Globalization, Crafts, and Tourism Microentrepreneurship in the South Pacific: Economic and Sociocultural Dimensions

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Abstract

This research assesses the economic and sociocultural dimensions of the handicraft and souvenir sector from the perspectives of predominantly female market vendors and microbusinesses in the South Pacific region. It focuses on two countries, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, which vary in their levels of tourism development, tourist characteristics, and available research on tourism impacts. Handicraft and souvenir businesses offer economic opportunities in remote and emerging island economies but face challenges from globalisation and tourism. The Solomon Islands prioritise locally crafted artworks, while Vanuatu largely depends on importing souvenirs, particularly for the large cruise-ship market. Such practices often lead to commodification and misrepresentation of local cultures and destinations, as businesses cater to the demands of tourists and engage in broader processes of international exchange and globalisation. While micro-entrepreneurs generally express satisfaction with their income from selling handicrafts and souvenirs before the pandemic, data indicates that benefits, mainly from cruise-ship tourism, are unequally distributed.

Keywords: handicrafts, souvenirs, micro-entrepreneurship, South Pacific, globalisation, tourism impacts

INTRODUCTION

While handicrafts as souvenirs play a significant role in tourism destinations worldwide (Kumar et al., 2022; Saarinen, 2016), souvenirs are not invariably tangible, as they can take intangible forms such as musical recordings, foodstuffs, and more (Hitchcock, 2021). This paper considers the tangible side, notably the adaptation of traditional forms of material culture as souvenirs, referred to here as 'handicrafts'. This research focuses on the South Pacific where, in common with many countries in the Global South, microbusinesses selling crafts as souvenirs contribute to local income and employment (Grobar, 2019; Trupp, 2023) but also promote tourism destination images (Thirumaran et al., 2014). Handicrafts are usually handmade items with practical or ornamental purposes, requiring locally developed artisan skills. However, there may be features of production line-type developments to cater to the demands of tourists. Thus, souvenirs do not necessarily represent local traditions but serve as proof of having travelled to specific places (Taylor, 2016).

Tourism micro-entrepreneurship has the potential to provide individuals with opportunities for self-determination, empowerment, and economic advancement (Kc et al., 2021; Trupp et al., 2021). As key players in travel destinations, handicraft micro-entrepreneurs play a significant role in fostering the production and consumption of tourist places, creating mutual benefits for the destination, tourists, and businesses (Hall & Rath, 2007). As entrepreneurs, they capitalise on their

cultural heritage, including producing weavings or wood carvings as handicraft businesses that can establish their niches in the tourism industry (Movono & Dahles, 2017; Trupp, 2017). The perceived authenticity and remoteness of island destinations with their distinctive cultural heritage can enhance their appeal as tourism products (Everett et al., 2018).

Tourism microentrepreneurship's socioeconomic and cultural aspects are relevant for remote and emerging island economies, often associated with small spatial and limited political, capital, and human resources (Ryan, 2001). These specific conditions also make it difficult for businesses to participate in local and international value chains and production networks (Tateno & Bolesta, 2021). Furthermore, in small island states, the multiplier and trickle-down effects for microbusinesses are increasingly restricted by tourist enclaves created by cruise ship tourism and 'all-inclusive' resorts (Trupp, 2023). Such businesses provide most tourism products and services within their restricted premises. Tourism enclaves have distinct features, such as the establishment of boundaries, power dynamics, and their physical or symbolic detachment from the surrounding economic and sociocultural environment (Saarinen & Wall-Reinius, 2019).

Moreover, the development of shopping centres draws visitors away from small and independent souvenir stalls. In addition, mass-manufactured and imported items result in economic leakages and craft goods that may be unrelated to the local cultural heritage or regional identity (Lacher & Nepal, 2011). Tourism and globalisation impact Pacific island societies in numerous ways, including increased cross-border mobilities of persons and goods, technology and geopolitical change, and popular culture (Tolkach & Pratt, 2021; Trupp et al., 2022). Concepts of commercialisation and individualism that were traditionally largely unknown in Pacific Island societies have impacted society, challenging the traditions of communal ownership and responsibilities (Cheer et al., 2018).

Early work on tourism and souvenirs focused on cultural expressions through crafts and how these changed through the impact of tourism (Graburn, 1976). The question of the 'meaning' of souvenirs was also crucial in the seminal edited volume by Hitchcock and Teague (2000). Further research has predominantly focused on the demand aspects of souvenir and handicraft businesses, examining visitor purchasing behaviour (Amaro et al., 2020; Wilkins, 2011), tourists' perceptions of souvenirs (Collins-Kreiner & Zins, 2011; Masset & Decrop, 2021), the role of souvenirs in travel motivation (Swanson & Horridge, 2006; Kong & Chang, 2016), and visitors' understanding of handicrafts and authenticity (Xie et al., 2012). While these studies have provided valuable insights into tourists' behaviours and attitudes towards souvenirs and handicrafts, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the perspectives of the micro-entrepreneurs who produce and sell these products.

Accordingly, the objective of this research is to examine the economic and sociocultural dimensions of the handicraft and souvenir sector as perceived by market vendors and microbusinesses in remote and emerging island economies such as the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Local indigenous voices in the discourse of the handicraft and souvenir sector are underrepresented. By exploring the challenges, opportunities, and dynamics within tourism microenterprises, this research sheds light on the impact of tourism and globalisation on the production, sales, and consumption of handicrafts and souvenirs in these Pacific Island countries.

Specifically, the research questions are: (1) How has the handicraft and souvenir sector evolved in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu? (2) How do local indigenous microentrepreneurs perceive and navigate the economic dimensions and change of the sector, including income and values of imported versus local products? (3) How do local indigenous microentrepreneurs perceive and navigate the sociocultural dimensions and change of the sector, including processes of commodification, intellectual property, and gendered practices?

This research thus relates to recent discourses on tourism, globalisation and economic and sociocultural transformation in emerging economies (Cave et al., 2013; Tolkach & Pratt, 2021). In addition, the study highlights "grassroots vocalisations" (Cheer et al., 2013, p.436) by giving a voice to the producers and vendors of the sector. Such research helps to clarify the challenges and opportunities facing these businesses in the context of globalisation and tourism. It assists in identifying strategies to promote sustainable and equitable tourism development as the region opens up for international tourism post-Covid-19 travel restrictions. Furthermore, the contention here is that the two countries under consideration (Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands) showcase distinct stages of tourism development and exhibit different characteristics of types of tourism and tourism infrastructure. However, there has been limited in-depth examination of the supply side of tourism in these countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Souvenirs and handicrafts

Tourists often link the souvenirs they purchase to the people that sell them, but there are many examples of franchise-like arrangements whereby outsiders make souvenirs (Hitchcock, 2000b). However, the style and branding remain linked to the vending ethnic group (Hitchcock & Teague, 2000). Though handcrafted souvenirs are often made of local materials (Grobar, 2019), there are many examples of hybrid materials sources, including recycled industrially produced goods, which in an increasingly green-focused world can be seen as a positive attribute by tourists. Souvenirs can also be mass-manufactured products with limited links to traditional craft forms (Graburn, 1976; Swanson & Timothy, 2012; Taylor, 2016). A case in point is the distribution of Balinese-accessed souvenirs to many outlets ranging from the Indian Ocean to the Caribbean, which may be designed to look as if they are locally sourced (Hitchcock, 2021). Souvenirs also travel along the hubs and spokes of economic distribution networks, and it may be difficult to ascertain their precise origins. This distinction of locally handmade versus mass-manufactured may become blurry if products are handmade and/or based on local materials but simultaneously produced and sold on a large scale.

