undertaken via motorbike, the most common form of transport in Tuvalu, for which fuel was provided by me so as not to financially burden

the participant. Photographs were created as part of this project on three separate days which are specified in the sections that delineate the photographs produced under the guidance of each participant. While the project was underway, conversations around the chosen photography sites and topics, and key points relating to the significance the content within a particular photo and location were hand-recorded in a notebook.

It is important to note two important factors relating to this exercise. Firstly, all information relating to descriptions of the photographs in this chapter are described in accordance with information directly from the perspective of the respondents and were not fact checked for accuracy. This was done in order to understand the level and type of understanding that local Tuvaluans have for physical features and spaces that are important to them. Secondly, there were many more photos that were taken as part of the exercise, but those selected to be featured in this section were of locations and features that respondents were most satisfied with and knowledgeable about. At the end of this chapter, I discuss the key similarities and differences between locally-guided photographs and photographs taken by foreign photojournalists on assignment for various media outlets.

## **7.2 Manase**

Manase is a 25-year-old Funafuti-based male Tuvaluan who agreed to participate in the locally-guided photography project. Photographs with Manase were created on two different days as specified in the following sub-headings.

### 7.2.1 24 February 2019

Beginning in Funafuti township in mid-morning, Manase first decided to go to the south end of the island via motorbike, stopping at two sites along the way to the very end of the island where the Pacific Ocean meets the vast Fongafale Lagoon. From there, the route went back to the north, through Funafuti township and part of the way towards the northern end of the island. A total of approximately 30 kilometres were covered over the course of three and a half hours. The following photographs and their descriptions are the product of Manase's guidance and direction.



*Figure 7.4:* Pandanus tree by community park in Funafuti

The first photo stop with Manase was at this new seaside park near the southern end of Funafuti's international airport. Manase explained the significance of pandanus trees that are used in the weaving of traditional Tuvaluan mats. The park was significant because,

according to Manase, “it’s a new place where kids come to play.” The park consists of concrete benches and tables, but no children’s play equipment. It is located on the side of Fongafale that faces the lagoon, just before entering the southern end of the island that is very narrow. After approximately ten minutes at this site, we continued to the south.



*Figure 7.5:* The southern end of Fongafale

A four to five-minute walk down a trail from the end of Te Auala o Vaiaku (Vaiaku Road) was required to get to this location on the southernmost tip of Fongafale. Manase explained that this is a place where many young Tuvaluans come to “have barbecue and drink”. On the way to the location, there were several groups of young Tuvaluans sitting on mats facing the lagoon side while drinking gin in half-cut aluminium cans and plastic bottles. All members of these groups waved and acknowledged us in a friendly manner.

This is a special location for Manase because he brought his half-Tuvaluan fiancée here to welcome her to Tuvalu on the day that she arrived from New Zealand approximately one year before this photo was taken. The land here is very narrow, and at the very tip is where the Fongafale lagoon meets the Pacific Ocean. On the way back to the motorbike Manase talked about how the coral stones on this part of the island had been brought in to add elevation as part of a CC land reclamation initiative several years ago.



*Figure 7.6: Ship delivering imported goods to Funafuti's wharf*

After leaving the southern tip of Fongafale and heading north through Funafuti without stopping, Manase felt that an important place to feature was the wharf that services Fongafale. In order to get to the wharf itself, it was necessary to drive the motorbike through a large storehouse that was stocked with piles of bagged rice, dry

goods, and other items that had just arrived and were bound for shipment to the outer islands. On the way through the warehouse, Manase simply waved to the security guard, who allowed access to where the ship was moored. The particular ship on that day was from Singapore and had docked up for several days for an unknown reason. Here, Manase explained Tuvalu's dependence on shipping and imported goods while also lamenting the difficulties locals often have with securing regular shipping and transport services to the other islands.



*Figure 7.4: Evening soccer match taking place next to the airport runway in Funafuti*

After leaving the wharf, Manase continued to the north for a short distance before turning around and driving back towards Funafuti due to heavy rainfall. A short time later, the rain stopped, and a request was made for photographs to be taken of the strip of grass that runs parallel with the airport runway. The airfield and the flat, open grassy

areas are utilised as sports fields in the evenings. This photograph depicts a group of locals playing soccer, which is a very popular sport in Tuvalu.



