

Moments in Time: A Systematic Review of Indigenous Business Research 1999–2019

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Abstract: Industry based studies show that Indigenous participation in business is increasing worldwide and academic research shows that Indigenous businesses successfully operate in both local and national markets, making significant economic and social contributions to their economies. However, Indigenous businesses are differentiated from mainstream businesses by many attributes, including close connection to community and inclusion of cultural heritage and values within business practices. These cultural values may at times conflict with mainstream perceptions of business. This paper adds to the discourse arguing that Indigenous business research is taking place in business schools, therefore there is a need for Indigenous business researchers within business schools to provide Indigenous business stakeholders with alternatives to western-based perspectives that currently dominate the field. This systematic review, undertaken in 2020, examines the field of Indigenous business research for the period 1999–2019 to identify what progress the field has made towards providing these alternatives, and what business schools need to do in the future to enable Indigenous business owners and business people worldwide to use research included within this review to make evidence-based arguments and decisions about their businesses. This review uses quality indicators perpetuated by business schools to guide which papers are included in the analysis. It identifies key trends in research to date and related gaps in the field, presents a conceptual framework for consideration by business schools of future directions in Indigenous business research, and proposes recommendations for future research.

Keywords: Indigenous business, Indigenous entrepreneurship, systematic review, Indigenous methodologies, etic-emic perspectives

Terminology Statement

Lower case in western is used intentionally to decentre colonial linguistic dominant discourse (Lenette, 2022).

Introduction

Indigenous participation in business is increasing worldwide (Supply Nation, 2018). Business schools teach that business ownership provides many opportunities for Indigenous people (Hindle & Moroz, 2010), including the opportunity “to take part in national and international level political economies while negotiating and asserting self-determination” (Bunten, 2011, p. 61). Indigenous business are differentiated from mainstream business by many attributes, including a close connection to community and the inclusion of cultural heritage and values within business practices (Dana, 2015), and, while these cultural values may at times conflict with mainstream theories of business, Indigenous business successfully operate in local and national markets (Bélanger Baur, 2019) and make significant economic and social contributions to their economies (Supply Nation, 2018). While this systematic review includes papers from only 1999 to 2019 our paper draws from discourse before and after this period to contextualise this study.

Although skipped over in the content of many business schools, many Indigenous groups have a long history of conducting business and have engaged in trade—including international trade—long before interactions with western peoples (Macknight, 1972). However, these Indigenous economies experienced great interruption during colonisation,

and Indigenous businesses, like Indigenous people, have been systematically eroded by colonial processes which is evident in many business school curricula. One outcome of this has been the devaluing of Indigenous knowledges, including business knowledge. Mainstream business research is often considered “theory-sensitive and practice-led” (Tranfield & Starkey, 1998, p. 349), with research outputs providing relevant knowledge which can be applied by educators, and also managers and policymakers, to assist in decision-making (Hindle, 2005; Toffel, 2016). To support students receiving a well-rounded education, and Indigenous business in their day-to-day interactions, there is therefore a need for researchers and educators to provide alternatives to the current dominant, western-based perspectives (Bruton et al., 2018; Hindle & Moroz, 2010). Given Indigenous business academics are an underrepresented population, this work must be taken on by all business education stakeholders.

There is an ongoing debate in the management literature regarding the desirability of developing either universal or Indigenous theories (Bruton et al., 2018; Jack et al., 2013), with perspectives grounded in alternative etic-emic orientations (Jack et al., 2013). The etic perspective, commonly associated with universal knowledge, is used to explain phenomena across nations and cultures (Tsui, 2004); however, research grounded in this approach can ignore nuances of culture (Sinkovics & Ghauri, 2008). Consequently, two alternatives for the development of Indigenous theory have been identified: working with existing theory and creating completely new theory based on alternative philosophies (Bruton et al., 2018).

Past studies (Dana, 2015) have utilised systematic reviews to bring together extant literature on Indigenous business research, with research questions focusing on business people (Croce, 2017; Hindle & Moroz, 2010; Morley, 2014), tourism (Carr et al., 2016; Weaver, 2010), training (Miller, 2005), mining (Horowitz et al., 2018), and conservation (Popova, 2014). However, no comprehensive review has to date mapped the development of the field of Indigenous business research, nor considered to what extent it has contributed to outcomes that have influenced business school content or supported Indigenous business development and ongoing management. This systematic review, therefore, evaluates research publications and their ability to support Indigenous business owners’ endeavours, building on earlier work (Croce, 2017; Hindle & Moroz, 2010) to highlight trends within Indigenous business discourse used by business schools; though the identification of significant gaps in the literature, it provides a theoretical contribution to management and Indigenous business fields; and through the development of a framework for the future direction of Indigenous business research, it contributes to the process of moving Indigenous business research from rhetoric to action (Carr et al., 2016; Hindle & Moroz, 2010). The approach taken turns the questions around to ask, “What are business researchers, schools and educators contributing?”. Finally, it provides recommendations for future research to ensure that it meets Indigenous business stakeholders’ needs.

Research Questions

We initially posed the following research questions:

1. What have the salient trends within Indigenous business research been, and what are their implications for Indigenous business?
2. How have methodologies developed to support the growth of discourse and research outputs?
3. What are the current trends in relation to research areas in Indigenous business research, and how do the research outputs contribute to the development and management of Indigenous business?
4. What may the future research trends for Indigenous business research be?

This paper provides a detailed summary of the approach applied, followed by a discussion of key findings aligned with the research questions. Examples of relevant publications are used to support the discussion. The findings are then used to develop both a framework for future Indigenous business research, which emphasises the importance of including Indigenous voices in the development of future research agendas and discourse, and recommendations for future research.

Methodology

Systematic literature reviews have been used to answer a multiplicity of research questions in both mainstream and Indigenous business research contexts (e.g., Bowen et al., 2010; Croce, 2017; Hindle & Moroz, 2010; Parris & Peachey, 2013). The systematic review for this study applied the phases identified by Kitchenham (2004). To ensure that our methods were rigorous and transparent (Victor, 2008), we developed a review protocol including the overarching research questions and five discrete stages (Kitchenham, 2004). We created a flow diagram (see Figure 3 in Appendix

1) to provide a structured guide for the researchers. Publications collated during the identification and screening stages were collated in Excel files recording article title, author/s, publication source, publication year, publication type, and empirical method.

Keyword Search

The search strategy combined keywords using Boolean operators, with search strings adapted based on database or journal syntax rules. To identify trends in Indigenous business research both in Australia and internationally, it was imperative that the keyword search include the diversity of Indigenous peoples in both contexts. Therefore, it began with “Aboriginal” OR “Indigenous” OR “Torres Strait Islanders” OR “First Nations” OR “Native Nations” OR “Native American” OR “Metis” OR “Inuit” OR “American Indian” OR “Native People” (Croce, 2017).

