

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of research

Fiji is a country in the South Asia Pacific region, with an area of 18,244 km and a population of approximately 758,000 people, this country is unique in the Asia Pacific region. Fiji has a unique communal identity, the area is formed from various historical and political factors, including acculturation, migration, and politics. Many development theories recognize tourism as a key driver in creating and expanding employment opportunities and a critical factor in bringing diversity to income sources. As a “non-extractive” sector, tourism has been warmly welcomed in countries with potential natural resources, such as Fiji. The development of the hotel industry beginning in 1970 became an important milestone for Fijians, especially those living in Vatuolalai Village, paving the way for economic progress and starting the process towards sustainable change and development.¹

Tourism is projected to continue to be a consistently growing primary source of livelihood in the Pacific region. Between 2005 and 2015, the number of international tourists visiting the six Pacific Islands increased by 50%. In 2019, the tourism sector contributed more than US\$1.5 billion to the member countries of the South Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO) and created jobs for around 5 million people, directly and indirectly. In more developed destinations such as Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, and the Cook Islands, tourism accounts for between 38% and 70% of gross domestic product².

¹ Apisalome Movono, Heidi Dahles, and Susanne Becken, “Fijian Culture and the Environment: A Focus on the Ecological and Social Interconnectedness of Tourism Development,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 26, no. 3 (2017): 451–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2017.1359280>.

² Apisalome Movono, Regina Scheyvens, and Sophie Auckram, “Silver Linings around Dark Clouds: Tourism, Covid-19 and a Return to Traditional Values, Villages and the Vanua,” *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 63, no. 2 (2022): 164–79, <https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12340>.

As small island developing states, Pacific island countries (PICs) are particularly vulnerable to the globalization process. However, Fiji has a favourable tourism export trade balance compared to other tourism-focused PICs. The absolute number of tourists to Fiji appears to have increased generally in recent years, as indicated by the small devaluation of the services sector. This has increased the value of most tourism activities, such as food, luxury merchandise and recreation³.

Over time, tourism development in Fiji has disrupted ecosystems as resort developments replace previously existing ecological environments. Before, the island nation had capitalized on opportunities in its tourism sector. Fiji uses the term “Vanua” to describe the cultural, social, and spiritual values, traditions, history, and customs that define the relationship between land and people. “Vanua” is not just the land with its flora, fauna, waters, and other objects, but also contains the social and cultural systems. For most Fijians, separation from Vanua or the land is akin to losing one's life⁴. The artistic philosophy of Indigenous Fijians serves as a “sociocultural link” that directs behaviour, connecting communities to ecological and social elements. It supports daily livelihood activities by providing a foundation for people's sustainable symbiotic relationship with their natural surroundings. The development of the tourism industry has led to a significant change from the pristine state of tourist destinations to one that can overload the system. For example, many communities have lost their knowledge of fishing, farming, hunting, and even performing traditional rituals and ceremonies after being away from their communities working in tourism. This situation has significant socio-economic impacts on the vulnerability, resilience, and long-term sustainability of

³ Kushneel Prakash and Dibyendu Maiti, “Does Devaluation Improve Trade Balance in Small Island Economies? The Case of Fiji,” *Economic Modelling* 55 (2016): 382–93, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2016.02.023>.

⁴ Movono, Scheyvens, and Auckram, “Silver Linings around Dark Clouds: Tourism, Covid-19 and a Return to Traditional Values, Villages and the Vanua.”

community livelihoods that can undermine economic sustainability and increase poverty, which, in turn, can exacerbate climate change impacts by reducing the ability of communities to participate actively in climate change efforts.⁵

Climate change is an ongoing issue in Fiji, significantly impacting the country. As an island nation, the country is highly vulnerable to sea level rise, coastal erosion and extreme weather caused by climate change. The impacts of climate change have severely disrupted the national economy, which focuses on tourism, agriculture and fisheries as the most significant contributors to the country's GDP, leading to increased poverty and food insecurity. As one of Fiji's identities, tourism is undoubtedly affected by climate change, such as ecosystem damage, natural disasters, infrastructure damage, and community quality of life, which will hamper the country's income. With that, Fiji adopted the Green Growth Framework 2014 as the primary national development strategy, including solutions to climate change. The plan aims to accelerate sustainable development, strengthen environmental resilience, promote social improvement, and enhance the capacity to cope with and manage the expected impacts of climate change.⁶

The need for international cooperation on climate change issues remains critical, as the implementation of adaptation projects in the Pacific relies heavily on external funding and technical support from development partners. Several bilateral and multilateral development partners, including China, provide critical funding for climate change adaptation and mitigation to Pacific Island countries (PICs).⁷ Cooperation with China in infrastructure is a new hope for Fiji to construct the country's identity and improve its image in the Asia Pacific region. The relationship between the two countries

⁵ Movono, Dahles, and Becken, "Fijian Culture and the Environment: A Focus on the Ecological and Social Interconnectedness of Tourism Development."

