

MĀORI INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND TRADE

This is a conceptual paper that examines the role of indigeneity in international business and trade. The experiences of the Māori people, the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, provide a context and case in which to explore the central thesis of the paper. The paper contends that indigenous culture facilitates international business and trade. When commonality and mutual respect are established in cross-cultural exchanges in international business there is said to be cultural congruity. When material cultural differences inhibit cross-cultural international business, there is cultural discordance. A conceptual model and specific examples are used to show how Māori culture is fostering cultural congruity in Māori international business and trade. Further empirical research is however required to evaluate the thesis and its implications for indigenous entrepreneurship and enterprise performance.

Much has been written of late about the Māori economy from a domestic standpoint (see for example, Davies, 2011; MEDP, 2012b; Mika & Tahī, 2012; Nana, Stokes, & Molano, 2011a, 2011b; NZIER, 2003; Sanderson, Stokes, & Slack, 2009). Comparatively less however has been published about the Māori economy's international dimensions (Nana, 2013; Schulze & Stokes, 2013). Attempts to address this imbalance are confronted by an absence of data on Māori international trade and investment (Allen, 2011). Economists have had to be somewhat creative with what data exists, relying on a range of sources and assumptions to estimate the nature and scope of the Māori economy (Butterworth, 1967; Nana et al., 2011a; NZIER, 2003; Rose, 1997). The Māori international economy, comprising Māori trade (exports and imports) and investment (inward and outward), therefore remains an under-studied phenomenon partly because of gaps in data and the attendant pre-occupation with the domestic Māori economy in public policy (MEDP, 2012b; MET, 2010; Mika, 2010). Moreover, not all Māori are enamoured with exporting and overseas trade. International trade polarises Māori opinion into two camps: first are Māori who fervently support international trade because of the benefits it affords the Māori economy (R. N. Love, 1998, 9 June; Mika, 2012); and second, are Māori who vehemently oppose international trade because it has hitherto obviated

indigenous rights, worker rights and human rights (Bargh, 2007; Melbourne, 1995). At this juncture, the debate relies on values-based arguments without the benefit of empirics (Allen, 2011).

Māori were engaged in international trade before Aotearoa New Zealand was annexed by the British Monarchy in 1840 (Orange, 1987; Petrie, 2002, 2006). This included supplying Australian and Pacific Island markets with surplus goods using Māori ships, flourmills and tribal productive capacities (Petrie, 2002, 2006). In particular, between 1769 and 1850 tribal economic development accelerated through the entrepreneurial zeal of tribal chiefs who recognised the value of and seized upon European technologies and foods to sustain their peoples (Davis, 2006; M. Love & Waa, 1997; Mika & O'Sullivan, 2012; Petrie, 2006; Schaniel, 1985). Māori economic activity and international trade imploded however between 1850 and 1900 (Hawkins, 1999; Petrie, 2006). This is attributed to the effects large scale land-loss during the New Zealand land wars forcing Māori into the wage economy, now the main source of Māori incomes (Belich, 1998; Hawkins, 1999; NZIER, 2003; Walker, 1990). More recently, Māori international business and trade seems to be regaining momentum on the strength of Māori commodities and cultural tourism, the value of which, while growing, is comparatively modest (Henare, 1998, 11 June; NZIER, 2003).

In 2008, New Zealand's exports generated around NZ\$26.9 billion in foreign exchange, representing about 30% of New Zealand's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which was 10% below the Government's target of exports at 40% of GDP (Allen, 2011). How much of this is generated by Māori is unknown as official statistics delineating Māori exports are not available (Allen, 2011; Parker, 2000). Some attempts have however been made to estimate the value of Māori exports. For instance, Māori export revenues outside of agriculture, fishing and forestry were estimated in 1998/1999 to be worth NZ\$225 million (Parker, 2000) while Māori exports from agriculture, fisheries and tourism were estimated in 1999/2000 to be NZ\$650 million (NZIER, 2003). A conservative estimate therefore suggests Māori exports in 1999/2000 were in the vicinity of NZ\$875 million. This would represent about 3% of New Zealand's exports by value in 2008. More recent attempts to estimate the value of Māori exports put the figure at \$2.9 billion in the year to March 2010 (about 5.5 percent of New Zealand's total exports) (Nana, 2013). Yet this latest estimate is plagued by the same

lack of statistics on Māori business as earlier efforts. Consequently, estimates of Māori exports are underpinned by assumptions not considered statistically robust but necessary in the absence of adequate data. Māori have much ground to make up if they are to achieve parity with non-Māori exporters in industries and sectors in which Māori are predominant as well as capturing a share of ‘knowledge’ based exports (Nana et al., 2011b).

