Mana Wahine in Motion:

Navigating Pakihi Māori within

Hospitality and Tourism

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Abstract

The hospitality and tourism sectors are a cornerstone of Aotearoa New Zealand's economy and serve as the primary conduit through which the nation's cultural identity is projected globally. Yet, within this space, a profound duality exists between transactional Western business models and the Indigenous practice of manaakitanga. Currently, the institutional frameworks used to measure commercial success remain deeply rooted in Eurocentric paradigms. These frameworks function as a colonial "second law" that continuously attempts to marginalise Aotearoa's first law of tikanga Māori.

To address this epistemological disconnect and promote the sector's sustainable future, this research investigates the multifaceted determinants of Māori economic success. The study explores how tikanga, kaupapa, and te ao Māori actively shape organisational performance and community uplift, moving beyond standard commercial metrics to evaluate enterprise through an Indigenous lens.

This investigation adopted an Indigenous interpretivist paradigm and a Kaupapa Māori methodology to ensure the research was conducted in a culturally safe and empowering manner. Through this framework, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five wāhine Māori entrepreneurs, centering their lived experiences and voices as the primary data source for understanding pakihi Māori.

A central revelation of this thesis is the profound operationalisation of mana wahine. The inherent spiritual, political, and ancestral power of Māori women within these commercial spaces. Mana wahine emerges as the ultimate driving force for cultural reclamation, emotional healing, and entrepreneurial resilience. The findings reveal that these wāhine leaders explicitly reject linear, profit-only motives; instead, they function as paradigm warriors who enact collective Māori leadership to foster relational wellbeing and ecological sustainability. Furthermore, their economic activity is actively utilised as leverage for social justice, ensuring that authentic ancestral storytelling and the protection of tribal whenua are prioritised over the commercial sanitisation of their culture. To synthesise these findings, this thesis conceptualises and applies Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima, a five-dimensional framework that adapts Sir Mason Durie's holistic health model into a culturally validated architecture for measuring Māori economic wellbeing. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that Māori entrepreneurship is a profound act of tino rangatiratanga, driven by mana wahine, that redefines commercial success entirely on Indigenous terms.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning

Signed/Dated:

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1. Introduction

Before commencing this inquiry, it is necessary to outline the language used throughout this thesis. Because this research investigates Māori economic success through an Indigenous interpretivist paradigm, te reo Māori is used extensively. As an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand, its application here is a deliberate choice. Translating complex Indigenous concepts into English often risks sanitising or diminishing their original mana and context. Therefore, te reo Māori is used to ensure that the ontological realities of the participants and the theoretical frameworks supporting them are articulated authentically. For readers navigating these concepts for the first time, a comprehensive glossary of te reo Māori terminology is provided at the end of this thesis.

This introductory chapter serves as the foundation for the thesis, establishing the context and rationale for investigating Māori economic success and longevity within the hospitality and tourism sectors of Aotearoa. Navigating this intersection of Māori values and Western commercial enterprise requires a clear understanding of the historical, political, and economic forces involed. Therefore, this chapter begins by outlining the duality between transactional Western business models and the Māori practice of manaakitanga, locating this research firmly within the 2026 sociopolitical landscape. This landscape is characterised by significant commercial growth within the Māori economy, which is also constrained by institutional frameworks rooted in Eurocentric paradigms that often fail to recognise the holistic realities of Māori enterprise systems.

Following the establishment of this broad context, the chapter defines the core research problem, which is the deep epistemological disconnect between Western organisational theory and mātauranga Māori. By forcing Indigenous operators into top-down, profit-focused scripts, an institutional clash occurs that actively silences Indigenous solutions. After identifying this problem, the chapter identifies three critical gaps in existing academic literature: (1) the dominance of Western management paradigms; (2) the utilitarian bias in social innovation; and (3) the absolute absence of holistic commercial frameworks for Māori enterprise. These identified gaps directly inform the primary research aims and the specific questions that guide this thesis.

The chapter then outlines the overarching methodological approach, detailing the deliberate and political choice of an Indigenous interpretivist paradigm and Kaupapa Māori methodology. It addresses researcher positionality, openly acknowledging the insider–outsider tensions

inherent in conducting this research as a wahine Māori and former tourism industry operator. Furthermore, the chapter introduces the two primary theoretical frameworks that provide the analytical rigor for this study: Coates et al.'s. (2023) Indigenous Institutional Theory and this author's original contribution: Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima – the Five Dimensions of Māori Economic Wellbeing model.

Finally, the chapter provides a structural roadmap for the thesis and introduces the reflexive journal as a vital methodological vessel. By moving from the broad sociopolitical context down to the specific methodological tools employed in this research, this introduction ensures the reader is firmly grounded in the reality of the participants before engaging with the academic literature and empirical data. It also provides the necessary architecture to navigate the complex and highly nuanced intersection of Māori culture and commercial enterprise.

1.2 Manaakitanga and the Māori Economy

In the kitchens and front-of-house spaces of Aotearoa, there exists a profound duality. On one side is the Western hospitality industry, a sector traditionally defined by transactional utility, profit, and standardised services to perceived impeccable standards. On the other side is the Indigenous practice of manaakitanga: the ancient, reciprocal obligation to uphold the mana of both guest and host through the sharing of kai, space, and spirit. For the Māori entrepreneur, these two worlds do not merely coexist; they collide.

To understand the significance of this research, one must first acknowledge the sheer economic weight of the hospitality and tourism sectors in Aotearoa. Historically serving as New Zealand's largest export earner, the industry remains a vital pillar of the national economy, contributing heavily to the gross domestic product (GDP) and providing crucial regional employment across the country. Within this massive economic engine, Māori tourism and hospitality businesses are not merely a niche subsector. They are the fundamental point of difference for Aotearoa on the global stage.

As of 2026, the Māori economy has matured into a $70 billion powerhouse (Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment [MBIE], 2023). Within this, Māori tourism acts as a cornerstone of New Zealand's global identity. A multibillion dollar contributor that serves as the primary vehicle through which Aotearoa presents its cultural uniqueness to the world (Amoamo, 2007). Moving beyond scenic landscapes, these pakihi offer authentic, relational experiences grounded in te ao Māori (Harmsworth et al., 2002). However, the importance of these enterprises extends far beyond their commercial value to the Crown. For Māori communities,

these businesses are critical drivers of regional economic development, providing sustainable employment and acting as vessels for cultural preservation and intergenerational knowledge transfer (Spiller, Erakovic, et al., 2011).

Despite this immense dual contribution which anchors Aotearoa's identity within the global hospitality and tourism industries and advances Māori regional development, the institutional frameworks used to measure and govern this success remain largely rooted in the "second law", the colonial legal system imposed by the British Crown (Mikaere, 2007b). Mikaere (2007b) uses the term "second" deliberately to challenge the Eurocentric assumption that British law is the only legitimate or real law in New Zealand. It arrived second, yet it forcibly positioned itself as supreme, attempting to overwrite and invalidate the first law, tikanga Māori.

This research is born out a necessity to bridge the gap between these two realities. It seeks to understand how Māori hospitality and tourism organisations navigate a national market while remaining anchored in an "economy of affection" (Henry & Pene, 2001), a system where kinship and the ritualised exchange of gifts prioritise collective wellbeing over individual capital accumulation.

1.3 The 2026 Sociopolitical Context

This thesis is situated in a time of unprecedented political division in Aotearoa. The year 2024 marked a turning point with the nationwide hīkoi of over 35,000 Māori and tangata Tiriti protesting the Act Party's Treaty Principles Bill and the erasure of Māori rights. In 2026, the repercussions of this movement continue to shape the economic landscape. Māori entrepreneurs today operate under a government that has dismantled progressive procurement targets and challenged the very foundations of partnership established in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

For the participants in this study, being in business was therefore a form of tino rangatiratanga – an act of resistance in a climate where the Crown often treats Māori culture as a superficial branding tool, adopting the powerful symbols of haka and toi Māori while neglecting the underlying ethics of tikanga. This research investigates the internal reality. It asks how Māori leaders use their pakihi to reclaim space, protect their whenua, and provide for their mokopuna in a society that continues to push for cultural assimilation.

1.4 The Research Problem

The central problem addressed in this thesis is the profound epistemological disconnect between Western organisational theory and mātauranga Māori. Historically, research involving

Indigenous communities has been extractive, conducted through a Eurocentric lens that designates Indigenous people as “the other” (Smith, 1999). In the context of business and operations management, this gaze has often failed to see Māori knowledge as a legitimate system of law and ethics.

Traditional management models are typically linear and top-down, prioritising utilitarian power and short-term financial gains. When Māori operators are forced into these scripts, it leads to what I identify as an institutional clash. Such clashes result in the silencing of Indigenous solutions and the emotional and spiritual burnout of Māori leaders. There is a critical lack of understanding regarding how whakapapa can restructure the internal logic of a commercial firm, turning it from a machine for profit into a living social ecosystem.

1.5 Research Gaps

While the growth of Māori-led enterprise is well documented, the academic literature remains fragmented and deficient in three specific areas, which I discuss individually below.

1.5.1 Western Management Paradigms

Existing hospitality and tourism research is overwhelmingly rooted in Western paradigms that treat Indigenous identity as a secondary variable or a niche marketing asset. The literature heavily focuses on conventional corporate social responsibility (CSR) or environmental, social, and governance (ESG) frameworks, which ultimately serve the primary goal of profit maximisation (Sharma, 2019). Studies that do centre Māori often focus on the consumer and prioritise how to market Māori culture to international tourists, rather than investigating the Indigenous standpoint of those running the operations (Nakata, 2007). Consequently, there is a lack of evidence-based inquiry into how tikanga restructures the day-to-day performance and decision-making processes of a Māori business.

1.5.2 The Utilitarian Bias in Social Innovation

Much of the existing research on social innovation adopts a utilitarian perspective and focuses on ways to help marginalised communities survive within a system that decentres their values. A smaller number of studies have explored radical social innovation (Ayob et al., 2016). In relation to Aotearoa, this research stresses the need for transformative models that do not just help Māori survive in a Pākehā system but also empower them to change exisiting power relations entirely through their own economic sovereignty.

1.5.3 The Absence of Holistic Frameworks

Perhaps the most significant gap is the lack of a culturally validated framework for measuring Māori commercial success in the hospitality and tourism sectors. While Sir Mason Durie's (1984) Te Whare Tapa Whā model has revolutionised Indigenous health, no equivalent model exists for the hospitality and tourism sectors regarding pakihi success models. Māori business owners are currently forced to use Western key performance indicators (KPIs) that do not account for the mauri or wairua of their work. This thesis fills this void by introducing and developing the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima model.

1.5.4 Research Aim and Questions

The primary aim of this research is to investigate the multifaceted determinants of Māori economic success in the hospitality and tourism sectors, offering a new theoretical lens through which to view Indigenous organisational performance and community uplift. To achieve this aim, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How has the incorporation of tikanga, kaupapa, and te ao Māori in hospitality and tourism organisations shaped the performance of those operations?
2. How has this incorporation affected the communities in which these organisations operate?
3. To what extent has the integration of Māori values fostered unique visitor experiences, strengthened community relationships, and promoted environmental sustainability?

1.6 Significance and Original Contribution

This thesis provides an original contribution to the field of Indigenous management by introducing the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima (the Five Dimensions of Māori Economic Wellbeing) framework. By adapting traditional health models into a commercial context, this work offers a decolonising tool for Māori pakihi to define their success parameters on their own terms.

Furthermore, this research contributes to Indigenous Institutional Theory (Coates et al., 2023) by providing thick, empirical evidence of how wāhine Māori navigate Western-dominated business institutions. It demonstrates that Māori economic success is not an outlier but a sophisticated, intergenerational model of sustainability that offers lessons for the wider global economy.

1.7 Methodological Choice

This study adopts an Indigenous interpretivist methodology. This choice is both deliberate and political. I reject the positivist notion of a single, objective truth. This is a stance that has historically been used to dismantle mātauranga Māori. A historical example of this is the colonial redefinition of Māori cosmology to fit Christian dogma (Best, 1982). Interpretivism allows me to acknowledge the subjective nature of social reality. It recognises that humans create depth in meaning through their unique cultures, circumstances, and ancestors (Chowdhury, 2014).

To gather pūrākau, this research employed semi-structured qualitative interviews with five Māori entrepreneurs operating within the Aotearoa hospitality and tourism sectors. Conducted between November 2025 and February 2026 via Microsoft Teams or in person to ensure flexibility and participant comfort, these conversations were guided by Smith's (1999) participant-first protocols. The resulting transcripts were then systematically analysed using NVivo software, employing a thematic analysis grounded in Kaupapa Māori principles. By utilising this Indigenous paradigm, I was able to "get the story right and tell the story well" (Smith, 2012, p. 226), and ensure that the participants' narratives were treated as the highest form of evidence.

1.8 Researcher Positionality

As a wahine Māori researcher and a former owner/operator in the hospitality industry, my positionality is central to this work. I am both an insider, connected to my participants through whakapapa and a shared professional history, and an outsider, a student of a Western academic institution tasked with translating these Indigenous realities into a master's thesis.

Throughout this process, I have experienced what can only be described as a researcher identity crisis. I have questioned if I am Māori enough or qualified enough to hold these stories. Rather than hiding these anxieties, I have embraced reflexivity as a form of epistemological navigation. Through personal reflexive journalling, I have documented the insider–outsider tensions I experienced, using them as a tool to practise kia tūpato. This reflexive approach ensured that I did not trample the mana of my participants and instead acted as a vessel for their sovereign knowledge.

1.9 Theoretical Frameworks

To provide the necessary rigor for a master's thesis, this research utilises two primary theoretical frameworks:

- **Indigenous Institutional Theory:** Used to analyse the clash between Indigenous priorities and institutional rhetoric (Coates et al., 2023).
- **Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima:** My original adaptation of Durie's (1984) wellbeing model, used to measure Māori organisational health across five dimensions: Taha Ōhanga (Economic Wellbeing), Taha Wairua (Spiritual Wellbeing), Taha Kaupapa (The Organisation's Kaupapa), Taha Whānau me te Hapori (Family, Hapū, and Community), and Whanaungatanga me te Whenua (Connection to the Land and Environmental Wellbeing).

1.10 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised into six chapters, guiding the reader from the foundational research context through to the presentation of a new theoretical model:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** provides the sociopolitical background of the Māori economy in 2026, establishes the primary aims of the research, and identifies the gaps in current Western management literature that the thesis seeks to fill.
- **Chapter 2: Literature Review** explores the academic foundations of the inquiry, critically reviewing existing literature on whakapapa, tikanga, and the historical and contemporary realities of the Māori economy.
- **Chapter 3: Methodology** outlines the interpretivist approach adopted for this research. This chapter details the qualitative methods used for data collection and analysis, and unpacks the role of researcher reflexivity in navigating insider–outsider tensions.
- **Chapter 4: Findings** presents the thematic narratives derived from five in-depth interviews with wāhine Māori entrepreneurs. It highlights their lived experiences of leadership, resilience, and community building within the hospitality and tourism sectors.
- **Chapter 5: Discussion** first applies Coates et al.'s (2023) theoretical framework to the findings, analysing the clash between the participants' Indigenous priorities and the Western institutional rhetoric they must navigate. It then introduces and operationalises

the bespoke conceptual model developed for this thesis, Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima, demonstrating how the five dimensions form a culturally validated framework for measuring Māori economic success.

- **Chapter 6: Conclusion** summarises the core findings of the thesis, articulates its original contribution to knowledge, and provides policy recommendations for fostering Māori economic sovereignty in 2026 and beyond.

1.11 The Reflexive Journal

I must acknowledge the crucial role of the reflexive journal I kept during the research process. As suggested by my mentor, this journal has captured the unsteady moments of research, my anger at the political climate, the joy of a shared coffee with a participant, and the realisation that my own management style was actually an expression of collective Māori leadership. This introduction sets the stage for a research journey that is as much about my own identity reclamation as it is about the economic success of the pakihi involved.

1.12 Summary and Conclusion

This introductory chapter has successfully established the foundational context, articulated the research problem, and outlined the overarching aims of this thesis. By identifying the deep epistemological clash between Western, profit-driven hospitality models and the Indigenous practice of manaakitanga, the absolute necessity for a culturally grounded investigation into Māori economic success has been made clear. The 2026 sociopolitical landscape that has been characterised by political tension and a pushback against Indigenous rights demands research that moves beyond utilitarian survival and instead actively empowers Māori economic sovereignty and tino rangatiratanga.

The three research gaps identified within this chapter highlight the critical need to centre the Indigenous standpoint in hospitality management. By establishing the primary research questions, this chapter has laid the groundwork for investigating how tikanga, kaupapa, and te ao Māori actively shape organisational performance and community uplift. Furthermore, the explicit commitment to an Indigenous interpretivist paradigm and Kaupapa Māori methodologies ensured that the voices, epistemologies, and cultural safety of the Māori participants remained paramount throughout the entirety of the inquiry (Smith, 2007). The application of Indigenous Institutional Theory and the conceptualisation of the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima model provide the robust analytical tools required to unpack the complex realities faced by these Māori entrepreneurs.

With the sociopolitical stage set, the research gaps clearly identified, and the methodological vessel established, it is now necessary to examine the existing academic literature that underpins this investigation. The following chapter provides a comprehensive and critical literature review. It explores the foundational concepts of whakapapa and tikanga as protocols for ethical inquiry, tracing the historical and contemporary realities of the Māori economy. By reviewing the literature on collective leadership, social innovation, and Indigenous entrepreneurship. The literature review acts as the theoretical bedrock upon which the subsequent empirical findings and the novel conceptual model of this thesis are built.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter established the foundational research context of this thesis, identifying the epistemological disconnect between Western hospitality models and the Indigenous practice of manaakitanga. Having delineated this clash and the resulting gaps in the existing literature, it is imperative to examine the theoretical foundations that underpin Māori enterprise. This literature review serves as the intellectual architecture for the study, critically synthesising the existing academic discourse surrounding te ao Māori to trace the historical, ethical, and relational frameworks that govern Māori economic and social reality in 2026.

The rationale for this review is twofold. First, to comprehend how Māori businesses successfully navigate Western-dominated industries, one must develop a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental cultural and ethical protocols that dictate pakihi internal operations: the constructs of whakapapa and tikanga. These concepts are far more than cultural heuristics. They are sophisticated systems of law, logic, and ethics that differently structure the priorities of a commercial organisation, shifting the focus from individual profit to collective intergenerational prosperity and longevity. Second, engaging with this literature establishes the theoretical foundation required to utilise Kaupapa Māori research methodology. By reviewing how Indigenous scholars have reclaimed academic and economic spaces, this chapter provides the necessary context to analyse the lived experiences of the Māori entrepreneurs participating in this study, ensuring that their narratives are understood not as isolated occurrences but as part of a larger movement of Indigenous reclamation.

This chapter is structured into four thematic sections. First, it explores whakapapa as an interconnected, ontological framework that binds the contextual meanings of Māori phenomena, providing the researcher with a mechanism to order and explain knowledge across time and space. Second, it examines tikanga as a protocol of ethical inquiry, with a specific focus on the operationalisation of mana, manaaki, and mana wahine. This section moves beyond simple definition, interrogating how these values function as operational imperatives in a commercial context. Third, the chapter explores the use of tikanga as a guiding protocol for Kaupapa Māori research in both academia and social reality, detailing how the research process itself is an act of decolonisation. Finally, the review examines te ōhanga Māori (the Māori economy), charting the historical shift from an economy of affection to an economy of

exploitation, and highlighting contemporary themes of collective leadership, resilience, and Indigenous social innovation.

Throughout this review, excerpts from my reflexive journal are integrated as a methodological tool. These entries document the ongoing lived experience of navigating Western academia as a wahine Māori researcher, providing tangible evidence of the epistemological journey required to conduct authentic Kaupapa Māori research. Ultimately, this chapter establishes the theoretical lens necessary to view Māori entrepreneurship not merely as an economic activity but as a profound act of cultural reclamation, political resistance, and intergenerational sustainability.

2.2 The Foundational Framework of Whakapapa

This section outlines the methodological infrastructure of whakapapa as an interconnected web of mātauranga that connects Māori to people, place, time, and space, guided by tikanga (Kawharu et al., 2024; Mahuika, 2019).

Before introducing tikanga, it is essential to understand the core concept that binds te ao Māori together. Mahuika (2019) identifies whakapapa as the genealogical connection of ancestral links, identity, and place for Māori. She discusses whakapapa as the foundational structure of epistemology and methodological frameworks within tikanga and kaupapa. The concept of whakapapa as an explanatory framework in mātauranga had strong foundations well before European arrival and remains valid in the modern Māori way of life (Mahuika, 2019).

This framework provides foundations in all aspects of Māori life, including ethical values, guidance, and ways of sharing and protecting knowledge. Māori have utilised whakapapa to provide a foundation upon which knowledge regarding all things can be ordered, explained, and contextualised across time and place (Kawharu et al., 2024). This provides a strong sense of belonging, kin relationships, and responsibility to one's whānau, whenua, and tīpuna.

Mahuika (2015) discusses the intrinsic meaning of whakapapa for researchers and how it enables a collective purpose:

> There is a collective we and us in the research process that is a key part of knowing who you are, and what your position is in researching and writing. You have a whakapapa accountability to whānau, hapū and iwi. (p. 12)

The Health Research Council of New Zealand (2010) further supports this explanation of whakapapa in Māori academic research, affirming how whakapapa can emphasise the quality of relationships by prioritising the processes and structures to support them within research

development. This is crucial for appropriately conducting Kaupapa Māori research, as it prioritises the empowerment and safety of Māori interests.

According to Royal (1998), "Concepts such as whakapapa have been used to argue for a system of logic that structures the way Māori think and formulate ideas" (p. 143). Kawharu et al. (2024) introduce whakapapa as an ethical approach to Māori-based research, grounded in a kin-community context, and in tikanga such as whakawhanaungatanga, kotahitanga, utu, manaakitanga, mana, and wairuatanga. These multifaceted contexts and approaches focus on uplifting Māori interests. They prioritise unique ways of creating, protecting, and sharing cultural knowledge, heavily grounded and layered within Māori values and unique ways of knowing.

In one reflexive journal entry of mine dated September 25, 2024, I recorded an internal debate regarding the definition of whakapapa, a word I've known my entire life and whose meaning I thought I knew exactly. However, after the second draft of this chapter, its contextual meaning expanded tenfold for me, making me realise how much more there was to learn:

> The more I read, the more I learn about myself. The more I learn, I find that I don't know myself at all. I thought I knew what whakapapa meant, I feel like I've underestimated its purpose and meaning. Before this I thought it was a simplified and linear connection to whānau and whenua. It's so much more complex, and connects us to everything, even research? Providing Māori not only a framework for researcher identity and positionality. But also, context behind motivational interests.

It was at this point in the research process that I realised this thesis was providing a means to learn not only about Māori social research, but also about myself as a wahine Māori and my place in the world, highlighting the importance of identity and positionality.

Williams (1975) sets out the complex nature of whakapapa as a sophisticated genealogical ordering of the world. Whakapapa is a legitimate and living entity that layers and orders relationships and events across time and space according to Māori perspectives. It is a multifaceted concept that articulates the intimate and intrinsic relationships Māori have with themselves, others, ancestral descent, and their environment, grounded in their relationship with the primordial parents. Spiller et al. (2020) explain:

> In a whakapapa ordering of the world, all aspects of creation have a genealogy. Thus, not only humans but insects, birds, plants, rocks – every single aspect of creation belongs to a domain. For example, creatures of the oceans come under the domain of Tangaroa,

> the god of the ocean. These personifications offer a sophisticated view of an animated interconnected universe. (p. 521)

In summary, whakapapa provides a grounding, foundational framework to identify my positionality within the world and as a wahine Māori researcher. With that infrastructure underpinning my researcher positionality and motivational pursuit, the next section furthers the discussion by exploring tikanga as a guiding ethical protocol grounded in whakapapa.

