



Te Kotahi
Research Institute

Māori perspectives on digital trade

A scoping report to define digital trade and its policy concerns as part of the Tauhokohoko Research Project

Te Mata Punenga o Te Kotahi - Te Kotahi Research Institute
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato - The University of Waikato

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Nā Danielle Lucas

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1. Preface

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¹ From the Tauhokohoko research project brief.

Reviewed By

Professor Virginia Warriner

Associate Professor Maui Hudson

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Private Bag 3105

Hamilton 3240

New Zealand

Email: rangahau@waikato.ac.nz

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Glossary

Te Reo Māori words used²

Hāpori	<i>section of a kinship group, family, society, community.</i>
Hui	<i>gathering, meeting, assembly, seminar, conference.</i>
Kaitiakitanga	<i>guardianship, stewardship, trusteeship, trustee.</i>
Karakia	<i>to recite ritual chants, say grace, pray, recite a prayer, chant.</i>
Kaupapa Māori	<i>Māori approach, Māori topic, Māori customary practice, Māori institution, Māori agenda, Māori principles, Māori ideology - a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society.</i>
Kawa	<i>marae protocol - customs of the marae and <u>wharehenui</u>, particularly those related to formal activities such as <u>pōhiri</u>, speeches and <u>mihimihi</u>. This seems to be a modern extension of the word.</i>
Kōrero	<i>speech, narrative, story, news, account, discussion, conversation, discourse, statement, information.</i>
Kura Kaupapa Māori	<i>primary school operating under Māori custom and using Māori as the medium of instruction.</i>
Mana	<i>prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma - <u>mana</u> is a supernatural force in a person, place or object.</i>
Mana Motuhake	<i>separate identity, autonomy, self-government, self-determination, independence, sovereignty, authority - <u>mana</u> through self-determination and control over one's own destiny.</i>
Mātauranga	<i>knowledge, wisdom, understanding, skill - sometimes used in the plural.</i>
Manaakitanga	<i>hospitality, kindness, generosity, support - the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others.</i>
Rangatahi	<i>younger generation, youth.</i>
Tangata	<i>person, man, human being, individual.</i>
Taonga	<i>treasure, anything prized - applied to anything considered to be of value including socially or culturally valuable objects, resources, phenomenon, ideas and techniques.</i>
Tikanga	<i>correct procedure, custom, habit, lore, method, manner, rule, way, code, meaning, plan, practice, convention, protocol - the customary system of values and practices that have developed over time and are deeply embedded in the social context.</i>
Tino rangatiratanga	<i>self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy, self-government, domination, rule, control, power.</i>
Wānanga	<i>seminar, conference, forum, educational seminar.</i>
Whakapapa	<i>genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent - reciting <u>WHAKAPAPA</u> was, and is, an important skill and reflected the importance of genealogies in Māori society in terms of leadership, land and fishing rights, kinship and status.</i>
Whakatauki	<i>proverb, significant saying, formulaic saying, cryptic saying, aphorism.</i>
Whanaungatanga	<i>relationship, kinship, sense of family connection - a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging.</i>

Acronyms used

² all definitions come from Te Aka online Māori dictionary (<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>)

CPTPP	<i>Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership</i>
DEPA	<i>Digital Economic Partnership Agreement</i>
GATS	<i>General Agreement on Trade in Services</i>
IT	<i>Information Technology</i>
TPPA	<i>Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (precursor to the CPTPP)</i>
WTO JSI	<i>The World Trade Organisation's E-Commerce Joint Statement Initiative</i>
AI	<i>Artificial Intelligence</i>
MOU	<i>Memorandum of Understanding</i>
MFAT	<i>Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade</i>
FOMA	<i>Federation of Māori Authorities</i>
APEC	<i>Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation</i>

2. Introduction

Māori have engaged in trade for generations, both domestically and internationally (Mika 2014, Spiller et al 2025). As a way to access resources and build or strengthen relationships, trade allowed Māori in the North Island to access pounamu from the South Island and now allows those around the world to experience Whakatōhea mussels, Tai Tokerau mānuka honey and Tohu wines (Tohu Wines 2021, Open Ocean Whakatōhea mussels 2021, Tai Tokerau Honey 2025). With Māori authorities and businesses exporting a combined \$1,350 million worth of goods in 2023³, Māori international trade is becoming increasingly important to both the national and Māori economies.

However, the way we trade, and what we are trading, are rapidly changing. Advances in technology, from improved refrigeration and transportation to the creation of the internet, are expanding flows of trade in goods, services, capital, labour and now data. This new form of trade, in digital assets and on digital channels has “...*fundamentally altered the production and consumption of goods and services worldwide over the past two decades* (OECD 2023 page 1).”

As a growing part of the national economy, Māori are increasingly engaging in digital trade, from utilising online platforms and QR codes for product identification to creating and exporting applications. As Whaanga et al (2015) state, Māori have a long history of “...*adopting new technologies, but also of innovating and developing technologies that suit their specific needs and allow for the expression of their culture and identity.*”

As digital trade grows, it is important that Māori communities can participate in and protect against digital trade. Therefore, this scoping report looks at Māori perspectives on digital trade. Although there is currently limited focus placed in this area⁴, the rapidly developing nature of digital trade means it is one of increasing importance to Māori communities.

This report provides a basis to explore digital trade. Firstly, it discusses definitions for digital trade, taking time to explore the growing divergence between 1) digitally traded goods and services, and 2) trade in digital assets and services. The next section highlights the policy

³ Based on Stats NZ data, Māori authorities exported \$816 million worth of goods in 2023 while Māori businesses identified by Stats NZ exported a total of \$534 million of goods in 2023 as outlined in McIndoe, C., Reid et al, 2024, page 23.

⁴ For example, the recent Māori Economy Report 2023 does not mention the digital economy or digital trade. However, it does have a case study on Kiwa Digital and other exports which utilise digital platforms to access international markets.

impacts of these diverse forms of digital trade (compared to traditional or non-digital trade) and how these forms of trade may cause unique considerations for Māori communities, providing some of the limited evidence available on this. This analysis highlights the tensions between the desire for Māori organisations to take part in the economic and social benefits of digital trade while ensuring that Māori rights and interests are not lost during the growth of digital trade.

In conclusion this report lists further areas where Māori perspectives on either trade or the technology sector are offered, which may help shed light on Māori perspectives of digital trade. Noting that there is a large number of adjacent reports to this area, the report recommends there is more specific and intentional research (such as a survey) on Māori perspectives on trade in digital trade to ensure these perspectives can be incorporated into trade policy.