The Māori economy has a preponderance in commodities (about 60.1% compared with 31.4% for the New Zealand economy as a whole) (MEDC, 1999). As a consequence, the Māori economy is export-dependent and is disproportionately affected by trade barriers and international market conditions (McCabe, 1999; NZIER, 2003). To alleviate this circumstance, the Māori Economic Development Commission (MEDC) recommended three strategies: (i) stronger advocacy by Māori for trade liberalisation; (ii) changing to less discriminatory markets and products, or less price sensitive consumers; and (iii) broadening the Māori asset base beyond commodities (MEDC, 1999). Evidence suggests New Zealand’s Māori development, business and trade agencies are actively supporting Māori enterprises to diversify their products, services and markets, including producing higher value goods and services (MEDP, 2012a; NZTE, 2012; Te Puni Kōkiri, 2007).

Māori enterprises are encouraged to participate in international trade and it appears they are increasingly willing to do so (Allen, 2011; Henare, 1998, 11 June; R. N. Love, 1998, 9 June; Mika, 2012). Recent trade missions led by the Minister of Māori Affairs to China and Malaysia have lent Māori entrepreneurs political support (Office of the Minister of Māori Affairs, 2012a, 2012b; Xinhua, 2014). The success of these delegations is attributed to the cultural affinity between Māori and Asian counter-parts and the use of *waiata*, *haka* (traditional song and dance), and *kai* (food) as a cultural prelude to formal talks (MET, 2011a). The warm reception to Māori traditions during trade missions to China is linked to cultural similarities between Māori and Chinese peoples (MET, 2011b). These include the importance of values and relationships in business, an intergenerational view of investment, and common ancestry, albeit distant (MET, 2011a; NZTE & MFAT, 2012). Māori cultural elements such as *kaitiakitanga* (stewardship), *kotahitanga* (unity) and *whanaungatanga*

(relationships) differentiate Māori goods and services and Māori ways of doing business, adding value to New Zealand's brand internationally (Comer, cited in NZTE & MFAT, 2012).

Earlier efforts by Te Puni Kōkiri and Trade New Zealand (now part of New Zealand Trade and Enterprise) were directed at facilitating inter-indigenous trade between Māori and Canada's First Nations and North America's Indian tribes on the basis of cultural empathy and mutual development goals (Stephens, 1997). Indigenous cultural affinities did not however translate into enduring commercial success. Further research is required to understand these inter-indigenous internationalisation efforts and the more recent focus by Māori and non-Māori enterprises on China, Japan and Malaysia.

THEORIES OF CULTURE IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND TRADE

Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) define culture as "a set of shared experiences, understandings, and meanings among members of a group, an organization, a community, or a nation" (cited in Ozorhon, Arditi, Dikmen, & Birgonul, 2008, p. 361). These shared understandings are represented in human knowledge, outlooks, attitudes, customs and behaviours of a given society (Low & Leong, 2000). Organisational culture is the commonly understood meanings that separate members of one organisation from another (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). While culture seems impervious to a singular definition, this has not dampened scholarly enthusiasm for examining the impact of culture on international business (Gan, 2008; Ozorhon et al., 2008; Sirmon & Lane, 2004). Much of this research explores the role of national and organisational culture in international joint ventures (Gan, 2008).

