



PIFS E-COMMERCE
BUSINESS TOOLKITS

USING E-COMMERCE TO HELP TOURISM BUSINESSES IN NIUE 2024

A guide to getting more customers online



Pacific
E-commerce
Initiative



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM





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FOREWORD FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

Over the past few years, E-commerce has become a focus for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. We are working hard in this space because we believe that E-commerce has real potential to help Pacific businesses overcome their structural challenges and gain a competitive advantage over its global competitors.

Our activities and those of our partners are carried out under the umbrella of the Pacific E-commerce Initiative and guided by the Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap. This aligns with the Technology and Connectivity thematic area of the 2050 Strategy and its implementation plan.

As a regional organisation, our role is to help our Forum Members achieve their objectives by working together, as in many instances working together can help us save time, money, and achieve better results. The Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap requires that we work together to develop E-commerce skills for our small businesses. The preparation of business toolkits is a practical way to do so.

Niue's tourism sector has shown remarkable resilience, bouncing back strongly from the

challenges posed by COVID-19. Occupancy rates are robust, and many businesses have already embraced the digital shift by utilising booking platforms, social media, and their own websites. This toolkit is designed to build on that momentum, helping tourism businesses not only attract more visitors online but also facilitate the booking of additional tourism products such as tours, rentals, and experiences. By expanding their digital presence, Niue tourism operators can enhance their offerings and continue to thrive in an increasingly competitive market. Based on a common methodology, which is how we work together, our toolkits have benefitted from the skills of local experts and business leaders to ensure that each toolkit responds to the real needs of the target area and sector.

I commend this progressive public-private partnership and wish our small business every success in their digital journey.

Zarak Khan

Director Programmes and Initiatives
Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

1

WHY MOVE ONLINE, WHY NOW?

In today's digital age, it is essential for your tourism business to be online. This toolkit explains why and how your business can make the digital shift, guiding you through key steps in the E-commerce journey and illustrating them through case studies.

In Niue, the digital landscape changed dramatically with the introduction of the undersea cable in 2019, followed by the widespread rollout of 4G technology. By early 2024, 79.6% of the population (1,539 people) were internet users. This digital shift has opened new opportunities for local businesses to promote their goods and services and receive payments digitally. The government is also supporting this shift through initiatives like the National Digital Strategy, currently in development.

Many tourism businesses in Niue already use Niue Tourism's website or online platforms like Airbnb and Booking.com, allowing tourists to book and pay online. These platforms help manage the limited room availability, especially with the increased demand for tourism following COVID-19. Now, there is an opportunity to go further by promoting additional services such as tours and transfers, car or bike rentals, and fishing charters. These services can enhance the overall experience for visitors and help Niue stand out as a destination known for its natural beauty and cultural uniqueness.

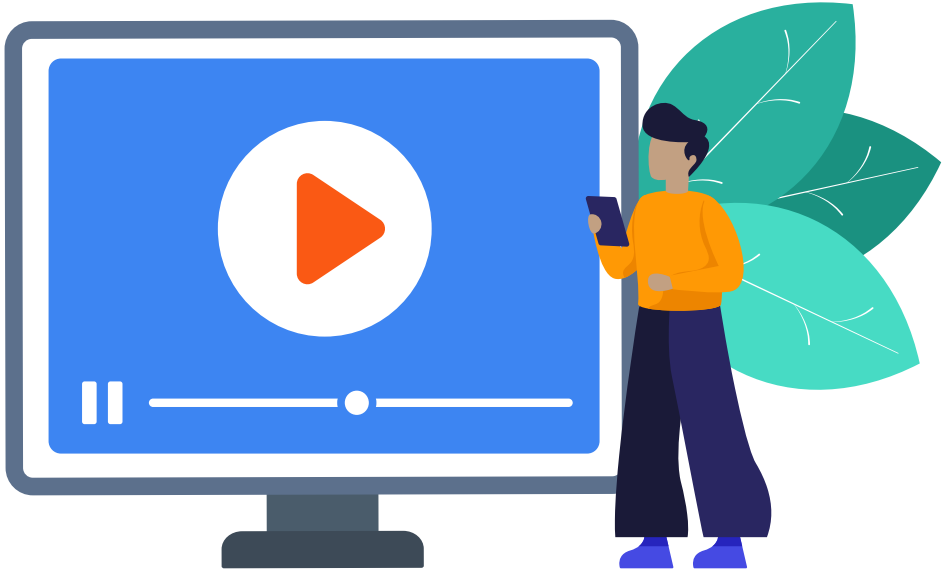
This toolkit is designed to help Niuean micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) enter the digital era. Investing in online tourism will allow you to attract travellers who are looking to make the most of Niue's unique attractions and authentic experiences. It will make your business more visible, efficient, and engaging, which will lead to more bookings and higher revenues. It will also allow you to promote sustainable and responsible tourism, contributing to the overall economic development of the country.