*Figure 7.5: Locally caught fish for sale in Funafuti*

Manase wanted to photograph this small fish stand in Funafuti in order to illustrate the country's dependence on the sea and its resources. Fish are brought here daily by fishermen, who sell them to locals as a main food source. Manase referenced the lack of fruit and vegetables on the island, while explaining that the abundance of fresh fish makes up for it.



*Figure 7.6: Tuvaluan teenagers race on Funafuti's main thoroughfare in the rain*

It began to rain again after the sun went down over Funafuti, and we took temporary cover under the roof of a two-storeyed guesthouse. A group of local teenagers rode past on motorbikes, and then stopped to conduct an impromptu foot race in the rain. Manase requested photo documentation of the activity, explaining “they still play like this here in Tuvalu”. His statement implied that Tuvaluan youth enjoy more freedom than young people of the same age in other parts of the world.

### **7.2.2 26 February 2019**

Manase expressed interest in continuing the project two days later for the specific purpose of documenting an element of nightlife in Tuvalu, and plans were made to meet in the evening. Manase was scheduled to leave Tuvalu to go live in New Zealand within

two weeks, and he felt that it was important to document the leisure activities that locals participate in at night time, such as kava drinking and singing.



*Figure 7. 7:* A musician at a kava session/ band practice in Funafuti



*Figure 7.8:* Kava drinkers at a residence in Funafuti

Located directly in Funafuti was the house of a Tuvaluan family where kava sessions were routinely held. Kava, a traditional Polynesian drink made from the root of a plant, does not grow in Tuvalu, and stocks are supplied directly from Fiji. On certain nights of the week, a band practice is held at this house while kava is served out of a modified buoy procured from the harbour by local fishermen.

This particular space was important for Manase to document because he often spends a great deal of time there, playing music and conversing over kava with a trusted group of peers. These sessions often flow all night long and into the morning, if there is enough kava to keep it going. The band that was practising on this night was made up of approximately eight individuals who played instruments such as guitars, ukuleles, and the keyboard (Figure 7.7, pictured above). The feeling of this place was very inclusive,

welcoming, and comfortable. Just days after these photos were taken, the band played for a delegation of visiting New Zealand MPs at one of Funafuti's hotels.

### 7.3 Mele

Mele, a 19-year-old Tuvaluan female was the second respondent who agreed to take part in the locally-guided photography project on 25 February 2019. The activity under Mele's instruction began in Funafuti in the late afternoon and continued north by motorbike all the way to the end of the road near the entrance of the island's rubbish dump and covered approximately 25 kilometres in total. Mele effectively guided the activity but she was very soft-spoken in terms of explaining the significance of the photos she directed. Nevertheless, some very clear points came through from her, which are described in more detail below.



Figure 7.9: Tuvaluan girls walking home from school in Funafuti

Mele requested a photo of these girls walking home from school, while explaining that the school uniforms are part of a strict dress/presentation code in Tuvaluan schools. She expressed concern that young people do not maintain the same degree of respect for their elders that previous generations did. Also, according to Mele, young people are also losing interest in living in ways that uphold traditional Tuvaluan principles.



*Figure 7.10:* Children playing on north end of Funafuti

Mele requested the above photo, taken on the northern part of Fongafale, for the simple reason of showing that Tuvaluan kids can play in the middle of the island's main road without worrying about traffic. She also drew attention to the ability of Tuvaluan kids to be resourceful and make toys out of any available objects at their disposal. The children depicted here are playing with discarded plastic rain guttering that Mele thought was possibly obtained from an area near the island's dump.



Figure 7.11: Vaikeli in Funafuti township

The small body of water showcased in photo 7.11 is known as a *vaikeli* in the Tuvaluan language. To get here, Mele took several back streets in Funafuti until it was located on what appeared to be private land. Mele explained that these ponds are located at several places on the island and were at one time used to supply drinking water to residents of the area. However, now they are becoming more inundated with salt water and people don't drink from them anymore. According to Mele, this has resulted in people putting less effort into maintaining and cleaning them. She added "people just have to use rain water now, so if it doesn't rain then we have to get water from Australia". Mele also explained that some of the "outer islands also have vaikeli that is much nicer, and the water is still fresh".



