



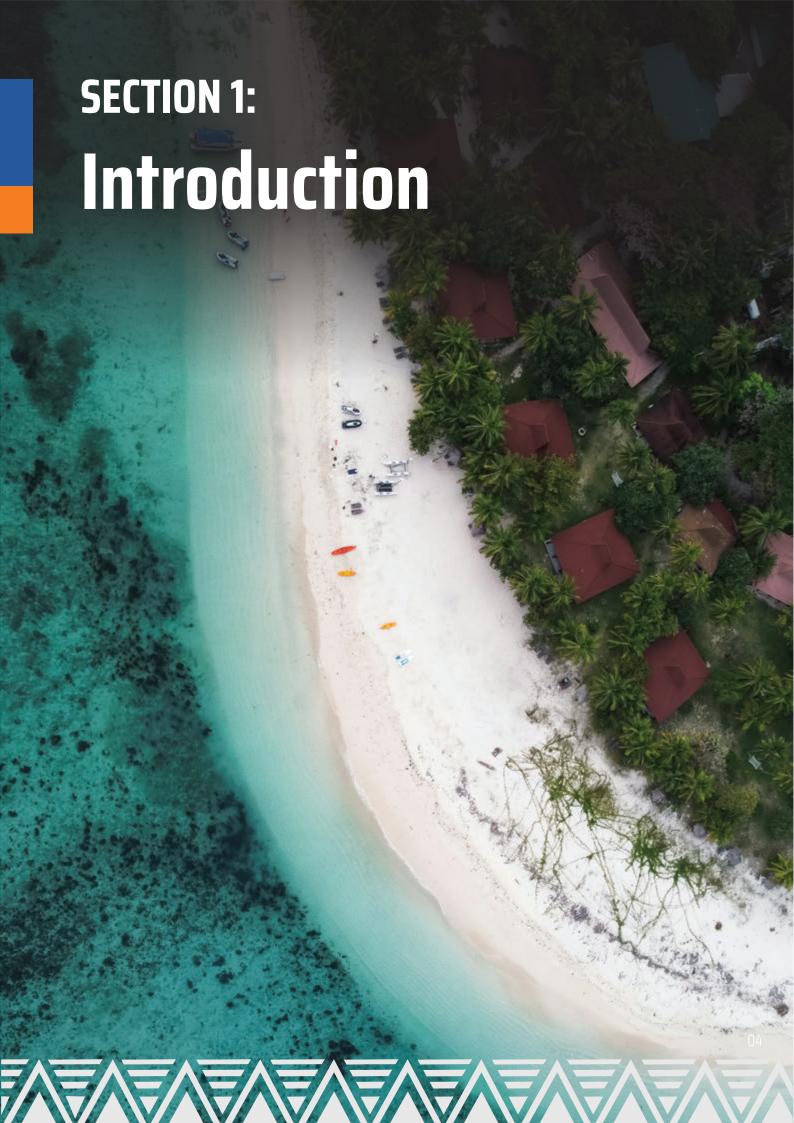
ACRONYMS

APAC	Asia-Pacific
EOIO	End of Investment Outcome
ITO	Inbound Tour Operators
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
SB	Strongim Bisnis
SBD	Solomon Islands Dollar
SIG	Solomon Islands Government
USD	United States Dollar



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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

Solomon Islands has long had underutilized tourism potential. Its marine and terrestrial ecosystem offer world-class diving, snorkelling, and rich biodiversity. Additionally, the country's authentic culture and WWII heritage sites appeal to niche travellers. Despite these advantages, international tourist arrivals to Solomon Islands have been low compared to neighbouring Pacific Island Countries (PICs).

The tourism sector is a vital contributor to the Solomon Islands economy, constituting 10.5% of GDP and generating more than SBD 1 billion in revenue before the COVID-19 pandemic. Since reopening borders in July 2022, the country experienced a notable surge in visitors.¹

The tourism sector in the Solomon Islands has been experiencing steady growth, with international tourist arrivals increasing at a measured pace. Despite this upward trend, the Solomon Islands still accounts for only about 1.5% of the South Pacific Tourism Organization's total tourist arrivals in the region, with neighbouring countries offering similar1 tourism experiences like Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu attracting significantly higher numbers.² Domestic tourism is also on the rise, though its growth remains limited. The local market is gradually expanding, with residents and expatriates increasingly participating in tourism activities within the islands.

The tourism sector is a national priority. The Solomon Islands' National Development Strategy (NDS) 20162035 recognizes tourism as a key driver of sustained and inclusive economic growth. It envisions improving the social and economic well-being of all Solomon Islanders, with tourism playing a central role in stimulating economic activity and creating employment opportunities. The strategy emphasizes the need for tourism infrastructure development, enhanced service delivery, and stronger international promotion of the Solomon Islands as a unique destination. With an ambitious target of 50,000 annual visitors by 2025, the NDS underscores the sector's potential for national growth.

Development partners have also supported initiatives contributing to a sustainable tourism sector through various programs. New Zealands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) has been a major donor, and since 2017 DFAT has supported the strengthening of tourism market systems through Strongim Bisnis, and other private sector development initiatives through the IFC-managed Pacific Partnership.

1.2 Learnings from previous phases

Initially, Strongim Bisnis efforts in the tourism sector focused on improving basic standards through partnerships with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic shifted the focus away from international tourism to the domestic market. This pivot necessitated a re-evaluation of strategies, with an emphasis on product development and improving accessibility for domestic tourists.