⁶ UNDP China, "China's South-South Cooperation with Pacific Island Countries in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," 2017, https://www.undp.org/content/dam/china/docs/Publications/China-Pacific Cooperation for SDGs Series_Climate Change.pdf.

⁷ Ibid.

improved after a successful visit, with the realization of a strategic partnership that respects mutual development. China has become Fiji's third-largest trading partner and fastest source of investment. This has seen a 150-fold increase in diplomatic relations since China and Fiji established cooperation 40 years ago.⁸

In recent years, China has increased its investment in Fiji's tourism sector, positively impacting the Pacific Island nation's economic growth and tourism development. One form of assistance China provides to deal with climate change is direct investment in Fiji's tourism infrastructure, such as the construction of hotels, resorts, and other tourism facilities managed by Chinese companies.⁹ These investments have helped increase Fiji's accommodation capacity and tourism appeal, creating jobs for locals and driving local economic growth. With the improved quality of human resources in the tourism sector, Fiji is becoming more competitive in the global tourism market. In addition, China also provides technical assistance and know-how in sustainable tourism management, including best practices in environmental management, cultural preservation and environmentally friendly tourism development.

China's assistance to Fiji provides economic benefits, strengthens the two countries' relationship, and provides an example of mutually beneficial cooperation among countries in the Pacific region. As a close development partner, China can ultimately make Fiji a country that plays a vital role as a sustainable cultural tourism destination that preserves culture, heritage, and art in the South Pacific. So, in this case, the author raises a research topic entitled "Construction of Fiji's Sustainable Tourism Identity in the Pacific Region through Fiji-China Economic Cooperation." This

⁸ Gradiola Stacie Oley, "Pengaruh Look North Policy Terhadap Poros Geopolitik Fiji," in *Geopolitics and International Contemporary Issues in Asia Pacific and Beyond* (Jakarta, 2020), 95.

⁹ Xinhua, "China Siap Perdalam Kerja Sama Praktis Dengan Fiji," 2024, <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/4011699/china-siap-perdalam-kerja-sama-praktis-dengan-fiji>.

research analyzes how Fiji constructs sustainable tourism as a state identity through cooperation with China in tourism.

1.2 Problem Formulation

Based on the description above, the main problem examined in this thesis research is: **How does Fiji utilize International Cooperation with China to construct a sustainable tourism identity?**

1.3 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are:

1. To find out how Fijian identity is constructed and influenced by economic cooperation with China.
2. To determine the impact of economic cooperation between Fiji and China on Fiji's tourism sector in the face of climate change.

1.4 Uses of Research

1.4.1 Academic Uses

The academic benefits of this research are expected to be a reference to add insight to readers in combining studies such as tourism, economics, culture and international relations to provide a comprehensive understanding of how a country's cultural identity can be promoted through economic cooperation. Just as Fiji pursues sustainable economic interests by making policies in the tourism sector regarding effective strategies in dealing with the impacts of climate change on Fiji-China economic cooperation. In addition, this research is expected to add new insights and knowledge for academics and the broader community on matters relating to international cooperation, especially international political economy.

1.4.2 Practical Uses

In terms of practical benefits, this research encourages academics to be more open-minded about how Fiji developed a more sustainable economy after the impact of climate change through Fiji-China economic cooperation based on ecological and social elements.

1.5 Literature Review

1.5.1 Previous Research

To strengthen this research, the author refers to several previous studies, namely:

First, previous research written by Gradiola Stacie Oley, in a journal entitled "The Influence of the Look North Policy on Fiji's Geopolitical Axis," explains that the Look North Policy is a representation of the geopolitical axis implemented by Fiji and has successfully influenced the views of the international community. This research is relevant because it has similarities regarding the influence of ideas to create new favourable relationships. Meanwhile, the difference between Gradiola Stacie Oley's research and this research lies in constructing Fiji's identity in the Pacific region.