Now is the time for tourism businesses to grasp the potential of taking their services online and becoming part of the digital transformation.



2

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT OPTIONS TO GO ONLINE?



You have several options to go online. The choice depends on your 'business' goals and resources.

1. **Social media platforms** offer valuable online visibility. For example, [Breeze Accommodation Niue](#) uses Facebook to promote its guesthouse, frequently posting about whale sightings from the property's porch, which highlights the unique selling point of viewing whales directly from the accommodation.

Pros	Cons
- Cost effective for marketing.	- Dependent on platform algorithms.
- Quick interaction with customers helps build an online community and followers.	- Content may get lost in feeds (Facebook).
- Drives traffic to the website.	- Payment processing through social media is not possible in Niue.
- Popular in Niue and globally.	

2. Online marketplaces like [Airbnb](#), [Booking.com](#) or [TripAdvisor](#) offer effective solutions to generate bookings and process payments, with additional tools to manage your services. By partnering with established online marketplaces, your business can access a global customer base. [Stone Villas](#) and [David's Fale](#) are examples of guesthouses advertising their accommodation on Airbnb.

Pros	Cons
- Global customer exposure.	- Commissions on generated sales.
- User-friendly booking systems.	- Limited control over branding (less customisation compared to websites).
- Low initial investment (if any).	- Competition with other hotels.
	- Marketplace regulations apply.

3. E-commerce websites can be developed to showcase your tourism services and products to both local and global audiences, giving you control over your own platform. [Aleki Guesthouse](#) is an example. You can either hire a web developer or use a platform to create your own website by customising existing templates.

Pros	Cons
- Full control over branding and experiences.	- Initial development and maintenance costs.
- Flexible design and features.	- Ongoing expenses for maintenance: hosting, domain, security and content updates.
- Caters to local and global audiences.	- Often requires technical expertise or resources to hire someone to help.
	- Time needed to gain traffic and visibility.
	- Responsibility for marketing efforts.

CASE STUDY:

EXPLORE NIEUE TOURS AND TRAVEL



**Sisi Z**
Auckland Central, New Zealand • 2 contributions



More than just a Snorkel & Dolphin tour!
May 2024 • Friends

My three girlfriends and I spent a week in Niue in May 2024, much of it was with BJ and Vanessa, and we can't speak highly enough of them or what they did for us.

We did their snorkelling and dolphin tour in crystal-clear water, and I had amazing experiences with the dolphins being only meters away. BJ's off-sider, Fredie, deserves special praise for his consideration and care of all four of us with very differing abilities and bravery around the water and the wild-life.

For four women with a strong love of food, the dinner that we had at their cafe was the best meal we had on the island. Indeed, when we expressed a desire to try the local crabs, BJ's hospitality extended beyond the commercial, as he then arranged and guided us on a night-time crab hunt, showing us how to capture and prepare them, for our second best meal of our week.

I, for one, can't wait until I can bring my partner back to share these experiences with him.

[Read less](#) ^

Written June 8, 2024

This review is the subjective opinion of a Tripadvisor member and not of Tripadvisor LLC. Tripadvisor performs checks on reviews as part of our industry-leading trust & safety standards. Read our transparency report to learn more.

Explore Niue Tours and Travel is a Niuean-owned and operated tourism business that has been operating for 14 years, initially focusing solely on fishing tours. Over time, the business has expanded its offerings to include island tours, whale watching, snorkelling, charter fishing, and guesthouse accommodation.

In 2016, the owners, Vanessa and BJ, began promoting the business on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Their online presence quickly grew, with over 1,000 followers on Facebook and 1,097 on Instagram. Although maintaining regular posting can be challenging due to the high engagement, the exposure and visibility on social media have been invaluable, complementing word-of-mouth advertising.