International trade and investment manifests in the relations and agreements reached by entrepreneurs and enterprises operating outside their country of origin. Enterprises venture into international markets in different ways. While the sequencing has been challenged, the 'stages' theory of internationalisation suggests this includes: exporting via agents; establishing an overseas subsidiary; and overseas production (Geringer, 1988; Warriner, 2009). Although economic reasons primarily drive international business, culture also plays some part (Ozorhon et al., 2008). Culture has the potential to influence international business and trade in three main ways: first, as a determinant

where a causal relationship is assumed between entrepreneurial culture, entrepreneurial activity, and enterprise performance; second, as a catalyst where culture exerts a moderating influence on international business; and third, as an intangible effect, enhancing satisfaction and confidence between the parties (Urban, 2010).

Despite their popularity, international joint ventures are frequently affected by instability (Gan, 2008; Parkhe, 1991, cited in Ozorhon et al., 2008). Some argue that culture, and in particular the absence of cultural compatibility, is a leading cause of such instability (Kabiraj, Lee, & Marjit, 2005; Sirmon & Lane, 2004). Ozorhon et al. (2008) adapt Hofstede's (1980, 1991) classifications of culture to assess cultural similarity between international joint venture partners in construction projects and its effect on enterprise performance. Ozorhon and colleagues use a mix of subjective measures (e.g., partner satisfaction) and objective measures (e.g., project performance) to quantify the impact of culture on international joint ventures (Ozorhon et al., 2008). They find that organisational level cultural similarities correlate with international joint venture performance, whereas national culture and host country culture have no discernible influence (Ozorhon et al., 2008). The conclusion drawn from this literature is that culture matters in international joint ventures involving business partners with distinct national and organisational cultures. The question is: to what extent and how?

It is proposed that cultural congruity—defined here as peoples of different national origin sharing material cultural similarities—facilitates cross-cultural business relations and alliance performance. An alliance means any business arrangement in which two or more parties from different countries are members (e.g., joint venture, agent, supplier). The opposite of cultural congruity is cultural discordance, where material cultural differences inhibit international business. Cultural congruity is different to ethnocentrism in which judgements about another's culture are made solely by reference to one's own cultural markers (e.g., language, dialect, physical features and religion) and connotes in-group favouritism (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006; Sumner, 1959 [1906]). Neither is cultural discordance the same thing as xenophobia, which is hostility to other groups with different cultural features to one's own (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006). Cultural congruity is premised on a commitment to overcome cultural difference in pursuit of shared business goals. Cultural

congruity is concerned with alignment of business interests through cross-cultural exchanges; cultural congruity being an enabler, cultural discordance being a constraint. The goal is cultural fit or cultural compatibility despite cultural differences, where paradoxically commonality is to be found within diversity (Gan, 2008).

MĀORI CULTURE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Māori language, knowledge, values, practices and norms, have been at heart of a cultural renaissance of the Māori people of Aotearoa New Zealand since the 1970s, not just socially but also in commerce (Durie, 2003; Henry, 2007; Macfie, 1993). Māori culture provides the foundation for Māori-centred approaches in education (e.g., Māori language pre-schools, schools and tertiary education) (Hohepa, Cram, & Tocker, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2009, 2011), health (e.g., Māori health models and service provision) (Durie, 1999, 2001b, 2004; Gillies, 2006) and the creative sector (e.g., Māori radio, television, film, design, fashion and performing arts) (Henry, 2011, 14 November, 2012; Matāmua, 2006; Mika, McKegg, & Smith, 2005; Royal, 1998; Warriner, 2009), among others. As a consequence, Māori culture and Māori leadership underpin gains for Māori in health, education, employment and economic development (Durie, 2001a; Te Puni Kōkiri, 2011; Walker, 1990).

Widely thought to be on verge of extinction with a population of just 42,000 in 1896, some 682,200 New Zealanders now identify as Māori (Durie, 2003; Statistics New Zealand, 2012a). Outmoded thinking that predicated Māori survival on assimilating Western ideals, values, and knowledge is surrendering to development modes in which Māori figure as self-determining indigenous people (Durie, 1998; Hunn, 1961; Peredo, Anderson, Galbraith, Honig, & Dana, 2004; L. T. Smith, 1999). Access to *te ao* Māori (Māori society), proficiency in the Māori language and customs, and a more balanced focus on Māori capacities and Māori potentiality rather than simply disparities, characterise contemporary Māori development (Durie, 2011; Mika, 2003; Pihama & Penehira, 2005; Te Puni Kōkiri, 1999, 2004). Increasingly, Māori culture is finding its way into the strategies, structures, activities and conduct of Māori enterprises (Best & Love, 2011; Harmsworth, 2005; Tinirau & Gillies, 2010; Tinirau & Mika, 2012, 11 June; Warriner, 1999).