The production and consumption of souvenirs and handicrafts in tourism destinations are shaped by complex global-local relationships that involve social, cultural, and economic dynamics. For example, global fashion or design trends can influence the style and pattern of handicrafts produced in these destinations (Cave et al., 2013). Souvenirs and handicrafts are not only a vital component of the tourist experience but also represent a broad range of material cultures associated with tourism (Hitchcock & Teague, 2000). They serve multiple purposes, including tangible evidence of travel, gifts for loved ones, and keepsakes to treasure trip memories (Cohen, 2000;

Swanson & Timothy, 2012; Wilkins, 2011). As pointed out by Hitchcock (2021), souvenirs are not solely associated with tourism, though that is the predominant connection in contemporary contexts.

Economic dimensions

Souvenir and handicraft businesses have the potential to promote local ownership, create employment, and generate income (Grobar, 2019; Porter et al., 2022; Saarinen, 2016). Moreover, studies have shown that handicraft enterprises can be profitable and serve as an important source of income for micro-entrepreneurs in developing countries, such as South Africa (Abisuga-Oyekunle & Fillis, 2017). The International Trade Center (ITC) (2012) reports that the average tourist visiting developing countries spends USD 20-80 on crafts and souvenirs, making handicraft businesses the primary "pro-poor income earners in the tourism value chain" (p.6).

Previous research showed that the handicraft sector in Vanuatu may provide additional support for existing incomes but rarely generates full-time jobs (de Burlo, 1996; Milne, 1991). This way, handicraft production may complement other activities like farming or fishing and be perceived as a household diversification strategy. Nevertheless, souvenirs in remote destinations are often imported, leading to leakages out of the local economy and thereby hindering local development (Lacher & Nepal, 2011).

Handicraft and souvenir sectors are predominantly operated by women, especially regarding the roles of production and sales. The literature on women in the souvenir and tourism industry provides a mixed picture. Some studies argue that economic gains acquired from these businesses do not necessarily equate to social and psychological empowerment for women (Trupp & Sunanta, 2017). However, more optimistic perspectives emerged from recent studies on female entrepreneurship in Melanesia. Researchers argue that tourism-based businesses lead not only to economic but also to social, political, and psychological advancements (Movono & Dahles, 2017; Orsua et al., 2023).

The tourism growth in Vanuatu has yielded mixed blessings for many small businesses since an increasing number of foreign-owned ventures have appeared that often lure visitors away from the locally owned sector, encouraging them to spend their money in foreign-owned shops as opposed to local markets (Hess & Ramsay, 2018). In particular, the cruise ship industry, which has been present in a limited way in the Pacific region since at least the 1930s, had by the 21st century become a dominant sector that often conveyed limited benefits to local people and had been shown to have negative environmental impacts (Cheer, 2017). Nevertheless, research shows that handicraft markets near cruise-ship ports can be one of the rare opportunities for small local businesses to gain direct access to the international tourism market, especially in more isolated islands (Douglas & Douglas, 2004). However, Kumar et al. (2022) show that one-day cruise-ship visitors in Fiji have less time at the destination and buy fewer souvenirs compared to overnight tourists.

Covid-19 has significantly impacted the economies of both Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. With tourism receipts halted, remittances reduced, and unemployment on the rise, the growth and development gains of the two economies have been undermined. In Vanuatu, tourism accounted

for 45.9 per cent of the GDP (including indirect benefits) in 2018 (Movono & Scheyvens, 2022) and supported approximately 29000 direct and indirect jobs in Vanuatu (UNCTAD, 2021). During the pandemic, the suspension of tourism resulted in 70 per cent job losses and a 48 per cent reduction in exports, attributed to a reduction in service exports mainly from the tourism sector (UNCTAD, 2021). The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, almost 60% of the households lost jobs, incomes or resorted to alternative sources of income during the pandemic (OCHA, 2021). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) estimated that Vanuatu's government spending on Covid-19 measures, coupled with declining revenue from tourism and taxation, pressured the fiscal balance and pushed it towards a deficit of negative 8 percent of the GDP in 2020 (DFAT, 2020). In the case of the Solomon Islands, ADB estimated a contraction of 5-6 percent of the GDP in 2020 (DFAT, 2021). In the case of the Solomon Islands, the economy was already reeling through weak growth outturns in 2019 and was vulnerable to significant economic shocks such as Covid-19. In 2018 tourism contributed 12.5 per cent to the GDP (Movono & Scheyvens, 2022). However, due to the pandemic, tourism made zero contribution to the exchequer when borders were closed (Kiriau, 2020), affecting both formal and informal market vendors due to market inaccessibility (Lese et al., 2021).

To reduce the risk of Covid-19 arrival and spread in the PICs, mitigation measures that included border closure, restricted mobilities (lockdown and curfews), social distancing, and in some cases, de-urbanisation were enforced (Lese et al., 2021). Both countries showed great agency in their response to Covid-19 and quickly closed their borders (Westoby et al., 2021). Consequently, the souvenir and handicraft businesses were significantly disrupted, leading to uncertainty among small businesses (Trupp, 2023). In July 2022, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu reopened their international borders for tourism and lifted quarantine requirements.

Sociocultural dimensions

The "'souvenirization' and 'touristification' of material culture" (Husa, 2019, p.1) involves the process of cultural commodification and commercialisation, leading to changes in the meaning and functionality of cultural products (Cohen, 1988). Souvenirs may also "promote damaging stereotypes", perpetuate myths and misrepresent destinations and local or indigenous communities (Brennan & Savage, 2012, p.147). As seen in Florence, it has also increased the functional tension between cultural protection and commercial competition (Schiller, 2008). While commodified culture may become meaningless, such processes can generate economic benefits, cultural capital or a sense of pride (Cole, 2007).

In his research on tourism development in a Sepik River community in Papua New Guinea, Silverman (2013) found that despite the wood carvers' primary economic motivation, their earned income had both instrumental and representational/symbolic qualities. This indicates that economic motivation does not necessarily diminish symbolic meaning. However, Azarya (2004) argues that while commodification can integrate handicraft producers into the new economy, it simultaneously marginalises them culturally. Thus, it is crucial to align the role of local and

indigenous communities in the handicraft sector and the tourism value chain with the principles of responsible tourism, where crafts are primarily produced and sold locally, representing local cultures and identities (Saarinen, 2016).