3. What is digital trade?

As the world moves online, so too does the economy. However, the rapid expansion of the digital economy makes it difficult to accurately define. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023 page15) explains:

“Despite many attempts by academics, international organisations and national statistical offices, there is currently no single, generally accepted definition of what the digital economy entails. This absence of agreement could be attributed to the multidimensional nature of the digital economy. Since digitalisation has affected the production, ordering, delivery, and consumption of all most all goods and services, the delineation of the digital economy could be considered almost the same as most modern economies.”

The wide-ranging impacts of digitisation has led to a diversion in definitions globally, creating two definitional approaches (OECD 2023). The “bottom up” approach, limits the digital economy to a finite set of economic activities, while the “top down” or “trend based” approach includes any economic activity enacted by the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). According to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

(APEC) (2023), depending on which definition you use “...current estimates of the size of the global digital economy range from 4.5% to 15.5% of global GDP” (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation 2023). With this percentage forecasted to increase to “...approximately 70% of new value created in the global economy...” (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation 2023). Clearly, the digital economy, regardless of how it is defined, is changing the way our current economies function.

As the digital economy develops, so too does the ability to trade digitally leading to unique and novel forms of trade. Traditionally, trade has been defined as “the activity of buying and selling or exchanging, goods and/or services between people or countries” (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation 2023). As explained at the Peterson Institute for International Economics Panel Discussion; traditional trade has three main qualities, it is: tangible, transactional and transported (Malmstrom 2025). Each of these characteristics allow for certain policy controls to be put in place. A tangible good (or person delivering a service) means that the point of transfer of that good (or service) is usually clear cut, the transactional nature of trade makes it clear that there is a buyer and a seller while the transportation element of trade means that there is a point where the good (or person providing the service) will cross a border and therefore fall under a certain jurisdiction’s regulations, policies and laws.

‘Digital trade’, however, blurs the boundaries of what constitutes trade. This is partly because digital trade can encompass everything from ordering socks on Amazon, to providing access to digital taonga. As Alschner (2023 page 3) explains:

“Definitions in the field of digital trade are notoriously fuzzy and contested..... In part, that is because technological change disrupts not only existing business models; it also upsets existing legal definitions and categories.”

Domestic organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand have adopted a broad definition of digital trade.⁵ In their 2023 Report on the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership the Waitangi Tribunal (the Tribunal) adopted a broad view of what is included in digital trade. As stated on page 4, the Tribunal explains “While there is no

⁵ Including the World Trade Organisation, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation, the United Nations, the World Bank and more locally the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Waitangi Tribunal. See: New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2025). What is “the digital economy” and “digital trade”? New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. <http://mfat.govt.nz/en/trade/free-trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements-in-force/digital-economy-partnership-agreement-depa/what-is-the-digital-economy-and-digital-trade>.

accepted definition of ‘digital trade’...” they have adopted the OECD’s “growing consensus that it [digital trade] encompasses digitally enabled transactions in trade in goods and services that can be digitally or physically delivered.” While, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), also adopts this broad definition, stating in 2025 that “Digital trade is anything that is enabled by digital technologies whether or not it is digitally or physically delivered.”

Despite these ‘catch all’ approaches, there is a growing need to separate diverse forms of digital trade due to their diverse policy impacts. As Alschner (2023 page 1) argues:

“E-commerce does not change what is traded...but how it is traded (online). This “eBay”-type trade falls within existing trade paradigms and is subject to globally converging domestic and international rules. In contrast, trade in digital assets (e.g. models, algorithms, data) may not be trade its exchange being often gratuitous.”

Looking to the example of a smartwatch can demonstrate these three diverse forms of trade. When you buy a smartwatch in a shop, traditional trade has occurred to get the smartwatch to your local store, bringing the product to Aotearoa New Zealand through a transfer of ownership, transport of the watch and a sale or transaction by the importer (and now you). While, ordering the smartwatch through an online platform, like Amazon, can be considered e-commerce. Like traditional trade, there is still a transfer of ownership, transportation of the watch and a transaction that occurs for you to receive the watch. However, once you are using the watch, the data collected and transferred from that smartwatch back to the company who runs the operating system of the watch, is a form of trade in digital assets. As articulated in Malmström et al (2025), every time your heart beats while wearing this watch, a form of ‘trade’ in data occurs. Alschner (2023 page 5) goes on to explain “...trade in digital assets is about transferring data and information as an independently traded asset...” rather than trading in a good or service. Although Alschner (2023) highlights that these forms of trade can and do often occur together, these distinct forms of trade often lead to distinct needs in terms of policies, regulation and legislation.

In summary, when we discuss e-commerce (or digitally trading goods and services), and trade in digital assets we are discussing two unique concepts which create unique policy

responses. The next section of this report explores distinguishing digitally enabled trade from trade in digital assets and briefly highlights their policy impacts.

Defining digitally enabled trade (E-Commerce)

E-commerce has created multiple shifts in the way we trade. With the advent of e-commerce, businesses are now able to market and sell goods, 24-hours a day, through various platforms across multiple locations, increasing market reach and reducing barriers for exporters.

Similarly, consumers can access products from places, and at times, that have never been possible before. With e-commerce, Māori exporters can now market and sell these goods to foreign markets, giving Māori businesses “...a significant global reach, exporting a diverse range of goods and services across various sectors” (McIndoe et al. 2023, page 23).⁶ In 2022, 76% of Māori enterprises and 74% of Māori authorities had an online presence (Figure NZ. 2022).⁷ Similarly in 2022, 65% of Māori authorities and 76% of other Māori enterprises had a social media presence (StatsNZ 2023). This is slightly higher than the percentage of all New Zealand businesses with a social media presence (59%). These statistics indicate that Māori businesses are willing and able to market themselves and their products or services online.

The rise in e-commerce has also created a rise in digital platforms for selling Māori goods. As defined by Spiller et al. (2025) “*Digital platforms: Enable decentralised marketplaces, crowdfunding, and collaborative consumption, facilitating direct interactions between producers and consumers.*”⁸ Toiere, Buy Māori Made, Hokohoko and Konei are examples of platforms that exclusively stock Māori goods. The benefits of these platforms were acknowledged by participants of the Trade for All review by MFAT (2023 page 21):

“Platforms can provide a space for businesses of all sizes to easily engage with the digital economy across borders. They do this by providing reach, by streamlining processes and reducing costs, and by facilitating payment. They also help users and traders to navigate international rules and regulations, for example, with compliance requirements in different markets, such as localised privacy laws. We heard from

⁶ Including items like seafood, tea, honey and beverages.