Strongim Bisnis assisted tourism businesses near Honiara, which serve 60% of all visitors to the Solomon Islands. In collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Strongim Bisnis partnered with B17 Dive and Beach Bungalows, Roderick Bay Beach Bungalows, Parangiju Mountain Lodge, Amazing Grace, and five coastal beaches in North-West Guadalcanal to enhance products, improve service quality, and increase accessibility. Additionally, Strongim Bisnis supported the "Iumi Tugeda Holidays" program, a joint initiative involving Solomon Airlines, Tourism Solomons, and several government ministries, with grant support from MFAT and SITIDF.

In 2023, Strongim Bisnis partnered with Dive Operators Solomon Islands (DOSI) to enhance the digital marketing of dive locations and member services. The DOSI website was upgraded, linking key marketing channels like Tourism Solomons and Solomon Airlines, making trip planning and bookings easier for international tourists. The

¹ SB 2023 annual report

² https://macbio-pacific.info/

partnership also focused on upskilling local Solomon Islander diving staff employed at DOSI-affiliated diving operators.

The key takeaway from previous phases:

Accessibility and minor infrastructure development: Tourism flourishes in areas with reliable access.
 Strategic, right-sized investments enable tourism businesses to scale quickly and attract more visitors. The return on investment is high small improvements in infrastructure, customer experience and marketing can generate strong word-of-mouth advertising, driving even greater tourist inflows.

For example, in 2023, Strongim Bisnis supported Parangijus growth through key upgrades, including a 5KVA solar system, two 10,000L water tanks, and a freezer to meet rising restaurant demand. Additional improvements included road signs, menu boards, and a whiteboard for meetings. In March, 11 local guides received tour guide training in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, enhancing service quality and first aid skills. In April, Strongim Bisnis invested SBD 200,000 to upgrade the trail to Tenaru Falls, adding stairs, railings, benches, and directional signs.

By July, monthly visitors had doubled to over 100, and sales more than tripled, with revenue shared equally between the two neighbouring tribes that own the falls. In December, Parangiju independently invested nearly SBD 200,000 to complete a new bar and restaurant, expanding its conference capacity and creating new income streams for 2024.

- Diving and Surfing: Diving holds significant potential, requiring greater investment in skills and international
 marketing. Surfing is also emerging as a promising niche. Even after COVID, when the tourism sector was at
 its lowest, diving operators continued to run at full capacity. This resilience highlights the strong appeal of
 the niche premium market. Targeted interventions in this sector have significant potential to attract even
 more tourists.
- Transportation Challenges: High flight costs constrain tourism growth, making it difficult for the Solomon Islands to compete with more affordable neighbouring destinations. Efforts to improve accessibility through fast boat services are underway but still in their early stages. Given that much of the country's tourism is water-based, challenges such as unclear transport schedules, unpredictable climatic conditions, and unreliable services further hinder the sector's potential.
- Branding and promotion: SIG is strongly committed to promoting tourism, having significantly increased the budget allocated to Tourism Solomons. A few years ago, Tourism Solomons underwent a major rebranding exercise, and it is currently pursuing an aggressive branding and marketing strategy aimed at targeted audiences. These efforts highlight the countrys unique cultures, pristine natural environment, and diverse tourism experiences. There is potential for SB to support Tourism Solomons' initiatives, particularly by focusing on niche markets.
- Shift in strategic approach in Phase II: Given the industry's dynamics, the program shifted its focus to supporting operators in high-demand areas who have already demonstrated an ability to attract tourists. The rationale was that targeted investment in their expansion could deliver more immediate and tangible results. However, this strategic shift did not disregard the importance of broader marketing efforts. SB collaborated with DOSI to promote the dive segment, complementing Tourism Solomons national brand awareness efforts.

By refining its approach, SB maximised the impact of its investments, ensuring that both short-term expansion and long-term market growth were supported in a way that aligned with how Solomon Islands tourism industry functions.

1.3. Phase III strategy

In Phase III, the program plans to build on the approach adopted in the latter part of the previous phase. This includes continued support for tour operators, a focus on high-value opportunities such as diving, and efforts to improve access to unlock new opportunities.

Strongim Bisnis will work in three focus areas for intervention:

- Strengthening access and connections to unlock more provincial tourism opportunities. The Solomon Islands faces significant challenges in accessibility, logistics, booking systems etc. which limit the growth of provincial tourism. Many operators struggle to attract visitors due to travel coordination issues and logistical constraints. SB will explore partnerships with local tour agents to develop tour packages that improve access to key locations. It will also seek collaborations with tour operators in Honiara and Guadalcanal, particularly those catering to cruise ship passengers, to strengthen connectivity and expand visitor experiences. The strategy also includes working closely with Solomon Airlines, shipping companies, transport providers, and tour operators to enhance services through improved planning, scheduling, and availability including express services tailored for tourists. The focus will be on strengthening logistics, coordination, and booking systems.
- 2. In areas where affordable access is established, improve tourism operators' capacity. In 2024, Strongim Bisnis focused its investments on Munda and Malaita, leveraging key transport links such as the Munda-Brisbane flight and the daily Pelican and Franjti shipping routes to Malaita. Building on these efforts, the program will continue to invest in similar opportunities, with a particular focus on developing the Marovo and Gizo hubs. These locations benefit from strong connectivity through the weekly Pelican service and the presence of Gizo and Seghe Airports. Marau will also be considered, depending on improvements to the Pelican schedule to better accommodate visitors. Central hub is also being considered as MCT will be purchasing a ferry to connect Honiara to the main destinations around Tualgi and Savo. In these hubs, the focus will be on providing targeted investments to upgrade facilities, enhance service quality, equip tour operators with the necessary tools and equipment, and build the skills needed to effectively host guests. Strengthening the capacity of operators will ensure they can fully capitalize on the improved connectivity in these areas. As discussed earlier, tourism thrives in regions with reliable access. Well-targeted, appropriately scaled investments that build capacity will enable businesses to expand quickly and attract more visitors.
- 3. Expansion of high demand tourism products and niche markets including diving, surfing and fishing. The Solomon Islands is seeing growing demand for niche tourism, particularly in diving, surfing, and sport fishing. In 2024, Strongim Bisnis supported dive sector expansion by assisting Fatboys Resort, Papatura Island Retreat, and Dive Guadalcanal, while also entering surf tourism in partnership with Kagata Surf Camp. Looking ahead, Strongim Bisnis will continue strengthening the dive sector by upskilling dive guides and increasing the number of operators across the country. A key initiative will be to work with Dive Operators Solomon Islands (DOSI) to provide training in diving equipment servicing, ensuring long-term sustainability and self-sufficiency among local operators. Surfing efforts will focus on Makira (Frigate Island Resort), Gizo, and West Guadalcanal, while sport fishing will be explored as a complementary off-season opportunity.