The search for the 'authentic' is often considered a given in tourism. However, it may be difficult in practice to deduce what is and is not 'authentic', and many debates that focus on this apparently desirable attribute are discussed in the existing literature (Adams, 2006; Hitchcock & Teague, 2000). Horner (1992) refers to 'personally negotiated authenticities' in the sense of additional meanings created by tourists derived from their travel experience in relation to their backgrounds. It should be noted that there are many examples of co-created experiences in which the vendor and tourist engage and become an important ingredient in the meanings and experiences interpreted and recalled by the traveller (Hitchcock, 2021).

Research into supply or demand perspectives of handicraft businesses in the South Pacific is limited. Existing studies have explored marine products by examining the relationship between tourism and the pearl-shell industry in Fiji and the other Pacific island states (Chand et al., 2015). Taylor (2016) studied how tourist images of ethnicity may be altered through the production of souvenirs, a case in point being the so-called Hawaiian shirt which has become a generalised Pacific tourism commodity that is no longer solely associated with its Hawaiian origins (Morgado, 2003). There are many other examples of souvenirs that become disassociated with their places of origin, notably Balinese animal carvings that can be found as far afield as the Maldives and Camden Lock in London (Hitchcock, personal observation). Moreover, studies of commercial activities on cruise-ships indicate that the authenticity of souvenirs and crafts is not a decisive factor in tourists' purchasing decisions (Douglas & Douglas, 2004; Kumar et al., 2022) since these products are seen as gifts or memory holders. More research concerning Pacific crafts has been conducted about the Pacific diaspora in Aotearoa and community members' work within cultural industries (Cave, 2009; Cave & Buda, 2013).

While the precise definition of globalisation is contested, scholars generally concur that it denotes the interconnectedness of countries and people across borders through exchanging goods, services, information, technology, and ideas (Pieterse, 1996). However, these exchanges are often unequal, further disadvantaging one exchange partner. Globalisation highlights the universality of global processes, while glocalisation emphasises the "particularisation of a product" (Cave et al., 2013, p.4). Tourism is not simply synonymous with globalisation, but globalising processes influence it. As Campbell and associates (2011) argue, tourism is largely international and involves a "complex web of social processes that intensify and expand worldwide economic, cultural, political and technological exchanges and connections" (p.4). What comes to the fore in contexts like the Pacific is that the traditional material culture, which may have been produced primarily to serve local cultural needs, often ends up as commodities with adjustments in meaning, production quality and aesthetics.

Thus, tourism offerings can be seen as a manifestation of commodification within contemporary capitalist societies. This process entails the production and exchange of commodities, resulting in the standardisation of products, preferences, and experiences (Cave, 2009). Cultural communities are often observed externally, where authenticity and commodification are seen as etic views imposed by outsiders (Cave et al., 2013). In Pacific communities, cultural products are highly

valued as expressions of unique cultural knowledge and identity. They are not solely created for commercial purposes but hold deeper meaning (Cave, 2009). The global-local nexus serves as a lens to understand the forces of change and identify potential opportunities (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). However, it is also a space where pressure can be exerted to assert the rights of indigenous communities (Butler, 2021). Therefore, while tourism products may be influenced by commodification, they also play a crucial role in preserving and showcasing unique cultural identities within the context of global dynamics, making it essential to recognise and respect the authenticity and values of these communities, avoiding external judgments and understanding their perspectives from within.

A frequently cited perspective is Graburn's contention that goods destined for tourist consumption may be regarded as 'outwardly directed' as opposed to 'inwardly directed' ones retained for traditional purposes (Graburn, 1976, p.4-5). In the case of outwardly directed objects, the purpose of commodification transforms the original meaning of an object and its symbolic codes (Hitchcock, 2000a). Souvenirs, though often based on traditional art forms, are often modified to suit the needs of tourists, such as miniaturisation or the substitution of lightweight materials for heavier ones (ibid.). Ironically, there may be a counter-trend in which goods may not be considered sufficiently attractive in their everyday context and thus are made more appealing, a common trend being gigantism in which ordinary purely functional items such as knives or spoons are enlarged (Cohen, 1993, p.5). Traditional societies may be aware of these contradictions but still appreciate the economic value of tourism, and thus turn to producing what may be called 'pride goods' that are both economically attractive and culturally valuable (Graburn, pers. comm.). The challenge for Pacific craft producers is that goods made for tourism are largely 'outwardly directed', with consumers often unaware of their original cultural significance and associated traditional aesthetics.

There is considerable literature on authenticity and the tourist gaze, especially relating to souvenirs (Hitchcock, 2000b; MaCannell, 1976). These publications may be considered to be a reaction to Boorstin's (1964) cautionary view that the mass media creates and maintains celebrities for mass consumption in much the same way as tourism creates pseudo-events and inauthentic attractions and commodities for tourists. By the time of Hitchcock and Teague's edited volume of 2000, it was clear that these somewhat polarised notions needed considerable nuancing as the global picture, when considered empirically, was more complex. Likewise, the notion that the 'tourist gaze' was essentially a Western one has been addressed in various papers (for example, Zhang & Hitchcock, 2017) since Urry's (1992) influential work. Authenticity is also highly subjective and contextual, meaning that the perception of what is authentic and what is not depends on the individual's background and experiences (Su, 2018).

Methodology

Data collection for this article took place in the capital cities Honiara (Solomon Islands) and Port Vila (Vanuatu) before Covid-19. The presented data on local perspectives relating to the economic and sociocultural impacts of handicrafts are now relevant in the context of the tourism recovery process. The respective national bodies' research permits were obtained before the empirical data collection. 25 qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted in English with souvenir and handicraft micro-entrepreneurs, shop vendors, and stakeholders such as a representative of relevant

ministries and associations (see Table 1). Research participants needed to play a vital role in the craft or souvenir business, through sales or production. As seen in Table 1, some respondents had multiple roles, including business owner, manager, producer, or vendor. In addition, stakeholders from the Ministry of Tourism and a handicraft association were interviewed because they could share additional information about the socioeconomic, cultural and political context, which have been essential to understanding the challenges and dynamics of the handicraft sector in both countries. Thus, the sampling strategy is based on purposive sampling, drawing on research participants who can best help understand the sociocultural and economic dimensions of micro-entrepreneurship. Handicraft and souvenir businesses were directly approached at markets and the respective shops. Most agreed to be interviewed, either immediately or at an arranged day and time. Interviews took place at markets, shops and coffeehouses. The length of these interviews varied but mostly ranged between 30 and 60 minutes, with the shortest interview lasting 28 minutes and the longest 72 minutes.

The lead author conducted all interviews, which were based on a list of interview topics including the following themes: demographic background, working experience, souvenirs (production and distribution, meaning and symbols, change of products), organisation and regulation of the souvenir business (involvement, marketing, regulation, competition, challenge sat work), characterisation of customers (types of buyers, purchase behaviour, changes over time, difficulties with customers), gender and household income, and future plans. The interview guide was discussed with scholars at The University of the South Pacific and guided by existing research on souvenirs, crafts and microbusinesses in the Asia Pacific region (see literature review). Moreover, observations, including the taking of field notes, were conducted at the various handicraft markets and shops in Honiara and Port Vila, documenting the types of souvenirs and handicrafts available and the interaction between buyers and vendors (see Table 2).