*Figure 7.12:* Local children on “the causeway”, at the narrowest part of Fongafale Island

Towards the northern end of the island is a very narrow piece of land that separates the lagoon from the Pacific Ocean by only about 15 metres. Known locally as “The Causeway”, this location on Fongafale is commonly featured in visual media stories on CC, especially when there is a king tide or other extreme weather event. Mele stopped here and talked to some locals who were spending time on the poured concrete pad on the lagoon side. The youngest one expressed interest in having his photo taken, and Mele requested for it to be done. This is a place, according to Mele where “we chill, drink, watch the sunset, enjoy the breeze”.



*Figure 7.13:* Local spot to park motorbikes while “cruising”.

Approximately 30 metres past The Causeway on the lagoon side was a glade of coconut palm trees and a small path that led into the clearing. This is a location that Mele identified as being special due to its function as a destination for “cruisers” who drive there from the town of Funafuti. “Crusing” as it is known locally, is a favourite pasttime of young Tuvaluans who ride their motorbikes for no other reason than the sake of riding. This activity can be done at any time, but it is especially common during the night time. Cruisers will often park at locations such as these on the island to congregate, socialise, eat and drink until the early hours of the morning. Regarding this particular location, Mele stated “this is a nice place to relax and check out the lagoon. I have been here before.”

## 7.4 Results of the locally-guided photography project

The photographic results of this exercise demonstrate several key differences between photographs that are taken by outsiders with limited or no local insight and those who actively seek to employ the involvement of locally based individuals. It is possible that many of the locations featured in the collection of photographs above would not have been located without the direct influence of a local Tuvaluan and the knowledge they possess. Even if these locations were photographed without local guidance, the important backstories and local context would not have been obtained to the extent that they were with direct communication between the guide and photographer. The inclusion of a local Tuvaluan frame of reference as an addition to visual imagery is a powerful and effective addition as this provides deeper meaning that may be more relatable to the viewer.

Perhaps the key difference in these photographs is that they largely do not uphold the visual narratives that are often present in international media stories on Tuvalu, such as the focus on people in and around water, and the focus on environmental degradation. The only exception to this could be photo 7.11 which features a *vaikeli*, or a small body of water that used to serve as a primary source of freshwater for Tuvaluans until saltwater began to seep into them at more concentrated levels. A visual theme that appears to come across in these photographs appears to be one which depicts some of the enjoyable or sentimental elements of everyday life in Tuvalu: young people playing, men playing music and drinking kava after dark, seafood that is loved by locals, and significant locations that are associated with friends, family and relaxation.

## **7.5 Locally-guided photography project conclusion**

Newton (1998) advocates that “we must work diligently to redesign photojournalism routines so that they openly acknowledge the subjective nature of visual truth while striving to produce reasonably accurate visual images” (p. 9). From this perspective, Newton (1998) considers that complete objectivity in photojournalism is largely a misconception, a factor that should be publicly acknowledged, while photojournalists at the same time work on creating images that are “increasingly worthy of public trust, rather than increasingly unbelievable”(p. 9). Subjective elements from a photographer’s personal perspective can come through in a photograph through a variety of ways, from the selected subject matter, angles, or background elements. It is also recognised that working photojournalists may arrive in a given location with a limited amount of time to cover a topic in a way that fits a particular narrative. In such cases, the upholding of visual truth and objective photojournalistic practice is largely compromised before the photographs are created.

Nevertheless, it is quite unsurprising that a collection of locally-guided photographs would provide visual representation of Tuvalu in a vastly different way than photographs that are produced solely from the perspective of an outsider. It is common practice in the field of photojournalism to utilise the services of local fixers, but different levels of input from these individuals would be accepted depending on the goals, personality and working style of the photographer. It is considered that visuals from a heavily locally-informed perspective may perhaps showcase too many sentimental elements of a given location, while an outsider’s perspective may focus more on the unusual, or sensational. Therefore, the closest representations of visual truth relating to

CC imagery may lie somewhere in the middle of a local and an outside perspective.