1.4. Contribution to the logframe

The table below outlines expected contributions of Phase III interventions to Strongim Bisnis End of Investment Outcomes.

End of Investment Outcome

Phase III contribution to EOIO

EOIO-1: Businesses in target sectors have increased sales and profits, providing increased employment and household incomes Supporting tourism businesses, local communities involved in tourism, and related service providers—such as transport operators, accommodation providers, and restaurants—will drive business growth and increase sales. This, in turn, will generate more job opportunities for youth and women in the tourism sector, leading to higher incomes.

EOIO-2: Women, youth, and people with disabilities have increased economic empowerment.

• Women play a vital role in the Solomon Islands' tourism sector as tour guides, guesthouse and eco-lodge managers, and hospitality workers in hotels and restaurants. They also contribute through traditional crafts, cultural tourism, and the food industry, offering local cuisine. The tourism sector in the Solomon Islands is one in which women engage formally and at scale, playing key roles in hospitality, cultural tourism, and entrepreneurship. This presents a direct opportunity for Strongim Bisnis to enhance women's economic prospects, promote gender equity, and ensure access to safe and inclusive work environments.

EOIO-3: SIG has increased opportunities to support the private sector through partnerships or reforms to improve the enabling environment.

• In the tourism sector, Strongim Bisnis has a proven track record of fostering market-driven solutions and engaging the private sector in collaboration with the government. In Phase III, Strongim Bisnis will continue working with Tourism Solomons—the government's marketing arm responsible for promoting tourism—and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. This engagement will ensure that Strongim Bisnis' interventions align with the Solomon Islands' National Development Strategy, which aims to attract 50,000 annual visitors by 2025.



Section 2: Sector Overview

2.1. Geographic focus

Tourism in the Solomon Islands is regionally diverse, with Western Province and Honiara serving as the main hubs due to their accessibility and well-developed tourism offerings. While eco-tourism and cultural tourism are expanding into other provinces, infrastructure and accessibility remains a key constraint.

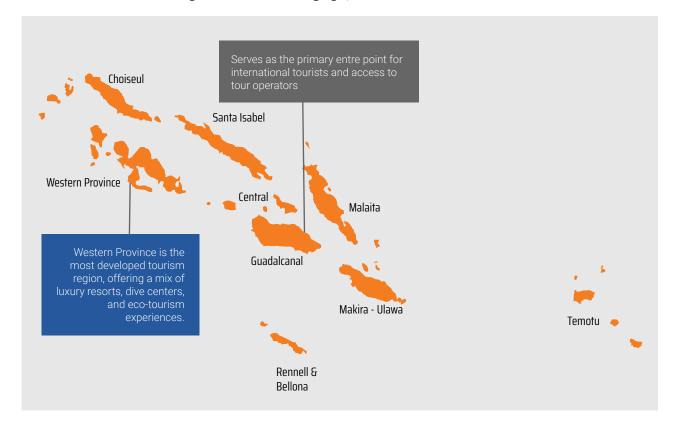


Figure 1. Tourism across geographies of the Solomon Islands

Tourism flourishes in areas with reliable access. Therefore, Strongim Bisnis will prioritise support to tourism opportunities that are easily accessible as a practical and feasible approach to attracting more tourists in the near future. The following table provides an overview of tourism opportunities in different provinces.

Honiara and Guadalcanal Province Honiara, the capital city on Guadalcanal Island, serves as the primary entry point for international tourists via Henderson International Airport. The city is a hub for business travellers, government visitors, and those exploring the country's World War II history. Key attractions include: 1. World War II heritage sites The Guadalcanal battlefields, Vilu War Museum, and war memorials attract history enthusiasts. 2. Local markets & cultural sites The Central Market and the National Museum provide insight into local traditions. 3. Mataniko and Tenaru Falls Natural attractions accessible from Honiara, appealing to adventure tourists.

Geography

Description

Western Province

Western Province is the most developed tourism region, offering a mix of luxury resorts, dive centers, and eco-tourism experiences. Key locations include:

- Gizo A tourism hub with resorts and access to world-class diving spots, including Kennedy and Skull Islands.
- 2. Munda Known for diving, WWII relics, and eco-tourism, with a growing domestic and international visitor base.
- 3. Tetepare Island An uninhabited conservation island promoting eco-tourism and sustainable travel.
- 4. Marovo Lagoon A UNESCO World Heritage nominee, famous for its biodiversity, traditional wood carvings, and eco-lodges.