A range of terms was then added, including “entrepreneur” OR “commercial business” OR “Aboriginal business” OR “business” OR “community business” OR “business organisation” OR “business centre” OR “business governance” OR “small business” OR “SME” OR “micro-business” OR “medium business” OR “large business” OR “hybrid economy”.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were included in the protocol (Table 1). Publications were classified during the planning stage as: original research – papers containing data or a new analysis of existing data; reviews – critical summaries of work in the field; discussion papers – papers containing no original data, such as letters or conceptual or editorial papers; and case studies – studies of a phenomenon in a real-life context (Foley & O’Connor, 2013). As the research question necessitated the review of empirical studies, only publications classified as case studies or original publications were included. For the purposes of the review, original publications were then further classified as journal articles, conference papers, theses, reports, and book chapters. All Indigenous business models were included within the selection, i.e., land, community, cultural, social, and commercial business. As mainstream business research encompasses diverse subject areas, including marketing, human resource management, and organisational behaviour (Bell et al., 2018), there were no restrictions placed on the subject areas included in the review.

Table 1: Selecting Studies: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Selection criteria	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Language	English language	Not in English language
Scope	Connection to Indigenous business	Non-Indigenous business
Population	Indigenous peoples	Non-Indigenous peoples
Methodology	Based on empirical research	No data reported in the publication
Publication type	Original or case study research	Discussion, theoretical, conceptual
Date of research	1999–2019	Pre-1999
Geography	Australian; international	n/a
Accessibility of publications	Full access	Limited or no access

Identification and Screening Stage Results

Considering the multidisciplinary nature of Indigenous research (Dana & Anderson, 2007) and its underrepresentation in mainstream research (Hindle & Moroz, 2010), a range of sources, including some outside of conventional academic sources (e.g., Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) ranking), were included in the search (see Appendix 2). Four identification and screening phases were undertaken in an iterative process (Kitchenham, 2004), providing a structured approach to identifying publications. For all data sources, where keyword strings returned a large number of results, the first 100 publications were reviewed for relevance and practicality (Bainbridge et al., 2014). A summary is provided in Table 2.

Phase 1

We used Google Scholar due to its capacity to identify both scholarly and “grey literature” (Godin et al., 2015; Hall, 2011; Hindle & Moroz, 2010; Horowitz et al., 2018), and SCOPUS for its wide journal coverage (Hall, 2011). As the use of electronic databases is not sufficient (Kitchenham, 2004), specific journals and websites were also included. Thirty-eight A*, A and B journals were selected from the ABDC list based on their focus on management, tourism, or business research, aligning with business school ideals of quality publications. Keyword strings were adapted to meet journal syntax rules (Kitchenham, 2004), with search terms from alternative studies (Carr et al., 2016) applied. Consequently, for journals which produced limited returns using the keyword search identified above, the beginning of the keyword search was reduced to “Aboriginal” or “Indigenous”, and all results were screened.

Phases 2–4

Thirteen industry and government website searches were completed. While some websites provided a “search” option, others required exploration of website pages. Following the protocol applied by Croce (2017), a manual review of publications was conducted in Phase 3, with six additional journals, two websites and one search engine identified as new sources. This approach proved effective, with $n = 143$ publications meeting the inclusion criteria identified; this represented 11% of records screened, being the highest proportion from all phases. In Phase 4, Google and Business Source Complete were used to locate any gaps in the identification of publications.

Table 2: Summary of the Publications Screened and Selected during Stage 1 of the Systematic Review

Phase	Records	Duplicates	Screened	Included	% Included from screened
1	16,154	11,740	4,414	272	6%
2	479		479	35	7%
3	1,315	26	1,289	143	11%
4	579		579	20	3%

A total of 18,527 records were found (see Figure 3 in Appendix 1). After excluding duplicate documents, and applying inclusion criteria, 434 publications remained for full text assessment in the eligibility stage.

Eligibility Stage

In this stage, full text records were reviewed using two weights of evidence (see Appendix 3): relevance of the study in relation to the research questions and quality of the study (Miller, 2005).

Following this review, 127 records were retained. Of these, 80% were journal articles and 13% were research reports, predominantly from the Centre for Indigenous Economic Policy Research (47%) and Australian government-funded research (47%), e.g., Cooperative Research Centres. The sample size was assessed against those of comparable methodological studies: Croce (2017): 25; Morley (2014): 30; Miller (2005): 67; Popova (2014): 101; Hindle and Moroz (2010): 102; Weaver (2010): 200; and Carr et al. (2016): 403. Compared to the average of 132 records, the sample for this study was considered appropriate. Nevertheless, despite applying Croce’s (2017) recommendation to include a range of non-mainstream sources, the majority of excluded publications did not meet the study’s criteria for quality, which required detailed methodological transparency. This was particularly evident in industry and government reports, which commonly cited data but provided limited or no information on methodology. Inclusion of methodology, particularly in Indigenous research contexts, is valuable for determining appropriateness of research and related findings. Criteria defining high-quality publications as practiced by business schools, which rely on international rankings, means that many papers by impactful Indigenous business scholars were not included.

Analysis

A coding schema was developed to support the analysis (see Appendix 4). Analysis for salient trends was conducted using Excel, while research outputs were analysed using NVivo (Version 12).

Results and Discussion

Salient trends and implications for Indigenous business

The first research question provided an opportunity to assess general trends within Indigenous business research over the past 20 years and consider their implications. Overall, there has been a growth in Indigenous business research publications, with 70% of the studies included in the systematic review published in the past 10 years (see Figure 1). However, as business research outputs are commonly connected to the context of relevant studies (Bell et al., 2018) and Indigenous business are not a homogenous phenomenon (Croce, 2017; Dana, 2015), an analysis of publications across continents, countries, and locations (urban, regional, and remote) was conducted, and this identified disparities in the geographic focus of studies. While Indigenous peoples reside in some 90 countries (United Nations, 2009), the studies were mainly focused on two continents: Oceania (over 50%) and North America (25%). In Oceania, the majority were focused on Australia (73%) and New Zealand (21%). In North America, they mainly focused on Indigenous peoples in Canada (59%) and the USA (25%).