In 2018, they launched their first website, designed to bring together all the different tours they offered. The website was remodelled in 2023 with plans to focus more on Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) in the future to increase traffic and visibility. They have also considered adding online booking and payment options, but as the tours are heavily dependent on weather conditions, they haven't yet identified a suitable solution.

The business's online efforts are further supported by its presence on Tripadvisor, where it has earned five-star reviews. This visibility helps build trust with potential customers, showcasing positive feedback and experiences from past guests.

Vanessa and BJ estimate that boosting their online presence has increased their bookings by at least 50%. Contact and bookings are managed through WhatsApp, email, and direct inquiries via Tripadvisor, offering convenient options for customers worldwide. By being active across multiple platforms, particularly Instagram and Tripadvisor, Explore Niue Tours and Travel effectively leverages online platforms to enhance both accommodation and tour services.

WHAT COSTS SHOULD YOU CONSIDER TO TAKE YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE?

Your digital journey involves various costs that need to be anticipated. Let's break down the main ones.

Internet connection. An Internet connection is an essential investment to manage reservations, market your business and manage your website. The table below offers examples of internet options and costs for your business in Niue.

ICT solutions	Plan details
	<u>Telecom Niue</u> Limited Plans: "Small" S1 Plan – 6GB – NZD 28 for 28 days. "Medium" M1 Plan – 15GB – NZD 50 for 28 days. "Large" L1 Plan – 40GB – NZD 105 for 28 days. Unlimited Plans: "True Unlimited" Plan – NZD 300 for 28 days.
	<u>Kaniu</u> Ocean Plans: NZD 50 per month for unlimited WiFi access in select locations where WiFi networks operate.

Devices. A laptop or computer is your control centre to manage online operations. Prices for laptops with suitable specifications start at around NZD 1,000. A mobile phone with a good camera is essential for capturing high-quality images of your products or services and for using helpful apps. You can find suitable phones starting at approximately NZD 300. Vendor financing is available in Niue through Kiwi Bank. Depending on your needs, you may also invest in printers and scanners for tasks like generating invoices. An all-in-one multifunction printer costs about NZD 120 with additional ongoing costs for ink and paper.

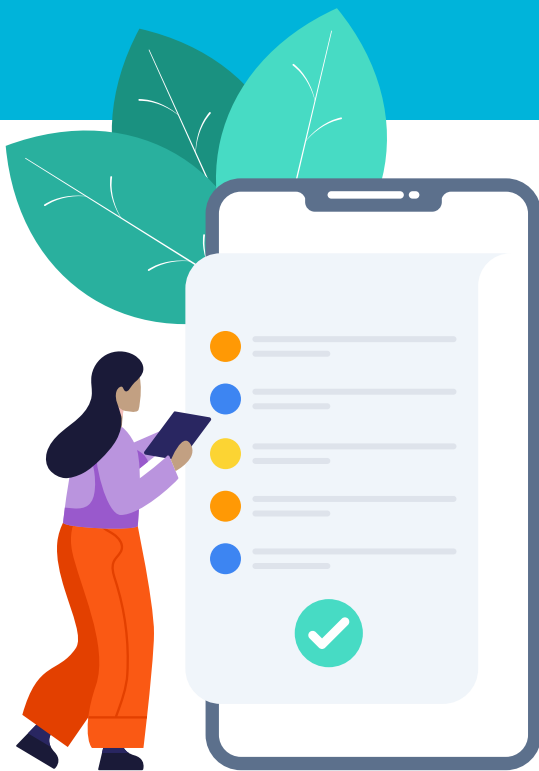
Costs specific to social media platforms. Investing in social media advertising can significantly boost your reach, engagement, and brand recognition. Platforms like Facebook offer flexible advertising options, allowing you to control your spending and effectively target your desired audience. A Facebook campaign can be launched for as little as NZD 5 per day.

Marketplaces. Utilising platforms like Airbnb and Booking.com can greatly expand your visibility but comes with costs. Often, fees depend on factors like property location, size, and market. Airbnb's fees for hosts start at 3% per booking, but the total cost to the customer, including service fees, can reach up to 16% or more of the booking value. Booking.com generally charges commissions ranging from 10% to 25%, along with pay-per-click costs, meaning you pay when someone clicks on your ad.

Your own website. Creating and running a website also includes costs, which depends on the size and complexity of the website and your marketing strategies. Properly assessing and budgeting for these costs is essential to ensuring a successful online presence.