Other Provinces

Central and Rennell-Bellona Provinces: Eco-Tourism and Cultural Heritage:

- Lake Tegano (Rennell Island, Rennell-Bellona Province) A World Heritage-listed site, drawing eco-tourists and nature lovers.
- 2. Historical WW2 sites: Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo, and Iron Bottom Sound, popular for wreck diving.
- 3. Natural wonders: Savo Islands volcano walk, hot springs, and megapode bird egg fields.
- 4. Diving and snorkeling: Russell Islands and Mbike Islands coral reefs and marine life.
- 5. Unique attractions: Roderick Bay's World Discoverer shipwreck

Malaita Province: Cultural and Adventure Tourism:

- Langa Langa Lagoon Known for artificial islands and traditional shell money production.
- 2. Auki A gateway to village-based tourism and cultural immersion experiences.

Remote and Emerging Destinations:

- 1. Makira and Temotu Provinces Less developed but rich in traditional culture, volcanoes, and unspoiled beaches, with potential for adventure tourism.
- 2. Isabel Province Offers rich cultural heritage experiences with limited but improving tourism infrastructure. Also popular for diving, surfing, and sport fishing.

2.2. Market Dynamics

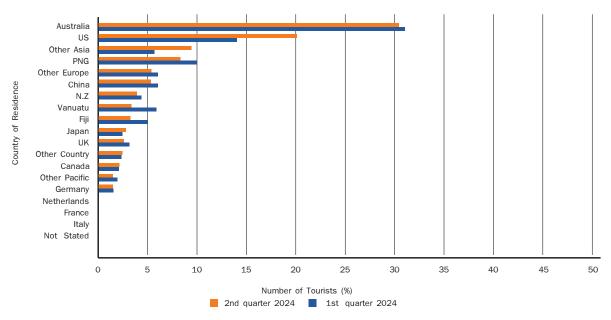
2.2.1. Demand landscape

Low but growing international tourism demand for tourism (also potentially business travellers who are often recorded as tourists), accounted for the largest share at 51.5%. Returning residents made up 47.8% of arrivals, while the remaining less than 1.0% were intending residents.³

Arrivals by country of residence for the second quarter of 2024 showed that visitors from Australia comprised

³ Solomon Islands National Statistics Office

the largest (34.9%) group of visitors to the Solomon Islands. The next largest group of visitors were from Papua New Guinea (10.9%), followed by United States of America (9.2%), Other Asian Countries (9.0%), Fiji (8.8%), China (7.0%), New Zealand (6.2%), Vanuatu (3.2%), Other Pacific Countries (3.0%), Other Europe Countries (2.7%), Japan (1.7%), United Kingdom and Other Countries (1.2%). The following table demonstrates the tourist arrival (%) by country of residence.



Source: Solomon Island National Statistics Office, Visitors Arrivals Second Quarter 2024

The most popular carriers during the quarter were Solomon Airlines, which carried (37.3%) of total visitors, followed by Air Niugini (26.3%), Qantas (23.5%), Unscheduled Flights (7.7%), and Fiji Airways (5.2%).⁵

Limited domestic tourism with growing local interest

Domestic tourism in the Solomon Islands is difficult to quantify. Anecdotal evidence suggests that local residents rarely use hotels, resorts, or organized tours, as most overnight travel within or between provinces involves staying with family. However, there are reports of growing demand for tourist accommodations from an emerging middle class, which became a target audience for Solomon Airlines domestic travel campaigns during the COVID-19 crisis. Overall, most domestic leisure tourists staying in hotels, resorts, or participating in touristic activities tend to be Honiara based expatriates, or temporary visitors coming into the Solomon islands for business or other work purposes.

Two primary types of tourism opportunities have proven particularly attractive to visitors:

- 1. Diving and snorkelling: The Solomon Islands is renowned for its world-class diving and snorkelling sites, boasting approximately 5,750 square kilometers of reefs and a rich diversity of marine life. The region also has one of the highest concentrations of World War II wrecks in the Pacific, making it a sought-after destination for underwater enthusiasts. These activities predominantly attract international tourists who seek unique and pristine marine environments.
- 2. Nature-based adventure tourism: The country's unspoiled natural landscapes offer ample opportunities for adventure tourism, including activities such as hiking, bird-watching, and cultural tours. While these experiences are popular among international visitors, there is a growing interest among domestic tourists and expatriates residing in the Solomon Islands. The allure of engaging with the natural environment and authentic local culture appeals to a broadening audience.

⁴ Solomon Islands National Statistics Office

⁵ Solomon Islands National Statistics Office

⁶ https://www.pacificpsdi.org/ Solomon Island Tourism Sector snapshot Nov 2021

In summary, the Solomon Islands' tourism sector is gradually expanding, with international arrivals increasing steadily and domestic participation beginning to rise. Diving, surfing, snorkelling, and nature-based adventure tourism stand out as the most lucrative and appealing opportunities, drawing both international and, increasingly, domestic tourists

2.2.2. Supply landscape

Accommodation. In 2019, Solomon Islands had an estimated 259 hotels and guest houses. Honiara is serviced by at least seven large (75 to 100 room) foreign-owned hotels. This is supplemented by smaller, locally-owned guest houses, which are lower in both standard and price. Outside Honiara, there are at least 130 local guest houses plus a small number of foreign-run resorts. Tourism Solomons estimates that around 5% of Solomon Islands accommodation is foreign-owned.⁷

Tour operators. There are at least 20 specialised tour operators in Solomon Islands. Ten or more are foreign-owned dive businesses that offer equipment rental and diving guides. These and other tour operators also offer battlefield tours, surfing, sports fishing, snorkelling, nature walks, and cultural tours in Guadalcanal and Western Province.