2.3 Tikanga

Tikanga is the first law of Aotearoa (Henry & Pene, 2001; Mahuika, 2019; Mikaere, 2007a; Te Aho, 2007). It is a process that guided the ethical foundations for Māori a thousand years prior to European arrival. Tikanga acknowledges the natural order of the universe and the whanaungatanga of all living things. Each member within this community, human and non-human, possesses its own intrinsic value, playing an active role in collective survival and empowerment (Mikaere, 2005). Gender and other hierarchical roles were later developed under a Western lens through the introduction of patriarchy; such hierarchies were non-existent in traditional tikanga (Mikaere, 2005).

In relation to this research, tikanga is an inherent and tangible connection between the participants and the researcher. In her discussion of autonomy and economic sovereignty, Te Aho (2007) emphasises the importance of tino rangatiratanga and how Māori have used this system of ethical standards – tikanga – to govern themselves. Tikanga is a complex and multifaceted system of Māori cultural and spiritual law. Te Aho (2007) proceeds to show that these complex systems were neither comprehended nor accepted by the monotheistic standards of Western law, which initiated their assimilation during settlement.

The Ministry of Justice (2001) has outlined the core values of tikanga that define and determine ethical conduct. Whakapapa and whanaungatanga are at the forefront of these values, whose interwoven relations connect with each other and the natural world:

> The land is a source of identity for Māori. Being direct descendants of Papatūānuku, Māori see themselves as not only ‘of the land’ but ‘as the land’. The living generations act as guardians of the land, like their tīpuna before them. Their uri (successors) benefit from that guardianship … the land is the link to future generations. (p. 44)

In conclusion, tikanga provides ethical motivations for Māori which are grounded in their whakapapa to people, place, and space. The research questions of this thesis explore how

pakihi Māori operators make relevant decisions based on their inherent motivations to preserve and empower their people and place. The following subsections discuss mana, manaaki, and wairua as particular conventions of tikanga that guide business decisions and operations.

2.3.1 Mana and Mana Wahine

This subsection focuses on mana, and mana wahine in particular. Te Aho (2007), Barlow (2002), and B. Jones et al. (2010) all define mana as the ancestrally derived authority to exercise certain rights. Mana provides constitutional power, authority, and prestige, guided by responsibility for people and organisational interests. This ancestrally derived authority permeates through whakapapa, right from the origins (atua and tīpuna) to living Māori who have inherited its intergenerational power.

Upon reflection, mana can be perceived as an inherent act of leadership and is a common trope of pakihi Māori principles and values. Mana as a leadership trait is grounded and guided by kaitiakitanga. The inherent connection between atua, place, and people through whakapapa provides the holder of mana with multifaceted motivations for collective success. Consequently, the bearer of mana typically empowers others and enacts tino rangatiratanga. Crucially, unlike Western patriarchal models, this leadership role is not restricted to masculinity but remains fluid across gender boundaries.

Prior to the Western introduction of patriarchy and the hierarchical variance in gender roles, wāhine Māori were acknowledged for their contributions to society. Mikaere (2005) elaborates on the role of wāhine in Māori creation theory with mentions of Papatūānuku, the Earth Mother, who symbolises birth and life. Hine-nui-te-po is another wahine atua, the goddess of death. Her role is to care for the remnants of human life after death, and her role in Maui's death is retold by Grace and Kahukiwa (1984), who describe the female sexual organs as a symbol of power. According to Mikaere (2005):

> It is here, in the story of Maui's death that the potency of the female sexual organs becomes most explicit of all. The passage through which each of us passes to enter Te Ao Marama is the same passage through which each of us must pass on our inevitable journey back to Te Po. The process which brings each of us into being, brought the world into being. Our very existence is centred around the sexual power of women. (p. 137)

Life is entered from and begun in the womb of a woman, and upon our exit from this world into death, Hine-nui-te-po meets us in the afterlife. The direct whakapapa of atua to wāhine Māori guides the foundations of mana wahine.

In support of the acknowledgement of mana wahine, Māori academics have published a vast and expanding amount of literature that examines this subject in many aspects of Māori culture and tikanga. Karanga is performed by rangatira wāhine during pōwhiri to welcome manuhiri onto the marae and the hosting iwi's whenua. This responsibility acknowledges and enhances the place of wāhine in society, making their contribution to leadership visible (Wolfgramm et al., 2016).

Te Awekotuku (1999, 2020) notes the symbolism and public representation of moko kauae throughout New Zealand's patriarchal social history. She discusses how, despite suffering through cultural assimilation, there is resilience in Māori who choose to wear their identity with pride, essentially confronting the coloniser with their presence:

> My face may make you uncomfortable, but it is my face, made by my pain. It is my pride, confronting your fear and infatuation. And we will never go away. Māori women will not disappear. We will always walk this land, which carries the bones of our forebears and enfolds the placenta of our newborns. He mana a whenua: he mana wahine – this is who we are. This is our power. (Te Awekotuku, 2020, p. 7)

The practice of mana is commonly portrayed in acts of tino rangatiratanga via political and cultural protests against European assimilation. Te Awekotuku (2004) discusses the application of mana in regard to self-determination, such as mana tangata and mana motuhake. Mana motuhake has been practised extensively, as Māori are renowned for publicly exercising their right to self-determination, autonomy, and control over their own affairs. Te Awekotuku's (2004) explanation of mana tangata is the power and status accrued through human rights and dignity, with the perception of human rights and resources as a main priority.

2.3.2 Manaakitanga

In this subsection, the intention is to expand on the characteristics of mana and how the act of manaaki cares for the people they host while preserving the dignity of their pakihi. This is relevant to this research, as I noted in a reflexive journal entry dated September 25, 2025:

> Manaakitanga seems to be a phrase that's thrown around the hospitality and tourism industry too often in my opinion. It's mentioned as a value in most businesses, yet from experience, it is rarely upheld and more commonly used for branding. I think it simplifies the whakapapa of that kupu, I give thanks to this new perspective of kupu derivatives to my recent research into whakapapa.

B. Jones et al. (2010) and Mead (2003) illustrate manaakitanga as the nurturing of relationships via an interconnected worldview that centres collective dignity, respect, and mutual care. Moeke-Maxwell et al. (2013) and Ritchie (1992) clarify the value of manaakitanga as the inherent respect for other human beings, in an acknowledgement of mana tangata and one's individual identity. This establishes the whakapapa of manaaki as the responsibility to prioritise and support the mana of the people or entity in focus.

This care and inherent sense of responsibility is grounded by mana and the kotahitanga of kin relationships, derived by whakapapa. As Spiller et al. (2011) note, "Care is at the heart of the Māori values system, which calls for humans to be kaitiaki, caretakers of the mauri, the life-force, in each other and in nature" (p. 153). However, the actions of manaaki and respect should be returned and reciprocated.

McGeorge (1993) recounts an event at a marae open to tourists, who are advised of tika and manaaki protocols prior to arrival. However, after being advised of protocol, a young tourist at the pōwhiri chose not to accept the leaf from the warrior symbolising kinship. This resulted in the tourist being knocked to the ground by the warrior, who had reacted appropriately to this tourist's insult according to tikanga, upholding the mana of himself and his rejected offer of kinship. As Ryan (1997) explains:

> Māori seek acknowledgement for what is theirs; acknowledgement that is recognised by national and international law and convention. Given due acknowledgement, tourists may share in that culture, but it is a conditional gift. It might also be said to be a gift that comes with a complex set of associations born of a history of past denial of Māori language. (p. 273)

The multifaceted concepts of tikanga display continuity in cultural practices and the contextual meanings behind them, offering a multitude of ethical protocols that reflect expected standards of behaviour that should be practised, applied, and aspired to (Wolfgramm et al., 2022). Manaaki upholds the mana of the people, places, and entities involved. When that mana is disrespected, appropriate action is commonly taken to reclaim collective dignity.

In summary, manaaki is inherently connected to mana and kaitiakitanga, guided by tikanga and whakapapa. Manaaki derives from a collective sense of pride and dignity; when that manaaki is not respected or reciprocated, it must be reprimanded to uphold that dignity. This challenge does not derive from ego but from respect for one's whenua and the whakapapa to tīpuna and

atua. One's mana never represents only oneself, but also all of those who came before that person and the atua from whom they originate.

2.3.3 Wairua and Mauri

Wairuatanga acts as a strong constitutional energy that permeates through all aspects of Māori, whether living or non-living. This spiritual force is what guides ethical incentives and purposes, and creates wisdom (Henry et al., 2017; Malcolm-Buchanan et al., 2012; Nikora et al., 2007). This subsection discusses the underlying constructs of wairua, its direct connection to whakapapa, and its relevance to the nature of this research.

Studies have analysed the wisdom on wairua and how it provides an ethical framework for a relational lens of economic policy, consequently contributing to a multifaceted perspective of economic success (Henry et al., 2017; Spiller et al., 2011; Wolfgramm et al. ,2016). However, in order to understand the applications of wairuatanga in academia and economic perspectives, it is essential to first understand mauri and wairua.

Every aspect of life is bound by mauri and draws on a tradition of wisdom that enables and empowers a world of stewardship, bound together by intangible life-force energies (Marsden, 2003). Mauri gives a sense of individuality (mana tangata) to each being or object and acts as a binding force that draws all species and objects together, thus creating a bond that ascribes intrinsic value to everyone and everything (Morgan, 2008). Mauri acts as the unique life essence of an entity; the term mauri ora extends wairua and designates wellbeing to the subject (Spiller, 2010).

Wairua and mauri play a quintessential role in the interconnected web of Māoridom. They bestow intangible energies on all living and non-living entities, connected by whakapapa as the genealogical lineage to the original source of that energy. This explains why Māori feel so connected and motivated to protect and preserve our environment. This is relevant to this research, which explores how these interconnected values can address and provide contextual meaning to pakihi motivations and perceptions of success.

2.4 Te Ōhanga Māori

Understanding the economic perceptions of performance for Māori businesses, and how these owners navigate Western-dominated industries, is a key motivator for this thesis. This section examines the history of the Māori economy, the challenges Māori have faced in gaining tino

rangatiratanga, and how these challenges are being addressed both in academia and within this specific research.

In order to understand the contemporary landscape of pakihi Māori, it is necessary to locate its origins in the pre-colonial Māori world. Henry and Pene (2001) explore this traditional way of life prior to British assimilation, describing a society grounded in tikanga and operating as an "economy of affection", a term originally coined by the Swedish-American political scientist Göran Hydén and introduced to the Māori economic development lexicon by Henare (1988). This system stands in stark contrast to the British economy of exploitation, which prioritised individual utility and capital accumulation.

The foundations of the Māori economy were fundamentally relational. Henare (1988) and Mauss (1990) depict pre-colonial Māori living within a kinship-based society where social and economic life revolved around whanaungatanga and the ritualised exchange of gifts. This analysis of relationality is deeply influenced by Ranapiri's (1907) seminal annotations on the hau (vital essence or spirit of a gift). Ranapiri (1907) illustrated how economic transactions were inseparable from spirituality and defined by the values of manaakitanga and the cyclical requirements of reciprocity.

Ultimately, the imposition of a Western utilitarian economy did more than just change how goods were traded in Aotearoa; it directly opposed the procedures of tikanga. The shift towards a profit-driven model attempted to dismantle the Māori economy of affection, replacing collective spiritual wellbeing with a framework of individualistic exploitation.

The disruption of mātauranga and te ao Māori during the process of assimilation has created a profound epistemological disconnect. Henare (1988) and Henry and Pene (2001) demonstrate that mātauranga does not align with the Western scope of religious or academic knowledge. As Henare (1988) argues:

> Māori religion is not found in a set of sacred books or dogma, the culture is the religion. History points to Māori people and their religion being constantly open to evaluation and questioning in order to seek that which is tika, the right way. Maintaining tika is the means whereby ethics and values can be identified. (p. 3)

Much like tikanga, mātauranga is not confined to Western doctrines or static dogmas. Instead, it is living and prominent within waiata, whaikōrero, haka, pūrākau, and art (Spiller et al., 2020). This suggests that the process of wānanga is grounded in a multidimensional understanding of

knowledge – one that is dynamic, holistic, and constantly evolving rather than fixed (Spiller et al., 2020).

A significant barrier to Western comprehension is that English translations often fail to capture the multifaceted meanings of kupu Māori. Te ao Māori revolves around a holistic way of being where the constructs of tikanga ensure that all actions carry both environmental and spiritual consequences (Wolfgramm et al., 2016). This worldview assumes that Western epistemologies are grounded fundamentally differently from the relational world of indigeneity. In the Māori context, there is a complex, interconnected web of whanaungatanga between people and the natural world (Wolfgramm et al., 2016).

These networks are supported by a relational ontology – an understanding of reality defined by relationships (Henry et al., 2018). This ontology allows for subjective experiences to be understood in relation to others, explaining why Indigenous ways of knowing and being are often difficult to translate into Western institutional frameworks (Henry et al., 2018; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012).

Given the historical complications arising from Western misinterpretations, Smith (1999, 2015b) emphasises the absolute necessity of tino rangatiratanga for Indigenous peoples. Ultimately, Kaupapa Māori research must be conducted by Māori, for Māori, and with Māori. It is essential that Māori maintain the sovereignty to define our culture on our own terms, according to our own perceptions and ways of sharing knowledge. Only through this self-determination can we ensure that our mātauranga is represented accurately and appropriately, in a way that uplifts and empowers our communities rather than further marginalising them.

2.4.1 Collective Leadership and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Developing from a kaupapa-focused and tikanga-based values system, a collective form of cultural wisdom offers new ways of understanding leadership dynamics. This subsection explores the relationship between leadership and collective wisdom in te ao Māori, providing a unique perspective on social relations and human resources motivators within professional organisations.

For Māori, collective and relational leadership is grounded by what is tika and focuses on profit aimed for the collective benefit (Henry & Wolfgramm, 2015; Ruwhiu et al., 2021). Spiller et al. (2020) identify three core strands of knowledge essential to engaging in collective leadership knowledge.

First, social-ecological systems (SES) theory posits that biological, physical, and social aspects interact in a coherent and sustained manner that is complex, multidimensional, and adaptive across time and space (Berkes et al., 2006; Folke, 2006; Wolfgramm et al., 2020). This theory emphasises the importance of understanding the interconnections of these aspects and relationships to address environmental and social challenges in a manner that promotes adaptation and collective thinking (Rotorangi & Russell, 2009; Wolfgramm et al., 2020).

Second, the Indigenous ecological knowledge framework has its foundations in multidimensional concepts that encompass the traditional knowledge, skills, and practices of Indigenous culture in relation to their interactions with their environment (Rotorangi & Russell, 2009; Spiller et al., 2020). This framework is grounded in a holistically Indigenous perspective, acknowledging the interconnectedness of all things, passed down through traditions with multidimensional facets of adaptivity, allowing for the ability to respond to unique environmental challenges (Durie, 2003; Rotorangi & Russell, 2009; Spiller et al., 2020).

By combining these two aspects and adapting them to a Māori worldview, Spiller et al. (2020) presented collective Māori leadership (CML) as a leadership approach that draws on Māori values and principles. This community-centred approach to leadership is emphasised by collaborative decision-making and shared responsibilities through whakapapa, whanaungatanga, and kaitiakitanga. It places importance on building strong, reciprocal relationships based on service and affection, encompassing the adaptive ability of resilience against any environmental, social, or economic challenges.

Spiller et al.'s (2020) research on CML's practical application to the wānanga process revealed a leadership ecosystem that activates "knowledge codes" and cultivates ties of affection and kinship to work through difficult tensions. Spiller et al. (2020) define a knowledge code as a form of cultural spirit; this could be in the form of karakia, mihi, or waiata. They argue that in te ao Māori, the activation of the knowledge code stimulates the wairua and mauri of the collective by tapping into the release of collective intelligence through shared incantations. Their research found that each activation of a knowledge code cultivated ties of affection through collective acts of kotahitanga and unity.

Māori leaders tend to use intergenerational knowledge codes through whakapapa and whanaungatanga to build their rhetoric of coming together as a collective to direct their next actions (Spiller et al., 2020). These knowledge codes were utilised by participants to work with tensions and find appropriate resolution strategies in times of conflict. Rather than perceiving conflict and tension as a negative quality, it is utilised as a necessary part of testing the

knowledge code to cultivate ties of affection, allowing for highly resilient institutional results (Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012; Wolfgramm et al., 2020).

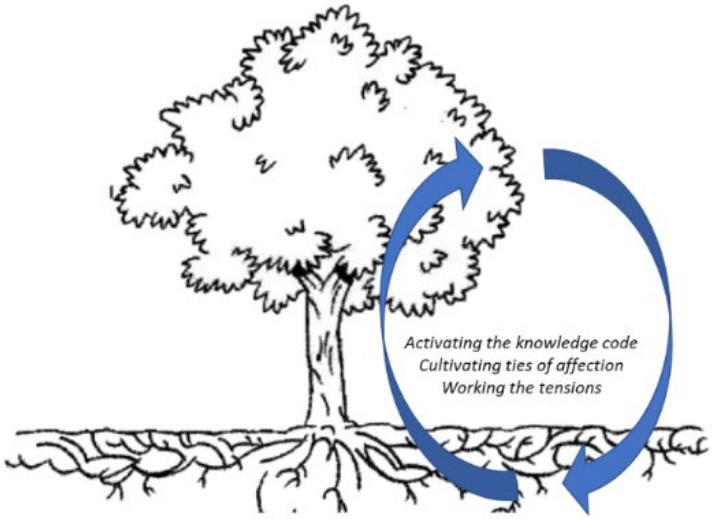
To conclude, this cultural approach to leadership and human resource management encourages adaptability and resilience amongst key stakeholders, influencing how they operate in cohesive and collaborative manners regardless of any possible tensions, conflicts, or disruptions. This sense of resilience contrasts with traditional, utilitarian business models that do not allow growth for employees according to top-down priorities, instead centralising a dynamic approach to HR and operations management.

2.4.2 Pakihi Māori Social Ecosystems

Based on their findings relating to wānanga discussed in the previous subsection, Spiller et al. (2020) produced an ecosystemic view of CML that consists of the three main aspects discussed: activating knowledge codes, cultivating ties of affection, and working the tensions.

Figure 2.1

Collective Māori Leadership Ecosystem Framework



Note. From "Paradigm Warriors: Advancing a Radical Ecosystems View of Collective Leadership from an Indigenous Māori Perspective," by C. Spiller, R. M. Wolfgramm, E. Henry, and R. Pouwhare, 2020, *Human Relations*, *73*(4), pp. 516–543. Copyright 2020 by The Author(s).

The tree in Figure 2.1 symbolises the organisation as a living organism, always growing and evolving over time. The roots represent the foundation of the organisation and represent whakapapa, signifying the connection to the land, Papatūānuku, and the natural world (Spiller et al., 2020). Within this whakapapa framework, the roots also represent the collective nature of

the organisation, drawing strength from its shared history, culture, and tikanga (Spiller et al., 2020).

The trunk represents the groups within the organisation, such as board members, hapū, subcommittees, and whānau. It acts as a bridge between the roots (the collective) and individual members (the leaves) (Spiller et al., 2020). This bridge symbolises the shared purpose, values, and kinship that unite the organisation as a collective (Mika & O'Sullivan, 2014; Spiller et al., 2020; Wolfgramm et al., 2020).

The leaves represent each individual member of the organisation and how they contribute to the overall health and growth of the tree. Every member and every role make significant contributions to the organisation's ongoing evolution. The circle represents the dynamic and cyclical nature of CML. It emphasises the importance of tapping into collective knowledge to inform wisdom and action; building strong relationships based on trust, reciprocity, and affection; and addressing conflicts constructively when required.

In summary, Spiller et al.'s (2020) CML framework emphasises the importance of collective decision-making and shared responsibility, with its foundations grounded in a holistic Māori worldview that prioritises interconnectedness and sustainability. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of how these elements connect, organisations can foster a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for all stakeholders. The present study explores these relational perspectives of business management and investigates how this subjective framework fosters adaptability, intuition, and resilience.

2.4.3 Collective Resilience and Social Innovation

Following the previous examinations of relational and collective leadership, this subsection highlights the unique resilience of autonomous organisations when given the opportunity to govern according to tikanga and the cultural norms of te ao Māori. Henry et al. (2017) refer to this act of resilience as social innovation: the development and delivery of solutions to change power relations while making overall improvements for everyone. The intrinsic motivations to change power relations lie within the intergenerational and holistic aspirations of Māori wellbeing for the collective (Henry et al., 2017; Henry & Poyser, 2024; Mika & O'Sullivan, 2014).

The persisting impacts of colonisation and Western industrialism have given social innovation significant importance due to the limited access to support and resources in marginalised communities. Nikora et al. (2007) explored the social consequences for rural Māori hapū and iwi during the urban migration that began in the 1930s, arguing that the primary drivers for migration

to the cities were a lack of employment and educational opportunities in rural areas, compounded by the assimilation of Western societal culture that dominated the economy, trade, and property ownership.

A lack of resource allocation put immense pressure on traditional, rural Māori lifestyles (Davey & Kearns, 1994; Henry & Poyser, 2024; Scott & Kearns, 2000). The Crown's disestablishment and confiscation of Māori land and resources dispossessed Māori, leaving them reliant on fragmented lands and largely undeveloped natural resources (Nikora et al., 2004; Salmond, 2022). In response, these communities were forced to demonstrate extreme resilience in order to survive, often while living in poverty.

Henry et al.'s. (2017) research emphasises that resilience encompasses the development and implementation of new ideas and solutions to address societal challenges and existing power relations. They highlight the crucial role of power dynamics, emphasising that shifts are required to challenge these limiting structures and ultimately disrupt the root causes of societal issues (Nicholls & Teasdale, 2017).

To support their research, Henry et al. (2017) present two contrasting models of social innovation originally introduced by Ayob et al. (2016). The utilitarian perspective focuses on the practical benefits of social innovation while avoiding any challenge to existing power structures. Conversely, the radical perspective emphasises transformative potential by directly challenging systemic inequalities to create more just and equitable societies (Ayob et al., 2016). Indigenous entrepreneurs are often drawn towards radical approaches to social innovation, as these methods are more likely to result in a generational power shift and long-lasting emancipation for their communities.

Henry et al. (2017) and Nikora et al. (2013) posit that social innovation serves as a tool for Indigenous entrepreneurs to shift their marginalised positions. This inherently challenges traditional structures to address and eliminate the root causes of societal inequity. Henry et al. (2017) point to the specific innovation of iMOKO, an app developed by Dr. Lance O'Sullivan, a Māori practitioner who acknowledged the lack of healthcare and resources available for whānau and children in low-socioeconomic communities. Rather than relying on government support that may never arrive due to crude politics, the development of this app allowed whānau to increase their access to healthcare, encompassing a bottom-up, community-focused approach to achieving social equity.

Dr. O'Sullivan's initiatives act as a prime example of Indigenous entrepreneurship, showcasing the crucial role these entrepreneurs play in empowering and uplifting their marginalised communities by challenging the existing power structures that limit their kinship and collective advancements (Henry et al., 2017).

To conclude, I presuppose the participants may share similar perspectives regarding their own respective challenges. These tensions, however, could provide innovative solutions that allow them to remain resilient and make an overall contribution to the economic success of their pakihi.

2.4.4 Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Management

This final subsection focuses on the role Indigenous entrepreneurs play as key stakeholders within their respective pakihi operations, management, and the wider economy. Indigenous entrepreneurs play a specific and crucial role in empowering kin communities that have been limited by social inequity as a direct result of colonisation.