Based on this exercise in Tuvalu, it is recommended that working photojournalists aim to capture the required content while at the same time utilising the input of local information as much as possible. This consideration will more accurately depict the human-environment interactions in a more accurate and representative manner.

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# Appendix One: Ethics Approval

**Geography Programme**  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

Todd Henry  
Priya Kurian  
Debashish Munshi

Environment & Society

6 November 2018

Dear Todd,

**Re: FS2018-35 Last Chance Tourism in Tuvalu: Local Perceptions and Tourist Motivations**

Thank you for submitting your cover letter and revised application to the FASS Human Research Ethics Committee. We have reviewed the final version of your application and the Committee is now pleased to offer formal approval for your research activities, including the following:

- semi-structured interviews with non-Tuvaluan leisure tourists.
- semi-structured interviews with Tuvaluan citizens.
- focus groups involving Tuvaluans.

We encourage you to contact the committee should issues arise during your data collection, or should you wish to add further research activities or make changes to your project as it unfolds. We wish you all the best with your research. Thank you for engaging with the process of ethical review.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Colin'.

Colin McLeay, Chair  
*Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.*

## Appendix Two: Participant Information and Consent Forms

### Participant Information Sheet (Tuvaluans)

Todd M. Henry

Study title: *Last Chance Tourism in Tuvalu: Local Perceptions and Tourist Motivations*

Locality:

Ethics committee ref.:

Tuvalu and New  
Zealand

Lead investigator: **Todd Henry**

Contact phone number:  
+64 21 083 89012

---

You are invited to take part in a study on the motivations of international tourists to visit Tuvalu, being undertaken as part of a master's thesis at the University of Waikato.

This study aims to gain insights into how local Tuvaluans feel tourism should be managed in way that would be beneficial to Tuvalu's future. The study will also investigate local perceptions of visual media portrayals of Tuvalu and the Tuvaluan people that have been featured in international publications.

Your participation would involve taking part in an interview for 30-60 minutes, at a mutually agreeable place and time. I will, with your approval, use an audio recorder and transcribe the information.

All information derived from the interview process will be held securely and retained for at least five years by the researchers. Your confidentiality and anonymity are assured throughout and your identity will not be disclosed without your consent.

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study until a date up to three weeks after the interview.
- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation.

- Request pausing or stopping the recording at any time.
- Be given access to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

*If you have been selected to participate in a focus group session instead of an individual interview, the session will consist of a facilitated discussion with approximately 3-4 people other than yourself. During the group session you will be asked to engage in open dialogue with the other participants on a range of topics relating to Tuvalu, climate change and tourism. Focus groups will take no longer than an hour.*

This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Waikato. Any questions you have about ethical conduct may directed to the Committee Secretary by email: [fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz)

If you have any questions or concerns about the study at any stage, you can contact:

*Todd Henry, Lead Investigator*

*Telephone: +64 21 083 89012*

*Email: [th166@students.waikato.ac.nz](mailto:th166@students.waikato.ac.nz)*

*The supervisors for the study are:*

*Professor Priya Kurian, The University of Waikato*

*Tel: +64-7-837-9319*

*Email: [priya.kurian@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:priya.kurian@waikato.ac.nz)*

*Professor Debashish Munshi, The University of Waikato*

*Tel: +64-7-838-4450*

*Email: [debashish.munshi@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:debashish.munshi@waikato.ac.nz)*

## Consent Form

Todd M. Henry

**Please tick to indicate you consent to the following**

---

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Participant Information Sheet.

Yes  No

---

I have been given sufficient time to consider whether or not to participate in this study.

Yes  No

---

I have had the opportunity to use a legal representative, whanau/ family support or a friend to help me ask questions and understand the study.

Yes  No

---

I am satisfied with the answers I have been given regarding the study and I have a copy of this consent form and information sheet.

Yes  No

---

I understand that the interview/focus groups will be audio recorded and that I can ask for the recordings to be paused or stopped at any time. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at

Yes  No

---

any point for up to three weeks after the completion of interviews  
and focus groups.