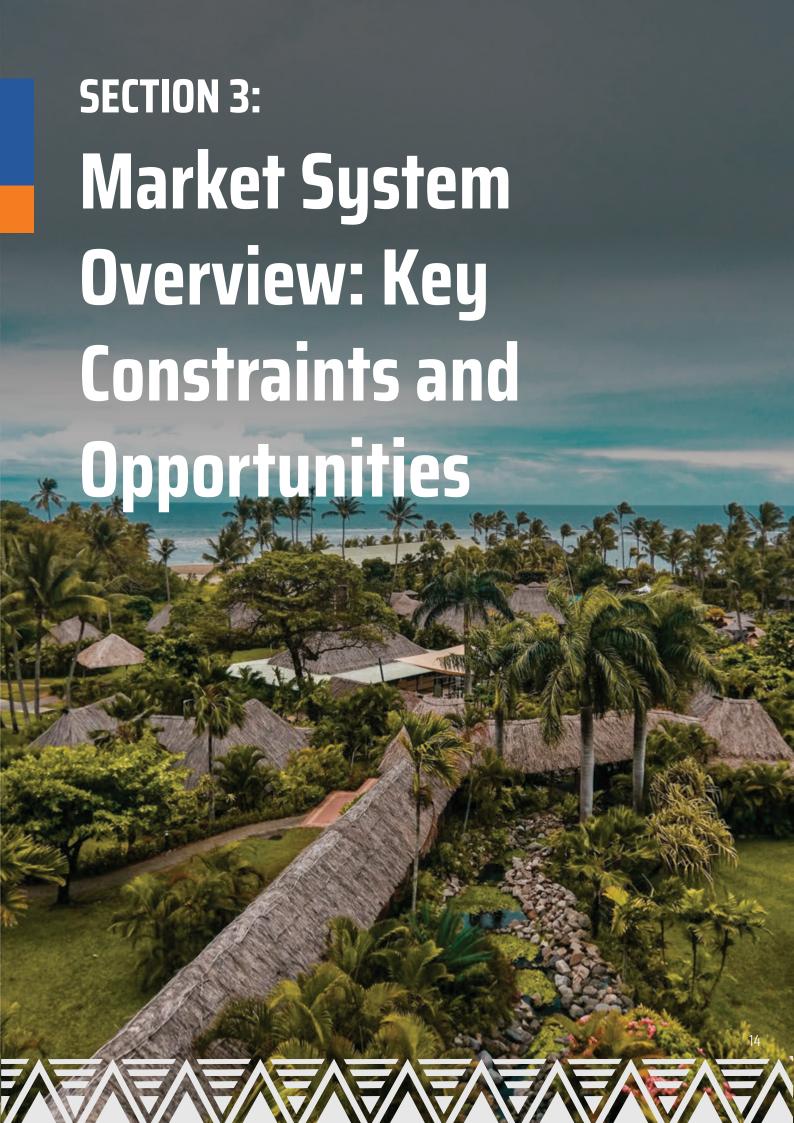
Transport and connectivity. Honiara is serviced by flights from Brisbane, Nadi, Port Moresby, Port Vila, operated by four international airlines: Air Niugini, Fiji Airways, Solomon Airlines, and Qantas. Direct flights from Brisbane to Munda commenced in 2019 following significant upgrades to Munda Airport aimed at growing tourism to Western Province. Currently, Solomon Airlines carries around half of all inbound passengers. The majority of Solomon Islands nine provinces are connected by air. Solomon Airlines operates flights connecting many provinces within the Solomon Islands, serving 23 domestic destinations. However, not all provinces have direct air service. For instance, Central Province lacks an airport, so travellers typically access it via flights to nearby provinces followed by boat transfers.

Ground transport. Ground transport operators play a crucial role in facilitating travel for dive tourists in the Solomon Islands, particularly in the main hub of Honiara. Inbound Tour Operators (ITOs), based out from Honiara, manage ground transfers for divers arriving through travel agents or local dive operators, ensuring transit between the airport, accommodations, and dive sites. In key dive hubs such as Gizo, Munda, and Seghe, the demand for ground transport is relatively low, as most arrangements are handled directly by the dive operators or pre-arranged through an ITO. For independent dive tourists, taxis in Honiara provide an alternative mode of transport, though the exact number of available taxis remains unknown.

Sea transport. Dive operations in the Solomon Islands collectively maintain a fleet of approximately 20 vessels used for local transfers and dive excursions. In the primary diving hubs of the Western Province, there is a limited though undocumented number of reliable local boats and drivers available, who can be contracted either directly or through dive operators as required. These local boats and drivers play a crucial logistical support role in the dive tourism industry in Western Province. They provide essential transportation services, safely ferrying divers and their equipment to remote dive sites that are often inaccessible without local expertise.