Hindle and Moroz (2010) acknowledge that the empowerment of oppressed communities often lies within the responsibilities of Indigenous entrepreneurs. They define this specific role as "the creation, management and development of new ventures by Indigenous people for the benefit of Indigenous people" (p. 363). This highlights that their direct purpose deviates from normative Western entrepreneurial aspirations of individualistic profit margins, focusing instead on the relative importance of communities and prioritising cultural and social advancements. In other words, it is an economy of affection in action.

Studies acknowledge the inherent tensions of navigating as an Indigenous entrepreneur operating within Western-dominated institutions (Frederick & Henry, 2003; Henry et al., 2017; Hindle & Moroz, 2010). The fundamental conflict between Māori relational ontologies and Western utilitarian paradigms has been a persistent source of colonial tension throughout New Zealand's history (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Henry & Wolfgramm, 2015; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Indigenous aspirations of autonomy, sovereignty, and self-determination drive the intention to control their own development, affairs, and resources. The ultimate goal is to rebuild and uplift communities on their own terms and according to their own protocols (Smith, 1999; Te Awekotuku, 2004). This deep-seated desire for self-determination incentivises Indigenous entrepreneurs to pursue collective wellbeing rather than merely individual success.

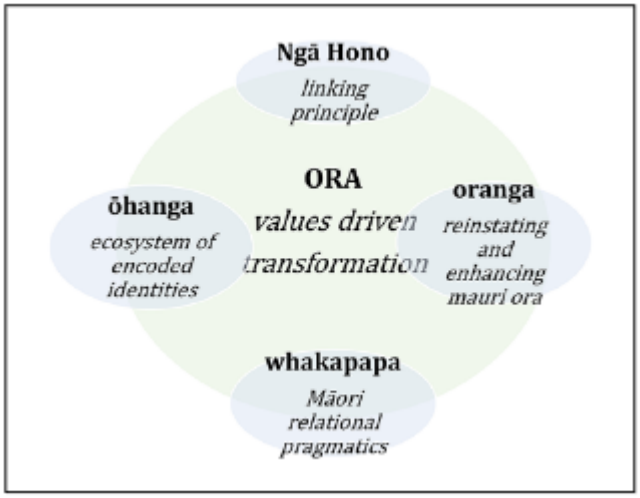
Wolfgramm et al. (2020) developed a culturally derived framework according to Māori ontological economies of wellbeing called Ngā Hono Ōhanga Oranga (Māori Economies of

Wellbeing) (Figure 2.2). It directly outlines five interrelated and multifaceted concepts of Māori wellbeing with foundations in tohatoha, which encompasses the fair distribution of material profits corresponding to collective responsibility – a distinctly relational focus on wellbeing.

Wolfgramm et al. (2020) acknowledged Porter and Ratima's (2014) iwi vitality outcomes framework and its applicability to research in Māori entrepreneurship. This framework highlights the unique challenges and opportunities that arise when incorporating holistic cultural values into modern business operations. These perspectives are highly valuable and directly applicable to the core focus of this study.

Figure 2.2

Ngā Hono Ōhanga Oranga (Māori Economies of Wellbeing)



Note. From "A Culturally Derived Framework of Values-driven Transformation in Māori Economies of Well-Being – Ngā Hono Ōhanga Oranga," by R. Wolfgramm, C. Spiller, E. Henry, and R. Pouwhare, 2020, *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, *16*(1), pp. 18–28. Copyright 2020 by The Author(s).

Figure 2.2 depicts a visual representation of a holistic and interconnected framework of sustainable wellbeing in Māori entrepreneurial research. Ora acts as the central driving force of the model in the pursuit of economic and ecological wellbeing, facilitating its multidimensional values. Oranga acknowledges the mauri and wairua within the physical, biological, and spiritual worlds of te ao Māori, strengthening these intrinsic connections. Specifically, it affirms Māori tikanga and the understanding that the wellbeing of hapū and iwi is directly correlated to the wellbeing of whānau, emphasising mauri ora for the collective (Wolfgramm et al., 2020).

Ōhanga in Māori relational economies highlights the ecological connection between people and the land. Grounded in the value of kaitiakitanga, it acknowledges kinship with the natural

environment, allowing Māori to manage natural resources sustainably according to their cultural and intergenerational knowledge (Porter & Ratima, 2014; Wolfgramm et al., 2020). Thus, these values bear the ability to interact through the grounding frameworks of whakapapa. This acts as a relational foundation for all aspects of Māori life, motivated by the intergenerational desire for collective longevity. Wolfgramm et al. (2020) have made a considerable contribution to Māori entrepreneurship research by offering insights that demonstrate the potential of social and cultural innovation for Indigenous organisational development.

In summary, Māori entrepreneurs play crucial roles in empowering marginalised communities. Their pursuits, driven by unique cultural values such as tikanga and collective responsibility, diverge significantly from traditional Western capitalist models. By prioritising collective wellbeing over individualistic, top-down profits, Māori entrepreneurs challenge existing power relations to create more sustainable and equitable economic models that uplift their communities while also benefiting their local environment.

2.5 Coates et al.'s (2023) Indigenous Institutional Theory

The development of this theoretical model was designed with the purpose of centring Indigenous perspectives, needs, and priorities while navigating a Western institutional environment. As established in the methodology, utilising this framework is advantageous for this specific research because it acknowledges the discrepancies Indigenous people face as minorities within Western-dominated institutions and addresses the diversity gap within these social and political structures (Coates et al., 2023).

Coates et al. (2023) developed this theory by combining two existing theories to create a new methodological approach for Indigenous inquiry in a manner that does not further marginalise them. The authors posited that combining Indigenous Standpoint Theory and Institutional Theory offers the potential for Western culture to understand Indigenous complexities and perspectives without acting as a point of disruption to their cultural priorities (Coates et al., 2023; Kovach, 2009).

Indigenous Standpoint Theory is a methodological approach designed to address Indigenous social justice (Coates et al., 2023; Nakata, 2007). The theory acknowledges the insider positionality of the researcher and provides the ability to highlight and integrate the knowledge and experiences of Indigenous ontology, facilitating the disentanglement of the limitations that many Indigenous people face (Coates et al., 2023; Kovach, 2009; Nakata, 2007).

Institutional Theory is a Western methodological approach that investigates the inner systemic social patterns of an organisation. Coates et al. (2023) combined old and new institutional theory with additional perspectives to develop their Indigenous Institutional Theory (see Figure 3.1). These additional perspectives allow for more flexibility in sociocultural logistics, ensuring the model can be adjusted and amended where required to meet subjective priorities. As noted in Chapter 3, there are three fundamental aspects of Indigenous Institutional Theory: resilience and community commitment, Indigenous leadership, and institutional rhetoric. I discuss these individually below.

2.5.1 Resilience and Community Commitment

Indigenous resilience and innovation are often necessitated by the structural requirement to survive within institutional realities that do not facilitate Indigenous thriving or the maintenance of holistic, sociocultural values (Coates et al., 2023; Kovach, 2009). This strand of Indigenous Institutional Theory identifies motivations and behaviours that prioritise community uplift over individual profit and gain, acknowledging that Indigenous Standpoint Theory acts as a corrective to Western institutionalism. Within this research, resilience is not merely a personality trait but a strategic management and operational necessity for pakihi Māori.

Navigation and Grounding: Resisting Performative Spaces. The findings reveal that resilience often begins with a personal and political negotiation of identity. Diva described the tension of living in two worlds and the common Māori experience of not feeling "Māori enough" or being "too Māori", depending on the institutional space. Her resilience manifested as a refusal to participate in the performative nature of hospitality. By displaying "Toitū Te Tiriti" in her front window, Diva grounded her business in a way that challenged closeted racism in Auckland and forced a "positive discomfort" upon consumers who might otherwise remain disconnected from the whakapapa of the kai and the people who serve them.

Similarly, Renee described her resilience as a journey of reclamation. After experiencing burnout in government roles where she felt like a "tick-box" Māori, Renee utilised her connection to the ocean as a vessel to heal and move forward. Her resilience is grounded in finding a sense of belonging that allows her to represent her kaupapa confidently, transforming her own healing into a sustainable service for others.

The Māori Ecosystem: A Shield against Assimilation. Resilience was further advocated by what Helen described as a whole ecosystem of Māori-funded support. Organisations such as the Poutama Trust, Te Puni Kōkiri, and the Māori Women's Development Fund provide a

privileged space that allows pakihi to operate according to mātauranga and Kaupapa Māori principles, rather than being dictated by Western norms.

Helen asserted that her business would be "very hard to do" without this ecosystem, as it allowed her to prioritise long-term intergenerational growth over immediate profit. Renee echoed this perception, explicitly stating that without this Māori-specific support, her business would have been "lost" and would have "failed … just assimilated to everything else".

This demonstrates that resilience is a collective endeavour; the commitment of these organisations to pakihi Māori enables individual entrepreneurs to "take the driver's seat" and stand in their sovereignty.

Resilience as Social Justice and Self-sustainability. For Keri and Tangiwai, resilience was a tool for social justice and political leverage. Keri viewed her economic success through tourism at Whakarewarewa as kaha, which has been used to challenge the Crown and government throughout history on environmental issues, such as geothermal protection. Her business acts as a guardian, ensuring that tribal mātauranga and the mana of their tīpuna are upheld, despite the millions of dollars at stake.

Tangiwai, meanwhile, highlighted the resilience of the Matakana Island whānau and community, where locals provide produce from their own pockets to feed school children, despite earning minimum wage. This community commitment is a form of resistance against Western ways of life that threaten to push out the island's self-sustaining culture.

The Intergenerational Phoenix. Helen summarised this sense of resilience using the metaphor of the phoenix and the flame. She viewed Māori culture as rising from the ashes of attempted destruction, transforming into a slightly different form that retains its ancient essence while adapting to the modern economic landscape. This intergenerational longevity, where the goal is for whānau, hapū, or iwi to eventually take over and progress the pakihi, is the ultimate marker of Māori economic success.

Conclusion. Applying Indigenous Institutional Theory shows that these entrepreneurs do not just manage businesses; they develop and steward social justice activists who leverage Western capital to protect Māori ontology. Their resilience is a response to the interruptions caused by colonialism, ensuring that the "golden sovereigns" of their ancestors continue to fund an autonomous future.

2.5.2 Indigenous Leadership

The second principle of Indigenous Institutional Theory relates to Indigenous leadership and contrasts it to its Western counterpart. Coates et al. (2023) note while the Western definition is quite linear, it does not necessarily take an authoritarian perspective on power, focusing rather on social influence and encouragement to motivate peers.

A range of scholars argue that the responsibility, role, and overarching definition of leadership in an Indigenous sense is more complex (Coates et al., 2023; Kovach; 2009; Nakata, 2007; Smith, 2015b). It incorporates Indigenous knowledges and ontologies and is heavily grounded in responsibilities to people, space, and place. Applying this principle helps identify the multifaceted foundations of what Māori leadership encompasses within a pakihi context, allowing for a cross-evaluation of how these specific leadership principles are constrained within linear social systems.

Wāhine Māori as Paradigm Warriors. The significance of the participant sample for this research ultimately being all female needs to be revisited here. Using Te Awekotuku's (2020) work on wāhine and power, we can interpret this not as a recruitment fluke, but as a manifestation of mana wahine in the modern economy. These women act as "paradigm warriors" (Spiller et al., 2020), utilising their unique ontological positions to lead in ways that are holistic rather than authoritarian.

According to the evidence collected in the findings chapter, Indigenous leadership in pakihi Māori is a complex form of carrying forward a legacy established by tīpuna and atua. Helen's "quadruple bottom line" is a clear operationalisation of Indigenous leadership. It moves beyond the linear Western focus on profitability to include cultural, social, and environmental pillars, reflecting Mead's (2003) assertion that tikanga acts as the ethical foundation for leadership.

Renee's leadership, meanwhile, extended to the spiritual wellbeing of her guests. By framing her tourism experience as a form of Indigenous therapy or healing, she was practising relational leadership (Henry & Wolfgramm, 2015; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Her leadership was not about *directing* a team but *stewarding* their wairua and mauri.

Keri's leadership was anchored in whakapapa. Her KPIs were set by her tīpuna and monitored by kaumatua, which challenges the Western institutional norm that shareholders alone define success. While Tangiwai's leadership style was also primarily grounded in whakapapa, she echoed Keri's narrative, emphasising that for Matakana Island, only those who whakapapa to

the land and its people should truly lead and tell their ancestors' stories, asserting tino rangatiratanga over their island's history against outside interests.

This facet of Indigenous leadership in pakihi Māori incorporates wairuatanga and manaakitanga as core business functions. Indigenous Institutional Theory demonstrates how these leadership behaviours are often constrained by linear social systems that fail to recognise spiritual healing or ancestral duty as valid commercial outcomes.

Leadership. For many Māori entrepreneurs, leadership is a form of carrying forward a legacy established by tīpuna (Coates et al., 2023). Keri described leadership as carrying on the legacy of her ancestors, such as Guide Sophia and Mākereti, where modern guides are not just performing a job but are maintaining the mana of tribal stories. This leadership is rarely isolated; at Whakarewarewa, cultural content and business stories are moderated by elders across generations to ensure authenticity and the upkeep of ancestral mana.

Kaitiakitanga. Leadership was also expressed through the role of the kaitiaki, extending beyond the environment to the wellbeing of kaimahi and customers. This type of leadership involves facilitating an environment where everyone feels safe and valued, regardless of their cultural background. This includes practising utu with both kaimahi and customers to ensure a balanced, respectful relationship (Spiller, Pio, et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2019). Renee defined her leadership through the essence of the feminine, mana wahine, focusing on empowering women to confidently reclaim their place in sacred spaces. Leadership in this sense is also about mentorship, using the tuakana–teina model she developed to provide support and guidance to others within the community.

Sovereignty. Indigenous leadership is often an act of resistance against tunnel-vision Western systems that prioritise profit over holistic values (Neha et al., 2021; Spencer et al., 2016). Helen described leadership as "taking the driver's seat" and making decisions based on mātauranga Māori principles. Diva linked leadership to being unapologetically political, using the pakihi as a space to ground identity through Toitū Te Tiriti and challenging customers to be conscious of their social and political choices. In the findings chapter, we found a common factor: Māori leaders often measure their success by how they give back to their community and whenua, and how they uphold tikanga. This contrasts starkly with Western KPI metrics that traditionally focus on financial performance and treat humans merely as resources.

Manaakitanga. The practice of manaakitanga is a core leadership behaviour that defines the interaction between the pakihi and its manuhiri (Barnett, 2001; Neill et al., 2015; Wikitera,

2019). Tangiwai described manaakitanga as being attentive hosts, where providing for the needs of others, such as offering food, drink, a place to rest, and spiritual safety and protection through karakia is the ultimate embodiment of leadership and cultural pride. Keri supported this narrative and noted that this tradition stems from ancestors who led tourism development simply by sharing their homes and offering manaaki to visitors, regardless of their social status.

Conclusion. Indigenous leadership principles are frequently constrained when they encounter Western social systems that do not recognise spiritual or relational responsibilities. While Western models may value social influence, Māori leadership is a multifaceted commitment to wairua, whānau, and whenua, ensuring that the mana of the past is preserved to empower the leaders of the future.

2.5.3 Institutional Rhetoric

The third and final principle of Indigenous Institutional Theory is institutional rhetoric. This involves examining the gap between what institutions *say* – their policies and rhetoric – and what they actually *do*: their impact on Indigenous priorities. This is where the Indigenous standpoint meets the institutional reality.

By providing tangible evaluations and evidence of Indigenous KPIs within their respective sociocultural contexts (from the previous two principles) and contrasting those findings against the examination of current institutional foundations or legislation, we can identify the sociopolitical discrepancies that lead to Indigenous limitation (Coates et al., 2023).

The "Tick-box" Trap and Policy Disconnects. The findings regarding Māori experiences in Pākehā organisations reveal a significant contradiction in institutional rhetoric. Renee's experience of feeling like a "tick-box" Māori while being ignored when offering actual systemic solutions is a textbook example of Mikaere's (2005) "cultural invasion". The institution wanted the image of diversity without the disruption of Indigenous ontology.

Further examples from the findings come from the narratives of Tangiwai and Helen. Tangiwai's struggle on Matakana Island illustrates the failure of current environmental policies and legislation, like the Resource Management Act 1991, to protect Māori landmarks and kaimoana from corporate dredging. The institutional rhetoric of environmental protection fails the specific Indigenous priority of kai sovereignty. Tangiwai also mentioned the difficulty of finding appropriate funding and support; she had met with investors, but their main priority was to "milk her business like a cow", highlighting the discrepancies in access to capital caused by

colonialism. Western investment models are often extractive and incompatible with a pakihi focused on tino rangatiratanga.

Helen's discussion of the Manuka Stadium in Australia, and the appropriation of kupu Māori for corporate branding, illustrates how intellectual property laws in Western institutions favour those with the most capital, rather than those with the whakapapa to the knowledge (Henry, 2008).

This section of the analysis has identified that Western institutional rhetoric often treats Māori culture as a commodity rather than a sovereign system. The policy disconnects highlighted by the participants show that for pakihi Māori to truly thrive, the institutional rhetoric must shift from accommodation to partnership. This means creating policies that recognise quadruple bottom lines and ancestral mandates as legitimate business frameworks.

Tikanga as the First Law vs the Colonial Script. The discrepancies instutitional rehetoric identified in the participants' narratives highlight what Mikaere (2007) describes as the fundamental tension between tikanga as the first law of Aotearoa and the subsequent imposition of Western legal and institutional policy. When Tangiwai discussed the environmental degradation of Matakana Island, whereby landmarks have been uprooted and the seabed dredged for cruise ships, she was describing a violation of the first law.

In a Western institutional sense, these activities may be consented to or lawful under New Zealand legislation. Yet, from an Indigenous standpoint, they represent a profound breach of kaitiakitanga. As Mikaere (2007) asserts, Pākehā law operates as a second law that fails to recognise the inherent sovereignty of Māori over their whenua. Tangiwai's resilience is therefore an act of legal and cultural resistance. She is asserting that the stories, the health, and the wellbeing of the island belong to the whānau and hapū, regardless of external corporate or governmental claims.

The institutional rhetoric of environmental protection often masks what Mikaere (2007) calls a cultural invasion. By prioritising corporate profit through dredging over the kai sovereignty of Matakana Island locals, Western policy fundamentally undermines the ontological reality of the island's residents. Tangiwai's refusal to accept extractive investment models is an operationalisation of tino rangatiratanga and an insistence that business must adhere to the first law of Aotearoa.

Launching Māori Futures: Beyond the Welfare Box. The final discrepancy in institutional rhetoric relates to how Māori economic aspirations are perceived by the Crown. Durie (2003)

emphasises the need for launching Māori futures, which requires a shift away from a deficit-based model focused on welfare towards a strengths-based model focused on wealth and wellbeing. Historically, in Old English the root term for both wealth and health were the same, inextricably linking prosperity with wellness (Ranapiri, 1907). In a Māori worldview, the severance in meaning never occurred. Economic prosperity is inseparable from the holistic wellbeing of the collective.

Renee's experience within government organisations highlights this deficit-based rhetoric. By being placed in "tick-box" roles, she was framed as a quota to be met rather than a leader capable of systemic innovation. This institutional behaviour reflects a refusal to allow Māori to control our own destiny. As Durie (2003) argues, Māori success requires the ability to move beyond reactive participation in Western systems towards proactive self-determination.

The participants displayed diverse interpretations of Māori economic agency. Helen's quadruple bottom line is a prime example of what Durie (2003) envisioned for a Māori future. It is an innovative business model that does not wait for Western validation but instead creates a new set of KPIs based on mātauranga Māori.

Keri's use of tourism for environmental and political protection aligns with Durie's (2003) vision of Māori utilising their assets to achieve broad social outcomes. Her business is not a separate entity from her iwi's political aspirations; they are one and the same. Renee's economic agency, meanwhile, was focused on her healing-centric vision. Her desire for a funded pathway for rongoā moana through the Accident Compensation Corporation for wai-based healing represents a challenge to the Western institutional rhetoric of health. She is actively advocating for a future where traditional healing is recognised as an equitable health pathway for all.

The institutional rhetoric currently limits Māori success by failing to provide the infrastructure or capital that respects Indigenous autonomy, as noted by Tangiwai. However, by adopting the Māori futures lens (Durie, 2003), we can see that these wāhine are not waiting for institutional reform. They are already constructing their own whare of economic success. This identifies a clear policy recommendation: the Crown must move beyond consultation and towards providing the resources that allow Māori to practise mana Māori motuhake in their respective operational sectors.

2.5.4 Summary of Indigenous Institutional Theory Analysis

Applying Coates et al.'s. (2023) Indigenous Institutional Theory to the findings proves that pakihi Māori are sites of constant negotiation and resistance. The status quo of Western business,

which is traditionally profit-driven, linear and extractive, is constantly disrupted by the participants' adherence to tikanga. Their resilience is not just a trait but a political requirement. Their leadership is not just management but ancestral stewardship. And their barriers are not just market forces but the ongoing colonial scripts of the institutions they must navigate.

The decision to integrate Indigenous Institutional Theory proposed with my own Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Whā framework was driven by the need for a multilayered analytical lens, one that accounts for both the external pressures of the hospitality and tourism sectors and the internal mechanisms of Māori operational integrity.

Coates et al. (2023) effectively map the macro landscape of institutional exclusion, identifying the systemic gaps that Indigenous entrepreneurs must navigate. However, while they provide the diagnostic framework for *why* Māori entrepreneurs face institutional friction, they are less descriptive of the *how* they maintain cultural and economic integrity while embedded within those systems.

Integrating Indigenous Institutional Theory with the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Whā framework reveals that institutional resilience is not an abstract state of being but a deliberate act of structural maintenance, managed through the five dimensions of my model.

For example, whereas Indigenous Institutional Theory identifies "institutional pressure" as a disruption to Māori business, my framework demonstrates *how* that disruption is mitigated. The spiritual (wairua) and community (whanaungatanga) dimensions of Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Whā act as the structural load-bearing walls that allow a business to absorb institutional shock without collapsing. Consequently, the combination of these frameworks moves the discussion beyond merely observing the struggle for space within a Western-dominated sector towards an understanding of how Māori entrepreneurs actively reconstruct the very house of business to suit their own ontological reality.

2.6 A Māori Definition of Wellbeing and Organisational Success

The question I was asked most regarding my research aim was "How will you measure success?" As I have stated above, my intentions were to present my participants' ontologies authentically and appropriately. I understand that the purpose of undertaking Kaupapa Māori research is to create reciprocal relationships that will allow me to analyse and interpret their experiences accurately, via a collective perspective that empowers the community. But the oft-repeated question of "How will you measure success?" demands an answer.

A Western definition of success is typically one-dimensional, primarily focused on achieving specific targets measured by tangible results (Lichter & Jayakody, 2002). Success acts as a component of wellbeing, which is an internal state of achievement. In this research, I determined to explore what this might look like from a Māori perspective.

I recall a reflexive journal entry dated April 11, 2025, a brief recounting of the previous night, when I had attended the M9 event at Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre in Auckland's Aotea Centre. M9 brings together nine powerful Māori voices for evenings designed inspire, empower, and impart kōrero Māori. This session was focused on te ōhanga Māori, and many of the kaikōrero discussed the Māori economy and potential determinants of success. I wrote:

> I always come home from M9 feeling so Māori, both excited and nervous within this state, especially with our current situation. There was a recurring statement amongst the kaikōrero last night, 'Te Whare Tapa Whā' as the key to being successful within a Māori worldview. 'You can use Te Whare Tapa Whā to be successful and be Māori'. I need to look into this further. Will this be my determinant of success?

In the next subsection I explore theoretical frameworks centred within a Māori worldview, prioritising Māori perspectives and ontologies, seeking how to best utilise them to accurately analyse and interpret my participants' experiences.