- Website development costs vary based on your website's expected functionalities. Prices range from hundreds to thousands of NZD. Costs are lower if you manage the website by yourself and higher if you hire a web developer.
- Annual domain registration fees usually range from NZD 10 to NZD 50.
- Monthly hosting fees usually range from NZD 2 to over NZD 100, depending on your hosting provider and requirements.
- Ongoing expenses include website maintenance, design updates, content updates, and additional security features like SSL certificates and firewalls.

As of August 2024, Kiwi Bank in Niue does not offer payment gateways for online transactions. This means that you cannot use a Niuean business bank account to receive payments on your website. If you have a business account in New Zealand, you can consider using E-commerce platforms such as [Shopify](#), [Wix](#), [BigCommerce](#) and [Squarespace](#) as options for building your website, registering your domain and hosting.



4

GETTING NOTICED ONLINE.

Effective online marketing is key to finding clients worldwide and boosting sales. Here are some actionable steps.

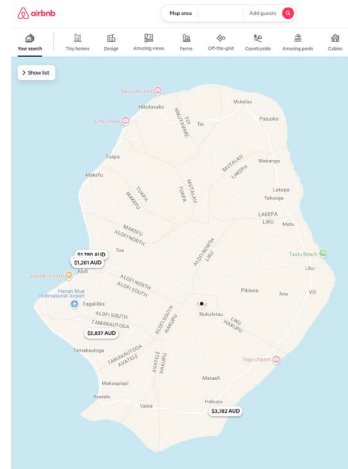
Joining online platforms for better visibility.

Platforms like [Niue Island](#) showcase many accommodations, offering a one-stop, easily accessible space for tourists to explore their options. Globally, customers use [Airbnb](#), [Booking.com](#) and [Tripadvisor](#), among others. These platforms provide a comprehensive view of available options, including pricing, amenities, and location, making decision-making easier. Being listed on a well-known platform can also build credibility and trust for your accommodation.

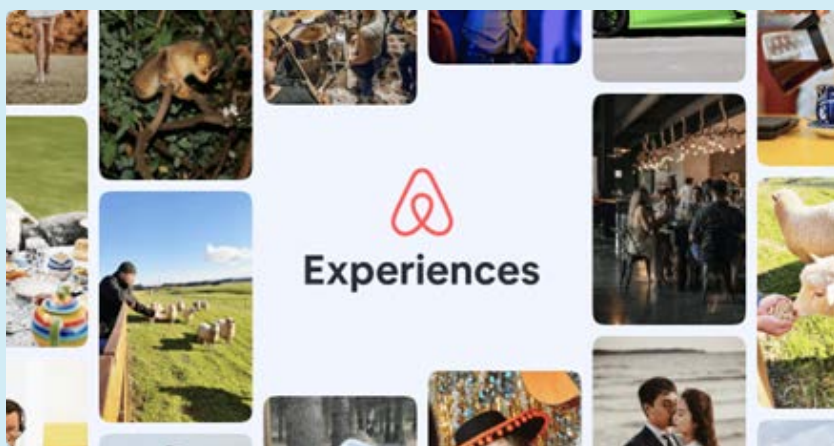
Social media presence. By following the steps below, your accommodation can improve its online presence and attract more visitors.

1. Create your business page on social media platforms like [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).
2. Regularly share engaging content, including selected photos, videos, and stories.
3. Respond promptly to comments and messages to better engage with potential customers.
4. Advertise selected content, such as high-quality photos, videos, and engaging stories. Customer testimonials and reviews can also help reach a broader audience.

Have a user-friendly website. A user-friendly website is important to attract tourists. Make sure that your website works well on both desktop and mobile devices, as most of the online traffic will likely come from mobile phones. Focus on easy navigation, attractive design, and high-quality images. Provide clear information about pricing, rooms, facilities, and location. Budget for additional expenses like Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and Search Engine Advertising (SEA) to improve your visibility on Google.



CASE STUDY: **PLATFORMS FOR SELLING TOURS AND EXPERIENCES**



While many lodging and hotel owners in Niue and other Pacific Island Countries use online platforms like Airbnb to book stays, there is a growing opportunity to expand into platforms that specialise in tours and experiences. These platforms, known as experience platforms, connect tourists with unique local activities such as kayaking, charter fishing, cultural experiences, and local events like Show Day. Offering these experiences allows tourists to engage more deeply with Niue's culture and nature, offering memorable and authentic adventures.