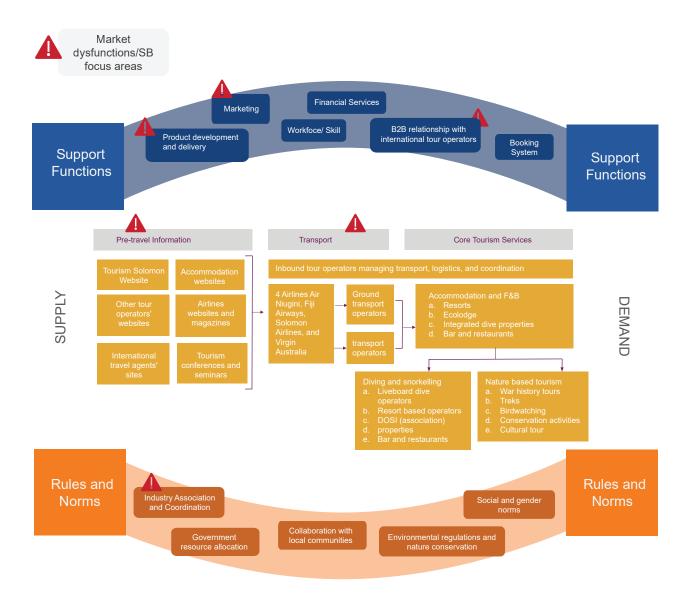
Moreover, Pelican Express is a high-speed passenger ferry service operated by Pelican Shipping Limited in the Solomon Islands. The company operates two fast-craft vessels, Pelican Express 1 and Pelican Express 2, providing transportation between Honiara and various provinces, including Western and Choiseul Provinces. Similarly, Frangti Shipping also provides daily trips to Auki, Malaita. These services are particularly valuable during peak travel times, such as post-festive seasons, when demand for travel to and from Honiara increases.

⁷ https://www.pacificpsdi.org/ Solomon Island Tourism Sector snapshot Nov 2021



Section 3: Market System Overview: Key Constraints and Opportunities

3.1. Market System Map



3.2. Market Failures and Opportunities

The table below provides a brief overview of the key market dysfunctions hindering the sector's growth and opportunities for interventions.

Function Background Market Dysfunction Opportunities: Relevance

Product development and delivery

Product and experience delivery

The overall quality of tourism products remains inconsistent. While some operators provide well-curated experiences, others lack proper maintenance, marketing, and packaging of their offerings. Service consistency remains a challenge, particularly in remote locations. Many service providers lack formal training in hospitality standards, customer service, and food safety, leading to variability in guest experiences. Additionally, response times for inquiries and bookings can be slow, reflecting gaps in digital literacy and reservation management.

Infrastructure

While major infrastructure upgrades require significant investment, several minor yet impactful improvements can enhance the tourism experience in the Solomon Islands

- 1. Road connectivity: Many tourist sites, including beaches and cultural villages, are difficult to access due to poor road conditions. Minor repairs and maintenance of key routes would significantly improve accessibility.
- Signage and information boards: Clear, informative signage at historical sites, nature trails, and cultural attractions would improve visitor engagement and wayfinding.
- Public facilities: Basic amenities such as clean public toilets, rest areas, and waste disposal bins are lacking in many tourist areas. Low-cost investments in these facilities would enhance visitor comfort

to Phase III strategy

Weak capacity of tour operators, inconsistent product quality, gaps in services, and poor accessibility and infrastructure are leading to low tourist turnout.

The capacity of tour operators will be improved by SB in all three focus areas of intervention.

- 1. Strengthening access and connection in provinces.
- Tap into opportunities where a connection is already established.
- 3. High-value tourism opportunities (diving, surfing).

Transport services and accessibility

Transportation poses significant challenges for tourism in the Solomon Islands, limiting accessibility and visitor experiences.

Air: Limited air connectivity, with few international flights and infrequent domestic services, makes reaching key destinations difficult. High airfare costs further restrict travel, deterring both domestic and international tourists.

Inter- Island transport: Ferry and boat services, essential for inter-island travel, operate on inconsistent schedules that are not always tourist-friendly. Poor road infrastructure in many provinces hampers access to inland attractions, requiring costly private transport or long, uncomfortable journeys. The lack of reliable public transportation forces tourists to rely on expensive taxis or resort transfers. Additionally, the absence of coordinated transport services complicates trip planning, increasing costs and logistical difficulties.

Weak transport services and a lack of coordination between transport providers and tour operators make travel in the Solomon Islands difficult, limiting accessibility, disrupting itineraries, and reducing tourism potential.

SBs focus area 1
(Strengthening access and connections to unlock more provincial tourism opportunities) will address transport and accessibility issues.

Booking system

A major trend in tourism is the increasing reliance on online booking and digital transactions, with travellers expecting to research, book, and pay for experiences in advance. In 2023, Euromonitor International reported that 73% of tourists preferred booking trips online. However, many tourism operators in the Solomon Islands face challenges such as limited network access, digital literacy gaps, and financial constraints, making it difficult to establish an online presence and secure bookings.

Many tourism operators lack the capacity to implement online booking systems due to network limitations, digital literacy gaps, and financial constraints.

One of the topics for capacity building of the tour operators will be an improved and digital booking system.

Marketing: Pre-travel information, branding, networking Tourism Solomon underwent a rebranding exercise a few years ago. Unlike regional counterparts such as Fiji, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea, Tourism Solomon does not broadly market the Solomon Islands as a general tourism destination. Instead, it prioritizes targeted niche marketing strategies. This approach explains why the Solomon Islands may not be widely visible in mainstream destination marketing, yet it maintains strong visibility within its specific niche segments and targeted audiences.

Limited international visibility of local operators, constrained digital marketing capacities, and gaps in partnerships with international tour operators impacted the tourism sector's growth potential, despite ongoing efforts by the government and Solomon Airlines to enhance the industry.

SB will collaborate with national organizations, such as Tourism Solomon and Dive Operators Solomon Islands (DOSI), and develop interventions to improve branding, marketing.