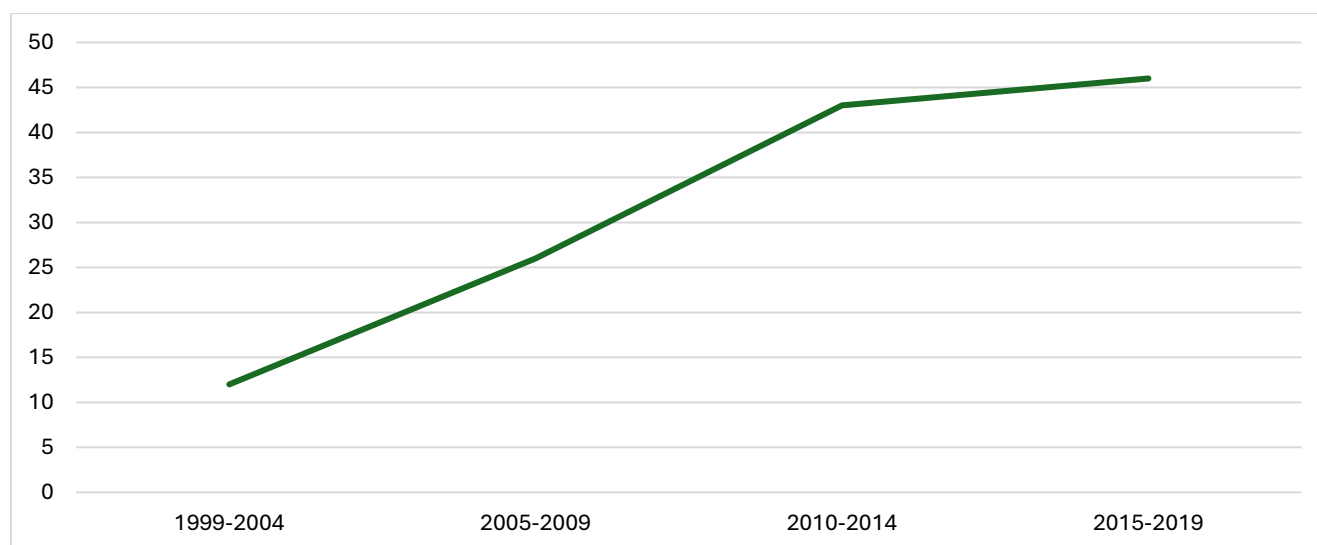


Figure 1: Trends in Indigenous Research Publications

This highlights the fact that Indigenous business research is predominantly focused on high-income countries, the impact of this phenomenon on business school content is yet to be investigated. Practical and policy recommendations from studies focusing on Oceania and North America may, therefore, not be transferable to many African, Asian, Latin American, and Caribbean countries, which have experienced limited economic growth (Drysdale, 2018) and include multiple Indigenous worldviews on business (Dana, 2015). While there has been a promising growth in studies focusing on Asia and South America, with research publications quadrupling in the past 10 years, the number of studies focused on Africa has decreased. And studies which compared two or more countries represented only 2% of research publications reviewed (e.g., Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005; Meis Mason, 2015). Finally, in the publications studied, a strong bias towards research in remote locations was evident, with 60% focused on remote locations, compared to 6% focused on regional and 10% focused on urban locations, while 15% included businesses from a combination of remote, regional, and/or urban areas. The importance of conducting research in regional and urban areas, where the majority of Indigenous people reside, was highlighted over 15 years ago (Foley, 2006; Hunter, 2004). Yet, during the past 10 years, the proportion of studies incorporating regional and urban locations has reduced from 37% to 27%.

Defining Indigenous Business

The diverse definitions applied to Indigenous business have been noted within the discourse. These definitions impact on calculations relating to the number of businesses defined as Indigenous (Hunter, 2013), the contribution of the Indigenous business sector to local and national economies (Supply Nation, 2018), and the ability of Indigenous business owners to access support (Foley, 2004). However, this review highlighted a further issue in relation to the range of definitions for Indigenous business: only 44% of the publications reviewed provided an explicit definition for this unit of analysis, while the remaining publications commonly combined a number of attributes. While earlier discussions have noted the different applications of tangible attributes such as levels of ownership (Foley, 2004; Hunter, 2013; Supply Nation, 2018) to define Indigenous business, this review identified an additional range of intangible attributes that were applied, including cultural heritage (Barr et al., 2018; Cahn, 2008; Foley, 1999, 2006, 2008; Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005), Indigenous values, and sense of community (Austin & Garnett, 2011; Boyd & Trospers, 2010; McInnis-Bowers et al., 2017). However, as it is an intangible attribute, the level of integration of Indigenous culture in a business cannot be specified, with variations in the depth of integration evident across business (Cahn, 2008). This reflects the reality of Indigenous business and the diversity of approaches across and within Indigenous groups (Dana, 2015).

The complexity of defining Indigenous business based on tangible and intangible aspects is therefore apparent, with the multiplicity of definitions impacting the ability to compare findings with earlier studies. This is further confounded when studies do not define the unit of analysis.

Trends in Research Methodology

Our second research question aimed to examine methodologies across the study's 20-year period. The prevailing use of qualitative studies in emerging research fields has been highlighted in previous systematic reviews (Carr et al., 2016;

Hindle & Moroz, 2010), but, while research in the context of Indigenous business needs to apply methodologies guided by Indigenous peoples and cultures (Carr et al., 2016; Hindle & Moroz, 2010; Munro et al., 2019), only limited evidence of the application of Indigenous methodologies was identified. Further, although some studies noted that research was conducted as a collaborative partnership, they did not make explicit reference to use of Indigenous methodologies (Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010). Even in those publications that explicitly noted the application of Indigenous methodologies, only limited details were provided (Abascal, 2019; Amoamo, 2011; Haar et al., 2019). Evidence of more detailed application of Indigenous methodologies was provided in some publications (see Barr et al., 2018; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2014), but, while these studies highlighted the positive aspects of applying Indigenous methodologies, including the ability to design studies that provided direct benefits to participants (Barr et al., 2018), they also noted issues such as conflicts with the timeframes imposed on researchers (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2014). A lack of positionality disclosure in papers makes it difficult to identify which scholars of Indigenous business research are themselves Indigenous, which may impact how Indigenous methodologies are considered, enacted, and reported.

Further analysis of the methodologies applied was then undertaken. Forty-one per cent of studies were qualitative, with this method also having the largest overall growth (244%), from 11 in 1999–2009 to 38 in 2010–2019. Case studies represented 37% of publications, with the application of this method constant over the 20-year period. However, a substantial growth in quantitative and mixed-methods approaches was evident in the period 2010–2019, which may indicate that the field is beginning to mature. There was a 57% increase in quantitative studies during this period compared to 1999–2009. Consistent with mainstream business research (Bell et al., 2018), mixed-methods approaches also increased, from zero to 14 cases, with the majority of mixed-methods approaches applying a quantitative-qualitative sequence.

Trends in Subject Areas and Research Outputs

As scholars have noted the need for research with holistic and actionable outcomes (Carr et al., 2016), we analysed the subject areas of research publications and the distribution and content of studies across industry sectors to understand trends in research outputs. Research publications were open-coded based on subject areas, and axial coding was conducted to examine the themes evident within subject areas and across industry sectors (see Appendix 4 for codes). Studies were coded based on whether they were focused on an individual entrepreneur on a new business start-up, which could be either an innovative start-up which disrupted existing markets or filled a current gap in the market, or innovation within an organisation (Hindle & Moroz, 2010).