⁷ This data is derived from Tatauranga Umanga Māori 2022. Using the Stats NZ definitions: 1) “*Māori business*” is a business that is owned by a person or people who have Māori whakapapa, and a representative of that business identifies the business as Māori, and 2) “*Māori authorities*” are economically significant businesses involved in the collective management of assets held by Māori.

⁸ As defined in: Spiller, C., et al 2025 page 306.

Māori businesses that platforms allow them global reach and opportunities previously not available.”

However, as consumers are more freely able to access goods and services across borders, issues of provenance, authenticity, intellectual property and inclusivity develop. Further, with more globalised markets, the need for international co-operation on regulation, standards, legislation, competition and taxation increases while platforms fail to address these (Alschner 2023).

Defining trade in digital assets

Digital trade or trade in digital assets (such as data, algorithms and models) is rapidly becoming a large part of the economy. *“Global traffic from data centres is estimated to have increased fourfold since 2015 – from 5 zettabytes in 2015 to around 20 in 2021.... There are 20 times more bytes of traffic from data centres than there are stars in the expanding universe (The World Trade Organisation & The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, page 11).”* As Alschner (2023 page 5) explains, trade in data has:

“... emerged as the fifth global flow alongside goods, services, capital, and labour... And it will likely dwarf its peers: digital assets -- data, information, algorithms, and models -- are “the new oil” that has fuelled much of the recent economic growth and that accounts for a growing share in the creation of new wealth.”

However, unlike oil, digital trade differs from ‘traditional trade’ (and e-commerce) for several reasons. Firstly, looking to the ‘digital trade’ of your health data, each time your heart beats, you are engaged in ‘digital trade’ without a transfer of a good (or service), a transaction (in the monetary sense) and any physical transportation. Further, in this ‘trade’ it is difficult to understand who the purchaser is, who the buyer is, what value the exchange is worth and when the exchange takes place (Malstrom 2025).

Secondly, data is non-rivalrous and non-exclusive, meaning that information can be transferred again and again with no additional costs or impacts to the original information (The World Trade Organisation & The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). This information trade creates more users or rights holders of the data, rather than necessarily transferring ownership of the data from one party to another. Multiple rights holders of a

particular datum or data set, and the ability to transfer data quickly and easily, can exacerbate issues in data protection and sovereignty. This is of particular concern for Māori communities attempting to have their rights recognised or assert control over their data.

Thirdly, data has inherent and potential value meaning that data is valuable both on its own and combined with other data or technology (The World Trade Organisation, & The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2025, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, n.d). This is particularly relevant when looking at the economies of data trade, as companies with access to large data sets (such as Google) can disproportionately capture market share.⁹ The capture and control of data markets by big tech creates sovereignty issues for both State and Indigenous actors alike and presents policy concerns “including misinformation, freedom of speech, democracy, privacy and national security (Alscher 2023 page 16).”

Lastly, data is both separate to and created by both traditional trade and e-commerce, creating a confusing tangle of diverse forms of trade. As outlined in the Trade for All report at page 6:

“We found some of the complexity of defining digital trade is in the blurring and overlapping of the digital and physical worlds. The concept of “trade” has evolved with the emergence of technology. Many routine activities in modern living, from scrolling social media to simply owning an email account, have interactions with modern digital trade rules, like privacy protection or rules around where data is stored. This blurring of lines, or merging of worlds, makes it increasingly difficult, if not functionally impossible, to opt-out of the rules that digital trade establishes. For that reason, we stress the need for a cautious and considered approach to agreeing digital trade rules in treaties and err towards an adaptive approach, including flexibility and cooperation where there may be uncertainty on the impact of commitments. This is especially so in the case of current and future effects of treaties on Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi.”

⁹ Meaning these companies can dominate the market as outlined in (Ciuriak, D., & Ptashkina, M, 2020).

Classifying the digital assets that are ‘traded’ is also difficult. In the smartwatch example, it is difficult to categorise the data transfer – does it fall under a health service, an information service or not a service at all but simply the use of a watch? Ascher (2023 page 3) provides further explanation:

“Is the streaming of a movie from a foreign website a trade in a (digital) product, like the purchase of the movie’s DVD? Or is it the consumption of a service? Or is it something altogether different like a trade in information? These categories matter because law is about putting real life into legal boxes to define legal consequences. The WTO Agreements, for example, create different rules for trade in goods versus trade in services, hence categorizing the streaming of a movie as a good or a service comes with varying normative implications.”

The unique nature of digital trade confuses existing trade norms creating unique policy concerns which are difficult to manage with traditional trade regulations. Although these policy concerns affect all communities, there are also unique concerns felt by Māori communities, as outlined in the following section of this report.

4. Scoping Māori perspectives of digital trade

As digital trade begins to impact our tangata (people), taonga, communities and businesses, it is important that Māori perspectives on these diverse and challenging policy issues are heard. These policy impacts can also be diverse when applied to Māori communities who have unique mātauranga and tikanga.

Māori engage in trade in diverse ways across a spectrum from the current Western neoliberal paradigm to models of exchange grounded in Māori values (Many not all see: McIndoe et al, 2023, Rout et al 2025, Postero et al 2022, Spiller et al 2025).¹⁰ For some Māori, trade is not just a way to exchange goods and services but a way to build, maintain and honour relationships (Rout et al 2025, Martin Jenkins on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and trade, 2023). This approach to trade, based on long standing relationships (whanaungatanga), mutual respect (manaakitanga) and guardianship (kaitiakitanga), create unique digital trade policy concerns for Māori communities, alongside the ones highlighted in the previous section (Rout et al 2025).

Table 1 collates and themes the limited evidence available on Māori perspectives of digital trade. It attempts to map these concerns to some of the more general policy concerns of e-commerce and digital trade, under the areas: 1) inclusivity, 2) property rights, 3) authenticity of goods, services, data and digital products, 4) quality standards of goods, services, data and digital products, 5) data use and protection, 6) privacy rights, 7) source code and algorithm protections and 8) consumer protection.

Although there is limited evidence available, this section draws from Māori advocacy groups (including Te Taumata and Ngā Toki Whakarururanga), Māori academics and surveys or consultation of Māori groups on trade or technology. It is intended as a starting point and doesn't represent a comprehensive view of Māori perspectives on digital trade, which should be canvassed in a more systematic way.

¹⁰Note: There are diverse definitions of Māori enterprises or businesses across these pieces of research and in policy.