Weak B2B connections between local and international tour operators

Limited international reach of local tour operators is a key challenge. Many small-scale tourism businesses lack strong connections with global travel agencies and online booking platforms, making it difficult for international travellers to discover and book experiences. This situation is somewhat better in dive and snorkelling tourism, in which some operators have built relationships with international dive networks. Other tourism segments such as eco-tourism, cultural tourism, and adventure tourism remain largely disconnected from global markets.

Digital marketing

Digital marketing gaps are a major constraint for tour operators. Many operators lack a strong online presence, user-friendly booking systems, and effective social media engagement, making it difficult to attract independent travellers. The reliance on word-of-mouth marketing and small-scale promotional efforts limits tourism growth.

3.3. Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI)

Tourism in the Solomon Islands is a key driver of economic inclusion, particularly for women, persons with disabilities, and local communities that might otherwise be excluded from mainstream economic activities. The sector offers flexible, community-driven opportunities that allow marginalized groups to participate in ways that align with traditional skills, cultural practices, and environmental stewardship. This sector serves as a bridge between remote communities and formal economic networks, enabling rural populations to benefit from tourism revenues in partnership with tour operators, hotels, and government agencies.

Women's engagement in the tourism sector

Women play a crucial role in shaping the tourism experience in the Solomon Islands, participating in a wide range of economic and cultural activities, including:

 Accommodation & hospitality: Women play an essential role in managing and operating guesthouses, eco-lodges, and homestays, especially in rural areas where community-based tourism is expanding. They typically handle responsibilities such as cooking, housekeeping, and delivering cultural hospitality, ensuring visitors enjoy an authentic and welcoming experience. Women are also increasingly employed across various tourism establishments, including hotels, restaurants, bars, and front-office positions.

- Handicrafts & cultural enterprises: Many women engage in traditional weaving, carving, and jewellery-making, selling their crafts to tourists in local markets, hotels, and tourism hubs. These activities provide income-generating opportunities that preserve and celebrate indigenous knowledge and craftsmanship.
- Food & catering services: Women play a leading role in food tourism, running local restaurants, catering services, and market food stalls that showcase Solomon Islands cuisine. Their involvement ensures that local agricultural products are incorporated into the tourism value chain, supporting both farmers and food entrepreneurs.
- Tour guiding & cultural storytelling: In many cultural and eco-tourism experiences, women act as guides, storytellers, and performers, offering visitors a deeper understanding of the Solomon Islands history, traditions, and environmental conservation. This enhances the authenticity of tourism experiences while creating sustainable income streams for local families.
- Tourism management & leadership: Although the number of women in leadership positions within the tourism sector remains limited, some have taken on roles as managers, policy advisors, and business owners.

Engagement of local communities

One of the greatest strengths of tourism in the Solomon Islands is its ability to connect rural and Indigenous communities with the formal economy, providing economic opportunities when few alternatives exist. Many remote communities have minimal access to jobs in the formal sector, but tourism allows them to monetize their natural and cultural assets while staying rooted in their traditions.

- Community-based tourism initiatives: Villages across the Solomon Islands have partnered with tour operators to develop eco-lodges, cultural tours, and nature-based experiences, ensuring that locals directly benefit from visitor spending.
- Partnerships with tour operators: In more developed tourism hubs like Munda, Gizo, and Honiara, local businesses collaborate with larger tour operators, hotels, and international travel agencies to attract visitors. This partnership model helps small-scale entrepreneurs access larger markets while offering authentic, locally-led tourism experiences.

By scaling up GEDSI-focused tourism initiatives, Strongim Bisnis can contribute to positioning the Solomon Island as an inclusive, sustainable, and community-driven tourism destination, ensuring that the benefits of the sector are shared equitably across society.

3.4. Climate

The Solomon Islands' tourism sector is deeply tied to its pristine natural environment, featuring rich marine biodiversity, untouched rainforests, coral reefs, and culturally significant landscapes. Visitors are drawn to its world-class diving sites, ecotourism experiences, and remote island adventures, making the natural environment a core asset of the tourism industry. However, as the sector expands, tourism actors must ensure that development does not degrade the very ecosystems that make it unique.

So far, the countrys small-scale tourism model has so far avoided negative environmental impacts associated with more commercialized destinations. However, as visitor numbers grow, unregulated tourism and poor waste management can pose potential threats to the long-term sustainability of the sector.