Trends in Subject Areas

Although business research encompasses a broad range of subjects (Bell et al., 2018), our results show that current research is still focused on two key areas (see Table 3): 75% of publications explored topics connected to entrepreneurship and organisational design. Gaps in marketing knowledge are beginning to be addressed (Akbar & Sharp, 2020), with marketing perhaps becoming an emerging field of study in Indigenous business research as 14% of publications examined topics in this area. To a lesser extent, management studies have also seen some growth, with an increase in leadership studies over the past 10 years, and an increase in organisational behaviour and human resource studies during the past five years.

Table 3: Summary of Research Topics in Indigenous Business Research 1999–2019

Subject area	Number of publications	Specific topics investigated in the area
Organisational design	49	Governance; planning; partnerships; development opportunities; success factors; barriers to success; institutional structures; measuring performance; sustainability; social capital; knowledge
Entrepreneurship	46	Motivations to establish business, e.g., self-determination, resilience, economic; entrepreneurial traits; drivers and barriers to entry; culture; social capital; cultural capital; value systems; Indigenous knowledge; managing drivers and barriers to entry; enabling factors; business people trends
Marketing	18	Product demand; promotion; product design; visitor codes
Leadership	7	Indigenous values and leadership; Indigenous management styles and organisational success; Indigenous management and international business
Organisational behaviour	5	Reaffirming cultural identity within the workplace
Accounting	1	Impact of culture on accounting methods
Human resource management	1	Recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees

A further disparity in Indigenous business research was evident in the distribution of studies across industry sectors. The majority of publications (70%) focused on one industry sector only, with the largest proportion being focused on

the tourism sector (34%). The agriculture sector featured in 16% of publications, followed by the art sector in 8%. The remaining industry sectors were represented in between 1% and 3% of studies.

Subject areas researched were not evenly distributed across industry sectors (see Table 4), with the broadest range being within the tourism and art sectors. The majority of marketing studies focused on the tourism sector (78%) and the remainder on the art sector. Marketing research focused on the tourism sector predominately examined demand-side issues (e.g., Abascal, 2019; Ashwell, 2015; Holder & Ruhanen, 2019; Pettersson, 2002), although some have recently broadened their research scope to include the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems and marketing decisions (Espeso-Molinero et al., 2016; Kausar & Gunawan, 2018). Compared to organisational design and entrepreneurship research, marketing studies included the highest proportion of quantitative studies (33%), which may reflect the dominant paradigm in mainstream marketing discourse.

Although there were comparable numbers of organisational design and entrepreneurship studies, differences between the studies were evident. While there was a significant growth in the number of organisational design studies published in the past 10 years, with 75% of studies published between 2010–2019, entrepreneurship studies showed a more even distribution over the 20-year period of this study, with 54% published in the past 10 years. The development of this field of business study is evident. During the period 1999–2009, Indigenous business research focused on differentiating Indigenous entrepreneurship from mainstream business people by providing definitions (Foley, 1999; Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005). Studies examined the characteristics of successful Indigenous entrepreneurship (Foley, 2003; Frederick & Dzisi, 2008; Lituchy et al., 2006) and the role of culture in entrepreneurial success (Cahn, 2008; Foley, 2008; Lee-Ross & Mitchell, 2007). A final stream of research was focused on the drivers (Ndemo, 2005; Swinney, 2008) and barriers to establishing successful business, such as levels of education and access to finance (Cachon, 2000).

Table 4: Summary of Indigenous Business Research Areas and Industry Sectors

Industry sector	Subject areas							Total
	ENT	MAR	ACC	HR	ORGB	LEA	ORD	
Agriculture	8						11	19
Art	2	4		1		2	2	11
Health							1	1
Manufacturing	1					3		4
Mining							3	3
Tourism	8	14			5		16	43
Transport							1	1
Education/training							1	1
IT							1	1
Finance							1	1
Multiple stated	14		1			1	5	21
Multiple not stated	13					1	7	21
Total	46	18	1	1	5	7	49	127
Percentage	37	14	1	1	4	5	38	100

Note: ENT: Entrepreneurship; MAR: Marketing; ACC: Accounting; HR: Human resource management; ORGB: Organisational behaviour; LEA: Leadership; ORD: Organisational design, including governance, networks, capital; knowledge (incl. transfer)

During 2010–2019, the field of Indigenous business research began to mature, with the scope of studies broadening to include the incorporation of Indigenous knowledges into business development (Dana & Waata Jr, 2011; Fleming et al., 2015; Fordham et al., 2013; Mason et al., 2012). Studies have examined how alternative business models that embody collective worldviews (Gordon et al., 2017) may be used to overcome barriers to Indigenous business development. Case studies focusing on cooperatives (Islam & Berkes, 2017) and community business (Giovannini, 2016) have provided examples of how these models may overcome barriers and provide a range of economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental benefits including the development of social capital (Giovannini, 2016), which is essential for business development (Fernandes, 2013), and of opportunities to build bridges between Indigenous and western cultures (Murphy & Harwood, 2017). In contrast, however, one case study argued that a focus on achieving multiple goals may limit a social business' capacity to undertake business development strategies and profitability (Brueckner et al., 2016). The conflicting results within these case studies reflect differences across multiple variables, including geographic location, type of business, and industry sector.

Although entrepreneurship research has predominately applied case study (37%) or qualitative (33%) approaches, studies using mixed (11%) and quantitative (19%) methods began to emerge in the mid-2000s. Although comparable numbers of case study and qualitative methods were applied in these publications, a growth in qualitative studies was

evident, with twice as many publications reporting using this method during the period 2010–2019. Conversely, case study approaches declined by 30%.

Compared to entrepreneurship publications, over half of which focused on business in multiple sectors, organisational design studies maintained a strong focus on single industries. They also had the greatest distribution across industry sectors, although they were still primarily focused on the agriculture and tourism sectors. Half of organisational design studies examined organisational structures, such as institutional structures, planning, and governance (e.g., Austin & Garnett, 2011; Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010; Boyd & Trosper, 2010; Brueckner et al., 2016), and organisational drivers and constraints (Fuller et al., 2005). However, others examined connections between aspects of culture and organisational design (Fernandes, 2013; Kawharu, 2018). Studies in the organisational design field were dominated by case study approaches (47%) and qualitative methods (45%). Quantitative or mixed-methods approaches were only used in 8% of publications.

Management publications were separated into leadership, organisational behaviour, and human resources management studies. Leadership studies is an emerging field of study in the Indigenous business context, and, while the relative numbers included in this review were small, ($n = 7$), 50% focused on the manufacturing sector. To date, these studies have focused on developing an understanding of the cultural dimensions of Indigenous management styles and their impact on management practices, employee wellness, and organisational success (Balbinot et al., 2012; Haar et al., 2019; Jackson et al., 2008; Madichie et al., 2008). Some studies have also begun to examine the interactions between Indigenous and western business value systems (Balbinot et al., 2012; Henry, 2011), exploring how Indigenous leaders' reconciliation of these value systems contributes to organisational success (Henry, 2011). Similar to studies in Indigenous entrepreneurship, these studies identify differences between western and Indigenous management practices (Jackson et al., 2008), with Indigenous managers' focus extending beyond the internal success of the organisation to encompass benefits to the broader community through community support and increased employment opportunities (Hunter, 2015; Jackson et al., 2008).