Table 1. List of interviews

The qualitative data was analysed via data-driven coding strategies adopted from Corbin and Strauss (2008). The initial step of open coding was supported by using NVivo software and generated 140 codes for the Solomon Islands interviews and 240 for the Vanuatu interviews. Subsequently, codebooks were exported, and codes were reviewed and grouped into categories based on similarity. Differences and similarities in the data between the two countries were also highlighted at this stage. The final analytical phase, selective coding or theoretical integration, involves connecting categories, validating these connections, refining the resulting concepts and developing a coherent narrative. While the first author conducted the initial coding, all three authors reviewed the emerging categories and the development of the storyline via what Kreftnig (1991) termed the “triangulation of investigators” (p.219). This approach allowed for a clear development of themes and categories, which are supported by empirical evidence in the form of interview quotes in the findings section.

Table 2. Souvenir and handicraft snapshot

TOURISM AND HANDICRAFT DEVELOPMENT IN MELANESIA

The Solomon Islands are among the least visited destinations worldwide, with fewer than 29,000 tourist arrivals by air prior to the Pandemic (UNWTO, 2020), alongside roughly 5,000 same-day cruise ship registered visitors (SPTO, 2019). Factors that have impeded tourism development in the Solomon Islands include political instability and ethnic tensions, limited accessibility, high airfares and travel costs, health issues such as malaria, as well as a lack of well-developed tourist infrastructure and amenities, natural disasters, and land disputes (Diedrich & Aswani, 2016; Trupp, 2023). Most tourists to the Solomon Islands can be classified as business/conference visitors (38%), followed by holidaymakers and vacationers (30%), and visiting friends and relatives (17%) (SIVB, 2016). The most important source markets are Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and the Asian market, particularly China and Japan (SIVB, 2016). Until recently, Honiara accommodated the nation's only functioning international airport until April 2019, when Munda Airport in the Western province started its international operations by providing weekly flights from and to Brisbane (Australia). Tourism stakeholders in the Solomon Islands acknowledge that the country has underperformed in tourism sector growth and highlights the need for small-scale tourism based on niche markets and a focus on cruise shipping (SPTO, 2015; Noor, 2023).

Compared to the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu's tourism development is more advanced. The country features a mix of attractive natural and cultural attractions, including a strong sense of *kastom* – a synthesis of various beliefs, cultural practices, and customs perceived as traditional or authentic (Cheeret al., 2013; Scheyvens & Russel, 2013; Trau & Ballard, 2023). In 2019, 121,000 international tourists arrived by air (UNWTO, 2020) and another 235,000 by cruise ship (SPTO, 2019). Significant challenges of tourism development in Vanuatu include the alienation of indigenous land for tourism purposes, the vulnerability towards natural disasters (climate change, tsunamis, earthquakes, volcano eruptions), the economic dependency on tourism, and the unbalanced development and geographical dispersal of tourism, particularly relating to the outer islands (Milne, 1991 Orsua et al., 2023; Trau, 2012). According to the Department of Industry, the handicraft sector contributes 1.3 billion Vatu annually (approx. 1.1 million USD). However, large amounts of these tourism products are imported, and the gains thus leak out of the economy (Roberts, 2018). The Department of Industry (n.d.) views the development of the handicraft sector as an opportunity to support the National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030 by contributing to various social and economic objectives such as preserving cultural knowledge, increasing revenue generation, stimulating economic diversification, and strengthening links to local production.

Table 3. International tourism snapshot

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HANDICRAFTS AND SOUVENIRS

Before the countries' transition from subsistence cultivation to a cash-oriented economy, carving and weaving served important secular and religious functions (Horoi, 1980). Body ornaments were used as personal adornment, sculptures, wooden figures or stone images were placed at traditional shrines and kastom places; some areas used shell and feather products as a medium of exchange similar to banknotes or coinage. During the period of European exploration and colonialism from the 18th to the 20th centuries, thousands of such artefacts from Solomon Islands and Vanuatu were bought, exchanged or taken by seamen, traders, colonial officers, missionaries, researchers, collectors, and tourists and have been displayed in museums around the globe (Burt, 2009; Specht & Bolton, 2005), such as the Übersee Museum Bremen, London's British Museum and Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum. One of the interviewees from the Solomon Islands Western Province recalled stories from his grandfather about how he, 100 years ago, had sold wooden bowls and carving to foreigners arriving by sailing boats (ISI 6).

In the 1950s, commercial airlines settled down in Honiara and Port Vila, and international tourism started to grow, though at relatively low levels (Douglas, 1997). Simultaneously, urbanisation and rural-urban migration accelerated, and small-scale industrialisation took off (Horoi, 1980). This was also the time when tourist-oriented crafts in the Solomon Islands appeared, based on carving (both wood and stone), weaving (not textiles but mostly mats, bags or hats based on pandanus or coconut leaves), in-lay work with mother of pearl shells, and shell money (Austin 2011; Guo, 2007; Horoi, 1980). According to interview respondents, only two main handicraft sale venues existed in Honiara until the late 1990/early 2000s (ISI 7). In the last 15-20 years, more shops, markets, and products have emerged. Artisanal and business associations such as the Solomon Islands Arts Association (founded in 1991) and the Solomon Islands Women in Business Association (SIWIBA, founded in 2004) assisted in strengthening the links between arts, handicrafts, and tourism by providing promotional materials for tourists, organising events, and facilitating workshops and training.

Vanuatu exceeded the number of Solomon Islands' present international visitor arrivals in 1982 when 32,000 tourists visited the country (de Burlo, 1996). In conjunction with Vanuatu's growth in international tourism in the 1970s and 1980s (fuelled by overnight tourists arriving by plane and cruise-ship day visitors), indigenous arts and crafts have become important features of Port Vila's urban and tourist landscape (McDonald, 2015). Interviewed micro-entrepreneurs selling at the cruise-ship wharf market in Port Vila date their first cruise-tourist-related sales of handicrafts and souvenirs back to the 1970s (IVA 7). Handicrafts at that time mainly consisted of weavings, red mats, tree fern masks, carvings made of wood, stone, and coral, and pig tusks (Saint-Pierre, 1985). While such or similar pieces can be found at Port Vila's tourist shops and markets today, the products have transformed significantly, as the sections below demonstrate.

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES FROM SOLOMON ISLANDS AND VANUATU

This section presents the study's main findings, focusing on the local perspectives from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in the handicraft and souvenir sector. It explores several key themes, including the perceived economic impacts of handicraft and souvenir sales, the distinction between imported and local products, the transition from commodification to misrepresentation, issues of traditional knowledge and intellectual property, and the dynamics of gendered practices within the sector.