Second, further research written by Henryk Szadziewski, in a journal entitled "Converging Anticipatory Geographies in Oceania: The Belt and Road Initiative and Look North in Fiji," explains that China's presence in Fiji has led to an increase in several external anticipatory geographies. On the other hand, regional initiatives emphasize domestic or Pacific Island issues, such as the diversification of economic partners and the climate crisis. This research is relevant because it has in common with the Fiji-China Cooperation, which affects economic improvement in the Pacific region. At the same time, the difference between Henryk Szadziewski's research and this

research lies in constructing Fiji's identity in the Pacific region through the Fiji-China Cooperation.

Third, further research written by Abdul Rahman Sagara Prakasa, in a journal entitled "Handling Climate Change Issues in the Pacific Region through the International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative," explains that climate change can threaten the environmental security of countries in the Pacific region, which is against the negative impacts of climate change. Geographically, small islands in the Pacific region can sink due to rising sea levels. Limited natural resources plus damaged ecosystems damaged by natural disasters threaten the livelihoods and lives of people in the Pacific region. Poverty is also a factor in the unpreparedness of Pacific communities to deal with the impacts of climate change. To deal with the problem of climate change, the Pacific Region also needs help from other countries. Therefore, many are displaced either by urbanization from coastal areas to urban areas or leaving their home countries to seek asylum in different countries, especially Australia.¹⁰ Climate change dramatically threatens the economic growth of Pacific Region countries, so the region also needs help from other countries to deal with the problem. Meanwhile, the difference between Abdul Rahman Sagara Prakasa's research and this research lies in constructing Fiji's identity in the Pacific region through Fiji-China Cooperation.

Fourth, further research written by Mulyadi Trisakti & M. Syaprin Zahidi, in a journal entitled "China's Interests in Increasing the Intensity of cooperation in the South Pacific Region," explains that China's presence in the South Pacific region is a strategy for promoting the One China Policy for its sovereignty over Taiwan, by attracting the support of countries in the South Pacific region to the policy. The cooperation provided

¹⁰ Abdul Rahman Sagara Prakasa, "Penanganan Isu Perubahan Iklim Di Kawasan Pasifik Melalui International Climate Change Adaptation Initiative," 2017, <http://lab-hi.umm.ac.id/files/>.

by China is in the form of assisting countries in the South Pacific region, which is intended to build the infrastructure needed by countries in the South Pacific region¹¹. This research is relevant because it has in common the existence of Chinese support for Pacific Region countries in the form of providing economic assistance intended to build state infrastructure. Meanwhile, the difference between Mulyadi Trisakti & M. Syaprin Zahidi's research and this research lies in constructing Fiji's identity in the Pacific region through Fiji-China Cooperation.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

In this research, the author will analyze the research using the constructivist ideological paradigm, which can be explained as follows:

a. The Concept of State Identity in Constructivism

Constructivism emerged in international relations when Nicholas Onuf introduced it in 1989 through his book "World of Our Making". Later, this concept was further developed by Alexander Wendt in his article "Anarchy is What States Make of It" in 1992. Alexander Wendt explained through the Shared Identity Perspective that it emphasizes the importance of social discourse and communication (not just physical interaction) between international actors. These actors shape and influence international relations through various communications and exchanges of ideas. Wendt emphasizes that "Actors use ideas to construct relationships and material realities. Ideas precede negotiations and interpret history to make relationships conflictual or cooperative". According to Wendt, social structures and systems have three elements: material

¹¹ Mulyadi Trisakti and M. Syaprin Zahidi, "Kepentingan China Meningkatkan Intensitas Kerjasama Di Kawasan Pasifik Selatan," *Indonesian Journal of Peace and Security Studies (IJPSS)* 4, no. 2 (2022): 16–29, <https://doi.org/10.29303/ijpss.v4i2.106>.

conditions, interests, and ideas. Interests determine the significance of material conditions, while ideas determine interests¹².

According to Constructivist theory, identity plays a vital role in determining actors' behaviour. A person's or state's identity results from a dynamic social process, where relationships and interactions with other actors shape their self-perceptions and interests. This identity serves as an essential element of how actors see themselves and helps determine what those actors consider imperative or valuable. For example, a country's national interest can be understood through its identity, which includes the values, culture and history it deems essential. This identity is often the basis for state policy-making, as policies are made to reflect and protect predetermined identities and interests. For constructivists, identity is difficult to change unless significant changes force actors to engage in new social relationships that help define a new identity.¹³ Alexander Wendt emphasized the importance of a country's domestic culture as the primary source of state identity. State identity is generally considered part of the culture, which most constructivists define as shared social beliefs. This process emphasizes that state identity and interests are not static but dynamic and constantly evolving through social and cultural interactions.¹⁴

In this context, Fiji is recognized as a country with a *vanua* identity and a social system that integrates communities with nature as a crucial element in their livelihood activities. This social system helps Fiji face the challenges of being a coastal country vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Although Fiji is known as a tourism

¹² Richard Price, "Konstruktivisme Sebagai Pendekatan Alternatif Dalam Hubungan Internasional Iva Rachmawati, M.Si 1," n.d., 25–34.