When searching for ‘Māori perspectives’ it is important to remember that Māori perspectives are as diverse as Māori themselves are. The range of views demonstrate both intercultural diversity with non-Māori¹¹ and intracultural diversity between iwi (tribe), hapū (sub-tribe), whānau (family), and individuals (Rata 2012). While there is not one universal Māori perspective or opinion there is utility in identifying the general characteristics that differentiate Māori approaches from non-Māori approaches to trade. This intracultural diversity is evident in relation to digital trade where the different perspectives of Māori businesses were shared in the *Trade for All Review*, (page 27) which stated there was a:

“...tension between two quite different perspectives on digital trade. Some were mainly concerned about ensuring that Treaty rights are not compromised in an evolving and often uncertain digital environment. Others were looking for practical steps to take to leverage opportunities and achieve trade benefits for Māori.... We identified different levels and types of interest, such as inherent interests of iwi and hapū and interests of Māori individuals and businesses.”

¹¹ as values from Te Ao Māori (The Māori World)) and tikanga Māori are incorporated.

Table 1: Mapping Policy concerns of e-commerce, trade in digital assets and additional concerns for Māori communities.

This section collates some of the policy concerns that arise from the unique nature of e-commerce and trade in digital assets as opposed to traditional trade. Alongside these policy impacts it highlights how these areas may raise additional concerns for Māori communities and then presents the limited evidence supporting Māori perspectives on these areas.

Policy concerns for E-commerce and trade in digital assets	Additional concerns for Māori communities	Evidence
Inclusivity (access to global markets and the digital economy)	Inclusivity in trade negotiations as trade agreements can improve access to markets	<p>Chris Karamea Insley (the former chair of Te Taumata) describes the benefit of trade agreements: “The NZ billion-dollar new ‘gold standard’ UK Free Trade Agreement set to go live in the next ten days, opening up the fifth-largest market in the world to premier and world-class Māori products and services by removing the sixteen percent tariff on NZ products. This is game-changing for Māori businesses, where the proceeds of this new trade will ripple back into Māori communities and homes in the form of new jobs in our orchards, farms, processing plants, fisheries, vineyards and much more.</p> <p>“Today, this effort is paying massive dividends for our people. ...Within the next six to twelve months, we will witness an even bigger NZ-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), opening up the collective \$17 trillion European economy to Māori businesses, products, and services. In fishing we will see the removal of the current twenty-four percent tariff. This is game-changing for Māori, as owners of half of the NZ Fishing industry” (Te Taumata 2023)</p>

		<p>However, in both a recent report by Sense Partners (2023 page 5) and the Trade for All review by MFAT (2023) Māori exporters did not knowingly utilise trade agreements.</p> <p>“Actually, what we’re trying to create is Aotearoa [New Zealand] ... Free trade agreements are critical to our survival and us thriving globally ... And the best thing Māori could do is understand the importance of them to our future and figure out how we’re going to use them ... to create businesses that create jobs, that create livelihood and income into Māori households. (Key Informant 2)” (Jurado & Mika 2022 page 13)</p> <p>Māori businesses find FTAs useful “As tools to access new markets, FTAs and trade missions were the most mentioned as being helpful: ‘they are very useful ... they do open doors’ (Key Informant 4). However, FTAs did not replace doing the groundwork for international business, such as market research, supply chains, logistics, profit margins and opportunities for market expansion. Crucially, Māori firms accessed and developed international markets by investing considerable resources into developing ‘complete’ relationships: ‘The deals come out of ... the relationship not out of a straight transaction based on a return on investment” (Jurado & Mika 2022 page 13)</p> <p>“Some Māori exporters [hold the view] that they are being disadvantaged by not having Māori people and Māori values ... considered in the [FTA] negotiations. And [they] very strongly [believe] that they ... could lead to price premiums being paid by those various companies and countries who are increasingly starting to place value on a set of other values rather than just pure economics. (Key Informant 3) Participants believed that the legitimacy of Māori input into policy development went beyond their special status as Indigenous peoples and Treaty of Waitangi partners, and was underlined by the important social and economic contribution that their enterprises made to the economy: The Māori economy is already large and predicted to grow much larger, to date Māori people haven’t had any participation or contribution to all of the trade discussions. (Key Informant 3)” (Jurado & Mika 2022 page 14)</p>
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		<p>“Māori exporters have a distinct view of the way that Māori values shape and inform their entrepreneurial activities, and they see these as different from the dominant Western paradigm and participants of this study considered these values could add value to trade policy development. Now, there is pressure on the government to address this omission and some promising signs that this is being taken more seriously.” (Jurado & Mika 2022 page 16)</p>
	<p>Inclusivity in Trade Agreements as they restrict Māori rights and interests under Te Tiriti</p>	<p>Trade agreements can impact Māori rights and interests as the Government of the day agrees to certain conditions of trade. As explained by MFAT “In response to the Wai 2522 report published by the Waitangi Tribunal, the DEPA Protocol includes a clause that reinforces New Zealand’s ability to adopt measures to protect Māori rights and interests, including protecting mātauranga Māori and other obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi.” (The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2021)</p> <p>“The Waitangi Tribunal report on the TPPA found that the main digital trade rules in the TPPA (which are the same as those in the UK FTA) “breached the Crown’s obligations of active protection and caused prejudice to Māori Tiriti rights.” (Maniapoto 2022)</p> <p>“Stakeholders we heard from stressed the need to continue pursuing trade missions with our trade partners, both in weightless goods and in other exports. There was some concern that, with the move towards digital trade, opportunities to build relationships in person would be lost. Māori businesses made that point particularly strongly, emphasising the value of relationship building in trade” (Martin Jenkins on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and trade 2023 page 23)</p> <p>“As ‘invisible’ participants in trade, Indigenous perspectives and participation in trade and trade policy development remains at best, muted, and, at worst, actively excluded. Yet, Indigenous economies, like the Māori economy, are growing in confidence, size, scale and influence (Amoamo et al., 2018; Mika et al., 2019; Schulze et al., 2021)... “Bargh (2011) calls for Māori participation in the trade policy process as a sovereign nation, rather than one among many other interest groups. Kawharu</p>