In health, education and social policy, the term *kaupapa* Māori (Māori philosophy) describes Māori culture and knowledge as it applies in these sectors (Eketone, 2008; Hutchings, Potter, & Taupo, 2011; G. H. Smith, 1997; G. H. Smith, Fitzsimons, & Roderick, 1998). *Kaupapa* Māori is a broad concept covering “Māori ways of doing, being and thinking” founded upon Māori cosmology (Henry, 2007, p. 542). While gaining traction among Māori business researchers, Māori business practitioners have not so readily adopted the term ‘*kaupapa* Māori’ to describe Māori-centred approaches to doing business (Durie, 2002; Henry, 2007; Panoho, 2006; Ruwhiu & Wolfgramm, 2006; Tinirau, 2004). Yet instances abound of Māori enterprises of all kinds—land-based Māori enterprises, Māori small and medium enterprises, Māori corporates, post-settlement Māori enterprises, and Māori social enterprises—using Māori values, language and knowledge to strongly identify with their Māori owners and stakeholders and differentiate themselves in the market place (Best, 2013; Dawson, 2012; Harmsworth & Tahī, 2008; Knox, 2011; Tinirau & Gillies, 2010; Warriner, 1999, 2007; Young, 1992).

Māori culture, termed *tikanga* in the Māori language, encompasses a broad and dynamic range of Māori concepts, values, and practices (Barlow, 1993; Cleave, 1998; H. M. Mead, 2003; Patterson, 1992). Identifying which are the most important Māori values for an activity or sector is problematic because prioritisations change with circumstance and need. In respect of Māori organisations, which include Māori enterprises, Knox (2005) identifies eleven Māori values. Among these, Knox (2005) lists *tikanga* (customs), *mana* (power and authority), *whakapapa* (ancestry), and *wairuatanga* (spirituality) as his top four. Waa and Love (1997) single out *mana* (prestige, honour), *utu* (reciprocity), and *tapū* (sanctity) as central to regulating Māori social and economic activity. Morgan and Mulligan (2006) find that Māori enterprises commonly identify with five value-sets: (i) *whānaungatanga* (relationships); (ii) *rangatiratanga* (leadership) and *mana* (respect); (iii) *kaitiakitanga* (stewardship) and *manaakitanga* (hospitality, care); *utu* (reciprocity) and *wairua* (spirituality) (Morgan & Mulligan, 2006).

These *tikanga*, or Māori cultural values and practices, are variously applied within Māori enterprises in decision-making, in strategy and policy documents, in the welcoming and hosting of

visitors, in meeting procedures, dispute resolution, and accountability processes (Spiller, Erakovic, Henare, & Pio, 2010; Tinirau & Gillies, 2010; Yates, 2009). Tikanga also influence product and service design, especially in the tourism and creative sectors (Barnett, 2001; Henry, 2012; Martin, 2008; Spiller, 2010; Warriner, 2009). There is some agreement among scholars and practitioners that successful Māori enterprises are however those that effectively balance commercial and cultural imperatives (Henry, 2007; Morgan & Mulligan, 2006; Zapalska, Perry, & Dabb, 2003).

A model of Māori values as they relate to Māori entrepreneurship and Māori international business is proposed (see Figure 1). The model identifies fundamental values of Māori entrepreneurship common across various kinds of Māori enterprises and sectors. The model suggests that Māori values influence Māori entrepreneurial activity, both domestic and international, which manifests in Māori enterprise performance. Beyond the parameters of the model, Māori enterprises contribute to the Māori economy, which in turn contributes to the New Zealand economy (NZIER, 2003). In this model, Māori values act as both constraints and enablers of Māori entrepreneurial activity, and in some instances may be considered ‘mixed blessings’ (Light & Gold, 2000; Martin, 2008; Mika, 2014; Warriner, 2009).