¹³ Tarek Al Tarawneh, "The Role of Identity in the Constructivist School: A Theoretical Study with Application to the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict," *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences* 51, no. 1 (2024): 382–95, <https://doi.org/10.35516/HUM.V51I1.6867>.

¹⁴ Maxym Alexandrov, "The Concept of State Identity in International Relations: A Theoretical Analysis," *Journal of International Development and Cooperation* 10, no. 1 (2003): 33–46.

destination with a unique attraction that lies in the authenticity and sustainability of nature, it remains a country in the Pacific region that is strongly affected by the impact of globalization. This requires Fiji, which has made the tourism sector a key indicator of regional development, to seriously consider the obstacles that can disrupt the running of the industry through the implementation of sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism is important because it can ensure stable development in the face of climate change challenges by maintaining a balance between tourism development and environmental preservation, which is crucial. Economic cooperation between Fiji and China can be seen as a process in which Fiji tries to maintain a social system that unites people with nature to enhance sustainable development through the assistance that China has provided. Initiatives such as infrastructure improvements to attract Chinese tourists and promoting Fijian culture in China are clear examples of how ideas are used to build relationships and material realities that support tourism.

In Islamic teachings, a principle of balance includes aspects of worldly life and the hereafter. In the context of sustainable development, Islamic teachings can be understood through three dimensions, one of which is the worldview. One of the fundamental concepts in the Islamic worldview is “*Khalifah*.” This concept emphasizes that humans are assigned as Allah's successors on earth. The task of humans as caliphs is to maintain and care for the planet and all of nature, not to create damage.¹⁵ As such, humans are responsible for maintaining the balance of nature and ensuring its sustainability for future generations. It is pertinent that Fiji has made efforts to deal with the impacts of climate change by promoting a sustainable tourism culture and identity. Cooperation with China through infrastructure investment can support Fiji in

¹⁵ Sofi Mubarak, “ISLAM DAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: Studi Kasus Menjaga Lingkungan Dan Ekonomi Berkeadilan,” *Dauliyah Journal of Islamic and International Affairs* 3, no. 1 (2018): 129–46.

addressing climate challenges and maintaining its cultural identity and natural environment, which can enhance sustainable development through the assistance China has provided.

b. International Cooperation Concept

International cooperation is a relationship between countries with objectives based on national interests. According to K.J. Holsti, cooperation begins as a result of various problems that arise at the national, regional, and global levels and require the attention of more than one country. He also defines international Cooperation as a specific agreement or issue between two or more countries to take advantage of similarities or clashes of interest. International cooperation is a collaboration between two or more nations or international entities to achieve common goals or solve problems involving national boundaries with certain agreements or understandings that satisfy both parties.¹⁶ International cooperation can involve various areas, including political, economic, social, environmental, security, and cultural. It can be carried out through various means, including bilateral or multilateral agreements, international forums, international institutions, and scientific, technological, and cultural exchanges.

Fiji and China have increased cooperation in various areas, including economics, infrastructure, and natural resource development. In the context of international cooperation, this can be seen from Fiji's efforts to increase its influence and importance again at the global level after the impact exerted by climate change through Cooperation with China, as well as part of China's strategy to gain support from countries in the Pacific Region through the One China Policy for its sovereignty over Taiwan. The relationship between the concept of international cooperation and Fiji-China cooperation can be seen in several aspects, including Fiji's efforts to utilize international

¹⁶ Era Riana, "Kerjasama Indonesia-Korea Selatan Dalam Mendukung Program One Village One Product (Ovop) Di Indonesia 2013-2015," *Jom Fisip* 3, no. 1 (2016): 1–14.

cooperation to help Fiji's image damaged by climate change, increase China's role as a regional and global actor, increase Fiji's interests at the regional and international levels. Cooperation in tourism can also provide economic benefits for both countries. Through an increase in the number of tourists visiting, both from Fiji to China and vice versa, there is a flow of income from tourism that can drive economic growth and create jobs. This reflects the concept of international cooperation in strengthening financial development and improving people's welfare.