2.6.1 Theoretical Frameworks for te ao Māori

A relevant and recently developed framework of note is Indigenous Institutional Theory proposed by Coates et al. (2023). The purpose of this theory is to offer a powerful explanatory tool when analysing a multitude of Indigenous organisational phenomena in Westen-dominated institutions, in a similar manner to cross-cultural studies (Coates et al., 2023).

Coates et al. (2023) assert the importance of challenging Western methodologies with methods developed by Indigenous researchers, from an Indigenous perspective. Coates et al. (2023) and Kovach (2009) argue that this changes the ontological and epistemological perspective of the reader, to reflect an Indigenous perspective and allow for a more culturally appropriate understanding. According to Nakata (2007):

> An Indigenous standpoint can facilitate with disentangling Indigenous people from the conditions that delimit who, what or how we can or can't be, to help see ourselves with some charge of the everyday, and to help understand our varied responses to the colonial world. (p. 217)

Indigenous Institutional Theory has been developed, redeveloped, and adapted from previous Indigenous and institutional theories to allow researchers to more accurately identify ontologies of Indigenous experiences within Western-dominated institutions. As Coates et al. (2023) state:

> While the model has been developed in the context of higher education, the authors anticipate that the newly proposed framework, Indigenous Institutional Theory, may be employed by Indigenous Peoples when investigating the Indigenous experience across a wide range of organisational fields, nationally and internationally. (p. 912)

There are three fundamental aspects of Indigenous Institutional Theory: resilience and community commitment, Indigenous leadership, and institutional rhetoric. According to Coates et al. (2023), "It helps gain a better understanding of the role and subsequent value of Indigenous Peoples in organisational structures. The authors believe it will also facilitate centring the voices of Indigenous Peoples within institutions" (p. 916).

Figure 3.1

A Conceptual Overview of Indigenous Institutional Theory



Note. From "Indigenous Institutional Theory: A New Theoretical Framework and Methodological Tool," by S. K. Coates, M. Trudgett, and S. Page, 2023, *The Australian Educational Researcher*, *50*(3), pp. 903–920. Copyright 2023 by The Author(s).

This theory has the potential to prove useful for the current research. In combination with my practising of reflexivity, Indigenous Institutional Theory can aid in centring the perspectives of my participants and provide a more comprehensive understanding of their epistemologies in relation to Eurocentric constructs within the hospitality and tourism industries.

2.6.2 Te Whare Tapa Whā: A Māori Model of Wellbeing

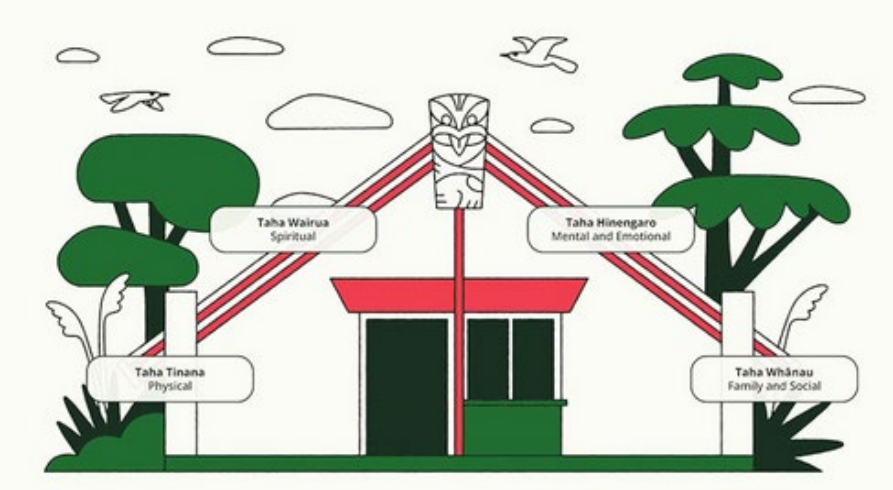
As noted above, several kaikōrero spoke about Mason Durie's (1984) Te Whare Tapa Whā model during the M9 evening I attended, and I had previously read some journal articles during my literature review – since then I haven't gone one day without reading, thinking, or writing about it. I took it as a sign from my tūpuna that this theoretical framework was the one I was looking for.

Te Whare Tapa Whā is a holistic framework, originally conceived by a group of Māori health practitioners during a hui in 1982 (Rochford, 2004). It is a framework commonly used in nursing and/or Māori health research. Durie (1984) developed the initial concepts into a model to aid non-Indigenous health workers in understanding the holistic constituents that frame Māori wellbeing (Sculley, 2023).

As shown in Figure 3.2, within Te Whare Tapa Whā there are four main dimensions of health that are depicted as the walls of a wharenui (Rochford, 2004; Sculley, 2023): taha hinengaro (mental and emotional wellbeing), taha tinana (physical wellbeing), taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing), and taha whānau (family and social wellbeing). There is also a fifth dimension incorporated into the model: the whenua which the wharenui sits on. This represents whakapapa to Papatūānuku, connection with the land, depicting a place of collective belonging through whakawhanaungatanga (Sculley, 2023). Each dimension of health is cohesive: when one aspect is weakened, the entire whare suffers instability (Durie, 1994).

Figure 3.2

Te Whare Tapa Whā (Māori Dimensions of Wellbeing)



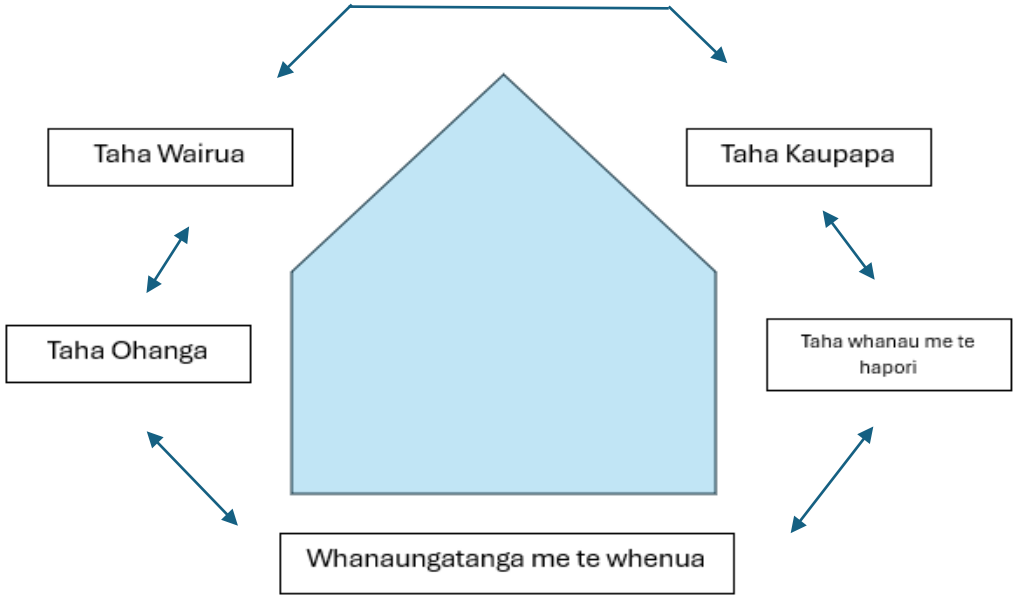
Note. From "Te Pae Ora: Te Whare Tapa Whā," by Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology, 2024 (https://www.tepūkenga.ac.nz/te-pae-ora/living-well-learning-well/te-whare-tapa-wha). Copyright 2024 by Te Pūkenga.

Rochford (2004) discusses the intergenerational implications of colonisation and assimilation for Māori over time. Te Whare Tapa Whā acts as a model of resistance against the Western normative dichotomy of health – body and mind (Kiyimba & Anderson, 2022; Rochford, 2004). Durie's (1984) framework inspired me to posit that it could possibly be applied within business operations to determine and reflect a multifaceted perspective of Māori economic success.

In Figure 3.3, I have adapted some aspects of Te Whare Tapa Whā to represent the economic and business dimensions of success and wellbeing.

Figure 3.3

Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima (the Five Māori Dimensions of Economic Wellbeing)



Note. Adapted from "'Te Taha Hinengaro'": An Integrated Approach to Mental Health," by M. H. Durie, 1984, *Community Mental Health in New Zealand*, *1*(1), pp. 4–11.

The five dimensions of this adapted model are Taha Ōhanga (Economic Wellbeing), Taha Wairua (Spiritual Wellbeing), Taha Kaupapa (The Organisation's Kaupapa), Taha Whānau me te Hapori (Family, Hapū, and Community), and Whanaungatanga me te Whenua (Connection to the Land and Environmental Wellbeing), which are all interconnected by whakapapa (indicated by the blue arrows).

Te Whare Tapa Whā acts as a reconnection for Māori to their true selves, allowing each dimension for health to be developed to reach optimal wellbeing (Kiyimba & Anderson, 2022). Durie (1994) represents the framework as a wharenui because every taha is reliant on the others

to ensure stability of the whare. If one wall is weakened, the entire structure is weakened. I hypothesised that the same multifaceted and causal aspects could also determine Māori economic wellbeing.

2.7 Summary and Conclusion

In summary, te ao Māori functions as a dynamic, multifaceted network of knowledge and cultural frameworks, grounded in the tikanga ethical value system. Unlike traditional Western dogma, there is no categorical hierarchy to this system or its functions. Instead, it centralises a collective pursuit of success across multiple dimensions of value that extend far beyond the purely monetary. This literature review has highlighted the foundational importance of mauri and wairua, which permeate all living things, and the role of whakapapa in providing the physical and spiritual genealogical connection that gives meaning to the intrinsic link between Māori and their people, taonga, and the environment. These frameworks provide contextual meaning for the intrinsic connections Māori maintain with their reality, defining the meaningful and multifaceted nature of the Māori worldview.

Building upon these foundations, Kaupapa Māori research has been introduced through its origins in mātauranga, utilising tikanga as the protocol for culturally grounded ethical inquiry. Within this focus, this literature review has explored the relevant constructs of Kaupapa Māori research within pakihi Māori, including collective leadership, resilience, innovation, and the exercise of tino rangatiratanga in entrepreneurship. It has argued that when Māori exercise sovereignty over their operating and management strategies, wellbeing increases, signalling broader prospects for diversity and enhanced economic performance.

This research investigates existing pakihi Māori within the hospitality and tourism sectors to understand their perceptions and experiences in navigating this kaupapa. This literature review has revealed the inherent tensions for pakihi Māori when operating within a Western-dominated society. There remain significant challenges in aspiring to operate according to tikanga and with mana within a colonially constructed economy that often struggles to comprehend Māori values or see beyond a narrow, hegemonic scope. The present study explores whether Māori wellbeing increases when they exercise sovereignty over their operating and management strategies, boosting prospects for diversity and enhanced economic and social performance.

By identifying these themes, this chapter has established the theoretical and ethical necessity of a research approach that respects Indigenous data sovereignty. The next chapter outlines the methodology of this thesis. It details the deliberate selection of an Indigenous interpretivist

paradigm and the application of Kaupapa Māori protocols, ensuring the empirical research was conducted with the authenticity and cultural safety required to capture the subjective realities of the participants.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter established the theoretical bedrock of this thesis and identified the epistemological disconnect between Western, profit-driven hospitality models and the Indigenous practice of manaaki. Having delineated this institutional clash and the gaps in the extant literature, it is imperative to outline the methodological processes through which this research was conducted. This chapter outlines the deliberate and political selection of an Indigenous interpretivist paradigm and the application of Kaupapa Māori research protocols. The rationale for this methodological selection is rooted in the requirement to align the research process with the values of manaaki, tikanga, and whanaungatanga, which the participants operationalise within their businesses.

This research design is not merely a matter of administrative compliance. It is an ethical imperative. Adopting Kaupapa Māori methodology ensures that the study remains grounded in the subjective realities of the participants, prioritising the empowerment of their voices over the extraction of data. This chapter demonstrates how the research was constructed to provide a culturally safe environment for five wāhine Māori entrepreneurs, facilitating a deeper, more nuanced investigation into how tikanga shapes their operational and management strategies. Furthermore, the chapter details the analytical rigour applied to the study, explaining how the themes of success were identified through a systematic, relational analysis, and how the researcher's own positionality was navigated throughout the inquiry.

The chapter is organised into four key sections. The first articulates the Indigenous interpretivist paradigm that governs the inquiry, arguing for the legitimacy of multiple, subjective truths in opposition to positivist constructs. The second details the Kaupapa Māori methodology, explaining how participant-first protocols and Indigenous data sovereignty were maintained at every stage. The chapter then presents the research design, including the selection of the five wāhine Māori participants and the use of semi-structured qualitative interviews. Finally, it outlines the data analysis process and addresses researcher positionality and reflexivity, documenting the ongoing internal negotiation of insider–outsider tensions. By detailing the methodological vessel of this research, this chapter provides essential evidence that the study was conducted with the rigour, cultural safety, and integrity required to produce knowledge that is both academically credible and of genuine service to the Māori community.

3.2 Interpretivism

In contrast to the positivist stance that there is a single, absolute and objective reality (Ernest, 1994), an interpretivist researcher's focus lies within the subjective nature of social reality. The uniqueness and differences of a particular situation are acknowledged, according to the person experiencing it (Chowdhury, 2014; Myers, 1997).

As demonstrated in the literature review, Māori have firsthand experience with the dangers of the perception that there is only one objective reality. Best (1982) demonstrated this with his introduction of Io into ancient Māori cosmology. This introduction of one supreme being who created everything out of his will was more harmonious with Christian dogma than Māori cosmology. This assimilation of te ao Māori into a Western state was extended into all aspects of Māori life and proceeded by ignoring New Zealand's foundational document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840). The most recent attempt to redefine Te Tiriti o Waitangi, this time by the Act Party, led to the suspension of Te Pati Māori MPs for performing a haka in protest in Parliament (Gabel et al., 2025).

Based on these experiences alone, I argue that a positivist perspective of one objective and causal truth is not suitable for this particular research, which involves marginalised communities who have suffered and continue to suffer the impacts of colonialism.

3.2.1 Interpretivism in Social Research

Validating social subjectivity rejects the monotheistic lens and assumption that aligns with the natural sciences, that only what is observable can count as truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Travers, 2008). Alternatively, interpretivism argues that social reality is grounded within the subjective interpretations of the participants of the phenomenon under study:

> Interpretivist tradition stresses the dynamic, constructed and evolving nature of social reality and rejects the positivist notion of knowledge being grounded in the objective and tangible, instead, it seeks to understand social reality through the eyes of those being studied. (Chowdhury, 2014. p. 434)

The acknowledgement of subjectivity in human phenomena dates back to the ancient Greek stoic philosopher and sociologist Epictetus, who stated: "'It is not actions that alarms or disturbs man, but it is their opinions and fancies about actions" (Merton, 1995, as cited in Chowdhury, 2014. p. 432).

3.2.2 The Dichotomies of Interpretivism and Positivism

Quantitative versus qualitative, interpretive versus positivist, insider versus outsider – these are just a few of the dichotomies created by the differences between the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. As a novice researcher, I wanted to comprehensively understand and potentially put myself into the shoes of all perspectives, to evaluate their suitability for this study.

Ikram and Kenayathulla (2022) note that positivism dictates a more monotheistic, numerical and scientific study of nature. The main objective is to prove a hypothesis, commonly relying on testing through statistical analysis. This paradigm was initiated by the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) as a means of determining a reality that is detached from interpretation, is generalisable, and exists independently of humans. Phenomena in this reality are observable and can be tangibly confirmed (Taylor & Medina, 2011). Ikram and Kenayathulla (2022) explain further:

> Comte (1855) described positivism as the philosophical state in which one learns the actual laws of phenomena through reason and observation. Positivism is a research philosophy that is widely known and well established at universities throughout the world; this scientific research paradigm strives to examine, confirm, and forecast law-like patterns of behaviour and is typically employed in graduate study to test ideas or hypotheses. (p. 40)

From this perspective, the researcher considers themselves an outsider, observing phenomena that independently exist. This limits positivist researchers' engagement with their participants as they try to capture the causal nature of reality using deductive theories to confirm or deny the hypothesis to be tested (Wijesinghe, 2011). A positivist approach is not redundant in social science – it demonstrates a sense of scientific rigour that could be utilised effectively in quantitative studies. Depending on the hypothesis, it has the potential to determine how or what human perceptions are, providing statistical results that can be generalised. But it is limiting in certain key aspects, as it doesn't reveal *why* these perceptions occur and the motivational reasons behind them.

3.2.3 Interpretivism for Understanding Context-specific Meanings

This study seeks to understand the unique and cultural perceptions of operators within a community that does not represent the majority in the Aotearoa hospitality and tourism sectors. Accordingly, a deductive, positivist approach would be rather disrespectful and potentially

harmful to the participants involved. This approach is too simplistic in nature and doesn't contextualise the complex experiences of those involved.

Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) see interpretivism in social research as a paradigm that is more focused on the in-depth intricacies of variables under study and the contextual factors that could be related to this interpretation:

> [Interpretivism] considers humans as different from physical phenomena as they create further depth in meanings with the assumption that human beings cannot be explored in a similar way to physical phenomena. Interpretivism considers differences such as cultures, circumstances, as well as times leading to development of different social realities. (p. 41)

Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) discuss interpretivism's potential to enable researchers to consider alternative factors and variables as determinants of behavioural aspects, based on unique and subjective experiences, especially in studies of cultural phenomenology.

As a Māori researcher conducting Māori-focused research, there is an inherent sense of responsibility to the community and its participants. Smith (2006) cautioned "kia tupato … kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata" (p. 12) and stressed the need to ensure appropriate researcher and participant conduct in Kaupapa Māori research.

I intend to utilise Smith's guidelines in my own research to offer a culturally and ethically appropriate outcome. I noted my own internal tensions regarding this in my reflexive journal, in an entry dated January 14, 2025:

> My biggest fear is the methodology and data collection process … How do I interact appropriately or create findings that benefits them? What if it offends? Am I Māori enough to be doing this? Or even qualified enough as a researcher? Māori have been through enough. My fear is that I don't contribute something that them and this research space deserves.

Looking back at this entry, I recognise the internal battle I was having with myself. With a clearer headspace, I now have the following questions for myself back in January 2025: "How did you expect to measure what is Māori enough? How did you expect to use this measurement to determine whether you are an insider or an outsider?" The resolving of uncertainty about my researcher positionality and insider–outsider tensions was an unexpected outcome of my research journey.

3.3 Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

The fundamental and philosophical assumptions of ontology and how it is perceived through epistemology define a study's purpose and eventually determine how the research will be conducted. Essentially, ontology raises the question of "What is reality?" and epistemology provides an answer as to how we come to know this reality (Ejnavarzala, 2019; Ikram & Kenayathulla, 2022; Kant, 2014).

Each individual has underlying social, cultural, and political perceptions based on their environmental upbringing, which frames their worldview. These perceptions guide the researcher's theoretical perspective and in turn informs the chosen methodology and specific research methods (Hyett et al., 2014; Ikram & Kenayathulla, 2022; Priya, 2021).

A master's thesis seems daunting at the outset, especially for someone new to research. What if I choose incorrectly, accidentally proceed with a method that doesn't embrace the rich and meaningful context that I strive for? I mentioned Smith's (1999, p. 169) description of research methodology in my reflexive journal entry dated February 13, 2025:

> Smith (1999) made an excellent description of the role methodology has in research. The purpose of it being to frame the research questions to determine the set of instruments and methods to be used to answer it. I think I've been over complicating the methodology this entire time. I understand (this) about (that), (this) is what I will do to show my understandings.

The research aim and questions of the present study came to light from an inquiry into my own ontological experiences as a wahine Māori owner/operator in the hospitality industry. Those personal perceptions motivated the conducting of this study. I critically analyse my own ontological and epistemological assumptions below to dictate the most appropriate methodological approaches and processes to answer the research questions.

3.4 Researcher Positionality

A common debate amongst researchers is how much their positionality determines the research process at hand. Ikram and Kenayathulla (2022) argue that the positivist, quantitative researcher automatically holds the position of an outsider, due to their research being objective and observation-focused. As noted above, this limits their interactions and/or relationships with their participants and study variables.

However, does my decision to adopt an interpretivist, qualitative approach automatically make me an insider? What is "Māori enough" to be considered an insider? I whakapapa Māori, know my pepeha, and can use Māori kupu in certain situations. I have owned and operated hospitality businesses throughout my career. However, I have not implemented a Māori framework in organisational management, one grounded in tikanga and wairua, like the participants in this research have. Nor am I fluent in reo Māori. Is this what a researcher identity crisis feels like?

At this research progressed, I practised reflexivity to demonstrate the power relations within researcher-participant assumptions and relations, and to navigate the insider–outsider tensions I experienced. I grounded my approach in Māori foundations such as whakapapa, tikanga, and utu to community to ensure the research reflected a Māori worldview.

3.4.1 Positionality in Qualitative Research

Holmes (2020) suggests that universities and in some cases supervisors may be under the assumption that the novice researcher is already aware of their positionality, and can confidently reflect such in writing, however it was rarely the case in Holmes's experience. Rowe (2014) defines positionality as the perception and standpoint that a researcher possesses when conducting research. It provides motivational intentions for how the researcher choses to interact with their participants and/or study variables and the qualitative research processes and approaches that will guide the direction of the study (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Yip, 2024).

Holmes (2020) suggests that novice researchers could identify their positionality by becoming aware of their existing ontological and epistemological assumptions of the phenomenon under study and then locate themselves within three areas regarding it:

> Positionality is normally identified by locating the researcher about three areas: (1) the subject under investigation, (2) the research participants, and (3) the research context and process … Some aspects of positionality are culturally ascribed or generally regarded as being fixed, for example, gender, race, skin-color, nationality. Others, such as political views, personal life-history, and experiences, are more fluid, subjective, and contextual. (p. 2)

A successful account of locating oneself within the three areas should encourage the researcher to further identify and address any bias and subjectivity of epistemologies and phenomena. Adu-Ampong and Adams (2020) suggest that the more the researcher explores and gains comprehension of their own positionality, the more they become aware of their own

potential biases, which they can take accountability for, increasing the reliability of their analysis and findings.

There are multifaceted aspects of positionality that influence the research process; most commonly, it informs the individual's stance and existing perceptions on the situation. However, it should also inform whether the researcher considers themselves to be an insider or an outsider regarding the topic at hand.

3.4.2 Insider–Outsider Debate

Savin-Baden and Major (2013) advise that a strong positionality statement should include a comprehensive description of the researcher's perceptions and worldviews, including how these would potentially influence the process and their chosen position regarding their selected participants. In other words, the researcher needs to state whether they consider themselves an insider or an outsider.

An outsider/etic positionality is generally on the quantitative side and situated within a realist perspective. This position aims to account for an objective view of participant phenomena under the assumption of a culturally neutral, pre-defined reality that can be tangibly observed (Nagar & Geiger, 2007). Merton (1972) offers a simple definition of the insider-versus-outsider dynamic: insiders are members of the specific group(s) selected for the study, whereas outsiders are not.

The inherent tensions in the insider–outsider debate influence research validity, rigour and reliability. Although the insider might find it easier gaining access and trust, the outsider is more likely to be free from bias because they can emotionally separate themselves from the context at hand (Htong Kham, 2024).

Hellawell (2006) warns that being too emotionally close to the participants and context has the potential to disrupt the objective interpretation of data. Merriam et al. (2001) challenge this perception and argue that a completely objective stance towards research method doesn't allow for the rich, contextual, and meaningful data that comes from embracing the worldviews of one's participants. Objectivity, depending on the research aim, can lead to flat, one-dimensional findings and discussions.