Perceived economic impacts

The Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are classified as lower middle-income countries by the World Bank (2023) and have a world ranking of 155 and 140, respectively, on the 2021 Human Development Index (UNDP, n.d.). Large parts of the population, especially in the Outer Islands, depend on agriculture, livestock, fishing, and forestry, while oil and many manufactured products are imported. Considering the countries' low-wage structure and the high costs for many (imported) products, self-employment may offer a relatively secure economic basis (Ongoa, 2017).

In the Solomon Islands, interviews with micro-entrepreneurs indicate that they deem their earnings (to be) quite satisfactory. However, income is unstable and fluctuates strongly according to tourist numbers, location, weather, and cruise ship arrivals. Monthly income can thus vary between USD 150 and USD 2000. Such fluctuations are also indicated in the interview quoted below.

> My income depends on the customers every day and what they want. Sometimes it's good, sometimes no income a day. [. . .]. Last month, I was at the market for two weeks. [. . .]. I roughly made 800 SBD (95 USD). [. . .]. That is medium good income for me. (ISI 1).

At some markets, heavy rain often interrupts sales operations, which respondents identified as one of their main everyday business challenges. A few years ago, a new roofed crafts market centre was constructed to cater to Solomon Islands handicrafts exhibitions and sales (The Island Sun, 2018).

Since Honiara receives a relatively low number of international tourists, the impact of one-day visitors in the form of cruise-ship tourists is experienced by many respondents as significant. On cruise-ship days, many market vendors and city shops set up stalls and tents at the temporary cruise-ship market. This market is located at the wharf next to the landing for cruises and is managed by the Solomon Islands Visitor Bureau. In the interview quoted below, one of the interview respondents explains the economic difference between cruise-ship and non-cruise-ship days.

> If there is a market at the wharf. Hopefully I get 3000 SBD (354 USD) for one day, when the tourists come. […] Yeah, very different. When I make low income on such days, I get 1000 SBD (118 USD) just for one day. (ISI 1).

Another micro-entrepreneur based at the Arts Village market enthusiastically stated: "Every day I dream about cruise ships because this means money inflow [laughing]" (ISI 9). Vendors and

micro-entrepreneurs receive information about cruise ship arrivals through the Solomon Islands Artist Association and Solomon Islands Women in Business Association (SIWIBA). While most of the interviewed vendors and micro-businesses clearly stated that they economically benefit from cruise visitors, vendors from one shop located in town stated that they hardly profit from the influx of cruise passengers. They view the increasing competition from market sellers and mobile vendors as their main issue.

In Port Vila, Vanuatu, however, perceptions towards cruise-ship tourists differ considerably. As explained above, many local products are checked against various bio-security requirements to be eligible for entry to Australia and New Zealand. Vendors sometimes feel this is also an excuse for not buying products from them.

> Honest words, we do not like cruise-ship tourists because they tell me things like: we can't take this because the Australian custom won't let us. You see! [They] always repeat those words in front of me. I am a Ni-Van [Ni-Vanuatu]. I am not an Australian. What I have is what I can sell. (IVA 1)

Many souvenir and handicraft entrepreneurs in Vanuatu also stated that the type of cruiseships tourists and/or their purchasing has changed. While there is an increase in cruise arrivals, tourists do not purchase as much as they used in the past (IVA 2). Interestingly, some respondents also differentiate between cruiseship tourists and overnight tourists by offering the following emic definition: "I call the cruiseship the one that visit us because they come and go. But the ones staying in the hotel, those ones I call tourists". In Vanuatu, the positive economic impacts of cruise tourism are mainly limited to those vendors located at the cruise-ship market. At the same time, most other businesses in the city cannot benefit from this development. Cruise tourism has been criticised for distributing tourism benefits at the local level (Cheer, 2017). A more inclusive tourism development that benefits a broader range of stakeholders, including small businesses and local communities, is needed.

Imported versus local products

While some mass-manufactured and imported products have entered Honiara's craft and souvenir landscape, the Solomon Islands have demonstrated a commitment to producing and promoting locally crafted items and artworks. The author identified 13 different shops, businesses, and markets directly geared at selling handicrafts and souvenirs to international (and partly also domestic) visitors. Generally, shops and markets in Honiara strongly emphasise locally (within the Solomon Islands) made and sourced products. All surveyed businesses offer items such as necklaces, jewellery or shell money made of seeds, shells, feathers, and tusks. The second most popular product category concerns locally made woven products such as bags, baskets, mats or bowls and different types of wood carvings, including figures, animals, small boats, and tableware. Paintings from Solomon Islands artists have also become increasingly popular in the tourism market.

> They [the association] only accept you if you produce the handicrafts yourself. […] they don't allow you to sell here if you bring stuff from the Chinese shop. Only if you have local products you are allowed to come here. No imported products. You can check the products around here. They may have [raw] materials from the Chinese but they make the product themselves. (ISI 1)

Existing market regulations also reinforce the localness of Honiara's craft products, associations and even hotel shops which discourage and prohibit the sales of imported items (ISI 3, 5, 8). Honiara's crafts and souvenirs thus differ from those in other Melanesian countries such as Vanuatu or New Caledonia, where many products are being imported. One of the entrepreneurs interviewed in Honiara visited Vanuatu and expressed her astonishment concerning the lack of local crafts and artworks at the main markets and shops in the capital city of Port Vila.

In Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila, 80-90 percent of crafts and souvenirs are imported, as indicated through in situ observation, interviews, and public sector information (Roberts, 2018). Souvenir shops in the city centre and the large cruise-ship market rely on imported items such as key chains, fridge magnets, necklaces, cups, sarongs, bags, and plastic puppets. Small handicraft businesses focusing on local or blended (mix of local and imported items) products exist but are predominantly found at handicraft markets outside the city centre and thus outside the reach of many visitors. Research participants have frequently addressed this problem, as the following quote indicates.

> It is very difficult to sell here, the flow, the number of the tourists, they do not come that frequent. If you are located in town you could easily be able to sell. Here it is very tough to sell. (IVA 8)

The Vanuatu government has tried to promote local products and small businesses by erecting a handicraft marketplace in the city centre along Port Vila's new seafront development. This market opened in late 2017 and is dedicated to selling Vanuatu-made crafts, with around 50 vendors selling various products, including woven baskets, paintings, wood carvings, and jewellery. Yet, most tourism-related items in Port Vila's city centre are imported products, predominantly from China and other Asian countries and sourced through a wholesaler outside the town. Many vendors now retail imported mass-manufactured items, as research participants from the cruise-ship market confirm:

> I buy form Chinatown, I mean Chinese shop. We always say Chinatown [laughing]. . . Magnets are my bestsellers. (IVA 4)

Indeed, a recent report by the Department of Industry (n.d) suggests that the "…profit in trading foreign-made souvenirs is high, and this is the factor in the choice of items sold by market vendors" (p. 22). Whilst interviewed participants partly confirm this statement, it is essential to understand the development that has influenced the shift from local to imported products. Vendors in the cruise-ship market remember the turning point when they were suddenly urged to change their products to comply with biosecurity and quarantine regulations in their main tourism source markets, Australia and New Zealand. According to interview partners, this shift took place

approximately 15-20 Years ago and had to be implemented immediately. One research participant shares her experience:

> We used to sell the local products here [at the cruise-ship market] and then they [the authorities] just stopped everything. Quarantine [regulations] just stopped everything; they stopped everything, the mat, the shell, the coral. Everything, they stopped it. So we had to find things from the Chinese. (IVA 11)

Vanuatu signed the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) concerning protecting Wild Fauna and Flora in 1989 (CITES, n.d.) which has had severe impacts on handicraft sales. Handicrafts made of wood, plants, and marine or animal products need to be checked against several quarantine requirements to be eligible to enter Australia and New Zealand. For example, plants such as bamboo or pandanus weavings must not be green or fresh, and wooden articles must be free from biosecurity risk material such as live insects, bark, seeds, animal debris or any other contamination, and thus need special treatment methods. At that time, many cruise-ship vendors felt blindsided and decided to change to mass-manufactured and imported retail products. The vendors who at that time did not receive support in adapting their products to the new biosecurity regulations have successfully changed their product strategy. However, 20 years later, government officials approached vendors again, advocating Vanuatu-made products as suggested by the Vanuatu National Sustainable Development Plan Objectives 2020 (Department of Industry, n.d). A vendor selling at the cruise-ship wharf further explains:

> Now they try to encourage [local products] again, just last month they came and the government they start to tell us to sell our local product again. Last month, they gave us the booklet. Any time, any tourists want to buy a matt, fan, chair, or anything, we can show them the booklet. Australian and Vanuatu governments have come to make an agreement. (IVA 11)

Another reason for the decline of local products is the perceived loss of local cultural capital, as expressed by one of the market vendors, highlighting that the art of carving diminishes:

> Because some of them, their husband don't know how to carve. They don't know how to carve and some of them, they don't know how to create different things. (IVA 7)

In recent years, parts of the Vanuatu government and other international organisations have pushed for more sustainable handicrafts that should ideally reflect locally sourced products and culturally authentic designs (Department of Industry, n.d.). At Port Vila's handicraft markets, one can find posters and guidebooks such as the Vanuatu Handicrafts Vendor Guide (PHAMA, 2017b), which aim to assist vendors (and tourists, particularly from Australia and New Zealand) in identifying potential quarantine concerns of handicrafts sold in Vanuatu. The handicraft vendor booklet further provides instructions on inspecting handicrafts to see if they comply with quarantine regulations. While vendors focusing on local handicrafts in recent years generally welcome such information campaigns (IVA 3), vendors who have already shifted to imported souvenir items could not be convinced to change back to local products so far. This attitude shows how international agreements such as CITES have influenced the change towards mass-manufactured and imported

souvenirs, a long-lasting impact which cannot easily be reversed. In the following section, processes of commodification and cultural change of handicrafts are discussed.

From commodification to misrepresentation

Various processes of commodification and changes in indigenous arts and crafts have taken place in the islands in this study. Items that were initially produced to fulfil utilitarian needs or serve various cultural and religious purposes have been transformed to meet the needs and interests of international travellers.

Horoi (1980) was the first to observe the shift in the function and purpose of carving in the Solomon Islands, noting that it has become primarily a means to earn cash income. For instance, the *Nguzunguzu*, a carved wooden figurehead traditionally affixed to canoes, is now widely available as a standalone craft and souvenir in various sizes and shapes. Similarly, shell money, which originally served as bridal gifts and a local currency in Malaita, has been modified to create necklaces and bracelets that have gained popularity as fashionable items for locals and tourists (Burt, 2009).

In Vanuatu, wood carving was previously associated with *kastom* (see above definition). By some respondents, this is interpreted that only carvers who gained customary rights could produce certain figures, such as the iconic *tamtam*, a two to five-meter-long wooden slit drum carved with different faces representing status. With the growth of the tourism industry, miniaturised *tamtams* can now be found in handicraft markets and souvenir shops across Port Vila. A craft vendor, who is married to a *kastom* carver, explains these changes as follows:

> Before, they [the carvers] just do it like that, they just carve for the culture at [the island of] Ambrym. But now they just sell the carvings like souvenir. [. . .] You can sell it now. Before, the products form Ambrym stay at Ambrym, you have [had] to go to Ambrym to find such products. But now no, it is different now. (IVA 5)

Moreover, tourism growth also led to the emerging trade of commercial carvers, who exclusively carved on consumers' requests. Such carvers have no customary right to produce *kastom* items but may carve other items such as pigs, turtles, or sculptures.

The commodification of arts and material culture has not only gained broader acceptance in the Solomon Islands, but has also spread geographically throughout the island state. Interviews with craft entrepreneurs and artists reveal that shell money once used as a bridal gift and local currency, is now widely available in shops and markets across town, making it a popular souvenir for tourists. However, it is essential to understand whether these changes in the function and meaning of products have led to local resentment and criticism. One respondent who asked about this issue stated:

> Before, yes but now everyone is keen on income. It used to be big business before already with the cruise boats in Langalanga. But they did not expand to urban areas. Now, they

> produce and sell here in Honiara too. I think one should not display the shell money in a hotel, you should do it in a proper place. (ISI 9)

Research participants in Vanuatu provided similar answers:

> Yes, sometimes. People [from Ambrym] criticised that. But now they can't because now many people do this. They come and sell the wooden carvings everywhere. (IVA5)

The respondents' views on the commodification of culture demonstrate their understanding of culture as a dynamic and interactive process. The respondents acknowledge that tourists and entrepreneurs are intertwined in a global-local relationship (Cave et al., 2013). They recognise the interdependence between tourists, hosts and source destinations. For instance, a local artist and carver from the Solomon Islands argues that:

> Things are changing and we have to be adaptive and so I think, I go for it. Selling this kind of artwork [. . .] I mean, we are adjusting to it. [. . .]. If I sell my artwork [. . .] people from other parts of the world will see it and they ask about it. They would say something about this piece from the Solomon Islands. This exchange is taking place. That's my opinion. (ISI 2)

Other vendors also mentioned adapting their products to meet tourists' requirements. In some cases, tourists even suggest how handicraft producers should design their products or request customised items. For example, tourists may provide ideas for a particular carving or specify the design, colours, and shape of a weaving product they desire. This product evolution can be seen as a result of economic, social and cultural interactions between travel destinations and the outside world, wherein guests and hosts mutually decide on the items that look authentic and culturally appropriate (Shen & Lai, 2022). This kind of interaction between tourists and handicraft producers is not uncommon and can influence the direction of local craft production. In hindsight, it could also result in ecological degradation due to the over-exploitation of raw materials (Ansari et al., 2019).

Other souvenirs found at shops and markets in Port Vila demonstrate a misrepresentation of the destination or local communities. For instance, several shops sell bags or shirts with a Vanuatu sign next to an elephant, which does not exist in Vanuatu. Other micro-entrepreneurs who sell local products disapprove of the growing influx of mass-manufactured products, which they refer to as "Chinese things".