---

If I decide to withdraw from the study, I agree that the  
information collected about me up to the point when I withdraw  
may continue to be processed. Yes  No

---

I understand that my participation in this study is confidential and  
that no material, which could identify me personally, will be used  
in any reports on this study. Yes  No

---

I know who to contact if I have any questions about the study in  
general. Yes  No

---

I understand my responsibilities as a study participant. Yes  No

---

I wish to receive a summary of the results from the study. Yes  No

**Declaration by participant:**

I hereby consent to take part in this study.

Participant's name:

---

Signature:

Date:

---

**Declaration by member of research team:**

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project to the participant and have answered the participant's questions about it.

I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Researcher's name:

---

Signature:

Date:

---

## Participant Information Sheet (Tourists)

Todd M. Henry

Study title: *Last Chance Tourism in Tuvalu: Local Perceptions and Tourist Motivations*

Locality:

Ethics committee ref.:

Tuvalu and New  
Zealand

Lead investigator: **Todd Henry, University of Waikato**

Contact phone number:  
+64 21 083 89012

---

You are invited to take part in a study on international tourism to Tuvalu, being undertaken as part of a master's thesis at the University of Waikato.

This study aims to gain an understanding of the motivations and goals of international tourists who have visited or who are planning to visit Tuvalu for leisure purposes. Information from this research will be used to identify any issues that may arise in Tuvalu because of increased tourism as well as how it could potentially improve the future of Tuvalu.

Your participation would involve taking part in an interview for 30-60 minutes, at a mutually agreeable place and time. We will, with your approval, use an audio recorder and transcribe the information.

All information derived from the interview process will be held securely and retained for at least five years by the researchers. Your confidentiality and anonymity are assured throughout and your identity will not be disclosed without your consent.

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- \* Refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study until a date up to three weeks after the interview.
- \* Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation.
- \* Request pausing or stopping the recording at any time.
- \* Be given access to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

*If you have been selected to participate in a focus group session instead of an individual interview, the session will consist of a facilitated discussion with approximately 3-4 people other than yourself. During the group session you will be asked to engage in open dialogue with the other participants on a range of topics relating to Tuvalu, climate change and tourism. Focus groups will take no longer than an hour.*

This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Waikato. Any questions you have about ethical conduct may directed to the Committee Secretary by email: [fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz)

If you have any questions or concerns about the study at any stage, you can contact:

*Todd Henry, Lead Investigator*

*Telephone: +64 21 083 89012*

*Email: [th166@students.waikato.ac.nz](mailto:th166@students.waikato.ac.nz)*

*The supervisors for the study are:*

*Professor Priya Kurian, The University of Waikato*

*Tel: +64-7-837-9319*

*Email: [priya.kurian@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:priya.kurian@waikato.ac.nz)*

*Professor Debashish Munshi, The University of Waikato*

*Tel: +64-7-838-4450*

*Email : [debashish.munshi@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:debashish.munshi@waikato.ac.nz)*

## Consent Form

Todd M. Henry

**Please tick to indicate you consent to the following**

---

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Participant Information Sheet.

Yes

No

---

I have been given sufficient time to consider whether or not to participate in this study.

Yes

No

---

I have had the opportunity to use a legal representative, whanau/ family support or a friend to help me ask questions and understand the study.

Yes

No

---

I am satisfied with the answers I have been given regarding the study and I have a copy of this consent form and information sheet.

Yes

No

---

I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any point for up to three weeks after the completion of interviews and focus groups.

Yes

No

---

I understand that the interview/focus groups will be audio recorded and that I can ask for the recordings to be paused or stopped at any time. Yes  No

---

If I decide to withdraw from the study, I agree that the information collected about me up to the point when I withdraw may continue to be processed. Yes  No

---

I understand that my participation in this study is confidential and that no material, which could identify me personally, will be used in any reports on this study. Yes  No

---

I know who to contact if I have any questions about the study in general. Yes  No

---

I understand my responsibilities as a study participant. Yes  No

---

I wish to receive a summary of the results from the study. Yes  No

**Declaration by participant:**

I hereby consent to take part in this study.

Participant's name:

---

Signature:

Date:

---

**Declaration by member of research team:**

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project to the participant and have answered the participant's questions about it.