Fetterman (2008) describes the insider/emic positionality as situated within a relational, cultural perspective. The researcher should acknowledge the epistemological behaviours and actions of the participants as relative to their own. Ideally this should include contextual accounts of familiarity according to the researcher's prior knowledge.

In exploring my own positionality, I found myself asking the following questions: Where do these insider and outsider tensions lie in my case? Does the ability to whakapapa Māori automatically make me an insider? Will the fact that I don't actively practise tikanga and wairua in my organisational management negate that? Do I need to reo Māori with fluency to engage in kinship with my participants?

Merriam et al. (2001) acknowledged the difficulty of identifying where the insiders and outsiders begin and end:

> More recent discussions of insider/outsider status have unveiled the complexity inherent in either status and have acknowledged that the boundaries between the two positions are not all that clearly delineated. In the real world of data collection, there is a good bit of slippage and fluidity between these two states. (p. 405)

I therefore decided to adopt a more fluid understanding of insider–outsider positions. This approach resonates with my personal, social, and cultural experiences. It has the potential to generate cultural and social resonances with my participants that could result in shared kinship experiences. However, I also understand that they will have perceptions, difficulties, and differences that I will not have experienced or have any prior knowledge about. Here, in alignment with Kaupapa Māori principles, I practised reflexivity to gain a more comprehensive and respectful understanding of participants' ontologies and epistemological phenomena.

3.4.3 Reflexivity

Lumsden and Winter (2014) describe reflexivity as a methodological approach that allows for the generation of knowledge in relation to the researcher's own worldviews, societal positions, and cultural experiences. Fenge et al. (2019) stresses the importance of this approach in qualitative social studies, especially they entail an insider's positionality, by requiring the researcher to be critically self-reflective over their own emotions and potential bias to enhance reliability.

An insider's approach to qualitative research gains much criticism in the academic space due to its subjective nature (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Merriam et al., 2001). Quantitative researchers often criticise the validity of qualitative findings due to a suspicion of bias and the potential inability to emotionally separate oneself from the context under study (Hellawell, 2006; Zampini et al., 2021).

To combat the criticism of insider's bias, I practised reflexivity throughout the entire research process to ensure rigour and reliability. Watt (2015) notes that the researcher is the primary

“instrument” of data collection and analysis methods. Practising reflexivity in a self-critical way allows researchers to become aware of their own beliefs and experiences, and how they could influence what they are experiencing. Reflexivity allowed me to show caution in consideration of the phenomenon under study and examine the ways my own behaviour may be impacting the inquiry, so I could acknowledge and take responsibility for them (May & Perry, 2014).

Due to this thesis being situated in a Kaupapa Māori context, the ability to navigate through the tensions of insider–outsider positionalities in a reflexive and fluid manner is crucial for ensuring ethical and culturally affirmative research approaches and processes (Black et al., 2023).

I do consider myself an insider, because I whakapapa Māori. I can relate to the participants and context culturally; those ontological assumptions drove the motivation to conduct this study. However, at times I also consider myself to be an outsider. Although I share strong relational values, I also understand that there will be perceptions and experiences that are new to me, and that the feelings and emotions bound to them are someone else’s and not my own. I am okay with not being one position or the other and have chosen to embrace a more fluid approach to whatever context or phenomenon may arise. By remaining reflexive, I can take accountability for any power dynamics and potential biases and maintain the integrity and mana of my participants and their experiences, without letting my insider status misrepresent their perceptions and mātauranga.

3.5 Māori Methodological Foundations

Mana, wairua, utu, manaakitanga are only a handful of the multifaceted concepts connected by whakapapa that have guided Māori for millennia (Mead, 2003; Mikaere, 2007b). They are the very foundations of mātauranga Māori and of Kaupapa Māori research. Smith (2015b) briefly discusses the principle of whakapapa, not only in relation to Māori academic discourse, but also within the context of researcher and participant identity, and each individual’s positionality within the research space.

Smith (2015b) argues that the Western perspective on identity leans too closely towards hegemonic inclinations to comprehensively understand the complexities and interconnected facets of whakapapa in regard to identity and positionality within land and place:

> [Māori] identity is also inextricably bound to whānau and whenua relationships, to the marae and the value system and language which holds these things together. The move away from pan-Māori approaches to political and economic development and the

> reassertion of whānau, hapū and iwi criteria have required a re-orientation by all Māori back to the iwi. (p. 48)

Previous Western perceptions of te ao Māori in academia failed to capture the sense of utu and kaitiakitanga for the community and participants involved in the research. Smith (2015b) argues for a more transformative and culturally understanding lens:

> What Māori people have, as with other indigenous people is a distinct knowledge tradition which lies outside western views of knowledge. It is still located in a cultural framework and lived by real people. I certainly believe that coming from a Māori conceptual framework makes spaces for new ways of looking at and seeking understandings of some of the research issues we confront in our work. (p. 50)

With this in mind, I intend to apply the traditions of mātauranga to develop and utilise Kaupapa Māori frameworks best suited to determine the multifaceted aspects of operational and organisational success within Māori businesses and communities, aspects that work outside of the positivist, top-down approach of typical Western organisations.

3.5.1 Indigenous Ontologies

Indigenous approaches to academic research were born out of resilience and retaliation against traditional European depictions of societies that were beyond their comprehension (Mutu, 2020; Smith, 2007). The earliest published research of Māori was conducted by British missionaries (e.g., Best, 1982). Wilson et al. (2022) notes that research has been used a tool for colonisers to shape how Indigenous peoples are portrayed, essentially forcing them into the role of "the other".

Indigenous research methodologies counter these perceptions by challenging the dominance of Western paradigms and how they have inaccurately influenced perceptions of Indigenous peoples as a means to further marginalise their ontological and epistemological experiences (Smith, 2016; Wilson et al., 2022).

Indigenous researchers heed the call to recover and revitalise their mātauranga, their traditional ontological and epistemological structures, and to engage in and develop meaningful and transformative research with and for their community and whenua. Smith (2015a) encourages Indigenous researchers to utilise paradigms that centre their unique worldviews, arguing this enables culturally relevant engagement between researcher and participants and allows for more appropriate analyses and interpretations that accurately reflect participants' realities. Previous Western research "on" Māori has negated this step, prioritising the researchers' own

perceptions of the participants' experiences, which stem from a place of outsider bias. As Wilson et al. (2022) explain:

> An Indigenous research paradigm holds central Indigenous peoples and their communities, which differs from a Euro-Western research lens that positions them at the research margins (Pidgeon, 2018; Smith, 2012). An Indigenous research paradigm is also an act of reclaiming and restoring traditional Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge while simultaneously including contemporary knowledge and realities. (p. 381)

Lambert (2014) suggests Indigenous research includes four distinctive dimensions:

1. It focuses on issues of local concern rather than being reliant on Euro-Western theory to define the research;
2. It is contextually bound, and therefore, produces relevant and meaningful knowledge grounded in local experiences;
3. It can utilise both Indigenous and Western theories; and
4. An Indigenous research paradigm informs assumptions about reality, knowledge, and values.

Based on Wilson et al.'s (2022) and Lambert's (2014) guidelines for conducting appropriate Indigenous research, I aim to utilise the expertise of Māori researchers to develop and determine the methods and theoretical frameworks that can best answer the research questions and capture the meaningful experiences of my participants within that sector.

3.5.2 Tikanga in Kaupapa Māori Research

This section demonstrates how the aforementioned tikanga values can be utilised as a methodological framework of ethical inquiry that provides contextual meaning to pakihi Māori interests.

Tikanga has acted as a protocol that protects the affairs and interests of Māori for over a thousand years, and it continues to act as a state of protection in our modern society (Burns et al., 2024). Māori have utilised tikanga to express their political interests throughout Aotearoa's history, and scholars have noted how Europeans have failed to recognise and acknowledge the existence of these cultural differences, resulting in cultural assimilation (B. Jones et al., 2010; R. Jones et al., 2006).

When British settlers arrived in Aotearoa, their Western hegemonic lens created immediate tension, as they failed to comprehend indigeneity or recognise tikanga as a valid system of law (Grey, 1885; Mikaere, 2005). However, despite European colonisation, Māori values and practices have remained resilient. This resistance to assimilation is increasingly reflected in the growing body of Kaupapa Māori research in academic literature.

R. Jones et al. (2006) and Smith (1999, 2015a) propose that tikanga serves as an appropriate code of ethical conduct for Māori, prioritising Māori affairs and interests. The application of tikanga within a research context empowers Māori researchers and their communities of enquiry to operate ethically and authentically within Western-dominated institutions.

3.5.3 Motivational Context behind Kaupapa Māori Research

Researchers have historically held a negative reputation among Māori and Indigenous communities. This section examines the reasons behind those trust issues and identifies an alternative methodological approach to research, grounded in a Māori values system.

Orthodox research practices have historically ignored the sociocultural contexts in which they are undertaken. Consequently, such research developed a negative reputation because it ignored tikanga Māori. (Henry & Pene, 2001; Henry & Poyser, 2024) Kaupapa Māori research addresses this shortcoming; it is research undertaken by Māori, for Māori. As a result, it is informed by tikanga, which is itself rooted in a values system and practices that are largely foreign to non-Māori.

Kaupapa Māori research inherently challenges Eurocentric academic approaches. It actively decolonises methodologies that have historically framed indigeneity through a Western, monotheistic lens (Smith, 1999). Smith (2015a) acknowledges the suppression of Māori cultural practices as a direct byproduct of colonisation, which delegitimised Māori in every aspect of life spiritually, economically, socially, and academically by attempting to remove constructs of tikanga, kaupapa, mātauranga, reo, and te ao Māori.

Furthermore, Smith (2015b) critiques the selective appropriation of Māori culture. She questions why core values and epistemological processes were systematically stripped from Māori identity, while more attractive or performative elements, such as haka, art, and waiata were retained and appropriated as New Zealand's national symbols after the 1930s. This highlights a dynamic where indigeneity is only permitted space in modern society when it can be defined and controlled by the coloniser Mead (2003).

This thesis, and the methodological processes chosen, challenges the cultural research paradigm of the other. Ultimately, it aims to highlight and empower Indigenous perspectives of their subjective realities by utilising their respective values system as a legitimate form of ethical inquiry.

3.5.4 Tikanga and Kaupapa Māori Researcher Conduct

Gaining trust from Māori participants requires careful consideration and preparation in order to foster meaningful and reciprocal relationships. In this subsection, the discussion is centred on Smith's (1999, 2006) community-up approach to identify appropriate researcher conduct within Kaupapa Māori research. This approach is grounded in tikanga, reflecting the legitimacy of te ao Māori and tino rangatiratanga over the orthodoxies of non-Māori academic research. It ensures that interactions between the researcher and participants are conducted in a manner that is both ethical and culturally appropriate.

The values that should guide Kaupapa Māori research identified by Smith (2006, p. 12) are:

- **Aroha ki te tangata**, which emphasises respect for the people you intend to collaborate with. This is demonstrated by allowing participants to define their availability and space on their own terms, rather than dictating the interview or meeting conditions for them.
- **He kanohi kitea**, which translates to "the seen face". This value emphasises the importance of meeting face-to-face. Following the principle of meeting participants on their own terms, it shows respect by making the effort to meet them in person. In contrast, the traditional academic approach of initiating contact by immediately sending formal consent papers and ethical guidelines is inappropriate and disrespectful, as it assumes collaboration without any prior establishment of a relationship or research accountability.
- **Titiro, whakarongo ... kōrero** – look, listen, then maybe, when it is called for, speak. This value emphasises the action of observing and listening with respect and intent. It is an immersive practice of paying attention and appreciating what is being shared, rather than speaking over participants or dictating the process. This value prevents the researcher from positioning themselves above the participants, offering a more empowering atmosphere for conducting research.
- **Manaaki ki te tangata** is to share and host with generosity. This value sets the pace for the research as an actively collaborative approach and allows knowledge to flow both ways. It includes the utu aspects of reciprocity, such as sharing the analysis results and being open and transparent with participants. It allows them to maintain sovereignty

over their own data and how they are presented, ensuring their perceptions are shared with consent so that the research uplifts their perspective rather than further marginalising them.

- **Kia tūpato** means to be cautious. This involves being reflexive and culturally safe regarding the research and positionalities.
- **Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata** is founded on the concepts of mana and manaakitanga. It advocates the importance of not trampling on the mana or dignity of a person. Māori are a very proud and determined people (McGeorge, 1993). The researcher must be cautious about how they interact with Māori people and taonga. Trampling on someone's mana is one of the highest forms of disrespect in Māori culture.
- **Kia māhaki** means be humble and avoid flaunting knowledge as a form of power over the participants. Kaupapa Māori research is grounded in the ethical values of empowerment and finding ways to uplift Māori participants and communities (Smith, 1999). The researcher should be generous when sharing their knowledge in a collaborative manner, avoiding any arrogance or power fluctuations that could disrupt the empowerment process.

It is evident that te ao Māori is a multifaceted web of interconnected values that must be understood via a relational and subjective scope. Kaupapa Māori research is grounded in these same values and offers a legitimate, ethical, and culturally safe means to conduct research with, for, and by Māori. The direct purpose of this kaupapa, and its way of developing mātauranga, is to offer transformative and practical applications for researchers and participants to utilise in a collaborative approach.

I adopted this approach when investigating pakihi Māori in the hospitality and tourism sectors to better understand the epistemologies and perspectives of wāhine Māori regarding the successes and challenges of operating their respective businesses.

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis

This final section outlines the chosen data collection and analytical methods employed to achieve the research aim. While I have previously noted my apprehension regarding data collection due to my novice status as a qualitative Māori researcher, the process of writing this chapter has illuminated vital methodological guidelines that support and validate my chosen techniques.

During the development of the literature review, it became evident that identifying a multifaceted methodological approach capable of empowering the perceptions and social experiences of my participants was critical. I frequently reflected on how to accurately determine and measure success for pakihi Māori. Within Western institutions, success is typically measured through the narrow lens of operational performance and financial profit. Applying this utilitarian scale to pakihi Māori, however, would be profoundly limiting and would fail to capture the holistic kaupapa of such organisations. The measurement of economic success applied needed to authentically reflect the specific endeavours and values of the participants. When I began to research Māori enterprises, it quickly became clear that their interests are multifaceted, prioritising a collective ethic of care for their people, the environment, and the whenua upon which they operate.

3.6.1 Relational Engagement and Kaupapa Māori

The primary purpose of undertaking a methodological approach grounded in Kaupapa Māori is to cultivate meaningful, reciprocal relationships with the participants. Such research operates as a partnership between the researcher and the community, ensuring participants are granted an empowering voice to articulate their own concerns and perceptions. Upon completing the third edition of Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2021), I documented the resulting emotional and epistemological shifts in my reflexive journal, in an entry dated March 21, 2025:

> I think I'm starting to get it. There's a notable tension that Smith (1999) mentions towards the end, between being a researcher and an activist. Seems similar to the fluid nature of insider/outsider positions. The most crucial point that Smith (1999) seems to point out is to 'get the story right and tell the story well'. It seems Indigenous peoples have had their mātauranga told on behalf of someone else since … forever. It's almost always wrong or misguided. Not even just by the Westerners but it could even be by one of our own, by me? I can't get this wrong. I need to be careful and remember that this is their story, not mine.

To navigate this tension and extend trustworthiness, I drew upon the Whānau Tuatahi framework developed by B. Jones et al. (2010). Initially utilised within the health sector as a whānau-focused tool, it was designed to ensure the voices of Māori are heard, fostering a desire to reclaim tino rangatiratanga over their own pathways rather than having one dictated to them by external institutions. As B. Jones et al. (2010) explain, "Key to this methodology is the tailoring of research practices to the needs and aspirations of the participants, and through genuine

engagement with the community as a partnership for research i.e. 'by, with, and for' Māori" (p. 2).

The most appropriate approach for the present study is therefore one that builds and empowers subjective perceptions, applying a framework specifically modified to my participants' unique interests. Te Whare Tapa Whā has proven to be a highly reliable model for addressing Māori wellbeing, and its facets have been adapted here to create a methodological framework capable of measuring the success of pakihi Māori. By purposefully integrating Coates et al.'s (2023) Indigenous Institutional Theory, this research operationalises Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima model. This dual approach establishes a rigorous, multifaceted methodology that deliberately decentres Western operational assumptions and prioritises collective Māori interests.

3.6.2 Positionality and Research Participants

My insider positionality, heavily informed by my professional background as a chef and my embedded experiences within hospitality operations, deeply shapes the intentionality of this research. This background demands a rigorous reflexivity: I am not merely an objective observer but an active participant within the industry I am investigating.

To operationalise the theoretical framework, participant selection was conducted utilising a purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2015). This targeted individuals who could provide highly relevant, information-rich narratives regarding the intersection of Indigenous ontology and commercial enterprise. Ultimately, five wāhine Māori entrepreneurs operating within the hospitality, tourism, and wellness sectors of Aotearoa were recruited. Their selection was driven by their demonstrable commitment to integrating tikanga and mātauranga Māori into their commercial operations, making them ideal candidates to address the core research aim. Operating across diverse landscapes, ranging from urban restaurant spaces in Auckland to ancestral tourism in Rotorua and regional ventures on Matakana Island, the five participants represented a comprehensive and highly nuanced cross-section of the industry.

While a sample size of five would be considered limited within positivist frameworks, this study prioritised depth of relational engagement over the amount of data produced. In qualitative inquiry, data saturation is understood as the point at which no new themes emerge from the data (Guest et al., 2006). However, within an Indigenous interpretivist paradigm, Malterud et al.'s (2016) concept of information power should also be considered. According to this, the more highly relevant, dense knowledge the sample holds, the fewer participants are required.

Because the selected wāhine possessed profound expertise directly aligned with the research aim, thematic saturation was achieved swiftly.

Consistently emerging themes such as kaitiakitanga and institutional resilience was solidified early in the analysis. Furthermore, conducting a focused number of interviews allowed the necessary time and space to genuinely enact whakawhanaungatanga and manaakitanga, ensuring the kōrero captured was not merely transactional but relationally robust and culturally authentic.

Participant Selection and Eligibility Criteria. To ensure the research remained grounded in authentic Māori commercial realities, eligibility was defined by cultural and industry parameters rather than Western financial metrics. The primary criterion was that participants must whakapapa Māori and be the active owners or operators of a pakihi within the hospitality and/or tourism sectors. In alignment with decolonising methodologies, colonial measurements such as blood quantum or percentage of descent were explicitly rejected; self-identified whakapapa was the sole baseline for cultural eligibility.

Furthermore, the study intentionally avoided enforcing minimum financial thresholds, such as annual profit margins or specific key performance indicators, to qualify as a successful business. This decision was made to ensure the research captured a holistic view of Māori enterprise, recognising that pakihi Māori often prioritise cultural and relational wealth over pure economic accumulation. In adherence to the principles of whakawhanaungatanga, participants were also welcome and encouraged to bring whānau members or kaimahi into the interview space if they wished, ensuring the research environment reflected collective operational realities rather than isolating the individual entrepreneur.

Recruitment and Sampling Strategy. A purposive and relational sampling approach was employed to identify and invite eligible wāhine Māori entrepreneurs. Recruitment was conducted through multiple, complementary avenues to ensure a diverse representation of the hospitality and tourism sectors. Firstly, I leveraged existing professional networks within the industry to identify potential participants. Secondly, I approached owners of local restaurants and venues that I had previously visited and patronised; this approach was inherently relational, building upon a pre-existing appreciation for their kaupapa and service.

To supplement these relational networks, I also utilised digital and institutional avenues. This included targeted searches on LinkedIn and Google, as well as accessing the online Māori Business Directory to identify pakihi operating in the relevant sectors. Initial contact was made

respectfully, outlining the purpose of the research, the commitment to protecting their mātauranga, and an invitation for a preliminary kōrero to determine their comfort and interest in participating.

3.6.3 Ethical Protocols

Navigating the intersection of Western institutional requirements and Kaupapa Māori methodology required a deliberate and careful approach. In strict adherence to the Auckland University of Technology's ethical protocols, all participants were provided with formal participant information sheets and signed consent forms were secured prior to commencing any interviews. However, I was acutely aware that such formalised academic requirements can sometimes cement power dynamics and hinder trust within Māori communities.

The true threshold for ethical consent is established through culturally appropriate methodologies. Initial contact is followed by the opportunity to build relationships kanohi ki te kanohi (face-to-face), allowing the researcher to practice reflexivity to cultural protocols and establish a foundation of reciprocal trust before any formal data collection begins.

Therefore, my interactions with the participants were intentionally grounded in tikanga to establish reciprocal, ongoing relationships through whanaungatanga. Contact was initiated through informal introductions, prioritising meeting kanohi ki te kanohi wherever possible. I enacted aroha ki te tangata and manaaki ki te tangata, often through the sharing of kai and whakapapa. The intention was to build a foundation of mutual trust that extended well beyond formal academic paperwork.

Data Collection. This consisted of semi-structured interviews and open discussions, conducted and recorded between November 2025 and February 2026 via Microsoft Teams to provide a safe, flexible environment for the participants. During these sessions, the Kaupapa Māori principle of titiro, whakarongo … kōrero was deliberately employed (Smith, 2015b). The intention was not to dictate the trajectory of the dialogue but to empower the participants, granting them the sovereignty to direct the conversation towards the phenomena they deemed most significant to their realities.

Participant Anonymity, Confidentiality, and Data Sovereignty. Traditional research practices often default to complete anonymity to protect participants. However, Svalastog and Eriksson (2010) explicitly note that Indigenous people have a strong interest in protecting their stories and knowledge. Enforcing blanket anonymity can inadvertently misappropriate this knowledge or remove the acknowledgement of their active participation and tino rangatiratanga.

Participants in this study were therefore given complete governance over their level of confidentiality. Participants could choose to be fully named, attributing their insights to their specific business and iwi. Or they could retain the absolute right to use an alias or de-identify specific comments. Furthermore, participants will be provided with their transcripts and draft findings, allowing them to adjust or amend any information prior to submission to ensure their stories and knowledge are protected.

Data Protection and Storage. To ensure the physical and digital safety of the shared mātauranga, all data were managed in strict accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee data management guidelines, overlaid with the recognition that Indigenous peoples have a strong interest in protecting their stories. During the active phase of the research, qualitative data was stored securely using NVivo software and password-protected university systems accessible only to the primary researcher and supervisory team.

Upon completion of the analysis, all digital files, audio recordings, and consent forms was transferred to a secure external hard drive for archiving. In compliance with institutional requirements, this hard drive will be stored securely for six years. Following this mandatory retention period, the data will be permanently disposed of through physical destruction, ensuring the participants' kōrero cannot be accessed or misused in the future.

3.6.4 The Interview Process and Researcher Conduct

The interview process was designed to dismantle traditional research hierarchies and empower the participants through semi-structured interviews. Guided by the necessity for culturally sensitive research, the discussions allowed participants to construct their subjective realities through their own language and shared meanings.

I remained highly reflexive throughout this process, aligning with cultural protocols to ensure the mana and dignity of the participants are never trampled. In recognition of the time, emotional labour, and mātauranga shared, the interviews conclude with a meaningful expression of utu through the provision of a koha. Rather than a standard commercial voucher, participants are gifted a handmade kete, ensuring the koha aligned authentically with the relational kaupapa of the study.

3.6.4 Data Analysis

The approach to data analysis was intentionally structured to protect the integrity of the participants' mātauranga. Complete transparency was retained by allowing each participant to review their interview transcript and granting them full governance to add, amend, or remove information. This step ensured Indigenous data sovereignty was maintained throughout the process.

Only after the participants' voices were accurately and respectfully validated were the approved transcripts imported into NVivo 15 qualitative software for thematic analysis. The data was then systematically coded in direct alignment with the interwoven principles of the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima model. This analytical strategy ensured that the resulting themes were an intentional reflection of Indigenous metrics of economic success and wellbeing, directly answering the overarching aim of the thesis.