MĀORI CULTURE AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND TRADE

Most literature on the role of Māori values in Māori business is internally oriented (i.e., how values affect what firms do and how firms behave) rather than externally oriented (i.e., how one firm relates to another) (Best & Love, 2011; Harmsworth, 2005; M. Kawharu, Tapsell, & Woods, 2012; Tinirau & Gillies, 2010). Of interest here is the role of Māori culture in Māori international business and trade. Several authors explore this question in relation to Māori branding, exporting, tourism and investment (Cairns, 2013, 17 May; Harmsworth & Tahi, 2008; Jones, Gilbert, & Morrison-Briars, 2004, 2005; Mika, in press; Warriner, 1999). For example, Jones et al. (2004) find that being Māori does not provide Māori tourism enterprises with a competitive advantage. Instead, Māori culture adds value in terms of product and service authenticity; less certain are they about the impact of Māori values on enterprise performance. Barnett (2001) is more emphatic that Māori culture provides an important

means of attracting overseas visitors, which is endorsed by the marketing efforts of New Zealand's tourism promotion agency (Tourism New Zealand, 2013).

Harmsworth and Tahi (2008) find that Māori and non-Māori enterprises are using elements of Māori culture in the branding of their products and services in local and overseas markets. The risks of misuse and misappropriation of *tohu* Māori (symbols of Māori culture) by non-Māori enterprises locally and internationally are increasing, yet protection mechanisms have not kept pace (Harmsworth & Tahi, 2008; A. T. P. Mead, 1994). Harmsworth and Tahi (2008) identify a number of Māori enterprises which incorporate Māori values into their products, services and business operations. One in particular is *Kono*. *Kono* means food basket in Māori (Ngata, 1993). Kono NZ LP (Limited Partnership) is a diversified food-based subsidiary of Wakatū Incorporation based in Nelson at the top of the South Island (Kono NZ, 2014). Kono was established in 2011 from the consolidation of different enterprises into three divisions: Kono Horticulture; Kono Seafood; and Kono Beverages (Kono NZ, 2012). Kono collectively employs 250 staff and farms around 500 hectares of land and sea (Kono NZ, 2014). Kono infuses Māori values into its branding, the way it does business and how it relates to its principal export customers, particularly China (Kono NZ, 2012). Kono identifies with four main values: (i) *kaitiakitanga* (custodians of land and sea); (ii) *whānaungatanga* (respectful relationships); (iii) *manaakitanga* (hosting and caring for others); and (iv) *rangatiratanga* (self-determination) (Palmer, cited in Kono NZ, 2012). These values, they argue, are fundamental to building a sustainable business, with intergenerational impact, and enduring international relationships (Kono NZ, 2012). Precisely how these values play out in international business relations and deal-making for Kono and other similar Māori enterprises is not widely known and warrants further research.

Warriner (2009) finds that Māori culture is not a strong factor in the branding of Māori exports in the creative sector; but in keeping with Jones et al. (2004), Māori culture is material as an inward measure of product quality and authenticity. Instead, Māori exporters are motivated by demand for their products and services rather than the prospect of an intercultural exchange per se (Warriner, 2009). Māori exporters rate in-country compliance costs and finding suitable agents and

distributors as challenges ahead of cultural differences in overseas markets (Warriner, 2009). While tikanga Māori is important for some Māori exporters in terms of business strategy, values and processes, this needs to be balanced against Western principles of business (Warriner, 2009). Warriner (2009) gives little comment on the role of Māori culture in relationships with overseas business partners (e.g., agents, distributors, investors) and deal-making. Rather, Māori culture is discussed as a catalyst to cementing domestic ties between entrepreneurs and their support network of family, friends and associates.