I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Researcher's name:

---

Signature:

Date:

---

## Appendix Three: Interview Guides

### DRAFT

#### Interview Schedule – Local Tuvaluans

Opening:

My name is Todd Henry. I am currently a master's student at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. In this research project I will be investigating tourism in the South Pacific nation of Tuvalu. You have been selected as a participant in my research because you are a Tuvaluan citizen who has worked with or had interactions with international tourists in your country. The details of my project are on the Information Sheet provided to you.

Interview process begins and flows naturally, in accordance with the talanoa research method.

1. Were you born in Tuvalu? If not, where were you born and how long have you lived in Tuvalu?
2. Have you lived in any countries other than Tuvalu?
3. Have you noticed an increase in international tourists in Tuvalu in recent years? If yes, what do you think is drawing international tourists to Tuvalu?
4. Does your work involve interacting with or catering to the needs of international tourists in Tuvalu?

5. Has your life been otherwise influenced or affected by international tourists in Tuvalu?
6. Do you feel that tourists are visiting Tuvalu to witness the effects of climate change firsthand?
7. Do international tourists express feelings or beliefs that Tuvalu is “sinking”?
8. Do international tourists reference international media reports on stories relating to climate change?
9. Do you feel that international tourists view Tuvalu as a “last chance” destination?
10. Do you think Tuvalu is an attractive destination for international leisure tourists? Why or why not?
11. Do you feel that Tuvalu’s infrastructure is adequate enough to meet the needs of international tourism? Is there anything that you think is inadequate and could use improvement?
12. What do you feel that Tuvalu can offer tourists which neighbouring Pacific Island nations cannot?
13. Have you personally met and interacted with international tourists in Tuvalu? What can you tell me about these experiences?
14. Have you read international media reports about climate change in Tuvalu? If yes, do you feel that these reports are accurate or inaccurate? (These reports could be in any form - print, online etc).

15. Have you seen images depicting climate change in Tuvalu in international media reports? If yes, do you feel that these images are accurate or inaccurate? Why?
  
16. Have you seen images depicting the lifestyles of local Tuvaluan people in international media? If yes, do you feel that these images are or are not accurate representations of the Tuvaluan people? Why?
  
17. Have you felt misrepresented at any time by stories or visual images that have been featured in international media? If yes, can you explain why?
  
18. Do you feel that the international media does a good job at providing accurate representations of Tuvalu and the Tuvaluan people? If not, how could accuracy be improved?
  
19. What do you think is causing climate change that affects countries such as Tuvalu?
  
20. If Tuvalu were to receive increased revenue because of increased tourist numbers, how do you think this income could be best allocated in order to promote effective climate change adaptation among local people?

This concludes the interview process, is there anything else that you would like to add at this time?

Thank you very much for your participation.

# DRAFT

## Interview Schedule – International Tourists to Tuvalu

Opening:

My name is Todd Henry. I am currently a master's student at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. In this research project I will be investigating tourism in the South Pacific nation of Tuvalu. You have been selected as a participant in my research because you have travelled to Tuvalu in the past, plan to travel to Tuvalu in the future, or you are currently in Tuvalu for the purposes of leisure travel (Not visiting friends or relatives). Details on the project are on the Information Sheet provided to you.

If you are ready, we will begin the interview process now.

### **Questions for respondents who have already travelled to Tuvalu or who are currently in Tuvalu:**

21. What country(ies) are you a citizen of?
22. When did you travel to Tuvalu?
23. Was it your first trip to Tuvalu? If not, how many previous trips have you made to Tuvalu?
24. Have you travelled to other countries in the Pacific other than Tuvalu? If yes, which were they?
25. How did you first hear of Tuvalu?