Data Analysis: A Co-Constructed Coding Rationale. The rationale and structural steps for data analysis in this study were deeply informed by the foundational works of Indigenous scholars, notably Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Ngahuia Te Awekotuku. A central tenet of this approach was to prioritise the agency of the participants, ensuring they were actively included in the research process and that their mātauranga was handled according to their wishes.

Initially, the methodological intention was to code the data utilising concepts derived from Smith's frameworks for researching in the margins. However, in true interpretivist fashion, the analytical framework evolved dynamically during the interview phase. During our discussions, it became evident that the participants deeply valued Sir Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā model. The participants expressed excitement at the prospect of collectively expanding upon Durie's health framework to suit their specific commercial values and operational needs. Consequently, the conceptualisation of Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima was a collaborative, co-constructed effort born directly from the interview space, dictating how the participants wanted their stories presented.

Coding Steps in NVivo 15 Following data collection, this co-constructed framework guided the practical steps of thematic analysis within NVivo 15 software. The coding process followed these procedural steps:

1. **Familiarisation and Immersion:** Transcripts were read repeatedly to ensure deep familiarity with the nuances of each participant's narrative.

2. **Structural Coding:** The five dimensions of the newly developed Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima model were established as the primary structural nodes within NVivo.
3. **Iterative Thematic Coding:** The data was coded into these five nodes. However, rather than forcing data into rigid boxes, the process remained iterative. Broader thematic sub-nodes were developed beneath the five pillars to capture specific, recurring operational realities (e.g., the use of business as political leverage, or the integration of whānau as a stabilising force).
4. **Participant Alignment:** The final thematic structure was continuously reviewed against the original intent of the participants, ensuring the coding framework accurately reflected the values and expansions they had articulated during the interviews.

3.7 Summary and Conclusion

The methodological framework outlined in this chapter was constructed as an ethical and intellectual imperative, designed to honour the epistemologies and subjective realities of the participating wāhine Māori entrepreneurs. By adopting an Indigenous interpretivist paradigm and adhering strictly to Kaupapa Māori protocols, this research was able to successfully bypass the extractive tendencies of traditional, positivist social science. This chapter has also detailed the rigour applied throughout the research journey, from the selection of participants and the management of semi-structured interviews to the systematic thematic analysis of the transcripts.

The methodology of this research is more than a set of tools; it also serves as a relational vessel. Throughout the research process, the application of tikanga, specifically the values of he kanohi kitea and manaaki ki te tangata, ensured that the participants were treated as the authoritative voices of the research. The reflexive journal maintained alongside this design provides insights into the researcher's own positionality, documenting the navigating of insider–outsider tensions and the continual refinement of the research approach to ensure cultural safety and epistemological integrity.

Ultimately, this chapter has demonstrated that for a study focused on pakihi Māori, the methodology must mirror the culture of the participants. The rigour of this study lies not in the adherence to neutral, Western-defined objectivity, but in the commitment to relational accountability and Indigenous data sovereignty. By ensuring that the research was conducted by Māori, for Māori, and with Māori, the study upholds the integrity of the mātauranga shared.

The research design provides a robust, authentic, and culturally grounded foundation from which to interpret the empirical findings.

Consequently, the next chapter transitions from the theoretical and methodological domains into the empirical one, presenting the thematic narratives and lived experiences of the study participants. The empirical data reveal how these wāhine entrepreneurs navigate the complex landscape of the hospitality and tourism sectors, offering deep insights into the intersection of Indigenous leadership, resilience, and economic sovereignty. This chapter concludes with the word of the late Kiingi Tūheitia: “Be who we are, live our values, speak our reo, care for our mokopuna, our awa, our maunga, just be Māori. Māori all day, every day, we are here, we are strong” (Whareaitu, 2024).

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter articulated the methodological architecture of this thesis, establishing an Indigenous interpretivist paradigm that prioritises relational accountability and Indigenous data sovereignty. Having defined how the research was conducted, this chapter moves into the empirical domain, presenting the lived experiences and narratives of the five wāhine Māori entrepreneurs who participated in this study. The findings articulated herein represent the operationalisation of the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima framework developed in Chapter 3, moving beyond abstract theory to demonstrate how tikanga and mātauranga function as the active drivers of business strategy, leadership, and operational success within the Aotearoa hospitality and tourism sectors.

This chapter does not treat the participants' narratives as mere data points to be extracted and codified. Rather, it acknowledges their stories as mātauranga, the living knowledge that challenges the hegemonic assumptions of Western business practice (Smith, 2016). By adopting an interpretivist lens, the study aims to present these narratives in a manner that honours the authentic voices of the participants while critically acknowledging the researcher's own influences and biases. This commitment to reflexivity is central to the analytical process. Rather than attempting to achieve an unattainable objectivity, this chapter documents the ongoing internal negotiation of the researcher's positionality. This approach creates a space where the intersection of personal perspective and participant reality can be acknowledged, navigated, and utilised to produce a deeper, more contextually grounded analysis.

The chapter is structured to provide both a contextual introduction to the participants and a thematic exploration of their operational realities. Following the mihi whakatau, the chapter presents the narratives through the lenses of the chosen theoretical frameworks, highlighting how resilience, tino rangatiratanga, and collective wellbeing are not merely aspirational values but the daily reality of these pakihi owners.

Ultimately, these findings serve as the essential evidence base for the subsequent discussion in Chapter 5, where the broader implications of these themes, such as the operationalisation of Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima, are critically synthesised to offer a transformative view of Indigenous economic performance in Aotearoa.

4.2 Mihi Whakatau

Table 4,1 introduces the five wāhine Māori entrepreneurs who generously shared their journeys for this research. In accordance with the ethical application approved for this research, all participants provided explicit, informed consent to be identified by their names and respective businesses. Their diverse experiences across tourism, hospitality, and wellness provide a rich tapestry of insights into the integration of tikanga and te ao Māori in contemporary business in Aotearoa.

Table 4.1

Participant Profiles

Participant	Profile
Renee Taylor (Renee)	With whakapapa to Tauranga Moana and the iwi of Ngāti Ranginui, Renee is the owner and operator of Salt Aotearoa. Her enterprise offers a freediving tourism experience that prioritises a holistic connection to the moana, emphasising Indigenous stewardship of marine environments.
Helen Paul-Smith (Helen)	Representing Tapuika and Ngāi Te Rangi, Helen is the co-owner of Oku. Her business specialises in native herbal rongoā while adhering strictly to tikanga and mātauranga to ensure that the healing properties of rongoā are accessible to a wider audience and maintain cultural integrity.
Diva Gillies (Diva)	With whakapapa to Ngāti Whātua, Diva co-owns Beau, a restaurant located in Ponsonby, Auckland. Beau serves as a modern hospitality space that intentionally fosters human diversity, blending culinary excellence with an inclusive, community-centric atmosphere.
Dr Keri Wikitera (Keri)	Affiliated with Tūhourangi and Ngāti Whakaue, Dr Wikitera is a shareholder in and consultant researcher for Te Puia and Whakarewarewa – The Living Village Tours in Rotorua. Keri descends from the first Māori guides of Rotorua and carries a profound ancestral legacy in Māori tourism and cultural preservation.
Tangiwai Manihera-Palmer	With whakapapa to Te Moutere o Matakana, Tangiwai operates Mo's Matakana Island Tours. This emerging tourism venture provides historical

(Tangiwai)	narratives of Matakana Island, grounded firmly in tikanga and the values of te ao Māori.

A significant, yet unplanned outcome of the recruitment process was that all research participants were wāhine Māori. I decided to interpret it as a tohu, a meaningful alignment of time and intent. While the initial research design included tāne Māori pakihi owners who ultimately became unavailable due to external commitments, the resulting all-female sample shifted the research atmosphere.

Consequently, the concepts of mana and mana wahine emerged as central, unifying themes, fostering a spiritually resonant and supportive environment for the sharing of kōrero.

4.3 Tikanga and Kaupapa Māori in the Business Context

As established in the literature review, tikanga functions as a sophisticated ethical framework and Indigenous system of law that has guided Māori for more than a millennium (Henry & Pene, 2001; Te Aho, 2007). For the participants in this study, utilising tikanga as a guiding protocol was not a choice but a necessity for protecting their mana and interests. This adherence ensures their commercial activities remain resonant with their specific ontological and epistemological realities.

To maintain the sanctity of these values, I adopted Smith's (2015b) "community-up" approach to researcher conduct. By upholding these values, I sought to provide a culturally encompassing environment where the participants feel valued and comfortable. I made the following entry in my reflexive journal on November 1, 2025:

> In practice, I need to maintain a degree of flexibility with scheduling, acknowledging that their time and space takes precedence over the research timeline. Try to spend the first 15–20 minutes to whanaungatanga, share whakapapa, pepeha, mihi; all of that. Try not to look at it as just small talk, this exchange acts as a foundational requirement. I need to build trust, create a safe and supportive space so they can speak freely and deeply.

4.3.1 Mana and Manaaki

The Emergence of Mana Wahine as the Mauri of Pakihi. For Renee, the mauri of Salt Aotearoa is explicitly grounded in the facilitation of mana wahine. Renee's journey from a personal passion for freediving into running a commercial enterprise illustrates how Māori business

models often prioritise collective empowerment over individual profit. This aligns with Harmsworth's (2005) assertion that Māori values-based businesses operate in accordance with realities that resonate with their specific cultural identities. Renee articulated a holistic guardianship that extended beyond environmentalism:

> It offers amazing side effects by embedding these values into business … the kind of main ones that we fall on to help guide us is kaitiakitanga. Which I think gets overused but for us it means to be guardians of ourselves as much as our taiao … We've got mana wahine obviously, everything's through that feminine powerful essence and empowering all wāhine.

Crucially, Renee emphasised that this centring of mana wahine is not exclusionary but rather a restorative act designed to recalibrate historical imbalances:

> It's not about being like this club of women that boys aren't allowed into. We have many male instructors, many partners, everything. They're all involved … but it's for the wāhine, so it's [about] how do we become confident to share the space and restore that balance.

In this context, kaitiakitanga is reimagined not just as environmental stewardship but as the protection of whakapapa and identity. This sentiment was echoed by Helen, who observed that the leadership of wāhine Māori provides a unique "flair" and mauri to the organisational structure of contemporary pakihi. Helen noted that while tāne remain supportive within the mahi, the current momentum in Māori business is significantly "wahine driven". This observation is in alignment with the work of Henry and Pene (2001), who demonstrate that tikanga acts as an ethical guide, allowing wāhine to assert their mana within commercial frameworks while upholding ancestral values.

Mana and Tino Rangatiratanga. The inherent mana articulated by the participants was frequently inseparable from their role as guardians of their whakapapa, whenua, and tino rangatiratanga. Keri, a descendant of Te Paea Hinerangi (c.1834–1911), known as Guide Sophia, described the tourism operations at Te Puia and Whakarewarewa as a continuation of an ancestral legacy rather than a modern invention. This reflects Mahuika's (2015) contention that Māori perspectives on history and place are deeply embedded in a connection that values and protects one's location in time. Keri explained: "Every steam vent, every piece of that whenua is laid in tribal stories … It's really important that we maintain the mana of our stories, and our guides and the people they operate with."

By referencing her whānau as historically some of the most successful entrepreneurs in the country, Keri illustrates how economic success is a vehicle for tino rangatiratanga. She expanded on this by framing historical tourism not just as hospitality, but as an engine for political autonomy:

> My research found that we were probably the richest tribe in the country … our wharenui had golden sovereigns on there instead of pāua shells. We were charging a lot of money for largely English tourists to go across the terraces … The tourism industry for us provides a bit of leverage, a lot of kaha to challenge the Crown on environmental matters … If we did not have tourism, none of that would be there.

As noted by Te Aho (2007), tikanga functions as a sophisticated system of law; here, Keri uses the leverage of the tourism industry to enforce political and environmental protection for her iwi.

This drive for self-determination is further reflected in the kōrero of Tangiwai. As an emerging business owner on Matakana Island, her mana is tied to the reclamation of narratives from external tourism operators who lack whakapapa to the land. Tangiwai's insistence that "only we can" tell these stories aligns with the community-up approach advocated by Smith (2006), emphasising that the right to represent Māori history must remain with those who are culturally and genealogically connected to it:

> There were other tourism companies that would operate from the island but they bought in people from the outside … They can't tell our stories and history for us. Only we can, because it relates to our ancestors and their experiences on the land. Not theirs.

Political Manaaki. While the majority of participants focused on the internal protection of mana, Diva offered a provocative interpretation of manaaki as a tool for cultural and political disruption. In the affluent setting of Auckland's Ponsonby, Diva used her restaurant Beau to challenge the "privileged majority", ensuring that her identity remains "unapologetically Māori":

> I've become more and more unapologetically Māori … businesses and hospitality aren't there, designed to make you feel completely comfortable. That's why we have "Toitū Te Tiriti" written on the window … I'd be happy if we sent someone home and shifted their cultural perspective a little bit.

Diva actively resisted the expectation that hospitality must be a passive, sanitised service for affluent consumers. She noted the importance of dismantling the anonymity of wealth that often dictates restaurant culture:

> I think it's really easy to go out and be disconnected from the kai that you're eating, the people that are serving you, especially in wealthy neighbourhoods … I don't think you should feel comfortable just because you're paying money to dine somewhere. If even just 50 people shifted their perspective a little bit, [that's a positive].

Diva's approach exemplifies what Ejnavarzala (2019) describes as the protection of interests in accordance with one's own epistemological realities. By writing "Toitū Te Tiriti" on the window of her business, she ensured that this act of manaaki was also an active assertion of sovereignty. As argued by Kawharu et al. (2024), this connection to tikanga allows Māori to protect their mana in modern spaces, ensuring that their presence is felt, respected, and uncompromising.

4.3.2 Wairua, Mauri, and Kaitiakitanga

While the previous section explored the emergence of mana in the participants' kōrero, this section examines how wairua and mauri serve as the ontological foundations for kaitiakitanga within pakihi Māori. For the participants in this study, acting as a kaitiaki is an intangible yet profound responsibility that informs everything from management structures to branding. Crucially, their narratives reveal that kaitiakitanga is not merely a tool for economic leverage or a green marketing strategy. Rather, it is a multifaceted obligation that encompasses stewardship over spiritual, social, environmental, and human entities (Spiller et al., 2011).

A Symbiotic Relationship. For Helen, wairua, mauri, and kaitiakitanga existed in a symbiotic relationship, reflected in both her social and environmental kaupapa. Her approach to business exemplifies the Māori worldview of interconnectedness, where the health of the community is inseparable from the health of the land. Helen described a model of "circular manaaki", structurally embedding these values into her daily operations through a dedicated framework:

> We run our business with what's called a quadruple bottom line … So a lot of businesses, the bottom line is profitability, but because we're a Māori-owned business with a focus on mātauranga Māori, we cover things culturally, socially, environmentally, and profitability … We try to partner up with iwi and whānau where possible … Our kaupapa from the very start was to always try to give back more to Papatūānuku than we take from her.

To ensure this cultural pillar remains authentic and robust, Helen relied heavily on traditional structures of accountability rather than Western corporate governance: "My uncle, I don't really put out anything unless he gives me the green light … He sat on that interview with me [for the international business awards] to tautoko me and my business."

Helen's perception of kaitiakitanga moves beyond simple conservation. It is an active pursuit of longevity for both people and place. By ensuring that her business gives back more to Papatūānuku than it takes, she operationalises the ethical guidance of tikanga as described by Mead (2003), treating Papatūānuku not as a resource to be exploited, but as an ancestor to be cared for.

Political Kaitiakitanga. In contrast to Helen's focus on medicinal reciprocity, Tangiwai's sense of kaitiakitanga was deeply political, tied to the protection of her whenua and whakapapa against external intrusion. For Tangiwai, kaitiakitanga involved protecting her holistic, self-sufficient "way of life" on Matakana Island from extractive corporate practices. She described the abundance that allowed her community to remain autonomous:

> We're very lucky on the island. There are no supermarkets, gas stations or anything like that. But they're pretty self-sustaining. You can catch and cook your own meals. There are always lots of fish available. Kina, pipis and oysters by the bucket … We've got really good soil there.

This autonomy makes the threat of outside exploitation even more visceral:

> Other people from the outside shouldn't profit from the land and the manaaki of our people. It should go back to them … I want to give my cousins sustainable work. That allows them to sustain our way of life … The other local work available is as a dredger for outsourced construction companies … which means they have to destroy our seabed and the way we live.

Healing the Hinengaro. Renee offered a further expansion of kaitiakitanga, suggesting that it must also include guardianship of the self. She critiqued the common simplification of the term, arguing that its true depth lies in hinengaro and healing:

> They all come for a spiritual reason or for a reason of healing. We go around the room before every single one of our experiences and it's like therapy … People come to deal with loss or depression – to deal with their mental health … Wai is naturally healing, so we help them use the moana as a healing tool.

To solidify this practice within a recognised framework, Renee explicitly linked her operations to Indigenous health models, proving that cultural wellbeing can be actively measured in a commercial setting:

> We all know that the ocean is basically medicine, it's like rongoā … but people like to see the evidence, so we created a measurement tool called Te Raukawa. It's a kawakawa leaf that goes off Te Whare Tapa Whā, but it adds a couple of other veins, and we use it as a reflection tool.

By positioning her tourism enterprise as a space for therapy and quantifiable healing, Renee demonstrated that pakihi Māori can act as a modern conduit for traditional practices.

4.3.3 Tikanga as a Future-focused Framework

The collective experiences of these wāhine demonstrate that tikanga is not a relic of the past, but a foundational guidance structure that shapes the future. As Mead (2003) posits, tikanga has acted as an ethical foundation for over a millennium. Here, it provides the framework for a Māori future where pakihi serves the interests of the whānau, hapū, and the next generation. Whether through Diva's political branding, Helen's environmental reciprocity, Tangiwai's mana for sovereignty, or Renee's spiritual healing, kaitiakitanga remains the central mechanism through which Māori entrepreneurs protect their mana and fulfil their ancestral obligations.

4.4 Māori Experiences in Pakihi Pākehā

A critical component of this research involved exploring the participants' previous experiences within Western organisational structures. My initial prediction was that these prior professional encounters would have served as a catalyst for their current kaupapa, either through a direct contrast of values or a realisation of the limitations inherent in non-Māori systems.

To analyse these cross-cultural correlations, I utilised the Indigenous Institutional Theory developed by Coates et al. (2023). This framework prioritises Indigenous voices and lived experiences, offering a sustainable means to evaluate how Māori navigate Western institutions without compromising their cultural integrity. Applying Indigenous Institutional Theory enabled me to explore whether my participants' current aspirations for their pakihi and communities were informed by the institutional gaps they previously sought to fill and/or the cultural misalignments they had to endure.

4.4.1 The Social Impact of Being Māori

The participants' upbringings reflected a diverse spectrum of connection to Māoritanga. For several participants, the journey towards business ownership was preceded by an intangible yet powerful inclination to reclaim an identity that had been obscured by urbanisation or cultural trauma. Diva, raised in an urbanised environment with whakapapa Māori on her mother's side

and British on her father's, described a sense of "cultural vertigo" – knowing she was Māori but struggling to find a sense of belonging in a predominantly Pākehā setting.

> I grew up in Tāmaki Makaurau … very urbanised and my mum didn't grow up with her father, and she grew up in a very Pākehā environment and kind of has been on a journey of feeling Māori enough in her own, and now I'm trying to take that further I guess.

Throughout her interview, Diva reflected on the internalised pressure of "not being Māori enough", a common trope that often haunts urbanised Māori. This lack of cultural validation was a hurdle she had to navigate personally before she could fully manifest her mana within her restaurant. She recounted a pivotal moment of shift:

> When we opened I was so young … I'd always kinda felt like not Māori enough in some spaces, compared to Māori in other spaces. You know? Just like, how Māori are you? And I think I've grown up with that question just so often I had internalised it. Then I met this really cool Māori woman from up north and she has so much mana … She said to me once that you whakapapa therefore you are, and then something clicked for me.

To survive the exhaustion and "cultural vertigo" of the hospitality industry, Diva relied heavily on the unpaid, emotional labour of her whānau, highlighting how pakihi Māori are frequently propped up by collective support systems rather than traditional financial capital:

> Our families were very involved from the get-go … coming home after a really shitty night or picking me up late … my dad doing dishes or my mum … just stopping by to say hi. I think that was quite stabilising in times that felt really unsteady and overwhelming … I don't know that we would've been able to do it without them.

Renee shared a parallel journey of reclamation, though her obstacles were rooted in the "negative associations" and cultural trauma experienced by her father. Raised in a household assimilated to a "Kiwi script" and disconnected from her marae, Renee initially pushed away her Māori side, viewing it through a lens of negativity that she later realised belonged to an older generation's trauma rather than her own.

> For me, I didn't grow up on my marae … I pushed away my Māori side, I didn't know where I was from … It was almost like it was naughty to talk about, it was just real negative. It was horrible. So, I grew up thinking and believing that, and it wasn't until I was older that I realised that was just dad's own trauma, not mine.

Both Diva and Renee demonstrated a profound sense of resilience. By acknowledging these initial disconnections, they have turned their pakihi into sites of active reclamation – spaces where they can be "unapologetically Māori" on their own terms.

4.4.2 Political Implications

The political climate of Aotearoa is a constantly evolving backdrop for these Māori entrepreneurs. For Diva, the gentrification of Ponsonby represents a physical and social loss, a "grief" for the Māori and Pasifika neighbourhood she once knew in the suburb. The environment made her presence in the hospitality sector feel inherently political. She described a tension between the commercial need for money and the exhaustion of standing up for her identity in a space that can feel performative:

> I feel very connected to this neighbourhood … [but] I grieve that, and then I get angry about it. Especially existing in the hospitality space because it's so performative … We need your money but how much do I want your money, cos you suck, you know? I felt like I was betraying myself and the people that I care about … But also, standing up for myself and for them is exhausting sometimes too.

To mitigate this sense of betrayal, Diva and her business partner chose to display "Toitū Te Tiriti" in their window, as noted above – a decision that served as a spiritual and political anchor, signalling to every customer that "you can't avoid who we are".

In contrast, Keri viewed political influence through a lens of historical continuity and leverage. Her tūpuna Margaret Pattison Thom (1873–1930), who was later widely known as Mākereti (or Maggie) Papakura, was also a guide and maintained personal relationships with English royalty and prime ministers, utilising those connections to share authentic Māori stories. For Keri, the commercial success of Whakarewarewa is a tool for social and environmental justice:

> Mākereti … hosted the prime minister, the kings and queens of England … the stories she told her visitors were truly authentic. She would say, this is my ancestor … So what we do at Whakarewarewa … help[s] us maintain that mana … and for the owners and people like me, they can feel really proud that their stories are being told in the same way.

However, the intersection of politics and pakihi was not always harmonious. Tangiwai described the extractive nature of Western investment, where investors sought to "milk" her business for profit while disregarding her kaupapa. Furthermore, she highlighted the devastating impact of corporate occupation on Matakana Island, where dredging and the removal of trees (which act

as tribal landmarks) are actively destroying the ecosystem her community relies on for self-sustenance:

> Other people from the outside shouldn't profit from the land and the manaaki of our people … I can't help sustain the island or our people if I'm giving most of the money to you, and you just milk us like a cow.

These diverse experiences, from Diva's political branding to Tangiwai's territorial defence, underscore that for these wāhine Māori, business is never just business. It is a multifaceted negotiation of ontological and political reality.

4.5 Pakihi Māori Human Resource Management

> E kore au e ngaro; he kākano i ruia mai i Rangiātea [I shall never be lost; for I am a seed sown in Rangiātea].