		<p>(2016) concurs that consultation with Māori on trade policy has been unsatisfactory as policy makers continued to view Māori as one of many minorities, as opposed to their special status as Indigenous to New Zealand” (Jurado & Mika 2022)</p> <p>“Tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake in the contemporary digital domain means the mana to control and manage according to your own preferences, [and] requires the development of a tikanga-based regime for regulating the digital ecosystem that recognises Māori Data Sovereignty, Māori Data Governance, and collective concepts of privacy. How that is balanced with other national and international rules to govern the digital domain is a matter for negotiation between the Tiriti parties.” (The Waitangi Tribunal, 2023 page 28 – quoting a submission)</p>
	<p>Inclusivity in the growth of the digital economy so it is not just private companies controlling digital trade (which impacts on Māori rights)</p>	<p>Another potential policy impact of digital trade, also highlighted by Ngā Toki Whakarururanga (n.d), is the power/impact of private companies, who are driving this ‘transformative technological change’, particularly through the use and development of artificial intelligence (Malmstrom et al, 2025). As Ngā Toki Whakarururanga (n.d) go on to explain:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“Often we focus on the state’s collection and (ab)use of data about Māori, for example by police, spy agencies or the census, and ignore the equally large threat of Big Tech companies like Meta (Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp), Alphabet (Google, gmail, YouTube) and ByteDance (Tiktok) that mine data from all our online activities.”</p> <p>This development by private companies, in an environment of limited regulation, creates further sovereignty challenges for both State and Indigenous actors as they become reliant on their relationships with these companies or reliant on their relationships with other governments where these countries exist, particularly the US. Digital trade and the ability for ‘big tech’ companies to move across the globe for favourable regulatory conditions also increases the need for international cooperation to assert sovereignty over digital assets.</p> <p>“One of the most prominent themes throughout our workshops was the necessity of Māori to maintain mana motuhake (self-determination) in the digital realm. This insight calls for greater control and governance over Māori data, ensuring that any collection, use, or distribution aligns with tikanga Māori (Māori protocols). Many participants voiced concerns over the potential for data to be exploited or misappropriated when handled by non-Māori entities.” (Archer 2024 page 16)</p>

		<p>“For some Māori participants, we heard concerns that digital trade had been overtly defined and classified by “big tech”. Māori participants took a broader interpretation, connected to a Māori world view, including making the connection to place, values, and relationships between indigenous peoples.” (Martin Jenkins on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and trade 2023 page 6)</p> <p>“We need to stop obsessing about accelerated growth if that growth is going in the wrong direction. We need strong foundations, specifically locally owned critical cloud infrastructure, not overly relying as we do today on overseas-owned big tech.” (Kamira 2024 page 15)</p>
Inclusivity (internet and processing access)	This is of particular concern to Māori communities who may face more barriers to access the internet.	<p>“Another recurring concern was digital equity. Many within our communities, particularly those from rural areas or lower socio-economic backgrounds, face significant barriers to accessing digital tools, the internet, and education. The digital divide is a real and growing issue, and unless it is addressed, many Māori will be left behind as society becomes more digitised.” (Archer 2024 page 24)</p> <p>“Participants also voiced concerns that Māori could be left behind if fundamental inequities are not addressed, such as lack of access to digital technologies...” (Martin Jenkins on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and trade 2023 page 27)</p>
Intellectual Property Rights of goods, services, data and digital products	Communal Intellectual property rights over communally owned mātauranga	<p>“Participants in the discussions identified a key challenge in how mātauranga Māori should be recognised and respected in trade instruments to ensure the safe transfer of Māori knowledge through trade... The issues of intellectual property sovereignty, Māori data sovereignty, and Māori data governance were repeatedly raised throughout the discussion as areas where Māori want to have control over decision-making. Participants told us this requires early and ongoing conversations in order to develop detailed positions.” (Martin Jenkins on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and trade 2023 page 28)</p>

		<p>“Participants also stressed the importance of using technology as a tool for preserving and enhancing te reo Māori, tikanga, kawa, and other aspects of , mātauranga Māori. Many spoke of the need for digital tools that promote whakapapa, connect Māori globally, and ensure that Māori knowledge systems are protected.” (Archer 2024, page 15)</p> <p>“The Westminster approach of legislation in New Zealand and its approach to IP protection based on Copyrights, Patents and Trademarks are juxtaposed against traditional Maori approaches of communally held ancestral knowledge (mātauranga) passed down through generations (whanaungatanga) based on guardianship and protection (kaitiakitanga) and the self-determination of use of such knowledge (rangatiratanga). Attempting to align tikanga concepts to the Westminster model of law is challenging as the two share completely different notions of ownership and responsibility. Expectations of protection, to prevent misappropriation and commercialisation by non- Māori of mātauranga Māori and Māori data, extend beyond the parameters of existing IP law, creates a similar disjunct.” (Sterling et al 2021 page 2)</p> <p>“The notion that groups have rights and responsibilities is nothing new to Indigenous peoples—the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is fundamentally about upholding collective rights. It is thus unsurprising that Indigenous data sovereignty is largely concerned with the rights of collectives—rather than individuals—in relation to their data... the lack of enforceable intellectual property (IP) rights can be a formidable barrier for Indigenous peoples wanting to exercise sovereignty over their collectively owned IP, including cultural knowledge and heritage, as affirmed by the UNDRIP. In Aotearoa, this remains an ongoing concern.” (Kukutai 2024 para 2)</p> <p>“There is a growing awareness amongst Indigenous peoples including Māori that “the current Western intellectual property system fails to take account of their needs.” As opposed to Western IP law, kaitiakitanga right which tikanga Māori bestows on the kin group having obligations towards the creation.” (Sterling et al 2021 page 18)</p>
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<p>Authenticity of goods, services, data and digital products</p>	<p>Cultural authenticity and preventing appropriation</p>	<p>“Data sovereignty is a critical issue, with concerns raised about cultural misappropriation in digital spaces. There is fear that without control, Māori cultural knowledge could be misused, commercialised, or altered without proper respect for its significance. The protection of cultural integrity in the digital sphere is seen as paramount.” (Archer 2024, page 13)</p> <p>There are also organisations that exist to ensure cultural authenticity such as Toi Iho which “Since 2009 the visibility and indeed viability of Toi Iho has remained increasingly important, especially with challenges from the digitisation of Māori art which has made non-Maori in particular copy and misuse our art forms.” (Toi Iho 2024)</p> <p>“Cultural authenticity is identified as offering value to consumers which adds external value through improved marketability and can also add internal value through improved production efficiency. It can be further defined as the accurate representation, application, or communication of a culture’s worldview, forming the core of its identity.” (Anderson 2024 pages 7-8)</p>
<p>Quality standards of goods, services, data and digital products</p>	<p>Protecting trade in taonga and mātauranga (across both e-commerce and digital trade)</p>	<p>There are many examples of Māori business that trade in e-commerce, and in doing so transfer important products or knowledge from Te Ao Māori across the globe. Although the transfer of knowledge may be intangible, the transfer of physical objects and the marketing or information provided about them may contain mātauranga. For example, Ōku tea formulas are “...designed to show off the amazing properties of the rākau (plants) found within our ngahere (forests). Many of these have a rich history of traditional use.” (Ōku 2023)</p> <p>In terms of transferring taonga, arguably the transfer of anything indigenous from Aotearoa New Zealand can contain something from a taonga species. For example, if Ōku tea transfers parts of native plants, it could be transferring the genomic material of a taonga species.</p> <p>Similarly, businesses transferring data out of Aotearoa New Zealand are likely transferring Māori data which may contain aspects of mātauranga.</p>