26. Are there any specific images in your mind that you can recall of Tuvalu in the media that may have influenced your decision to consider Tuvalu as a tourist destination? If yes, can you describe those images?
27. Did any media stories about climate change in Tuvalu influence your decision to travel to Tuvalu? If yes, can you explain how these stories influenced you?
28. What activities did you participate in when visiting Tuvalu?
29. Was your experience in Tuvalu what you expected?
30. Before visiting Tuvalu, did you consider any other destinations? If yes, which were they?
31. Do you perceive Tuvalu as “disappearing” due to the effects of climate change? If yes, did this perception influence your decision to travel to Tuvalu?
32. How did you find the tourism infrastructure in Tuvalu? Are there adequate facilities for tourism? How was the standard of food and accommodation? Do you have any recommendations for improvements?
33. Would you like to travel to Tuvalu again in the future? Explain why or why not.
34. Would you recommend Tuvalu as a travel destination to other leisure tourists? Why or why not?
35. Was there anything about your time in Tuvalu that you particularly liked or did not like?
36. How were your interactions with the local people in Tuvalu?
37. Did anything surprise you about Tuvalu that you did not expect before visiting?

38. Can you describe any effects of climate change that you witnessed in Tuvalu?
39. What do you think is causing climate change that affects countries such as Tuvalu?
40. Would you say that you travelled to Tuvalu to “see it before it disappears”?
41. Do you think Tuvalu will still exist as a country in 100 years?
42. Did you witness any local Tuvaluan people adapting to the effects of climate change? If yes, what did these adaptations look like?
43. Is there anything Tuvalu could be doing differently to adapt to climate change and plan for a sustainable future?
44. If so, have you shared these thoughts with any institution, agency, or individual in Tuvalu?

This concludes the interview process, is there anything else that you would like to add at this time?

Thank you very much for your participation.

## Online Survey Questionnaire (Tourists only):

Q1	1.) What country(ies) are you a citizen of?	Essay	   
Q2	2.) Have you travelled to other countries in the Pacific other than Tuvalu? If yes, which were they?	Essay	   
Q3	3.) How did you first hear of Tuvalu?	Essay	   
Q4	4.) Are there any specific images (photographs) in your mind that you can recall of Tuvalu in the media that may have influenced your decision to consider Tuvalu as a tourist destination? If yes, can you describe those images and where you saw them?	Essay	   
Q5	5.) If you have not yet travelled to Tuvalu - When is the date that you would like to go, and what activities are you hoping to participate in while in the country?	Essay	   
Q6	6.) Would you say that you travelled to, or want to travel to Tuvalu to "see it before it disappears"?	Essay	   
Q7	7.) Do you think Tuvalu will still exist as a sovereign nation in 100 years?	Essay	   
Q8	8.) Did any media stories or documentary films about climate change in Tuvalu influence your decision to travel to Tuvalu, or want to travel to Tuvalu? If yes, can you explain how these stories influenced you?	Essay	   
Q9	9.) Did you consider any destinations to travel to other than Tuvalu? If yes, which were they?	Essay	   
Q10	10.) Do you perceive Tuvalu as "disappearing" due to the effects of climate change? If yes, did this perception influence your decision to travel to Tuvalu?	Essay	   

Q11	11.) Is there anything from your perspective that Tuvalu could be doing differently to adapt to climate change and plan for a sustainable future? Have you shared these thoughts with any institution, agency, or individual in Tuvalu?	Essay	   
Q12	12.) What would you say is Tuvalu's most serious barrier to developing their tourism industry?	Essay	   
Q13	13.) If you have already travelled to Tuvalu - When did you go? Did you travel solo or as part of a group?	Essay	   
Q14	14.) Was it your first trip to Tuvalu? If not, how many previous trips have you made to Tuvalu?	Essay	   
Q15	15.) Did you travel to Tuvalu for work purposes? If yes, what was the nature of your work?	Essay	   

Q16	16.) If you travelled to Tuvalu to work on a photography/documentary project, was the goal of your work to capture images of climate change in the country? Was your work published on any print or media platforms?	Essay	   
Q17	17.) Did you participate in any tourism activities when visiting Tuvalu? If so, what was the nature of your activities?	Essay	   
Q18	18.) Was your experience in Tuvalu what you expected? How could it have been improved?	Essay	   
Q19	19.) How did you find the tourism infrastructure in Tuvalu? Are there adequate facilities for tourism? How was the standard of food and accommodation? Do you have any recommendations for improvements?	Essay	   
Q20	20.) Would you like to travel to Tuvalu again in the future? Why or why not?	Essay	   