Human resource management topics only appeared in one study that focused on the recruitment and retention of workers in an art centre (Seet et al., 2021). Given that Indigenous business employs a higher proportion of Indigenous peoples (Jackson et al., 2008; Supply Nation, 2018), further studies in new industry/business contexts would be valuable. Early organisational behaviour studies focused on the tourism sector, and particularly on cultural aspects of Indigenous peoples' engagement in tourism and methods of maintaining power in the host–guest relationship (Campo & Turbay, 2015), and on the strengthening of cultural identity through performance (Amoamo, 2011; Hunter, 2013).

Research Outputs

To examine the contribution of research outputs to the development and management of Indigenous business, we applied open coding under two themes: theoretical and practical outputs. As the importance of conducting Indigenous business research underpinned by Indigenous theory has been noted (Bruton et al., 2018), we conducted axial coding on the theoretical outputs to determine if the theory developed was western, Indigenous or a hybrid of both. A quarter of publications were coded western, with 43% coming from the marketing disciplines. As previously noted, marketing publications included a high proportion of quantitative studies, which, when combined with the lack of positionality disclosure as accepted practice in business research, suggests that studies in this area may be predominantly applying an etic perspective to Indigenous business discourse. While these studies appear to contribute findings with practical relevance (Toffel, 2016), the limited engagement (or stated engagement) of Indigenous researchers and business during both the research process and the development of recommendations reinforce dominant western-based perspectives that business schools must question.

In contrast to this approach, the majority of studies contributed to the development of Indigenous theory using hybrid approaches. However, a notable difference between publications in this category was noted, with two separate themes identified. In the first, Indigenous theory was developed by comparing research findings with western literature to identify similarities or differences (e.g., Foley, 2004). These findings provided policy recommendations in relation to key areas such as education and training. In the second, researchers explicitly aimed to develop Indigenous theory by combining western theory with Indigenous knowledges. These studies examined areas including developing competitive advantage (Barr et al., 2018), understanding tourist demand (Munro et al., 2019), creating product development frameworks (Espeso-Molinero et al., 2016), defining Indigenous value chains (Kawharu, 2018), and applying an Indigenist worldview (Rigney, 1999) to marketing Indigenous products to postcolonial populations (Akbar, 2016) and to Indigenous business models (Amoamo et al., 2018). In these studies, the application of collaborative approaches that incorporate and respect Indigenous knowledges developed Indigenous theory to be used in the development and operation of Indigenous business.

Thematic analysis of the practical implications of these findings identified that the majority of recommendations related to two key areas: policy and planning, and education and training. A broad range of policy recommendations was connected to creating an enabling environment (Hunt, 2018) for the establishment and ongoing sustainability of Indigenous business. These included recommendations on education and training, finance, business support, infrastructure, and procurement. Further, the importance of Indigenous participation in the development of policies connected to Indigenous business development was highlighted (Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010; Melubo & Carr, 2019).

Education and training recommendations demonstrate the importance of tailoring programs to meet the social, cultural, and economic subtleties of Indigenous business (Collins et al., 2017; Yong, 2019). As educational levels are connected to entrepreneurial success (Foley, 2004), recommendations for educational and training programs have included identifying methods to overcome lower levels of education (Hunter, 2004), whether through formal education (Foley, 2004), within Indigenous business (Flamsteed & Golding, 2005), or through mentorship programs which provide personalised support (Fisher & Rola-Rubzen, 2011; Hunter, 2004). Specific training requirements are highlighted, including skills and knowledge connected to capacity building (Fuller & Cummings, 2003; Yong, 2019), and the self-efficacy and self-confidence building required for entrepreneurial success (McInnis-Bowers et al., 2017).

Based on these findings, a conceptual framework was developed to guide future research and discourse directions in Indigenous business research (see Figure 2). However, while significant opportunities exist for researchers and educators to extend and develop Indigenous business theory, in order to conduct ethical research, collaborative approaches will be required (Munro et al., 2019). Further, the role of business schools in engaging with quality Indigenous business discourse must be considered. In particular, who defines the term “quality” in the context of Indigenous business research needs examination.