Benefits of using experience platforms

Businesses can benefit from these platforms, which often simplify payment processing and manage bookings, making it easier to organise and plan offerings efficiently. Whether it's a platform like Airbnb Experiences, Viator, GetYourGuide, or others, there are ample opportunities for local businesses to tap into the global tourism market.

Steps for listing experiences on experience platforms

- 1. Choose the right platform:** Research and choose a platform that matches the experiences you offer. Popular options include [Airbnb Experiences](#) (currently not taking new listings as Airbnb is working on re-launching the service), [TripAdvisor Experiences](#), [Viator](#), and [GetYourGuide](#), each with its own focus and audience.
- 2. Create an account on the chosen platform:** Set up an account on your chosen platform. If you are already using a platform for accommodation, you may be able to use the same account for listing experiences.
- 3. Develop your experience idea:** Think about what unique activities you can offer that showcase the culture, nature, or cuisine of Niue. Consider what makes your experience different and appealing to tourists.
- 4. Ensure compliance with local regulations:** Before listing your experience, make sure it complies with any local laws and regulations regarding tourism activities in Niue or your specific location.
- 5. Create a detailed listing:** When setting up your experience on the platform, provide detailed descriptions, high-quality photos, and all necessary information regarding the duration, pricing, and what guests can expect. Be clear about what's included and any prerequisites or requirements for participants.
- 6. Set your schedule and availability:** Define when and how often your experiences will be available. Most platforms allow flexibility, so you can adjust this according to your availability and preference.
- 7. Submit for review:** Once your listing is complete, submit it for review by the platform. They may provide feedback or request additional details to ensure the experience meets their quality standards before it goes live.
- 8. Promote your experience:** Once approved, promote your listed experience through social media, your website, and other marketing channels to generate interest and bookings.

With the global shift towards experiential travel, these platforms offer a powerful way to connect with travellers seeking authentic, local encounters. By choosing the right platform and carefully crafting your offering, you can attract a wider audience and showcase the unique culture and natural beauty of Niue to the world."

5

GETTING PAID ONLINE.

For tourism businesses in Niue, choosing the right payment methods is crucial for smooth operations and customer satisfaction. Here's an overview of the various payment options available, along with their pros and cons, followed by steps on how to get paid through online platforms.



Local payment options

	Pros	Cons
1. Cash payments (NZD)	Simple and immediate; no processing fees or delays.	Requires handling and securing large amounts of cash; not suitable for advance online bookings.
2. Bank transfers to Kiwi Bank	Secure and directly deposited into your bank account; good for local transactions.	Not always convenient for international tourists; can involve transfer delays.
3. Payment with EFTPOS¹	Convenient for customers; reduces the need to handle cash.	Depends on the availability of reliable internet connections; transaction fees may apply.

Note: While owning a payment gateway for a website is not available directly in Niue, businesses can process online payments through a New Zealand-based business bank account. This option allows for more accessible bookings but requires setting up and maintaining an overseas account.

¹ EFTPOS stands for "Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale." It refers to a system that allows customers to pay for goods and services electronically using debit or credit cards at a point-of-sale terminal. The payment is directly transferred from the customer's bank account to the merchant's account in real time.

CASE STUDY: GETTING PAID BY MARKETPLACES

Here's a step-by-step guide on how to get paid and an overview of the associated costs.

Steps to get paid on Airbnb

1. **Set up your payment information:** Ensure your bank account details are correctly entered in your Airbnb account. Airbnb supports various payment methods, including direct deposit, PayPal, and other options depending on your location.
2. **Understand the payment timing:** Airbnb usually releases your payment about 24 hours after the guest's scheduled check-in time to ensure that the check-in process goes smoothly.
3. **Receive payment:** The payment method you've set up will determine how you receive funds. Direct deposits may take a few days to appear in your account due to bank processing times.

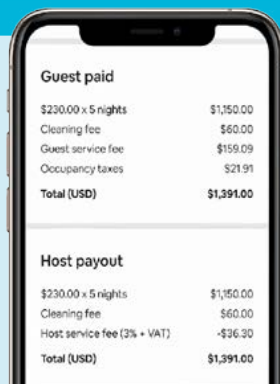
Steps to get paid on Booking.com

1. **Choose your payment method:** Booking.com offers various payment solutions, including direct payment at the property payments through Booking.com's platform, and virtual credit cards. Choose the option that best suits your business model.
2. **Payment processing:** If you opt for payments through Booking.com, you will receive payments according to the chosen schedule (e.g., monthly). If guests pay at your property, you handle the transaction directly.
3. **Receive payment:** Like Airbnb, the chosen payment method will determine how and when you receive your funds. Payments processed through Booking.com are subject to bank processing times.