Q21	21.) Would you recommend Tuvalu as a travel destination to other leisure tourists? Why or why not?	Essay	   
Q22	22.) Was there anything about your time in Tuvalu that you particularly liked or did not like?	Essay	   
Q23	23.) Did you have many interactions with the local people in Tuvalu?	Essay	   
Q24	24.) Did anything surprise you about Tuvalu that you did not expect before visiting?	Essay	   
Q25	25.) Can you describe any effects of climate change that you witnessed firsthand in Tuvalu?	Essay	   
Q26	26.) What do you think is causing the climate change that affects countries such as Tuvalu?	Essay	   
Q27	27.) Did you witness any local Tuvaluan people adapting to the effects of climate change? If yes, what did these adaptations look like?	Essay	   
Q28	28.) Please select "YES" below if you have read and understood the following:1.) I have read, and I understand the Participant Information Sheet.2.) I have been given sufficient time to consider whether or not to participate in this study.3.) I have been given regarding the study and I have a copy... *	Multiple Choice	   
Q29	29.) Please write your name and today's date in the field below to indicate your consent to take part in this study. *	Essay	   
Q30	30.) Thank you for your participation in this survey. If you need to contact me for any reason I may be reached at th166@students.waikato.ac.nz.If you would like to receive a copy of the completed research project, please write your email address below.	Essay	   

## Appendix Four: Sample Photographs used in interviews with Tuvaluans



(Source: <https://350.org/photos-from-the-global-climate-march-that-give-us-hope/>)



(Source: <https://borgenproject.org/hunger-in-tuvalu-2/>)



(Source: <https://borgenproject.org/tuvalu-poverty-rate/>)



(Source: <http://econews.com.au/41299/tuvalu-pm-climate-change-weapon-of-mass-destruction/>)



(Source: <http://fass.ubd.edu.bn/news/tuvalu.html>)



(Source: <https://fightback.org.nz/2012/07/16/pacific-migration-climate-change-and-the-reserve-army-of-labour/>)



(Source: <https://fightback.org.nz/2012/07/16/pacific-migration-climate-change-and-the-reserve-army-of-labour/>)



(Source: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/10/06/national/japan-urged-ratify-climate-change-agreement-november-deadline/#.XTbzHZNlifR>)



(Source: <http://www.loopvanuatu.com/content/more-pacific-people-opt-migrate-due-climate-change>)



(Source: <http://www.loopvanuatu.com/content/tuvalu-and-palau-submit-climate-plans>)



(Source: <http://www.moyak.com/papers/tuvalu-climate-change.html>)



(Source: <http://www.moyak.com/papers/tuvalu-climate-change.html>)



(Source: <http://www.nzgeo.com/stories/tuvalu/>)



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(Source: <https://www.nzgeo.com/stories/tuvalu/>)



(Source: <https://www.oxfam.org.au/2011/03/tuvalu-the-island-being-destroyed-by-climate-change/>)



(Source: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/311822/work-underway-on-stronger-seawall-in-tuvalu>)



(Source: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/311822/work-underway-on-stronger-seawall-in-tuvalu>)



(Source: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/311822/work-underway-on-stronger-seawall-in-tuvalu>)



(Source: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/311822/work-underway-on-stronger-seawall-in-tuvalu>)



(Source: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/311822/work-underway-on-stronger-seawall-in-tuvalu>)



(Source: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/worlds-first-climate-change-refugees-were-just-granted-residency-new-zealand-180952279/>)



(Source: <https://tcap.tv/climate-change>)



(Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2018/08/a-visit-to-tuvalu-surrounded-by-the-rising-pacific/567622/>)



(Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2018/08/a-visit-to-tuvalu-surrounded-by-the-rising-pacific/567622/>)



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(Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2018/08/a-visit-to-tuvalu-surrounded-by-the-rising-pacific/567622/>)



(Source: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/08/07/has-the-era-of-the-climate-change-refugee-begun/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.bb8e47179de7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/08/07/has-the-era-of-the-climate-change-refugee-begun/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.bb8e47179de7))



© Juriaan Booij  
(Source: <https://www.pozible.com/project/199705>)



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