> The T-Shirt shows an elephant. There is no elephant in Vanuatu. You also find the Bob Marley and reggae designs on the clothes here. Bob Marley is not from Vanuatu. Many small things we need to consider. (IVA 6)

> This is Vanuatu. I don't take Chinese things and come and sell it to you. Honestly, in my mind, I don't agree with that. I think it is wrong. I sell what I am identified with. (IVA 1)

This kind of inaccuracy in souvenir production can contribute to a distorted view of the destination and its culture, potentially undermining the authenticity and integrity of the local community.

Traditional knowledge and intellectual property

According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), traditional knowledge (TK) may be described as a collection of know-how, skills and practices that have been developed, sustained and passed on down the generations within a given community (WIPO, n.d.). This knowledge may form part of the community's cultural or spiritual identity and may be considered as only being accessible to that community. Morrow (2000) noted that the intellectual property arena is principally concerned with private property rights, involving copyrights, patents and trademarks. These rights are established in national law, often influenced by multilateral and bilateral conventions concerned with intellectual property. However, as Morrow (2000) points out, indigenous or cultural intellectual property is not often acknowledged by the international property regime, though there have been attempts by bodies such as the United Nations, notably UNESCO, to address it. To complicate matters, indigenous rights may involve rituals, dances, signs and symbols, including biological and ecological know-hows' (ibid.), which may be challenging to integrate into international notions of law. Moreover, traditional knowledge may be the property of a community and not of an individual, a family or a local company, thus making protecting cultural property rights difficult to enforce in practice.

While many micro-entrepreneurs and artists interviewed acknowledged cultural change and commodification as realities they could deal with, some expressed concerns about issues related to indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights (ICIPR), as expressed via the quote below:

> The issues of intellectual property come in. The issues of cultural rights also come in. […] Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture Bill. In short, we say TKEC. That particular bill focuses on the traditional rights of the owners of cultural products, cultural resources, and of course, traditional knowledge. We are just at the beginning of this. (ISI 4).

ICIPR pertains to indigenous peoples' heritage and may include material cultural expressions such as shell money, carvings or weaving products tied to a specific indigenous group or territory. Copyright infringement or misappropriation of indigenous arts and crafts can occur when non-indigenous artists create and market their work as indigenous or when mass-produced souvenirs by non-indigenous people copy cultural symbols or display inauthentic designs (Janke & Sentina, 2018). Although the importance of ICIPR is increasingly recognised by stakeholders of the indigenous arts and cultural industries, its development and implementation are still in their infancy.

Gender Perspectives

Based on own observations and interviews with respondents, it is evident that the handicraft and souvenir sector in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu is predominantly female-dominated. Business-related activities within the sector exhibit clear gender-based divisions. Conventionally, men engage in tasks such as wood cutting, carving, and fishing, while women are involved in

weaving and especially in selling at the markets and shops. The following statement exemplifies this division of labour:

> So the men carve and they give it to the women to sell. The man plants and harvests the food, which is then given to the woman to sell at the market (IVA 12).

Women in both countries are often perceived by themselves and by others as more confident, patient, and talkative in the sales activities, with one respondent noting: "Women are more confident and often do the talking. Sometimes men don't want to talk and explain things" (ISI 1). Some respondents attribute this division of labour to cultural norms, stating: " I think it is because of our culture, where men are men and women are women. Men can't do what women are supposed to do. That kind of mentality exists" (IVA 8).

In addition, women also face the double burden of work at the market and responsibilities at home. After working at the market or shop, they still have household duties to attend to, as also acknowledge by a male respondent:

> For the women who work here, when they return home, they also have to do the household work. It is a lot of work also at home. (IVA 2)

Regarding financial management, women often handle the money earned from selling handicrafts. They become breadwinners and use the income for the benefit of the family, as highlighted in such responses: "She does it for the family, not just for her" (IVA 12). While men predominantly do not engage in sales activities, there is evidence of a gradual shift, with more men appearing at the market place (IVA 11). There are instances where men engage in traditionally female-connotated tasks, but they may not openly showcase their involvement due to sociocultural norms and expectations. For example, some men produce clothes, such as island dresses, at home, but they do not readily advertise their services (IVA 1).

Similarly, there are a few women who participate in carving, a craft traditionally associated with men (ISI 3). Overall, the gender perspectives within the handicraft and souvenir sector in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu highlight a clear division of labour, with women predominantly involved in selling and weaving activities. However, there is a noticeable shift where gender roles within the handicraft and souvenir sector are being contested.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although existing research has yielded valuable insights into the behaviours and attitudes of tourists towards souvenirs and handicrafts (Amaro et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2022), there exists a notable gap in the literature concerning the viewpoints of micro-entrepreneurs who are involved in the production and sale of these items. This study explored such local perspectives uncovering sociocultural and economic dimensions in Melanesia. With the growth of international tourism, tourist-oriented and 'outwardly directed' (Graburn, 1976) crafts emerged, leading to an increase in handicraft sale venues and the transformation of products.

From an economic perspective, souvenir and handicraft micro-entrepreneurs earn more than the countries' prescribed minimum wages, supporting the findings from previous research, which states that souvenirs and handicraft businesses have the potential to generate income and economic benefits (Abisuga-Oyekunle & Fillis, 2017; Grobar, 2019; Saarinen, 2016). Micro-entrepreneurs in the Solomon Islands specialising in local carving and contemporary art can profit more than in Vanuatu. The perception in the Solomon Islands toward cruise-ship tourists was positive. Research suggests that people who benefit from tourism hold positive perceptions (Shah et al., 2023). Our study also shows that locally produced souvenirs can be more profitable, which is also crucial for reducing economic leakages (Lacher & Nepal, 2011). Importantly, not all entrepreneurs benefit equally since cruise ship passengers usually buy from the stalls at the temporarily erected cruise-ship market or at the centrally located handicraft market, highlighting the role of strategic locations in souvenir sales.

In a country with few international tourist arrivals, cruise tourists often make a big difference in micro-businesses earnings. However, such sales are inconsistent since cruise-ship arrivals are infrequent and last only one day (IFC, 2016). According to most respondents in Vanuatu, cruise-ship tourists were regarded as problematic. Cruise-ship tourists are highly visible in Vanuatu's capital city. However, few locally owned businesses benefit from their arrivals as the visitors are usually short-term and restricted in their movements. Therefore, businesses that cannot join the central locations which fall within the cruise passengers' restricted movement are disadvantaged, reflecting typical problems of enclave tourism (Saarinen & Wall-Reinius, 2019; Trupp, 2023).

The study also shows that the souvenir and handicraft businesses are feminised in terms of numbers and the nature of the work, especially sales, which is largely considered 'women's work'. Such gendered practices and divisions of labour are often not questioned in the handicraft sector (Trupp & Sunanta, 2017). However, contestations of conventional gender norms take place and may be induced by these economic opportunities, which make souvenir and handicraft vendors the primary income earners of the household.