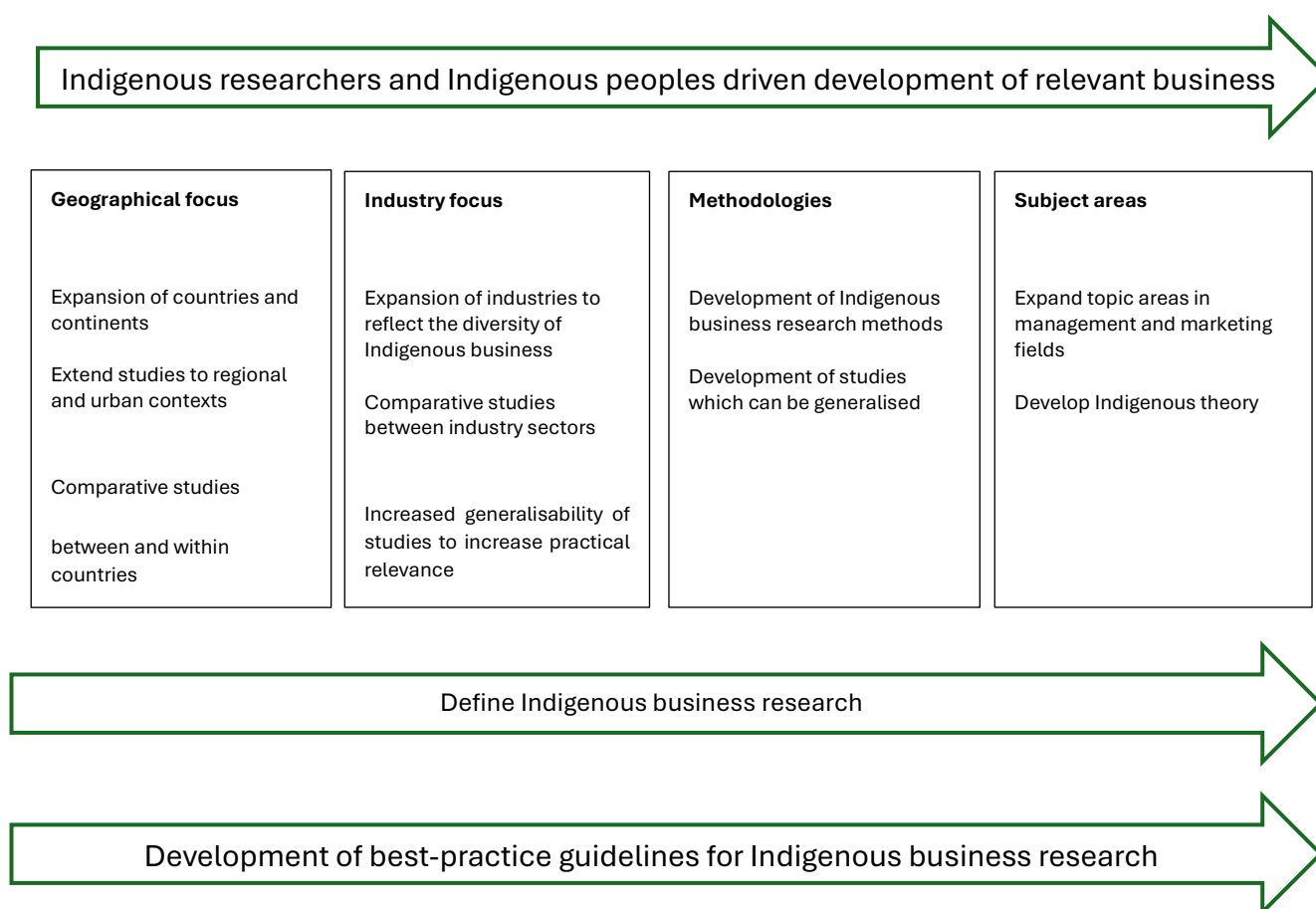


Figure 2: Future Research Directions within Indigenous Business Research: A Conceptual Framework

This framework proposes possible pathways forward to advance the interests of Indigenous business research and how it is used to inform business education in higher education. It is designed to be collaboratively developed and improved as part of future research conducted with Indigenous business stakeholders to ensure pursuit of fit-for-purpose Indigenous business discourse and impactful Indigenous business education, including in mainstream business content. This framework serves as a call to Indigenous business researchers to advocate for a collaborative, self-determined re-defining of Indigenous business research, and how it will be used, in future. Following further work

to define Indigenous business research, maybe the development of best-practice guidelines for Indigenous business research will reinforce the need for Indigenous business research stakeholders driven development of relevant business. Rethinking of what (and who) defines quality research in this space is vital as Indigenous scholars seek inclusion in the outlets their institutions term higher quality. Indigenous business researchers should not be stuck waiting for a special issue to gain entry to the journals they are required to publish in. Indigenous business is every day, not special days. A wholistic approach to these developments could lead to a systematic improvement of higher education business content to be more inclusive of Indigenous business for the benefit of all people.

Limitations

Several limitations in the study were identified, and strategies for overcoming these in future research have been developed.

This systematic review adopted quality indicators commonly used by business schools in higher education, being institutional rankings, as guidance on what papers could be included. This means that some pertinent publications have been overlooked. This does not mean that those works are not of great value, only that the narrow version of what is considered quality business research, as perpetuated by many business schools through publishing requirements, means that many credible works are systematically going under cited. For example, currently there is no Field of Research code relating to Indigenous business research in use by business research and education institutions. Future research may overcome these limitations with strategies such as contacting the authors of conference presentations to access the papers, contacting the authors of non-mainstream sources to request details of the methodology, and developing new approaches to selection criteria, such as assessment of impact factors.

A further limitation was that the use of non-Indigenous sources and English language publication as selection criteria in this study minimised the contribution of “Indigenous voices”. In addition, as the study was limited to papers written in English, it was outside of its scope to determine drivers or barriers to Indigenous business research in Africa and South America. Future research, perhaps to be undertaken by multilingual teams to support wider inclusion of languages, into these factors would help to increase the inclusion of global Indigenous voices in a study like this, including works that are not in English and those from non-colonised countries (Gorbuntsova et al., 2019), as well as those whose “Indigenous status” is not recognised by their governments (Berger, 2019). Such a study would also open opportunities for a more global defining of Indigenous business from a self-determined perspective, which would enhance clarity and comparability for future research. With an increase in the practice of including positionality in high-quality academic publications, it may even be possible for future research to investigate the differences in work undertaken by Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and diverse research teams.

Additionally, the study was limited in its capacity to assess the impact of practical recommendations on Indigenous business and business school educators. Indeed, it became apparent that, to assess the relevance of these findings, future research focusing on examining if, and how, the recommendations have been implemented and what the outcomes will be required. Further, as emerging fields of research are providing recommendations in relation to areas such as ethical leadership (Haar et al., 2019), future research could examine how these knowledges are being incorporated into business school content, education, and training programs, and what the outcomes of those programs are. Such research is of paramount importance to ensure that studies conducted with Indigenous peoples have value to the people they claim to support.

And, finally, this systematic review was undertaken in 2020. Since 2020 the researchers have revised and resubmitted this paper to four journals considered high quality by business schools, with one journal taking 23 months and multiple resubmissions to ultimately reject the paper based on “fit”. This means that the data is older than ideal for a current publication but also demonstrates the challenges Indigenous business research faces in being published in journals considered high quality by business schools.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This systematic review attempts to flip the lens onto academia, and asks not only what has happened in the field of Indigenous business research and education to date, and what contribution this has made to business knowledge, but also what needs to happen in the future to enable Indigenous business stakeholders from all places to use research to make evidence-based arguments and decisions about their businesses and trust that graduates understand Indigenous business. Using the parameters considered high quality by business schools means that there is considerable scope for this work to be done in a different way in future.

To answer the questions of this study, we undertook a systematic review of empirical Indigenous business research published over a 20-year period in places considered high quality by business schools. This review identifies trends in subject areas and research outputs, and, in doing so, highlights significant gaps in the field. Although there has been growth in the amount of Indigenous business research being conducted during this period, failure to clearly define the unit of analysis (i.e., Indigenous business) and a lack of engagement with Indigenous business models have undermined its effectiveness. Regional and urban Indigenous businesses in developed countries, and Indigenous businesses in developing countries, are underrepresented in the research, and Indigenous voices are underrepresented in English-language research. There has been little research to date on the extent to which recommendations previously published in the literature have been applied by Indigenous business stakeholders, and what their impact has been. There has also been little research into how Indigenous business research is incorporated into business school content and how educators ensure meaningful discourse on this topic.

The following recommendations aim to address these gaps.

First, studies should give explicit definitions of their units of analysis (i.e., “Indigenous business”), and highlight similarities and differences when defining these in their discussions. This will increase the usefulness of their findings and enable comparisons.

Second, researchers need to explore and identify areas of best practice for the application of Indigenous methodologies within Indigenous business research, and standards for reporting this in research publications.

Third, as etic and emic approaches can be complementary, with the insider perspectives generated in emic studies being transformed into items for application in quantitative research (Sinkovics & Ghauri, 2008), mixed-methods research on generating Indigenous theory should consider applying this approach.