Costs associated with these platforms

Both Airbnb and Booking.com deduct fees from each booking made through their platforms. Here are the typical costs:

- **Airbnb:** charges hosts a flat service fee of about 3% per booking, varying with the cancellation policy. Guests also pay a service fee of 14% to 16%, which, while paid by guests, can affect overall pricing attractiveness and influence booking decisions.
- **Booking.com:** The commission rate can vary but usually ranges from 10% to 25%. The rate depends on your property's location and the specific agreement you have with Booking.com.



Guest paid	
\$230.00 x 5 nights	\$1,150.00
Cleaning fee	\$60.00
Guest service fee	\$159.09
Occupancy taxes	\$21.91
Total (USD)	\$1,391.00

Host payout	
\$230.00 x 5 nights	\$1,150.00
Cleaning fee	\$60.00
Host service fee (3% + VAT)	-\$36.30
Total (USD)	\$1,391.00

COMPLYING WITH LAWS AND REGULATIONS.

Starting your online business requires compliance with national laws and regulations. Here's a checklist of the essential steps:

Step	Description	Details	Cost	Link
Company registration	Register your business name	Visit the Companies Office of Niue in person to complete the registration.	NZD 150	Form
Business licensing	Obtain a business licence	Apply in person at the Department of Treasury. Required for sole traders, partnerships, and companies.	NZD 69.50	Form
Tax registration	Obtain a Tax Identification Number (TIN)	Apply at the Department of Treasury to register for paying taxes on business revenues.	Free	Form
Online marketing	Ensure truthful representation of products/ services	Adhere to the Sales of Goods Act of 1908 for online and offline marketing practices.	N/A	Act
Terms and conditions	Include essential policies on your website	Ensure your website has a Cancellation, Returns and Refund Policy, as well as a Dispute Settlement Policy. Customisable templates are available.	N/A	Template

In terms of government vision towards E-commerce, it is set out in the [National Strategic Plan 2016-2026](#) and the [Trade Policy Framework 2016](#), which highlight the important role of ICT in achieving the country's development goals. A [National Digital Strategy](#) is currently under development.

7

SECURITY TIPS.

Security tips: protecting your business online

As you venture into E-commerce, it's crucial to protect yourself from the increasing risk of online scams and cyber threats. Security breaches can lead to major disruptions, including lost sales, compromised customer data, and damage to your business reputation – costs that can be avoided by taking preventive measures.

Security tip	Action	Reason
Upsize your passwords	Use strong, unique passwords with at least 12 characters, including letters, numbers, and symbols. Avoid easily guessable information. You can use a service such as LastPass or 1Password to upsize your password.	Longer and more complex passwords are harder to crack, providing an essential layer of security.
Upgrade to two-factor authentication	Enable two-factor authentication on all important accounts, involving a code sent to your phone or email.	Adds an extra step, making it significantly harder for unauthorised users to access your accounts, even if they have your password.
Update your apps regularly	Keep software, apps, and operating systems up to date. Enable automatic updates if possible.	Updates often include security patches for newly discovered vulnerabilities, protecting your systems from attacks.
Uphold your privacy	Be mindful of the information shared online. Adjust privacy settings on social media to limit access to sensitive data.	Reduce the risk of your information being exploited for scams or unauthorised access.
Upscale your data and systems backup	Regularly back up your data using both local and cloud storage solutions. Test your backups to ensure they work.	Ensure you can recover from data loss due to cyberattacks, system failures, or accidental deletion, allowing business operations to continue with minimal disruption.


Niue Tourism

www.niueisland.com


Niue Trade Portal

<https://niue.tradeportal.org/>


Niue Rapid eTrade Readiness Assessment

<https://www.undp.org/samoa/press-releases/niue-launches-digital-readiness-assessment-process>


Pacific E-commerce Initiative
Niue E-commerce Readiness Assessment

<https://pacificcommerce.org/reports/niue-e-commerce-readiness-assessment/>


GOVERNMENT OF NIUE
National ICT Policy

<https://tvniue.com/2024/03/ict-policy-on-niues-digital-development/>



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