		<p>“Māori are making concerted efforts to reclaim elements of their cultural inheritance, including their knowledge system mātauranga, which colonisation has endangered and suppressed. In this context, sensitivity is understandably heightened that any part of mātauranga may be constrained or lost through the negotiation and implementation of trade agreements like the CPTPP. At the same time, increasing digital trade and e-commerce gives rise to questions about how Māori may utilise new technologies to compete and thrive in an increasingly global, networked world. This balance between opportunity and threat to Māori interests is at the heart of our focus in this report...”¹²</p> <p>“Known in the food industry Reid & Rout (2020), state that provenance can have a vital role in validating authenticity, through traceability. The emphasis on provenance through origin, history, narratives, mātauranga Māori, traditional knowledge, and whakapapa, as Māori aspects of provenance. This ensures the genuine nature of taonga species is acknowledged and recognised through its commercial process. The need for transparency and traceability can connect and maintain the root of the taonga species.” (Anderson 2024)</p>
Data use and protection	Ensuring data is protected as a taonga and data sovereignty can be expressed	<p>As outlined in the Trade for All Review “Māori view data about themselves as an extension of themselves, which makes the collection, processing, and storage of that data overseas uncomfortable. Some Māori participants, however, acknowledged that there is a spectrum of data collection in society, with some accepting that requiring data collected in social media presents a substantially different challenge to government-collected data.” (Martin Jenkins on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and trade 2023 page 42)</p> <p>Trade Agreements that contain limited restrictions on data use or location impact Māori data sovereignty. The TPPA, NZ-UK FTA, and the NZ-EU FTA and the WTO JSI on e-commerce all promote the cross-border transfer of information, including</p>

¹² The Waitangi Tribunal. (2023). *The Report on the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Tran-Pacific Partnership*. Legislation Direct. https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_195473606/Report%20on%20the%20CPTPP%20W.pdf (WAI2522). Page 33.

		<p>personal information, while prohibiting restrictions on data location (Ngā Toki Whakarururanga, n.d). This makes it more difficult for Māori data to remain under New Zealand’s jurisdiction potentially eroding Māori control over this information. However, some of the agreements do have carve outs. The NZ-UK FTA, and the WTO JSI on e-commerce both allow these conditions to be overcome to achieve a ‘legitimate public policy objective’ (Ngā Toki Whakarururanga, n.d). However, this ‘carve out’ has an exception. For example, in the NZ-UK FTA a policy concern cannot be used ‘arbitrary or unjustifiably applied’ and ‘cannot impose restrictions on transfers of information greater than are required to achieve the objective’.</p> <p>Of further concern is how this exception has been applied. Ciurak and Ptashkina (2020 page 8) highlight a ruling on the public policy exception under Article XIV of GATS. “The complainants argued that the US ban on online gambling was inconsistent with its commitments under GATS; the United States countered that its measures were covered by the “public morals” exception allowed under the GATS Article XIV. This case established the applicability of GATS to the digital realm through the principle of technological neutrality with regard to the different modes of supply: “prohibition on one, several or all of the means of delivery included in mode 1...constitutes a limitation on the total number of service operations...within the meaning of Article XVI:2(c)” ... Upon appeal, the Appellate Body found that the case advanced by the United States failed to satisfy the requirements of the chapeau of article XIV11 and thus found the measure to be protectionist.”¹³ This shows the WTO is likely to rule in favour of trade over social policy concerns and is particularly concerning to Māori communities that may have unique social policy concerns.</p> <p>“A powerful theme throughout all our discussions was the concept of rangatiratanga - self-determination and control - in the digital space. Our people expressed an ardent desire to have control over the technologies we create and use, particularly around the management and governance of Māori data. There is a deep understanding that Māori need to maintain control over their data, ensuring it aligns with our values and isn’t exploited or misappropriated.” (Archer 2024, pages 14-15)</p>
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		Te Mana Raraunga also presents a Māori perspective on data sovereignty more generally.
Privacy Rights	Communal Privacy rights	Many of the current trade agreements, although recognising the need for privacy and consumer protection, do so on an individual level not a community level, as required by Māori communities (Kukutai 2025).
Source code and algorithm protections	Removal of sovereignty from decision making	<p>“While provisions around data localisation are a focus area, Treaty rights extend to wider aspects of digital trade, including evolving areas like maintaining domestic rights to regulating emerging technologies like AI.” (Martin Jenkins on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and trade 2023)</p> <p>Under recent trade agreements the source code of algorithms is protected meaning that consumers are unable to understand what information is used in these algorithms. Without access to the source code (in simple algorithms), it is difficult for Māori communities to assess if an algorithm is using culturally appropriate information and techniques in different software products. As described by Ngā Toki Whakarururanga (n.d), the TPPA and the NZ-EU FTA do not allow the transfer or access to source code as a condition of import, distribution sale or use of software or products containing the software. However, both allow the transfer of source code to ensure it complies with regulation, or to a regulatory body. In more complicated, larger scale algorithms, the source code may not be enough to understand how it functions, further removing the ability for Māori communities to scrutinise these.</p> <p>“We heard various concerns about AI technology, from a lack of understanding of the algorithms that it uses to concerns around the interface with Māori culture and identity. We heard concerns about the translation of te reo Māori and the preparation of karakia and whakataukī. Some participants saw the value in having better translations more readily available to people, while some noted that the translations may be of lower quality than for other languages with larger volumes of data. Others spoke of the opportunities that more accessible translation services could create in improving language competency across the country. They also, however, raised concerns about taonga like the whakataukī, which carry specific cultural protocols.” (Martin Jenkins on behalf of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2023, page 38)</p>