This whakataukī emphasises the inherent strength and potential within the Māori individual, something which permeated the leadership styles of the participants.

4.5.1 Branding, Authenticity, and the "Cuzzy" Economy

The participants highlighted a recurring issue: the appropriation of kupu Māori and branding by organisations that have no ethical boundaries or understanding of the whakapapa of the kupu. Helen shared her frustration with the legal battles over the term "manuka", in which international entities have sought to profit from Māori medicinal knowledge without accountability:

> They just don't care. It's just branding really, for them … They're so profit-driven … "Manuka" is our kupu for it. Anyway, it went through the courts … and there's currently a stadium somewhere in Australia called Manuka Stadium or something.

To counter this, Helen adopted a quadruple bottom line framework, balancing cultural, social, environmental, and financial pillars. This ensured that every business decision was filtered through a Māori worldview rather than just a profit and loss statement.

Tangiwai echoed this need for authenticity, offering "cuzzy" packages that provide raw, uncensored experiences of island life, rooted in a legacy rather than a sanitised tourism product. For Tangiwai, authentic branding means refusing to dilute the cultural or personal realities of her guides for the comfort of the consumer. During my in-person meeting with her, I

reflected on a tour I was given by Matua Christo. Both Tangiwai and I noted the importance of maintaining his raw narrative style, with Tangiwai sharing:

> I couldn't record any kōrero from Friday with Matua Christo unfortunately. Mainly cause there were too many swear words … But I also wasn't going to ask him to change his mannerisms, the way he presents himself or how he chooses to tell his mātauranga. That is unique to him and his experiences. Which completely goes against his kaupapa and ours.

4.5.2 Resilience through Kotahitanga and Innovation

As Coates et al. (2023) note, Indigenous resilience is often a response to the pressures of Western institutions. Renee described the cynical reality of working in a government-funded organisation where she felt she was there only to a tick a box and fill a Māori quota, rather than actively contribute. Her resilience was shown in her decision to quit everything and create a business venture that offered a safe space for all people to heal by connecting to the ocean.

Both Renee and Helen attributed their survival to kotahitanga and the support of Māori business organisations like the Poutama Trust and the Māori Women's Development Fund. This ecosystem of support allowed them to maintain a values-based practice that would otherwise be assimilated into everything else. As Helen explained:

> We've had a lot of business support through different Māori organisations like Poutama and Te Puni Kōkiri … we have that support that we can tap into when we have a Māori business. But I also wouldn't be here if it wasn't for my Māori customers … We're lucky that we've kind of got a whole ecosystem that buys into us and then we try and feed back into it.

For these participants, resilience was a relational act. It was the strength gathered from knowing that one's pakihi is part of a wider movement of Māori economic and cultural self-determination.

4.5.3 Tino Rangatiratanga: The Exercising of Sovereignty

Within the context of this research, tino rangatiratanga is explored as a practical, operational reality rather than an abstract political theory. Moana Jackson famously predicted that full sovereignty for Māori would be achieved by 2040, two centuries after the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Rapira, 2020). The participants in this study are currently modelling what that sovereignty looks like within their reality.

For Diva, tino rangatiratanga is practised through the sovereignty of the environment. By incorporating kupu Māori and political signifiers, she actively shifts the power dynamics within her restaurant. She facilitated a space where "positive discomfort" for the majority created a sanctuary of immense joy and hospitality for the minority:

> I have a family friend who is Samoan, she has a beautiful tattoo all over her … but she walks into restaurants and I see the way people look at her. I wanted to work really hard to facilitate an environment where people like her can walk in and they're just met with immense joy … And I think Māori kupu is a really easy way to do that … It may create some discomfort, but I think it's a positive discomfort … It's clearly a more culturally competent space or at least truly caring.

For Helen, sovereignty was synonymous with autonomous decision-making. It was the ability to take the driver's seat and ensure that every business choice is filtered through mātauranga Māori principles. For her, this sovereignty was an internal solution to external problems:

> How that resonates to me is sovereignty and taking ownership of your own decisions and doing things your own way … taking the driver's seat and doing things my way. I think it's all about standing in your sovereignty … Māori have taken ownership over fixing our own problems.

Finally, for Renee and Tangiwai, tino rangatiratanga was about the reclamation of space and legacy. For Renee, it was the sovereignty of the body and mind, empowering wāhine to reclaim their confidence in the moana. For Tangiwai, it was the economic sovereignty for her whānau and the preservation of her late husband's legacy on Matakana Island: "I want to use [this business] to provide sustainable work and income for all my cousins and whānau on the island. Cause when they succeed, we all do."

Tangiwai's narrative brings this chapter full circle, illustrating that tino rangatiratanga is ultimately about collective success. When Māori businesses thrive on their own terms, they provide the financial, cultural, and spiritual infrastructure necessary for the survival of their whānau, hapū, and iwi.

4.6 Summary and Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate that for the participating pakihi Māori, business operations are not disconnected from their broader cultural, spiritual, or environmental obligations. Throughout the interviews, it was evident that success is defined not

by the singular accumulation of capital but by the ability to maintain the structural integrity of the economic whare by balancing the five dimensions of Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima: Taha Ōhanga, Taha Wairua, Taha Kaupapa, Taha Whānau me te Hapori, and Whanaungatanga me te Whenua. The participants' narratives provided a vivid illustration of how tikanga acts as both an operational guide and a mechanism of resilience when navigating the challenges inherent in a Western-dominated sector.

Throughout this chapter, the pūrākau have consistently demonstrated that the participants view their businesses as extensions of their whānau, iwi, and whenua. The narratives illustrate that when these pakihi exercise tino rangatiratanga over their management strategies, they create ecosystems of resilience that benefit the collective. The reflexive engagement with these narratives has allowed for a nuanced understanding of how mātauranga is continuously adapted and applied to contemporary economic challenges, from the stewardship of marine environments to the provision of authentic cultural narratives in hospitality and tourism.

By grounding these findings in the participants' own voices, this chapter has effectively moved the research from the abstract theoretical frameworks established by the literature review and methodology chapters into the empirical domain. The themes identified, ranging from the importance of ancestral connection to the perceived radical act of prioritising community wellbeing over top-down profitability, provide a robust basis for the critical analysis of the findings that follows in the next chapter.

In conclusion, this chapter has provided empirical evidence to demonstrate that Māori hospitality and tourism enterprises are actively engaged in social innovation and the redefinition of economic success. The findings demonstrate that Māori sovereignty in the commercial sector is a living, breathing entity. They collectively act as an assertion that Māori stories, lands, and bodies belong to Māori, and that any commercial engagement with Māori, must be conducted on Māori terms.

As the whakataukī states, seeds sown in Rangiātea are flourishing through the leadership of these wāhine. They are not simply "doing business" – they are reclaiming narratives, protecting ecosystems, and ensuring that the mana of their tīpuna is carried forward into a sustainable and self-determined future. The following chapter looks at the broader implications of these findings for the Aotearoa tourism and hospitality sectors and explores models of Indigenous entrepreneurship that are both economically viable and culturally authentic.

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The empirical findings presented in the previous chapter reveal the complex, multifaceted, and deeply spiritual nature of Māori entrepreneurship as enacted by the five wāhine Māori participants. Through their lived experiences, it became evident that pakihi Māori is not merely a vehicle for economic participation, but a site of profound ontological and political praxis. This chapter seeks to synthesise these findings using the theoretical frameworks established in Chapter 2, specifically Indigenous Institutional Theory (Coates et al., 2023) and my Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima model to determine the broader implications of these narratives for the hospitality and tourism sectors.

The primary objective of this discussion is to move beyond the descriptive level of the findings to a critical level of analysis. By interrogating the participants' narratives, this chapter examines how tikanga operates as both a sophisticated ethical framework and a mechanism for political resilience. The discussion navigates the inherent tensions identified in the findings: the conflict between the participants' relational ontologies and the hegemonic, utilitarian scripts of Western organisations. Furthermore, the chapter explores participants' active reclamation of mātauranga and their redefinition of success, which redirects from traditional, Western, profit-only motives to what Helen called "a quadruple bottom-line" approach. This signals a transformative shift in the conceptualisation of Indigenous economic performance.

This chapter is structured to address the research aim by developing a critical, thematic synthesis. First, it discusses the operationalisation of relational leadership in practice, specifically focusing on how the participants reflected the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima framework. Second, it analyses the political implications of Indigenous entrepreneurship, addressing how the participants utilise their businesses to negotiate gentrification, combat extractive practices, and assert tino rangatiratanga in a contemporary colonial landscape. Third, the chapter engages in a reflexive critique of the institutional challenges faced by pakihi Māori, utilising Indigenous Institutional Theory to interpret why these entrepreneurs remain resilient in the face of structural silencing. Finally, the discussion articulates the broader implications for the Aotearoa hospitality and tourism sectors, arguing that Indigenous economic sovereignty offers a pathway towards more sustainable, culturally competent, and ethically grounded organisational models. By situating these findings within the broader academic discourse, this

chapter will offer a critical contribution to the field, reinforcing that Māori business is a vital force for cultural revitalisation and economic self-determination.

5.2 Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima: A Model for Māori Economic Success

While Indigenous Institutional Theory (Coates et al., 2023) identifies the sociopolitical limitations of New Zealand government policy and the gaps within the economy and society that restrain the interests of pakihi Māori, Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima is presented here as an analytical path forward.

It is important to clarify the origins, purpose, and analytical role of this model within this thesis. This framework is not presented as a universally validated economic theory, but rather as an exploratory, conceptual lens developed specifically to organise and make sense of the lived realities shared by the participants in this study. The dimensions of this model were not predetermined prior to data collection; rather, they emerged organically after extensive discussions with the Māori entrepreneurs. Through these interviews, it became evident that the participants' operational phenomena and perspectives aligned closely with the foundational concepts of Te Whare Tapa Whā. However, the entrepreneurs naturally adjusted and expanded upon these concepts to fit their specific commercial, social, and economic realities. Consequently, Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima represents a natural, context-specific deviation from Durie's health model to evaluate the holistic operational health of pakihi Māori.

Application in NVivo 15 Analysis. During the data analysis phase, this framework guided the thematic coding process within NVivo 15. The five dimensions of the whare were utilised as structural codes, but they were not applied in isolation. The coding framework was expanded to include broader thematic nodes capturing overarching aspects of te ao Māori, which deeply informed and intersected with the five dimensions. This fluid, iterative coding strategy ensured that the model remained a responsive analytical tool, one that genuinely reflected the entrepreneurs' requirements and cultural values, rather than constraining their narratives into rigid categories. My intention in the following subsections is to demonstrate how this framework gives structure to the participants' voices.

5.2.1 Taha Kaupapa (Organisational Purpose): The Ideological Wall

In the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima model, Taha Kaupapa represents the intellectual, emotional, and political foundation of the pakihi. While Western management theory often views mission

statements as marketing tools designed to attract a broad consumer base, the participants in this study utilised kaupapa as a filter – as a means of grounding themselves in a reality that circulates around Māori identity. This wall is situated within tikanga and kawa to ensure that the business model remains an extension of te ao Māori.

Disruptive Hospitality and Political Grounding. The most provocative evidence for this dimension came from Diva, whose kaupapa was unapologetically political. In the affluent setting of Auckland's Ponsonby, Diva's kaupapa disrupts the traditional hospitality script, which dictates that the customer should always feel completely comfortable. Her writing "Toitū Te Tiriti" on the front window of her restaurant acted as a political and symbolic anchor serving two distinct functions: it connected the business to the land in an undeniable way and acted as a barrier against the disconnection often found in affluent neighbourhoods.

Diva's reflections highlight that when a business is purely money-driven or performative, the whare becomes unstable, leading to a sense of betraying oneself. Her innovation was to transform "positive discomfort" into a tool for sovereignty. By forcing customers to confront who owns the business and what they stand for, she ensured that her pakihi was not a site of assimilation but one of tino rangatiratanga.

Authenticity and Social Justice Leverage. For Keri, Taha Kaupapa took the form of an ancestral mandate. She argued that at Whakarewarewa you cannot "do a pretend authentic experience", because the kaupapa is overlaid on every steam vent and pool. Keri's narrative provides a powerful rebuttal to the commodification of Māori culture in tourism. She viewed the entire enterprise as social justice leverage, utilising the mana of her guests and the economic power of the tourism industry to force the government to listen to iwi concerns.

This strategic use of kaupapa is mirrored in Tangiwai's refusal to sanitise her mātauranga or mannerisms for an outsider's perspective. By refusing to record sanitised versions of her stories and insisting that "only we can tell them", Tangiwai protected the integrity of the Taha Kaupapa wall. Her business model was not designed to cater to the outsider's gaze but to place the guest directly into the locals' lives and perceptions of their reality.

The Quadruple Bottom Line: Structural Kaupapa. Helen provided the structural evidence for how kaupapa is operationalised. Her "quadruple bottom line" ensured that cultural, social, and environmental pillars were weighted equally with profitability. For Helen, the kaupapa began in the side-hustle phase, driven by the need to make rongoā more accessible and to control the

entire process from start to end. This holistic approach ensures that the Taha Kaupapa wall is not just a slogan but a series of "priorities that we consider with every business decision".

Healing and Guardianship: The Mana Wahine Essence. Finally, Renee expanded the definition of kaupapa to include guardianship of the self. Her kaupapa was guided by kaitiakitanga, which she defined as the guardianship of "ourselves as much as our taiao". By centring mana wahine and using diving as a tool for therapy and healing, Renee proved that the ideological wall of a Māori business can hold the weight of community trauma. Her kaupapa is not just about the ocean; it is about "reclaiming our place in those spaces confidently".

Summary and Analytical Synthesis. Collectively, these excerpts prove that Taha Kaupapa is the wall that defines the identity of the whare. In a political climate where treaty obligations are being eroded and procurement targets are being removed, a strong and unapologetic kaupapa is the primary defence against institutional erosion. As Diva's narrative suggests, it is the difference between an inauthentic relationship based purely on money and an authentic one based on shared values and political integrity.

5.2.2 Taha Ōhanga (Economic Wellbeing): Profit as Leverage for Mana

In the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima model, Taha Ōhanga represents the economic stability and resource management of the pakihi. While Western institutional theory often isolates economic performance as the sole measure of success, the findings from the participants suggest that, for Māori, economic activity is inextricably linked to the spiritual and social foundations of the whare. The economic wall is not built for individual accumulation but to provide the kaha required to protect tribal interests and ancestral stories.

The "Driver's Seat" of Sovereignty. For Helen, the economic dimension of her business was a direct manifestation of tino rangatiratanga. She described business ownership as "taking the driver's seat" and refusing to be dictated to by the norms of Pākehā commercial scripts. Her transition from a plant person to a businessperson was not driven by a desire for market dominance but by a heart-led kaupapa to make rongoā accessible:

> When you have your own business, you're making a stand here … I'm gonna take the driver's seat and I'm gonna do things my way … and being herbalists, we're not actually business people. We're actually plant people. And that's just turned into a business … That's all about standing in your sovereignty.

This narrative suggests that in Māori entrepreneurship the business is a vehicle for the passion. The Taha Ōhanga wall is stabilised by the fact that the participants live by these principles,

which provides the energy to avoid burnout – a stark contrast to Western models where economic pressure often depletes the other walls of the whare.

Relational Wealth and the Māori Ecosystem. Helen also identified a unique Māori ecosystem that supports the economic wall. This ecosystem involves both institutional support from organisations like the Poutama Trust and Te Puni Kōkiri, and the loyalty of Māori customers who buy into the kaupapa. This creates a circular economy where success is fed back into the community, aligning with Spiller et al.'s (2011) ethic of care and relational wealth. Success is not measured by market penetration alone – which Helen admitted was slower because they prioritised other pillars – but by the ability to eventually transition the business to whānau, hapū, or iwi.

Economics as Social Justice Leverage. Keri provided perhaps the most powerful historical evidence for the Taha Ōhanga wall. She reframed money as paper – a resource used to upkeep the mana of the ancestors. Her research into the "golden sovereigns" of her whānau wharenui proves that Māori have long utilised high-value commercial engagement with English tourists to fund their tribal aspirations: "The tourism industry for us provides a bit of lavish, bit of kaha to challenge the Crown on environmental [issues] … If we did not have tourism, none of that would be there."

For Keri, the economic wall provides the leverage to act as kaitiaki of geothermal resources. The business is run "very much like a business". Yet the economic outcomes are moderated by elders to ensure that the Taha Wairua and Taha Kaupapa walls remain uncompromised.

Normalising the "Positive Discomfort". Diva used the economic dimension of her restaurant to facilitate a social environment of immense joy for those often marginalised by Western hospitality. Her economic success was not defined by awards or being the best in Auckland but by being a favourite local spot where relationships are built.

Diva's innovation was to use Taha Ōhanga to challenge casual racism in the industry. By normalising kupu Māori and displaying "Toitū Te Tiriti" in her window, she ensured that customers pay for more than just a meal. They pay to enter a "culturally competent space". If this created discomfort, she was "not here to service that", showing that her economic sustainability is not dependent on compromising her kaupapa.

Authenticity and the Koha Economy. Finally, Tangiwai represents the nascent, raw form of the Taha Ōhanga wall. Her venture was koha-based, illustrating a transition from traditional exchange to monetary trade that still prioritises the "preservation of our way of life". Her refusal

to let anyone else decide how the business is run, even in the face of needing funding, is a powerful assertion of economic tino rangatiratanga.

5.2.3 Taha Wairua (Spiritual Wellbeing): The Pulse of the Pakihi

In the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima framework, Taha Wairua represents the spiritual dimension that breathes life into the organisational structure. In te ao Māori, wairua is an all-encompassing force – everything, whether animate or inanimate, possesses its own wairua (Kiyimba & Anderson, 2022; Sculley, 2023; Spiller et al., 2011). While institutional rhetoric often categorises spirituality as a personal variable, the findings reveal that for Māori entrepreneurs wairua is a fundamental source of energy, a mechanism for healing, and a safeguard for authenticity.

Wairua as the Antidote to Burnout. A recurring theme across the participants is the role of wairua as a source of sustenance that prevents professional exhaustion. Helen observed that despite the ridiculous hours required to establish a pakihi, the founders avoided burnout because they lived by spiritual and cultural principles that "provide the energy to keep going". She added: "I think of also the focus being on spiritual and mental wellbeing … I think possibly something to do with wairua and also when you're doing something you love. You know, that's a part of you."

Helen extended her observation to her uncle's work at the marae, noting that the act of constant giving, which might lead to burnout in a Western context, actually enhances your wairua. This suggests a Māori economic paradox: the more one gives to the collective and adheres to spiritual obligations, the more one's internal fuel is replenished. This aligns with Kiyimba and Anderson's (2022) findings that spiritual connectedness is a primary driver of post-traumatic growth and resilience.

Rongoā and Intergenerational Knowledge. The spiritual wall is also constructed through the transmission of mātauranga Māori. Helen's experience learning rongoā from her tohunga highlights the spiritual connectedness that bridges ancient knowledge and modern Māori practices. For Helen, the relationship with the ngahere was not just a sourcing process but a spiritual dialogue: "I learn my rongoā … by growing the plants themselves and observing them and having quite an intimate relationship with the plants and find that the plants teach me."

This intimate, hands-on connection serves as a rejection of the extractive commodification often seen in Western markets, where native flora is reduced to mere "tea tree branding" for mass consumption. As modern, sophisticated markets increasingly demand genuine

authenticity, Helen ensured the pakihi remains anchored in a spiritual reality where plants are treated as ancestors and teachers rather than just ingredients to be exploited.

Ancestral Stewardship and the Tapu/Noa Balance. For Keri, Taha Wairua was inseparable from the mana of the ancestors. The tourism products at Whakarewarewa are built upon a legacy where every pool and steam vent is layered with tribal stories. This spiritual density creates a boundary that prevents a "pretend authentic experience". The application of wairua in this context involves managing the balance between tapu and noa. Keri described training guides to respect areas that are tapu, such as specific caves, ensuring that commercial activity does not violate spiritual laws.

Similarly, Tangiwai's cousin Christo told her about a tohu where he was unable to visit Panepane (a historical site on Matakana Island) because the land was swamped – a spiritual indication that the site was too tapu for visitors at the time: "[He] took it as a tohu that they didn't want you to go to the tower … That place is very tapu. So maybe you weren't meant to go there that time." This willingness to prioritise spiritual signs over a commercial itinerary represents tino rangatiratanga in practice; it is the assertion that ancestors still govern the land.

The Ocean as Spiritual Medicine: Renee's Healing Journey. Renee provided the most explicit evidence of accommodating one's wairua as a healing tool. Having escaped terrible relationships and institutional burnout, Renee used the ocean as a vessel for reclaiming her Indigenous identity. She has since transformed her pakihi into a space for others who may be dealing with their own loss, hardships, depression, or suicidal thoughts, using free diving as therapy and life coaching: "They all come for a spiritual reason or for a reason of healing … It is therapy, but it ends up being like life coaching … We help them use the moana as a healing tool."

To measure this spiritual progress, Renee developed Te Raukawa, a measurement tool shaped like a kawakawa leaf that maps the hauora of participants. By adding specific veins to the traditional Te Whare Tapa Whā model (see Figure 3.2), she has innovated a way to quantify spiritual and emotional transformation in a commercial setting.

Summary and Analytical Synthesis. As Helen summarised, the "whole everything about our culture that connects us spiritually" is the strongest asset pakihi Māori possess. This is not a commodity in the sense of being for sale but in the sense of providing a unique, unshakable value proposition for which global audiences are hungry.

In Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima, Taha Wairua is the wall that ensures the pakihi does not degrade into a performative, profit-driven entity devoid of cultural integrity (a "soulless tick-box exercise"). It is the dimension that manages "positive discomfort" (as seen with Diva) and the deep responsibility of healing (as seen with Renee). Without a stable spiritual wall, the "golden sovereigns" described by Keri would lose their value, as the mana of the ancestors would be assimilated into what Mikaere (2007) describes as the "colonial script of the second law", where commercial wealth is stripped of its ancestral purpose and relational obligations.

5.2.4 Taha Whānau me te Hapori (Family and Community): The Relational Foundation

In Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima, Taha Whānau me te Hapori represents the collective strength and support systems that anchor a pakihi. Unlike Western business models that often prioritise individual leadership and private equity, the findings suggest that Māori economic success is built on a foundation of whakawhanaungatanga and kotahitanga. For the participants, whānau was not merely a biological category but an operational necessity – a stabilising force that provides emotional, physical, and cultural labour.

Whānau as a Stabilising Force. The narrative of Diva illustrates that the whānau is often the invisible backbone of a startup pakihi. Her experience reveals that family involvement is rarely financial; instead, it manifests as emotional support and presence. This presence served as a stabiliser during the "unsteady and overwhelming" early years of business ownership:

> Our families were very involved from the get-go … painting and coming home after a really shitty night … It would've been them being taken over the dining or stopping by just to say hi … That was quite stabilising in times that felt really unsteady and overwhelming.

Diva noted that this involvement creates a unique environment where customers and staff meet her parents, fostering a sense of shared value. This blurs the line between the private home and the public business, suggesting that a Māori pakihi is an extension of the whānau unit rather than a separate corporate entity.

Iwi Supply Chains and Cultural Mentorship. Helen demonstrated how Taha Whānau me te Hapori expands into a wider ecosystem of iwi and hapū support. Her business model incorporated Māori harvesters from various areas around the motu, ensuring that the economic dividends of her success flow back to Māori landholders. Furthermore, her uncle serves as a

cultural navigator, providing a green light for cultural decisions and offering tautoko during high-stakes international business award interviews.

This mentorship reflects the tuakana–teina relationship, where the wisdom of the collective protects the integrity of the business. Helen's ultimate economic goal was not to sell to the highest bidder but to ensure intergenerational longevity, by having her children or another suitable Māori entity take over the pakihi.