Overall, the commodification of culture in the context of handicraft and souvenir production and sales is a complex issue involving various economic, social, and cultural factors (Cave et al., 2013; Hitchcock, 2021). The findings suggest that economic opportunities have resulted in broader acceptance of the commodification of arts and material culture (like using shell money as souvenirs), supporting the assertion that tourists and entrepreneurs are intertwined in a global-local relationship (Cave et al., 2013). Moreover, the evolution of handicrafts and souvenirs can also be seen as a result of economic, social and cultural interactions between travel destinations and the outside world (Shen & Lai, 2022). However, while the handicraft and souvenir business presents economic opportunities for micro-entrepreneurs and their communities, it also raises concerns about cultural misappropriation (such as the bags or shirts with an elephant in Vanuatu) and protecting indigenous cultural, traditional and intellectual property rights (Schiller, 2008; Taylor, 2016). Processes of commodification of crafts and arts – though to a different extent – can be observed in both countries. Such processes can clash with concerns about traditional knowledge and indigenous intellectual property rights issues. Despite micro-entrepreneurs and artists recognising and expressing valid concerns regarding issues related to ICIPR, the inherent

communal nature of TK poses challenges regarding effective enforcement measures. Cheer et al. (2013) also highlight in the context of Vanuatu that "tourism and traditional culture are prone to contestation, especially over control, income and ideology" (p. 449). Both countries studied in this research are culturally and ethnically diverse, presenting a challenge in protecting their cultural heritage from the appropriation and misrepresentation of indigenous artworks and crafts. This has also led to a rampant unauthorised replication or misrepresentation of indigenous arts and crafts wherein non-indigenous artists promote their indigenous work, and their mass-produced souvenirs imitate cultural symbols or present inauthentic designs (Janke & Sentina, 2018).

Results further show significant differences between the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu regarding the representation of locally produced items. While mass-manufactured imported products that do not reflect local culture or crafting skills dominate Port Vila's (Vanuatu) market, Honiara's (Solomon Islands) handicraft landscape strongly emphasises locally made products. Though these affirm that the production and consumption of souvenirs and handicrafts are shaped by complex global-local relationships involving social, cultural and economic dynamics (Cave, 2009; Cave et al., 2013), it also offers a contradictory consumption view. The case of Vanuatu demonstrates that souvenir consumption upholds the belief that the authenticity of souvenirs and crafts is not decisive in cruise tourists' purchasing decisions (Douglas & Douglas, 2004; Kumar et al., 2022). Hence, souvenirs are often mass-manufactured products with limited links to traditional forms (Gaburn, 1976; Taylors, 2016). However, the crafts and arts exhibited and sold in Honiara largely consist of handmade, locally sourced, and produced items representing different regions of the country, emphasising that tourists favour conspicuous consumption (Lacher & Nepal, 2011) and that uniqueness and authenticity are place-bound concepts (Shen et al., 2022). This sets the Solomon Islands apart from many other destinations in the Pacific, where mass-manufactured and often imported souvenirs dominate. These identified differences can be attributed to several factors, including the quantity and characteristics of incoming tourists, quarantine and biosecurity protocols, product perceived quality, and business network formation.

Theoretical contribution

The research addresses the significant underrepresentation of local indigenous voices within the handicrafts and souvenir sector discourse, thereby contributing to ongoing discussions on tourism and globalisation's impact on the economic and sociocultural transformations experienced by local communities in emerging economies (Cheer et al., 2013). By delving into the intricacies of tourism microenterprises, this study sheds light on the effects of tourism and globalisation regarding the production, sales, and consumption of handicrafts and souvenirs in Pacific Island countries.

Additionally, by amplifying the voices of local producers and vendors, this study recognises these stakeholders' economic and cultural contributions, thereby enriching the theoretical framework for analysing the complexities of tourism, globalisation and economic development in the region (Cave et al., 2013). More specifically, findings highlight the agency of Pacific Islanders over cultural changes in their arts and cultural artefacts. Examining the handicraft and souvenir sector elucidates the interplay between global market forces, local cultural expressions, and the

aspirations and challenges faced by microenterprises. Authenticity as a concept needs to be understood in a relational, flexible, and pragmatic way. As formulated by our research respondents, culture and its various expressions are changing. In this global-local nexus, tourism is just one agent of change, among other factors, including migration, legal frameworks for import and export, and popular culture (Tolkach & Pratt, 2021). This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between tourism, globalisation, and economic development in emerging economies, and it offers valuable insights to foster sustainable and inclusive tourism practices.

Practical Implication

The findings of this study underline the significance of including underrepresented local voices, such as souvenir producers and sellers, in market planning processes. Market planners must recognise the stakeholders' expertise and insights regarding local products, cultural significance, and consumer preferences. By involving them in decision-making forums, market planners can ensure that policies and regulations are developed with a comprehensive understanding of the market dynamics and the needs of local businesses. This inclusivity will lead to more equitable and sustainable market outcomes that benefit the industry and the local communities, such as a renewed focus on locally crafted items and artwork will reduce leakage and provide more livelihood options (Lacher & Nepal, 2011). One contribution to the solution is the adoption of geographical indications, which can aid in distinguishing between domestic and foreign products and promoting local cultural goods to consumers (Grobar, 2019). In addition, the implementation of the ICIPR is paramount in safeguarding the cultural and indigenous assets of the affected communities. Indigenous communities, however, will need a more holistic approach to protect their knowledge and cultural expression, including deeper multi-stakeholder consultation and legislative change (Janke & Sentina, 2018). Additionally, clear and effective communication from regulators to businesses is crucial for minimising disruptions and adverse effects on local vendors. The sudden implementation of quarantine regulations highlighted in the research participants' experiences (regarding CITES) immediately ceased various product sales. Regulators should prioritise proactive and transparent communication channels with vendors, ensuring that policy changes, such as biosecurity and quarantine regulations, are communicated well in advance. This approach allows businesses to prepare, adapt, and seek alternative strategies without significantly disrupting their operations. By fostering open lines of communication, regulators can maintain a collaborative relationship with vendors, addressing concerns, providing guidance, and creating an enabling environment for compliance with regulations.

Limitations and future research

Findings show that the economic and cultural practices in the handicraft and souvenir sector are highly gendered. While souvenirs and handicrafts undoubtedly offer economic opportunities for women, the question whether the sector in the Pacific Islands also leads to female social and psychological empowerment requires further research. Furthermore, extant research shows that global-local perceptions govern souvenirs and handicrafts (Cave et al., 2013). However, our research focused on the supply side, i.e., the viewpoints of producers and sellers. Future research could explore additional perspectives, including an in-depth examination of domestic and

international tourists, cruise-ship visitors, and the role of the public sector. From a business and capacity-building angle, future studies can look into the role of inadequate resources, skills, or business understanding (including perceiving tourist demand) needed for product development and marketing of sustainable handicrafts.

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