	Removing bias from algorithms that impact Māori communities	<p>“For algorithms that use Māori data, these require extra considerations due to the heightened risks Māori endure due to systemic biases inherent within data and the processes that underlie algorithm development.” (Brown et al, 2025 abstract)</p> <p>As identified by Brown et al (2024), “There is a need to ensure that algorithms used or developed in Aotearoa are equitable and work for Māori. West et al. (2020) highlights the need for (a) the creation of a Māori values framework and tikanga guidelines to support automated decision-making design, development, use, and maintenance, (b) robust equity assessment protocols for algorithms, and (c) meaningful Māori participation in institutional algorithm self-assessment processes.” It is increasingly hard to incorporate Māori views into algorithms when they are developed by international companies and used under trade secrecy.</p>
Consumer protection	Consumer protection in terms of ensuring that technologies are culturally appropriate and adaptable	<p>The NZ-UK FTA, in Article 15, and the TPPA and Article 14.7 allow for consumer protection. However, Article 14.4 of the TPPA enforces ‘non-discretionary treatment’ for digital products.</p> <p>“A consistent theme was the necessity for tikanga Māori to guide how we engage with DigiTech. The community made it clear that technology should not just be adopted but adapted to fit within a Māori worldview. This means ensuring that innovative technologies align with Māori values, tikanga, and whakapapa.” (Archer 2024, pages 14-15)</p> <p>“Across emerging tech fields, mātauranga Māori is becoming a powerful guide, driving innovation, and ensuring that technology aligns with Māori values. In AI development, our principles of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) inform how algorithms are designed to protect cultural knowledge. In gaming, Māori storytelling is creating immersive experiences that blend tikanga with virtual environments. This is mātauranga Māori in action - ensuring that, in every digital advancement, Māori perspectives are present, protected, and celebrated.... At the heart of these conversations was the importance of community-building. While tech offers new tools and possibilities, the wānanga participants emphasised that technology must serve our people and not the other</p>

		<p>way around. Digital tools should enhance and strengthen the ties that bind whānau, hapū, and iwi, creating new ways to connect, collaborate, and thrive.” (Archer 2024, page 15)</p> <p>“A critical insight from the workshops was the importance of embedding mātauranga Māori within all digital and technological initiatives. This extends beyond simple representation; participants want to see mātauranga Māori as a guiding principle in how technologies are designed, developed, and implemented. This includes ensuring that technology aligns with our whakapapa, tikanga, and kaupapa Māori frameworks” (Archer 2024, page 17)</p>
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Although there is limited evidence available on Māori perspectives of digital trade, the above table shows that there are emerging, diverse concerns for Māori communities.

5. Further areas to explore for Māori perspectives on digital trade

This section briefly outlines some further areas to explore to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Māori perspectives on digital trade.

Interviewing Māori companies who engage in trade in digital assets

There are some prominent Māori businesses involved in digital trade and the digital technologies sector, although Māori remain “...under-represented proportionately” (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment 2016). Examples of business involved in the trade of digital assets include Kiwa Digital (on their website) and Animation Research Limited. (Nana 2012, page 37-38) Although there are general case studies available on both these companies, the ability to ask more pointed questions about how these companies balance the benefits and risks of trading in digital assets would be useful to further shape policy discussions on digital trade, from a Māori perspective.

Research which interviews Māori in the Tech sector already exists (see the section below on further research) however these reports do not currently investigate ‘trade in digital assets’ specifically. Likewise, there is research interviewing Māori exporters (see section below on further research) but many of these companies are engaged in traditional forms of trade or e-commerce rather than trade in digital assets.

Interviewing Māori advocacy groups further

Engaging with Māori advocacy groups (and through them, their members) could provide further Māori perspectives on digital trade.

Te Taumata

Te Taumata is “a charitable trust that provides an authentic voice for Māori on trade between New Zealand and the rest of the world.”¹⁴ Further discussions with Te Taumata, and the resources outlined below, will likely highlight perspectives on digital trade.

Memorandum of understanding (MOU) with MFAT: Te Taumata have a MOU with MFAT. Within the MOU there is a commitment to make an annual work plan and to regularly meet. Accessing the minutes from these meetings would be a good source of insight into Māori perspective on digital trade (The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2022). However, this MOU contains confidentiality clauses.

Trade Talks: Te Taumata host trade hui across Aotearoa New Zealand. Attending these, or analysing notes from the discussion, will likely provide further insights.

The Federation of Māori Authorities (FOMA)

FOMA stands for the Federation of Māori Authorities, a New Zealand-based organization that represents Māori landowners, land users, and land managers. Although predominately traditional trade and e-commerce this group could also provide some insights on digital trade.

MOU with MFAT: FOMA have a MOU with MFAT. Within the MOU there is a commitment to make an annual work plan and to regularly meet. Accessing information from these meetings would be a good source of insight into Māori perspective on digital trade (The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2023). However, this MOU contains confidentiality clauses.

Ngā Toki Whakarururanga

Ngā Toki Whakarururanga, is a group that advocates for Māori rights and interests in trade. After the Waitangi Tribunal Claim Wai 2522 Mediation Agreement, the Crown promised to give “genuine influence on trade policy” at all stages of negotiations (Ngā Toki Whakarururanga, n.d.).

¹⁴ From Te Taumata’s website: <https://tetaumata.com/>

Ngā Toki Whakarururanga provide an overall critique of Trade Agreements highlighting that they recolonise te reo Māori and whakapapa Māori. They also provide a more granular critique of Trade Agreements, looking to each individual Free Trade Agreement or proposed trading agreement to assess the impact of digital trade on Māori rights and interests. In particular, the main concerns they highlight from digital trade agreements include content about data use and location, privacy and consumer protection and source code and algorithms protections all of which prohibit Māori control over Māori data.¹⁵

Further discussion with this group would be useful.

Digital Trade adjacent research

Research on Māori perspectives in the Technology Sector

Another potential avenue to find Māori perspectives on digital trade is looking to Māori perspectives on and in the technology sector. Although not directly about digital trade, reports on Māori perspectives in the Technology Sector collect evidence in these areas. Examples of such reports include:

Kamira, R. (2024). Toi Hangarau: A Report on Māori-owned Technology Enterprises 2024.

Publuu.com. <https://publuu.com/flip-book/75621/1248556/page/42>.

- This report summaries 86 survey responses.
- Surveys were designed to connect to a broad range of participants including: rangatahi aged 18-24, those who were learning tech skills, Māori owners of tech companies and broader tech ecosystem players who encourage Māori into Technology opportunities.
- Although Page 13 of the report states that “72% [of respondents] are very conscious of the importance of exports to grow the tech sector in New Zealand” and “62% [of respondents] are very conscious of the importance of data, the value of controlling access to data and the impact of decisions made from data analysis. Respondents agree on a Māori approach to the concept of data would add value to the whole sector.” There is no specific discussion of digital trade.

¹⁵ Ngā Toki Whakarururanga in their Deep Dive on Digital Trade Rules and Te Tiriti (Day 2), point out that as well as being contrary to Te Tiriti this is also contrary to Article 11 of The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Williams, W. (2020). Digital Taniwha: Growing Māori participation in the IT industry [A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Strategic Management]. The University of Waikato.<https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/ee2505e9-3ec1-4311-b16e-a0a4eca79f1d/content>.