Fourth, further research is needed on developing a deeper understanding of Indigenous business models, including areas of best practice for teaching and implementation. As Indigenous business employs a higher proportion of Indigenous peoples (Jackson et al., 2008; Supply Nation, 2018), there is a particular need to extend or develop research on human resources, management practices, and management focus in the Indigenous leadership space, especially in new industry/business contexts. And as the industry structures within which Indigenous business operates influence competition and profitability (Porter, 2008), and businesses owned and operated by Indigenous peoples traverse multiple sectors (Supply Nation, 2018), research with a multiple-industry focus is also required.

Fifth, research methodologies such as quantitative assessment of processes in the area of organisational design studies need to be developed to enable the identification of best-practice measures which can be implemented by Indigenous business.

Sixth, in order to increase the utility of future research, research tracking the extent to which previous recommendations have been taken up, and what their impact has been, is needed.

Seventh, in order to negate the standardised approaches of neo-liberal government policies on Indigenous peoples and businesses (United Nations, 2009) in both developed and developing countries, and provide evidence that can usefully inform the decisions of Indigenous business people and policymakers, future researchers need to broaden the focus of their research in both geographic and community terms. Researchers also need to increase their engagement both with Indigenous business people in non-Anglophone and developing countries and with Indigenous business people in urban and regional areas of Anglophone and developed countries.

Indigenous realities vary between and within geographic locations (United Nations, 2009), and a business’ location—urban, regional, or remote—impacts on the entrepreneurial models it uses. Studies that both consider (Akbar & Hallak, 2019; Croce, 2017) and compare these diverse contexts are therefore needed. And as the inclusion of data from more than one geographic location provides opportunities for comparative analysis and also enables recommendations that account for diversity within Indigenous business models, such studies will allow researchers to gain more insight into Indigenous business practices and offer more useful information to Indigenous business stakeholders in all contexts.

Finally, the movement we have identified away from etic and universal theory and towards etic-emic and mixed-methods research needs to be expanded on through the adoption of research methods that prioritise Indigenous voices and create benefits for the businesses and communities that participate in the research; the resulting research should be disseminated through quality business school content. The conceptual framework presented in Figure 2 of this paper provides a pathway for doing so.

These strategies will enable researchers and educators to not only address current gaps in the field, but also begin to identify, and answer, the questions that Indigenous business stakeholders want answered in order to help their businesses succeed.

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About the authors

Dr Skye Akbar, Enterprise Fellow at UniSA Business, University of South Australia, is a Waljen woman, Mum, Sister and Aunt. As an Aboriginal academic, business researcher and educator, she supports evidence-based decision-making that strengthens contextually and culturally informed solutions for Indigenous businesses. Her work focuses on enabling local responses to local challenges by centring Indigenous knowledges, community priorities and practical pathways for sustainable economic development.

Professor Alex Brown (B.Med, MPH, PhD) is Professor of Indigenous Genomics at the Kids Research Institute and The Australian National University. An internationally recognised Aboriginal clinician researcher from the Yuin Nation, with family connections to Nowra, the Illawarra and Wallaga Lake on the south coast of NSW, he focuses on understanding and overcoming health inequalities as experienced by Indigenous communities, with a primary focus on clinical, epidemiological and genomic research into diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Professor Deirdre Tedmanson, Dean of Work Integrated Learning at UniSA Business, University of South Australia, is a non-Indigenous academic with extensive experience working alongside Aboriginal colleagues and communities. Her research focuses on critical reflexivity about the dominating impacts of whiteness and is strongly committed to centring Aboriginal methodologies and voices in practice, teaching and scholarship.

Janine Williamson combines broad leadership experience in education, commercial, and non-profit organisations with applied research at the intersection of leisure studies, tourism management, and social sustainability. Her recent work examines how leisure and community events foster social inclusion, particularly regarding refugee settlement. Utilising stakeholder-engaged methodologies, she bridges the gap between academic theory and practice to inform policy. Additionally, Janine explores sustainable tourism practices within regional development and SMEs, alongside the scholarship of teaching and learning, specifically Work-Integrated Learning (WIL).