Warriner (2009) and Harmsworth and Tahi (2008) are examples of Māori culture influencing outward trade by Māori enterprises in other countries. The same principles it is argued apply with equal facility to inward trade and investment by overseas business partners in Māori enterprises within Aotearoa New Zealand. Two examples illustrate this: first, Te Arawa Group Holdings Limited (TAGH) of Rotorua; and second, Whitau Limited and the Red8 Group in the nearby Mataatua tribal district (Mika, 2014). TAGH was established in March 2007 as an investment company of Te Pūmautanga o Te Arawa, a trust comprising eleven affiliated Te Arawa *iwi* (tribes) and *hapū* (subtribes). TAGH's primary purpose is to grow its treaty settlement cash assets of NZ\$34 million on behalf of affiliated tribes (Mika, 2011). When engaging with overseas business partners, TAGH focuses on establishing enduring business relationships based on tikanga Māori (Māori values and customs) (Pikia, 2013). As a sign of good faith, TAGH and its business partners, including multinational corporations from China and Japan, enter into a *kawenata* (covenant). This is a formal yet non-binding pact which signifies mutual understanding and respect. The acculturation process implicit within the *kawenata* and associated customs has been favourably received (Neville, 2013).

In the Mataatua district a consortium of Māori enterprises are formulating plans with Chinese business partners to invest in agribusiness projects. The Māori consortium have instituted the Whitau Sovereign Agreement as a mechanism to facilitate cross-cultural understanding with overseas business partners (Radford & Cairns, 2013, 7 June). *Whitau* means flax fibre and is a metaphor for quality (Moorfield, 2011). The sovereignty component represents Māori as self-determining indigenous peoples with customary rights affirmed in the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840 (I. H. Kawharu,

1989; Orange, 1987). In practical terms the Whaitu Sovereign Agreement has involved a number of cross-cultural exchanges, overseen and directed by *kaumātua* (esteemed elders), in which Chinese business partners engage in Māori culture, with Māori people, then Māori commerce (Mika, in press).

CONCLUSION

There are a number of reasons why culture, and in particular, cultural congruity in Māori international business should matter to Māori entrepreneurs, researchers and policy makers. First, cross-cultural dynamics of managing enterprises in multiple host nations is a long-term prospect—mastery of this is essential for managerial and enterprise success. Second, cultural congruity may reduce the risks and transaction costs of international business. Research suggests Māori enterprises are employing Māori cultural values and practices to achieve cultural congruity with international business partners in overseas and domestic ventures. Uncertainty prevails however as to whether or not the cultural effect is a determining, catalysing, or an esoteric one on the parties, their relations and enterprise performance. Third, as the Māori economy is export-dependent, Māori enterprises are increasingly looking overseas for consumers, business partners, investors and suppliers. In this scenario, cultural congruity is a likely criterion when assessing internationalisation options. There is some acknowledgement however of the need for balance between commercial and cultural imperatives. This implies caution against over-playing the role of culture at the expense of fundamental principles of commerce (i.e., enterprise profitability and survival). It is surmised that knowledge of why some Māori enterprises are better than others at striking such balance will be of great interest to entrepreneurs and researchers alike—a potentially fruitful direction for research and practice. Fourth, by incorporating their culture in respectful ways, Māori enterprises are legitimising an alternative approach to doing business internationally, which honours the cultural origins and practices of the parties.

Two major deficiencies are identified in the literature. First is a gap in official data and information on Māori exporting and overseas investment activity. This is linked to a more fundamental absence of Māori business statistics (Statistics New Zealand, 2012b). As a consequence,

researchers and officials are reliant on proxies to establish some sense of the scale, nature and direction of Māori international business and trade. Second is a gap in research on how Māori cultural values and practices influence Māori international business and trade. Available literature suggests Māori values are active within domestic operations of Māori enterprises and catalyse international business relations. A conceptual model illustrates these relationships. A number of assumptions underpinning the model however warrant further examination. These include: (i) whether the five values identified are the right ones; (ii) how the values interact with each other to ensure balance between commercial and cultural imperatives; and (iii) how Māori culture affects Māori international business relations and enterprise performance. These questions seem amenable to a mixed methods study of Māori enterprises operating internationally.

With New Zealand firmly set on expanding trade with China and other Asian countries, Māori culture offers a point of difference not only in product and service quality and authenticity, but in the authenticity of relationships with international business partners. There is more to learn about the value and nature of this point of difference, presenting interesting lines of inquiry for indigenous and non-indigenous management scholars alike.

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Figure 1 Model of Māori values and international business