Ta'awun is the principle of cooperation or help in Islam. It explains that members of society must help each other, including in an international context, to achieve mutual benefits and goodness. For Muslims, the principle of *ta'awun* encourages helping each other in goodness and righteousness. This is outlined in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Maidah¹⁷ *ayat* two means: "Help each other in (doing) righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sins and transgressions." This correlates with Fiji's cooperation with China, as both countries are trying to achieve the common good, for example, through infrastructure development, such as roads and bridges, that improve accessibility and encourage economic activity in Fiji. In addition, China has received support for the One China policy for its sovereignty over Taiwan. This is in line with the principle of *ta'awun*, which encourages cooperation to achieve good results.

1.7 Hypothesis

This research discusses the construction of Fiji's sustainable tourism identity through Fiji-China economic cooperation in the Pacific region. The development of tourism as a significant economic sector is changing Fiji's social system and cultural

¹⁷ Saefullah Wiradipraja and Guru Besar Fakultas, "PRINSIP-PRINSIP HUKUM INTERNASIONAL DALAM ISLAM E. Saefullah Wiradipradja ***" XIX, no. 2 (2003): 118–34.

identity. Fiji's financial dependence on tourism makes the country more vulnerable to climate change, as tourism infrastructure, such as hotels and beaches, is susceptible to natural disasters. However, by cooperating with China, Fiji can get support to increase resilience to climate change by developing more robust and sustainable infrastructure. Economic cooperation between Fiji and China in the tourism sector gives Fiji access to financial resources and technology that can be used to address the impacts of climate change. This assistance involves investments in extreme climate-resilient infrastructure, workforce training, and environmentally sustainable projects. As a result, Fiji can integrate local cultural elements into tourism promotion, thus preserving social identity while increasing revenue from the tourism sector.

1.8 Research Methodology

1.8.1 Research Design

In this research, the author uses qualitative methods as part of the research procedure by collecting relevant data to explain the phenomenon to be studied. According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research is used with comparative analysis to understand research subjects comprehensively. These research methods are applied in many disciplines to describe a phenomenon by collecting data and analyzing certain behaviours.¹⁸ Researchers collected data using literature studies obtained from journals, books, and official international websites. The researcher is the main instrument in this method.

1.8.2 Object of Research

The object taken in this research is a Cultural Development Strategy through Fiji-China Economic Cooperation.

¹⁸ Lesley Eleanor Tomaszewski, Jill Zarestky, and Elsa Gonzalez, "Planning Qualitative Research: Design and Decision Making for New Researchers," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 19 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920967174>.

1.8.3 Data Collection Technique

The writing method in this research uses library research, which collects data by understanding and studying theories from various literature related to the research.¹⁹ Data is collected by searching for sources and reconstructing from multiple sources such as journals, books, and official international websites. The data analysis technique used by the author is descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis techniques assist researchers in describing and summarizing the data obtained so that researchers can easily describe the results of their research.²⁰

1.9 Research Systematics

The systematics of writing this research consists of 4 Chapters, and some have sub-chapters. The four chapters include:

CHAPTER I, INTRODUCTION. Explaining about: The first chapter is an introduction, where the author will describe the background, problem formulation, research objectives, research benefits, literature review, conceptual framework, hypothesis, research methodology and writing systematics. In this chapter, the author will explain the topic to be researched based on the formulation of the problem, which will then be analyzed using the concepts and theoretical framework initiated.

CHAPTER II, IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION, FIJI TOURISM AND ADAPTATION STRATEGIES TO CLIMATE CHANGE. Describes the background to the problems facing Fiji, a coastal island nation highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. And the emergence of a shift in Fiji's national identity increases

¹⁹ Miza Nina Adlini et al., "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2022): 974–80, <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3394>.

²⁰ Albine Moser and Irene Korstjens, "Series: Practical Guidance to Qualitative Research. Part 3: Sampling, Data Collection and Analysis," *European Journal of General Practice* 24, no. 1 (2018): 9–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375091>.

its vulnerability to climate change. Then, Fiji adopted an adaptation strategy to deal with these problems.

CHAPTER III, CONSTRUCTION OF FIJI'S SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IDENTITY IN THE PACIFIC REGION THROUGH FIJI-CHINA ECONOMIC COOPERATION. Explains: Social construction is an interpretative filter through which people see, think or feel things. The Fiji Government seeks to develop the country's economy in the Pacific region with various interactions between countries by reconstructing identities, norms and ideas.

BAB IV: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will contain conclusions from the author's findings regarding the Construction of Fiji's sustainable tourism identity in the Asia Pacific region through Fiji-China cooperation.