5.2.5 Whanaungatanga me te Whenua (Connection to the Land and Environmental Wellbeing): The Foundation of Belonging

The final pillar of Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima is Whanaungatanga me te Whenua, representing the physical, spiritual, and genealogical connection to the environment. In traditional Western economic models, the environment is often viewed as a resource for extraction. However, the findings from this study suggest that, for pakihi Māori, the whenua and moana are active stakeholders that dictate the ethical and operational boundaries of the business. This dimension is not merely about sustainability in a Western corporate sense. It is about the inherent responsibility of kaitiakitanga and the recognition of the land as a living relative.

The Environment as a Living Teacher. For Helen, the connection to the whenua was built through an intimate, hands-on relationship with the plants that formed the basis of her rongoā. This relationship transcends simple harvesting. It is a spiritual dialogue where "the plants teach me". By growing, observing, and processing the plants from start to end, Helen ensured that Whanaungatanga me te Whenua remained intact, grounding her economic activity in mātauranga that shares lineages with other Indigenous traditions like Ayurveda. This intimacy ensured that her products are natural things made with the essence of the ngahere.

Land as Political Leverage and Social Justice. Keri reframed the environment as social justice leverage. At Whakarewarewa, the tourism industry provides the kaha and financial power required to challenge the Crown on environmental issues, such as geothermal protection and pest control. Without the economic success of the tourism venture, the iwi would lack the resources to act as effective kaitiaki over their ancestral lands.

Keri emphasised that tribal stories are "laid in" every steam vent and pool of the whenua, creating a landscape that is physically and spiritually inseparable from the people's identity. This ensures an authentic experience that Western models cannot replicate because they lack the whakapapa connection to the specific geography.

Spiritual Signs and Self-Sustainability. Tangiwai highlighted the self-sustaining nature of the island environment, where the soil is "really good" and the ocean provides fish, kina, and oysters "by the bucket". This physical abundance was managed through a spiritual lens of kaitiakitanga, where the people act as guardians over both the land and each other.

Tangiwai's narrative also illustrates the role of tohu in business operations. The inability to visit specific sites like Panepane due to swampy conditions was interpreted as a sign from the tūpuna that the area was too tapu for visitors. This willingness to yield to the land's spiritual requirements, even at the expense of a tour itinerary, demonstrates that in Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima, the whenua holds ultimate authority.

The Moana as Ancestral Highway. Finally, Renee used the ocean to trace back her whakapapa through the Pacific, connecting her business to a voyaging ancestry. For Renee, the moana was medicine and a healing tool that allows wāhine to reclaim their Indigenous identity without judgement. By basing her Voyager Series (a free-diving programme she offers across the Pacific) on these ancestral connections, she demonstrated that the environment is not just a place of recreation but a vessel for spiritual and emotional transformation.

5.2.6 Methodological Applications and Future Applicability

In practice, Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima offers a culturally grounded framework for understanding how Māori businesses measure success beyond the traditional confines of Western profitability. However, because this model was developed as an exploratory, interpretive tool, its limitations must be transparently acknowledged.

First, the framework is intrinsically tied to the data collected from a highly specific demographic: wahine Māori leaders operating uniquely within the hospitality and tourism sectors. Consequently, the themes that populate the dimensions of the model in this thesis are deeply influenced by the gendered nuances of mana wahine and the specific relational dynamics of the hospitality industry. It is likely that this model would require significant adjustment before it could be applied to vastly different commercial environments, such as the corporate sector or large-scale construction.

Crucially, while this model contributes to the wider field of Indigenous management, its application is strictly localised. Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima was designed specifically for, and in collaboration with, Māori entrepreneurs. It should not be assumed that this framework can be generalised or universally applied to all Indigenous cultures and peoples, as doing so would erase the unique socio-historical and cultural contexts inherent to te ao Māori.

Despite these limitations, the model serves its primary methodological purpose: offering a highly applicable, qualitative lens grounded in tikanga and mātauranga Māori that accurately frames the realities of the participants in this study.

5.2.7 Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima: A Key Outcome and Novel Contribution

To accurately capture the realities of mana wahine entrepreneurship, this study did not begin with *Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima* as a foundational framework. Instead, Sir Mason Durie's (1994) *Te Whare Tapa Whā* and Coates et al.'s (2023) Indigenous Institutional Theory were utilised as the primary theoretical lenses through which the research was initially framed, analysed, and interpreted. Coates et al. effectively mapped the macro-landscape of institutional exclusion, while Durie provided the quintessential framework for holistic Māori wellbeing.

However, during the thematic analysis of the empirical data, it became evident that while these established theories provided a strong analytical foundation, they were structurally insufficient for fully capturing the specific commercial, cultural, and political realities of pakihi Māori within the hospitality and tourism sectors. Consequently, *Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima* is repositioned here not as a starting premise, but as a key outcome of the research.

The Inductive Leap: From Health to Enterprise Driven directly by the lived experiences of Diva, Renee, Helen, Keri, and Tangiwai, the new framework was developed inductively from the empirical findings. The data dictated a fundamental translation of Durie's wellbeing pillars into an organisational context. Where traditional models focus on individual human health, the participants' narratives revealed that the pakihi itself is treated as a living entity requiring its own holistic balance.

This inductive transition transformed the traditional walls of wellbeing into operational business dimensions: *Taha Ōhanga* (Economic Wellbeing), *Taha Wairua* (Spiritual Wellbeing), *Taha Kaupapa* (The Organisation's Kaupapa), and *Taha Whānau me te Hapori* (Family, Hapū, and Community), all intricately bound and interconnected by *whakapapa*.

The Fifth Pillar: Whanaungatanga me te Whenua The most significant empirical finding that necessitated the development of a novel framework was the elevation of the environment into a distinct, active dimension. Within traditional conceptualisations of *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, the whenua is deeply respected but often positioned implicitly as the foundation upon which the four walls stand. However, the data demanded that the environment be recognised as an active,

authoritative fifth pillar: *Whanaungatanga me te Whenua* (Connection to the Land and Environmental Wellbeing).

This inductive addition demonstrates clearly how the findings led to the development of the model, as the whenua and moana acted as authoritative stakeholders that dictated ethical and operational boundaries for the participants:

- **The Environment as a Living Teacher:** Helen's rongoā practice demonstrated an intimate dialogue where plants are teachers, grounding economic activity in ancestral mātauranga rather than Western commercial harvesting.
- **Land as Political Leverage:** Keri's narrative revealed that economic success in tourism provides the *kaha* (strength) to challenge the Crown, actively using business as a tool for environmental protection.
- **Spiritual Signs and Authority:** Tangiwai's adherence to environmental *tohu* (signs)—yielding tour itineraries when areas are deemed too *tapu*—proves that the whenua holds ultimate operational authority over Western profit motives.
- **The Moana as Ancestral Highway:** Renee's utilisation of the ocean for wāhine healing illustrates the environment as a vessel for spiritual transformation, deeply interconnected with Pacific whakapapa.

An Original Contribution to Indigenous Entrepreneurship Presented as an empirically informed model, *Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima* constitutes a significant and novel contribution to knowledge within the field of Indigenous entrepreneurship. By establishing the research within recognised theoretical frameworks from the start, the study exposes the limitations of applying standard commercial bottom lines—or even traditional four-pillar wellbeing models—to Māori business. This key outcome extends, refines, and challenges existing understandings of Indigenous mana wahine entrepreneurship by proving that true economic sovereignty requires a bespoke, five-dimensional framework that includes a genealogical and active commitment to the whenua.

5.3 Active Reflections as a Methodological Application

Throughout this research, my reflexive journal entries served as a vital tool for reflexivity, providing tangible evidence in time and place of my perceptions and emotional labour. As an interpretivist researcher, these reflections allowed me to navigate the Māori standpoint while documenting the spiritual and political weight of the kōrero shared by the participants.

The journal entries captured several critical moments of intersection:

- **Spiritual resonance:** My notes regarding the "strong spiritual pull" on Matakana Island and the interpretative tohu encountered during the fieldwork validate Taha Wairua as an active data point rather than a theoretical abstraction.
- **Political disillusionment:** Reflections written during the 2024 hīkoi for Toitū Te Tiriti provide a context for the anger and resistance voiced by participants, linking individual business struggles to a wider national pulse of Māori mobilisation.
- **Reflexive growth:** The transition in my journals from feeling nervous about my own tikanga knowledge to realising that my research is an act of whakawhanaungatanga mirrors the participants' own journeys of cultural reclamation.

By summarising these entries, it became clear to me that the researcher is not a detached observer but a vessel through which the participants' realities are co-constructed. This reflexive evidence proves that the development of Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima was not merely an academic exercise but a lived experience of making sense of Māori survival and success in a challenging institutional landscape.

5.4 Summary and Conclusion

The discussion presented in this chapter has sought to reconcile the empirical realities of the participating wāhine entrepreneurs with the theoretical constructs of Indigenous Institutional Theory (Coates et al., 2023) and the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima framework. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that Māori entrepreneurship is a sophisticated form of institutional disruption. The participants have shown that by refusing to decouple their commercial identity from their whakapapa, they do not merely operate businesses. They practise a form of political and cultural praxis that challenges the colonial script of the status quo.

The operationalisation of Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima has revealed that economic wellbeing is only stable when all five walls of the whare are nurtured. The participants successfully demonstrated that mana and mātauranga are not impediments to business, but rather the most powerful competitive advantages available to them. Whether through Diva's unapologetic political branding, Helen's circular rongoā economy, or Renee's healing-centric tourism, these businesses have successfully navigated the tick-box traps of Western institutional rhetoric by centring their own Indigenous Standpoint.

As this chapter concludes, it is again evident that seeds that were sown in Rangiātea are flourishing through the leadership of these wāhine. They are reclaiming narratives, protecting ecosystems, and ensuring that the mana of their tīpuna is carried forward into a sustainable and self-determined future. These businesses are proof that when Māori practice tino rangatiratanga over their management strategies, they create ecosystems of resilience that benefit the collective.

The discussion has revealed that the future of the hospitality and tourism sectors in Aotearoa lies in embracing these Indigenous models. The next and final chapter of this thesis synthesises these arguments into a formal conclusion, offering final reflections on the contributions of this research to the field and proposing a path forward for pakihi Māori as they continue to build an autonomous economic future on their own terms.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The journey of this research has been an intentional effort to investigate the multifaceted determinants of Māori economic success within the hospitality and tourism sectors of Aotearoa New Zealand. By utilising an Indigenous interpretivist lens, applying Indigenous Institutional Theory and developing the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima framework, this study has sought to identify how tikanga, kaupapa, and te ao Māori are operationalised within pakihi to challenge and redefine Western institutional scripts. This concluding chapter synthesises the core connections of the inquiry, articulates the theoretical and practical innovation of the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima model, and asserts the critical importance of this research for the future of Indigenous entrepreneurship.

6.2 Addressing the Research Questions and Summary of Findings

This inquiry was guided by three core research questions. By returning to these questions now, the impact and depth of the participants' narratives can be clearly synthesised.

Research Question 1: How has the incorporation of tikanga, kaupapa, and te ao Māori in hospitality and tourism organisations shaped the performance of those operations?

- The most significant revelation of this thesis is that tikanga Māori is not merely an auxiliary cultural component to business; it is a highly sophisticated, deeply resilient operational strategy. The findings demonstrate that this incorporation fundamentally shapes organisational performance by shifting the definition of success from a linear, profit-centred metric to one grounded in mana and mauri. Performance is characterised by a quadruple bottom line, where cultural and social integrity are treated as essential, load-bearing pillars alongside economic viability. This approach fosters a unique form of operational resilience. Taha Wairua provides the necessary energy to navigate the systemic pressures of Western management systems without succumbing to the burnout that often accompanies institutional friction.

Research Question 2: How has this incorporation affected the communities in which these organisations operate?

- In addressing the second research question, the research reveals that these Indigenous organisations significantly impact their broader communities by prioritising collective

interests and social justice over individual accumulation. Success is intrinsically tied to a community's ability to remain on their whenua and thrive according to their own subjective values. The participating organisations act as vehicles for social justice, utilising their economic kaha to challenge the Crown on economic and environmental resourcing issues, while providing mentorship through tuakana–teina models to uplift the next generation of Māori leaders.

Research Question 3: To what extent has the integration of Māori values fostered unique visitor experiences, strengthened community relationships, and promoted environmental sustainability?

- Finally, the integration of these principles fosters unique visitor experiences that explicitly reject the performative hospitality script in favour of radical authenticity and manaakitanga. Relationships are strengthened through whakawhanaungatanga, transforming traditional customers into manuhiri who are invited into a culturally grounded reality. This relational economy empowers Māori businesses to resist the extractive limitations imposed by Western institutional rhetoric. Furthermore, this relational approach is inextricably linked to environmental sustainability, ensuring that business decisions are always made with respect to the spiritual requirements of the land and the ancestors.

6.3 The Significance and Strength of This Inquiry

To fully grasp the implications of these findings, it is essential to recognise why this specific methodological approach is paramount in research of this nature. The strength of this thesis lies in its refusal to view Māori enterprise from a disconnected, top-down, or Western-centric vantage point. Grounded in a lived, insider understanding of the hospitality sector, this research bypasses superficial operational metrics to uncover the ontological realities of the wāhine driving these businesses.

By adopting a reflexive, community-up interpretivist approach, this thesis succeeds where traditional business studies often fail: it captures the intangible mechanics of wairua, mana, and whakapapa in a commercial setting. It conclusively demonstrates that radical authenticity and manaakitanga are not simply cultural performances put on for the consumer; they are unassailable comparative advantages. In the hospitality and tourism sectors, which are increasingly defined by disconnected consumption, this thesis demonstrates that inviting customers to become manuhiri, grounded in real cultural narrative, is both a profound act of resistance and a highly viable economic model.

6.4 Original Contribution to Knowledge

The primary contribution of this thesis is the conceptualisation and development of Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima, a model for Māori economic wellbeing. By adapting the four dimensions of Sir Mason Durie's original health model (Te Whare Tapa Whā), this research has operationalised a five-dimensional framework that includes:

- **Taha Kaupapa:** The organisational purpose and ideological wall.
- **Taha Ōhanga:** The economic dimension and leverage for mana.
- **Taha Wairua:** The spiritual pulse of the business.
- **Taha Whānau me te Hapori:** The relational foundation and collective strength.
- **Whanaungatanga me te Whenua:** The connection to the land and environmental wellbeing.

This model allows Indigenous entrepreneurs to evaluate their own success and sustainability while resisting the limitations imposed by Western institutional rhetoric. The demonstrated practical utility of Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima makes it a transformative tool for Indigenous entrepreneurs to evaluate their own success and sustainability.

This research posits that radical authenticity and manaakitanga are not simply cultural practices; they are the unassailable comparative advantages of pakihi Māori. Relationships are strengthened through whakawhanaungatanga, transforming the traditional customer into manuhiri who are invited into a culturally grounded reality. This relational economy empowers Māori businesses to resist the limitations imposed by Western institutional rhetoric, which scholars such as Henry and Spiller have long critiqued for its extractive and linear constraints.

6.5 Implications for Practice and Policy

The implications of this research are particularly urgent within the 2026 sociopolitical climate of Aotearoa. For practitioners, the findings validate that an unapologetic commitment to Kaupapa is not a commercial risk but a primary market strength that fosters deep brand loyalty and resilience.

For the Crown, the findings serve as a direct critique of current legislative shifts, such as the removal of the mandated 8% target for awarding government contracts to Māori businesses and the erosion of Treaty obligations. For the Māori economy to continue its vital contribution to the

nation, the Crown must move beyond “race-neutral” rhetoric and recognise the specific cultural and spiritual scaffolding required for Indigenous businesses to flourish.

6.6 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

While this research offers significant insights, the small size of the participant sample – a specific selection of five wāhine Māori leaders within the Aotearoa hospitality and tourism sectors – must be acknowledged. Consequently, future research would benefit from applying the Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima model to a broader range of industries. Additionally, further investigation into the “positive discomfort” of political branding could provide valuable data on how decolonising business practices influence broader consumer behaviour in Aotearoa.

6.7 Final Concluding Statement

In closing, this research has demonstrated that for Māori entrepreneurs, business is not merely a commercial endeavour but a profound act of tino rangatiratanga. The Te Whare Ōhanga Tapa Rima model stands as a testament to the resilience of those who navigate the insider–outsider dynamic to create spaces of belonging and healing. As Māori culture continues to rise from the ashes of historical interruption, it brings with it a sovereign way of doing business that is as ancient as the land and as vibrant as the future it promises to build. I have decided to conclude this research with my final reflective journal entry, dated May 3, 2026, in relation to the completion of this thesis:

> In reflection to my academic progress, I wish to acknowledge not only my academic, social and intellectual growth throughout this thesis, but also my personal one. The pursual of this nature of research has connected me to an area of knowledge not only through literature, but also through interaction. I think I wrote well to present how appreciative I am of the resilience of my participants, who provided me with so much knowledge and valuable evidence to uplift their mana and experiences. Which also inspired my own. It’s also helped to acknowledge my own personal acts of resilience to complete this thesis. Olivia – you have managed to complete this under your own financial hardship during the recession, and your mother’s diagnosis of breast, lung and bowel cancer whilst you were writing your methodology chapter. You found a full-time stable job, and you helped your mother go through her medical journey and she is now in remission and thriving. You have also, pushed against your own self doubt to complete this thesis. Dad would’ve been proud – he manawa a wahine.

I am immensely proud to conclude this research with a tohu I believe came from my late father and a sentiment that has guided this entire inquiry and encouraged me to pursue it initially.

> “Karanga” by Apirana Taylor
>
> when on to the marae i’m called
> my heart hears the words, ‘karanga mai karanga mai’,
> taken back i am by the first woman
> to the first woman of the call
> to the manu tīorooro singing
> to the twelve heavens, ‘haere mai rā, haere mai rā’,
> thus begins the journey back to the beginning
> sailing the waka to the mauri Māori
> on the marae atea where the dust of Tūmatauenga whirls
> in the waiata kōrero of seeking te ao mārama
> opening like a bud
> the people weave the light
> from threads of memory
> stories stitching weaving
> everyone together with laughter tears and kōrero
>
> (Rapatahana & Piahana-Wong, 2023, p. 12)

Glossary

Aotearoa	New Zealand
aroha ki te tangata	respect, empathy, and love for the people
atua	ancestors with continuing influence, gods, or deities
awa	river
hapū	sub-tribe, kinship group
hau	the vital essence or spirit of a gift/offering
hauora	health, wellbeing
he kanohi kitea	a seen face; the cultural expectation of being physically present and visible
hikoi	march
Hine-nui-te-po	goddess of death and the afterlife
hinengaro	mind, intellect, mental and emotional wellbeing
iwi	tribe, extended kinship group
kaha	strength, power, leverage
kai	food
kaikōrero	speakers
kaimahi	workers, staff, employees
kaimoana	seafood
kaitiaki	guardian, steward
kaitiakitanga	guardianship, stewardship, environmental and spiritual management
karanga	formal, ceremonial call of welcome usually performed by women
Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata	Do not trample on the mana or dignity of the people

kaupapa / Kaupapa Māori	purpose, foundational principle, or agenda / a philosophical framework and methodology grounded in Māori values
kaumatua	elders, respected leaders
kawa	protocols and customs of the marae
kawakawa	pepper tree, *Macropiper excelsum*
kete	basket, kit
kia māhaki	to be humble and avoid flaunting knowledge or power
kia tūpato	to be cautious, careful, and culturally safe
kiingi	king
kina	sea egg, common sea urchin, *Evechinus chloroticus*
koha	gift, offering, contribution (often involving reciprocity)
kōrero	speech, narrative, discussion, or conversation
kotahitanga	unity, togetherness, solidarity
kupu	word, vocabulary
mahi	work, job, employment, or activity
mamae	pain, ache
mana	prestige, authority, control, power, spiritual essence
mana Māori motuhake	Māori autonomy, absolute self-determination
mana motuhake	autonomy, self-determination, and independence
mana rangatira	chiefly authority, prestige, and power
mana tangata	power and status accrued through human rights, dignity, and people
mana wahine	the inherent power, authority, and prestige of women
manaaki/manaakitanga	hospitality, kindness, generosity, the reciprocal ethic of care for others

manaaki ki te tangata	to share and host with generosity
manawa	heart
manuhiri	guests, visitors
marae	meeting grounds, the focal point of Māori communities
mātauranga / mātauranga Māori	traditional Māori knowledge, wisdom, and understanding
Maui	demigod and a trickster, famous for his exploits and cleverness
maunga	mountain
mauri	life force, vital essence
mauri ora	wellbeing, vitality, and the active state of a healthy life force
mihi / mihi whakatau	formal greeting or speech of welcome
moana	ocean
moko kauae	traditional female chin tattoo
mokopuna	grandchildren, future generations
motu	island, often used to refer to the entire country
ngahere	forest, bush
noa	ordinary, unrestricted, free from tapu
ōhanga	economy, economics
ora	life, health, vitality
oranga	livelihood, welfare, health, survival
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
pakihi	Business, enterprise, commerce
papakāinga	Original home, communal land or village
Papatūānuku	Earth Mother

pāua	abalone, sea ear, *Haliotis* spp.
pepeha	tribal saying, formal introduction of identity and whakapapa
pipi	a common edible bivalve with a smooth shell, *Paphies australis*
pōwhiri	traditional Māori welcome ceremony on a marae
pūrākau	myth, ancient legend, traditional storytelling method
rangatira	cChief, esteemed leader
Rangiātea	a place in Hawaiki and point of final dispersal of some migration canoes
reo	language (often referring to te reo Māori)
rongoā	traditional Māori medicine and healing practices
taiao	environment, nature
Tāmaki Makaurau	Auckland, the largest city in Aotearoa
tane/tāne	man, men
tangata Tiriti	people of the Treaty (non-Māori New Zealanders)
taonga	treasure, highly prized object, property, or concept
tapu	sacred, restricted, prohibited, spiritually protected
tautoko	support, backing
te ao mārama	the world of light and understanding
te ao Māori	the Māori world, the Māori worldview
te ōhanga Māori	the Māori economy
Te Po	the night, darkness, or the underworld/afterlife
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Treaty of Waitangi
Te Whare Tapa Whā	Sir Mason Durie's four-sided house model of holistic Māori health and wellbeing

tika	correct, right, just, or fair
tikanga	customs, protocols, correct procedure, described as the "first law" of Aotearoa
tino rangatiratanga	self-determination, absolute sovereignty, autonomy
tīpuna/tūpuna	ancestors, grandparents
titiro, whakarongo … kōrero	look, listen, and then (when appropriate) speak; a principle of careful observation
tohatoha	distribution, allocation, sharing
tohu	sign, mark, symbol, spiritual indication
tohunga	skilled person, chosen expert, priest, healer
toi Māori	Māori art
Toitū Te Tiriti	honour and uphold the Treaty of Waitangi
tuakana–teina	a mentoring relationship between an older/more experienced person (tuakana) and a younger/less experienced person (teina)
uri	descendants, successors
urupa	cemetery, burial ground
utu	reciprocity, balance, repayment
wahine/wāhine	woman, women
wahine toa	strong, brave woman; female warrior
wai	water
waiata	song
wairua/wairuatanga	spirit, soul / spirituality
wānanga	a forum, educational seminar, or the collaborative process of discussing, debating, and learning
whaikōrero	formal speech or oratory

whakapapa	genealogy, lineage, ancestral descent and connection
whakataukī	proverb, significant saying
whakawhanaungatanga	the active process of establishing relationships
whānau	family, extended family
whanaungatanga	relationship, kinship, sense of family connection
whare	house, building
wharenui	meeting house
whenua	land, placenta

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