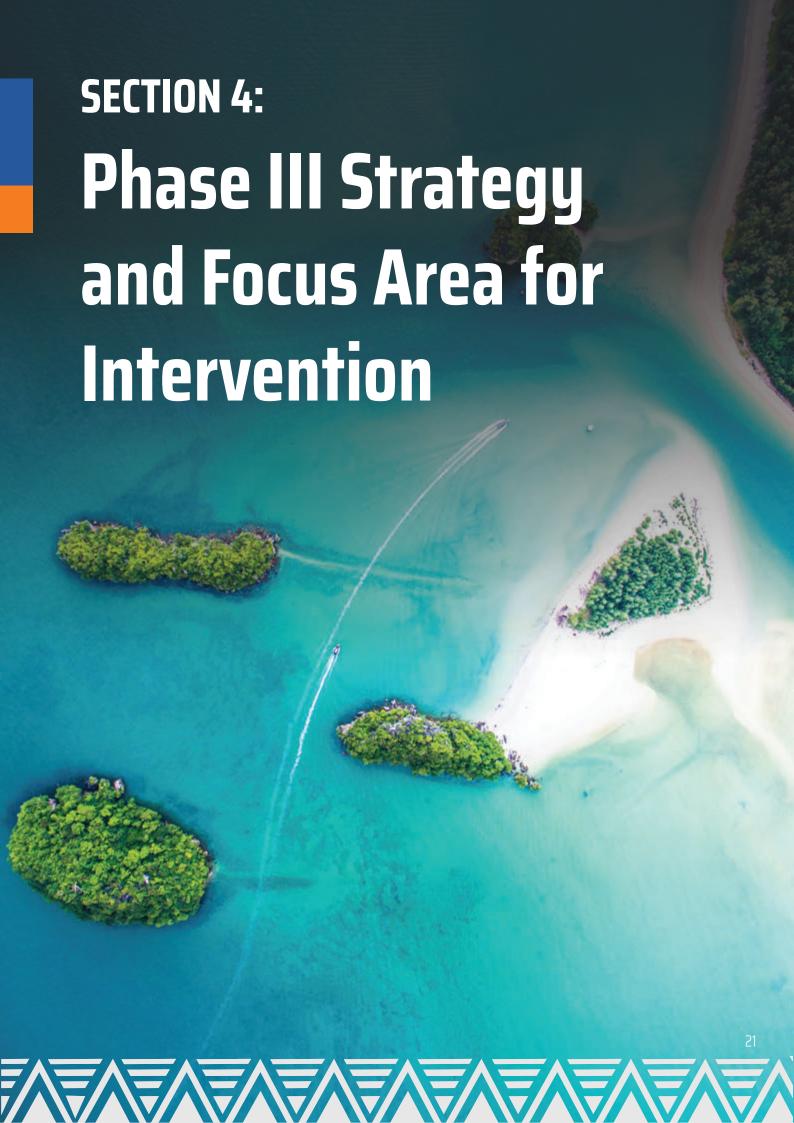
Environmental consequences of tourism growth

- Coral reef damage & marine pollution: The Solomon Islands is heavily dependent on marine tourism, particularly diving and snorkelling. However, increased anchoring, pollution, and careless diving practices can damage reefs. Plastic waste and sewage disposal from boats and resorts can harm marine life, affecting both biodiversity and local fisheries.
- Deforestation & habitat destruction: Expanding eco-lodges, resorts, and road networks without proper environmental guidelines can lead to forest clearing, threatening biodiversity and increasing erosion. Some

tourism developments risk disrupting fragile ecosystems, particularly in remote island communities where land-use planning is minimal.

- Waste management issues: Many island communities lack proper waste disposal systems, leading to
 plastic pollution and sanitation challenges. With increased tourism, unregulated waste disposal could
 overwhelm fragile ecosystems and impact coastal and marine health.
- Cultural & environmental integrity: Over-tourism can commodify traditional customs, potentially undermining meaningful cultural practices in favour of mass-market tourism. Without careful planning, tourism development could displace communities or damage sacred sites and natural heritage areas.

Strongim Bisnis will continue to assess the environmental impact of its interventions and explore opportunities for collaboration with the government, tour operators, local communities, and other stakeholders. This includes developing community-based conservation initiatives and providing training for tour operators on the mitigation of tourism-related environmental impacts.



Section 4: Phase III Strategy and Focus Area for Intervention

In Phase III, Strongim Bisnis strategy to drive tourism sector growth will involve supporting businesses to enhance the quality of their products and services and fostering premium niche experiences such as diving, surfing, snorkelling, and sport fishing. Additionally, Strongim Bisnis will focus on improving key supporting functions, including transportation, booking systems, marketing, and linkages with international tour operators, to create a more competitive and sustainable tourism industry.



This goal will be achieved by focusing on three focus areas for intervention.

1. Strengthening access and connections to unlock more provincial tourism opportunities

- Transport & Accessibility Improvements: Collaborate with transport providers and tour operators to improve connectivity, optimize transportation services, and enhance accessibility of tourism sites. Strengthen coordination between stakeholders to aggregate demand and establish more reliable and efficient travel options for visitors.
- **Product Development & Market Expansion:** Collaborate with tour operators to create new offerings that capitalize on untapped opportunities.

2. Expanding tourism operators' capacity in areas where affordable access is established

- **Product development and delivery:** Strengthen high-potential tourism businesses by improving product offerings, upgrading small-scale infrastructure (small roads, walkways, signage, public facilities), and enhancing marketing efforts.
- Skills Development & Inclusion: Invest in capacity-building programs for tour guides, focusing on enhancing service quality, storytelling, and visitor engagement. Promote greater participation of women in tourism roles, particularly as tour guides, to foster a more inclusive and diverse industry.
- **Booking System Improvements:** Technical support, mentoring, and training programs will help tourism operators set up and manage digital payment and reservation systems while improving their digital literacy and online booking skills.

3. Expanding tourism operators' capacity in areas where affordable access is established

- Skills Development & Professional Certifications: In partnership with DOSI, invest in the training and certification of dive and surf guides, ensuring they meet international standards for safety, customer experience, and environmental responsibility. Professional certifications will enhance credibility, improve service quality, and attract higher-value visitors, particularly in niche adventure tourism segments such as diving and surfing.
- Targeted Marketing & Promotion: Strengthen destination marketing through a multi-channel approach, including business-to-business (B2B) partnerships, active participation in international trade fairs, and enhanced social media engagement. These strategies will effectively connect local tour operators with international travel agencies, raising visitor awareness and interest. Our efforts in this area will align with and complement the ongoing initiatives of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT) and Tourism Solomons.
- National Branding & Promotion: Continue supporting national tourism initiatives by working closely with the government/Tourism Solomons, Solomon Airlines, and other industry stakeholders (such as DOSI) to create a cohesive and recognizable destination brand and using different marketing channels to promote it

Solomon Islands

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