- This thesis interviews ‘Digital Taniwha’ or Māori within the technology sector
- It focuses on the following questions:
 1. What are the key drivers for Māori participation in IT?
 2. What has been done well to promote these key drivers?
 3. What could be done better to promote these key drivers?
- Although these questions may highlight some perspectives on digital products and services from Māori IT professionals, there is no mention of trade or exports in the thesis.

Rollo, L. M. (2023). Iwi Investment and Deep Tech: An Exploration of the Factors Driving and Preventing Iwi Investment into New Zealand Early-Stage Deep Tech. The University of Auckland.<https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/items/6b6cd6fd-335c-4822-9f02-4378ffcd5e43>

- In this thesis, nine interviews were conducted with various stakeholders relevant to the investment activity of iwi, such as iwi investment managers and other corporate investment managers.
- This study does not mention trade and instead focuses on domestic barriers.

Pāua Interface limited. (2024). Toi Hangarau: A Report on Māori-owned Technology Enterprises 2024.<https://publuu.com/flip-book/75621/1248556>.

- This report offers insights and benchmarking on Māori-owned business in the Tech Sector. Note: Māori-owned business is defined as any business with an owner who has Māori ethnicity or Māori decent, and no percentage threshold is required.
- The report covers 85 businesses, of which public data was used. 12 of the biggest revenue-earners of these businesses were then interviewed. 24 businesses then had founder interviews of which 17 or 71% are exporting.

- Digital trade is not discussed specifically.

Archer, E. (2024). Ngā Anamata Māori i te Hangarau Matihiko 2024: Māori in DigiTech Futures Report. <https://ellearcher.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Maori-Anamata-o-Matihiko-Hangarau-2024.pdf>.

- Quotes from this report were used as evidence in Table 1.
- Page 3 of the report states: “This inaugural annual report brings together the voices, aspirations, and concerns of our rangatahi, hapori, and thought leaders in Māori digitech. Through a series of workshops, wānanga, and kōrero, we have listened deeply to our people’s visions for the future, and now we present those insights to the wider world.”
- There were four key wānanga – one in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), one in Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington), one online and one at a Kura Kaupapa Māori.
- Page 7 states: “Each wānanga was structured around several key questions: 1. What does a thriving Māori digital future look like? 2. What happens if we do nothing? 3. What are our hard no’s – our dark futures we don’t want to see come to pass? 4. How can we bring ancestral knowledge and modern technology together to shape a future that benefits our people? 5. What barriers exist for rangatahi and hapori to access opportunities in the tech sector? 6. How can we create new pathways that support Māori in tech careers and leadership roles? These questions were at the heart of the kōrero, prompting participants to think deeply about their roles as creators, protectors, and innovators in the digital realm. Participants ranged from rangatahi navigating educational and career pathways, career changers, to experienced practitioners working in DigiTech sectors.”

Martin Jenkins on behalf of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2023). Digital Trade Review (Final Report). <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Trade-General/Trade-policy/Digital-Trade-Review-Final-Report.pdf>.

- Quotes from this report were used in Table 1.
- This review was commissioned by MFAT after the Waitangi Tribunal Report into the CPTPP.

- No iwi or hapū were consulted in this.

Research on Māori exporters

Although there is limited research on Māori exporters perspectives on digital trade, there is a growing body of research on Māori exporters. Although many Māori exporters are in the primary sector and therefore engage in more traditional forms of trade, some of these views may relate to digital trade. Research includes:

Jurado, T., & Mika, J. P. (2022). Indigenous entrepreneurs' export practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Small Enterprise Research*, 30(1), 1–23.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13215906.2022.2134192>.

- This research was used in Table 1.
- This report interviewed 10 Māori involved in exporting across the agriculture, dairy, service, pharmaceutical and food and beverage industries.
- Digital trade is not discussed.

Sense Partners. (2023). Māori firms' use of Aotearoa New Zealand's FTA network.

- This report was used in Table 1.
- This report has a small sample size: “We received 64 completed surveys. While this is a reasonable response, we would not suggest it is necessarily a representative sample of Māori firms. As such, care should be taken in inferring too much (in a statistical sense) from our results, especially when we start to slice and dice to analyse specific markets or the responses of certain types of firms.”
- Mainly looks to the use of FTAs.
- Focused on services and primary sector exporters (not digital).

Mika, J. (2023). Ūropi tauhokohoko ka taea: New Zealand-European Union Free Trade Agreement: An Independent Assessment of the impacts for Māori.

<https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/90d0a139-8808-4aac-980e-b92310694fe1/content>.

- This research is used in Table 1.
- This research is very specific to the NZ-EU FTA.

McIndoe, C., Reid, A., Schulze, H., Wiradika, S., & Dixon, H. (2024). Te Ōhanga Māori 2023: The Māori Economy 2023. Prepared by Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL) for The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/30486-te-ohanga-maori-2023-report-pdf>.

- This report covers the Māori economy in general, including exporters.
- Apart from providing a case study on Kiwa digital, this report does not discuss digital trade.
- This report contains statistics about Māori exporters rather than perspectives from Māori exporters.

A lack of iwi and hapū perspectives on digital trade

There is limited research available on iwi or hapū perspectives of digital trade (in terms of both e-commerce and trade in digital assets). This would be a valuable area to explore further.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, when discussing digital trade, it is important to detangle the concepts of e-commerce and trade in digital assets to allow a full discussion of their diverse policy impacts. E-commerce is more akin to traditional trade and therefore can be governed by similar policies, legislations and regulations. However, the increased access to international markets mean that issues of provenance, authenticity and traceability are increased. Trade in digital assets, however, is diverse from both e-commerce and traditional forms of trade and pushes the boundaries of what constitutes trade creating unique policy concerns that challenges existing trade norms. Furthermore, when looking to Māori communities it is important to understand the further policy concerns prompted by a diverse tikanga, mātauranga and way of trading.

Although there is limited research on Māori perspectives on digital trade, the available analysis highlights the tension between those interested in using technology, trade and digital trade to the advantage of Māori communities and those that wish to tread cautiously in these rapidly developing areas to ensure that rights are protected. However, it is clear that there is a growing interest amongst Māori to engage in the technology sector which inevitably leads to involvement in digitally enabled trade or trade in digital services and assets. As a fast-growing and wide-spread sector understanding opportunities and challenges for Māori participation in digital trade and the wider digital economy and is important. Further research focused on Māori perspectives on digital trade is essential to ensure that digital trade policy can develop to protect and promote te ao Māori.

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