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Appendix 1

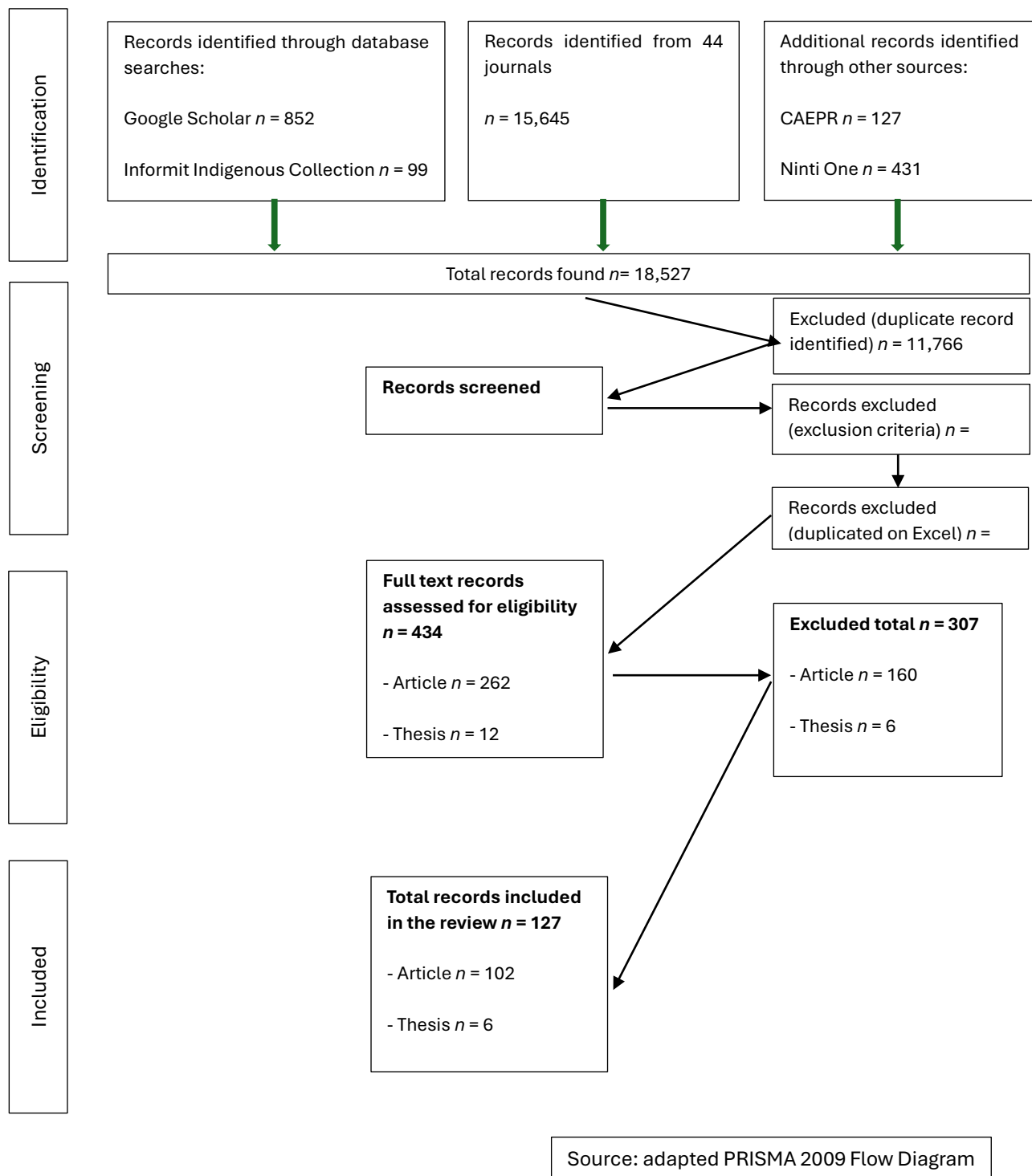


Figure 3: Structured Guide for Researchers

Appendix 2: Proposed data sources

Electronic online databases

EBSCO
SCOPUS

Web search engines

Google <<https://www.google.com>>
Google Scholar <<https://scholar.google.com>>

Websites

Australian Bureau of Statistics <<https://www.abs.gov.au>>
Business.gov.au <<https://www.business.gov.au>>
Indigenous Business Australia <<https://www.iba.gov.au>>
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet: Indigenous Affairs <<https://www.pmc.gov.au/Indigenous-affairs>>
Australian Chamber of Commerce <<https://www.australianchamber.com.au>>
Swinburne University, Library, Infogates, Small Business <<http://www.swin.edu.au/lib/infogate/smallbus.htm>>
Small Business Association of Australia and New Zealand <<https://www.seaanz.org>>
Small Business Association <<https://smallbusinessassociation.com.au>>
Indigenous Business Council of Australia <<https://www.bca.com.au/Indigenous>>
Supply Nation <<https://supplynation.org.au>>
GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor international website <<https://www.gemconsortium.org>>

Small business related websites

Council of Small Business Organisations <<https://www.cosboa.org>>
Family Business Australia <<https://www.familybusiness.org.au>>

Journals A*, A and B

Academy of Management Learning and Education
Academy of Management Review
Annals of Tourism Research
Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice
International Journal of Research in Marketing
Journal of Business Venturing
Journal of Management
Journal of Marketing
Journal of Sustainable Tourism
Journal of Travel Research
Organizational Research Methods
Research Policy
The Journal of Business (Chicago)
Tourism Management
Business and Society
Business Ethics Quarterly
California Management Review
Cornell Hospitality Quarterly
Current Issues in Tourism
Entrepreneurship & Regional Development
Family Business Review
Harvard Business Review
International Journal of Tourism Research
International Small Business Journal
Journal of Business Ethics
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research
Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management
Journal of Small Business Management

Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing

Journal of World Business

Asia Pacific Business Review (Asia-Pacific Journal of Management Research and Innovation)

Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research

Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society

Entrepreneurship Research Journal

International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research

Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management

Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism

Appendix 3: Guidelines for review of screened publications at the eligibility stage

Table 5: Assessment criteria for weight of evidence A (relevance)

Focus of study	Rating		
Unit of analysis	High	Medium	Low
Relevancy of research output	High	Medium	Low
Facilitators or constraints on research	High	Medium	Low
Overall weight of evidence A (relevance)	High	Medium	Low

Source: adapted from Miller (2005)

The *quality of the study* will be assessed based on the rules of evidence criteria: sufficiency, validity, reliability, authenticity, and currency.

Table 6: Assessment criteria for weight of evidence B (quality)

In this research study	Rating		
Is the evidence valid?	High	Medium	Low
Is the evidence reliable?	High	Medium	Low
Is the evidence authentic?	High	Medium	Low
Is the evidence sufficient?	High	Medium	Low
Overall weight of evidence B (quality)	High	Medium	Low

Weight of Evidence A

How would you rate the relevance of the study to the review questions?

Consider the following in answering the question above:

Q1: Population of study

1. Are the research questions or objectives related to Indigenous business research or Indigenous business?
2. Is the unit of analysis relevant to the study?

Q2: How relevant are the findings to Indigenous business?

Consider the following in answering the question above:

1. Do findings extend theoretical knowledge in the context of Indigenous business?
2. Do findings have practical implications for Indigenous business?
3. Are recommendations made for application by Indigenous business owners/managers?
4. Are recommendations made to government/agencies?
5. Are recommendations made for future research?

Q3: To what extent are facilitators or constraints on research noted?

1. Are ethical constraints noted?
2. Are researcher constraints noted?
3. Are accessibility constraints noted?
4. Are institutional constraints, e.g., university processes, noted?
5. Are other constraints noted?
6. Are facilitators to the research process noted?

Weight of Evidence B

How would you rate the quality of the study in terms of trust that can be put into its findings for the research question posed?

Q1: In this research study is the evidence valid?

Consider the following in answering the question above:

1. research aims and variables or concepts measured
2. design and whether methods measure what was intended to be measured (i.e., validity)
3. efforts made to address the validity of data collection tools/methods, e.g., pilot-testing tools
4. efforts made at data analysis stage to address validity, e.g., limiting analyses where numbers are insufficient

5. efforts made in the analysis to control for bias from confounding variables whether links between data, interpretation, and conclusions are valid justification of conclusion drawn.

Q2: In this research study is the evidence reliable?

Consider the following in answering the question above:

1. efforts to determine that data collection methods and tools will yield same result each time (i.e., are reliable)
2. efforts to ensure data analysis can be repeated and yields the same result each time
3. any assumptions/theoretical perspectives that shape the form or the output of the research noted
4. any alternative explanations for stated findings.

Q3: In this research study is the evidence authentic?

Consider the following in answering the question above:

1. Whose voice it is in the report?
2. For whom and for what purpose the knowledge was being sought?
3. What are the sources of evidence: direct or indirect?

Q4: In this research study is the evidence sufficient?

Consider the following in answering the question above:

1. sample sizes, etc.
2. the author's conclusions
3. whether there are any other possible explanations for the findings
4. that the evidence presented is enough to support the findings and conclusions,

Source: adapted from Miller (2005)

Appendix 4: Coding Schema

Item code	Description
Free text box Author(s) Year Title	Bibliographic details Author(s) name Year of publication Publication title
Free text box Publisher	Publication source Journal; Agency; NGO
Single code JOU CON REP THES OTH	Publication type Peer-reviewed journal article Peer-reviewed conference paper Report Thesis submitted for Masters or PhD Other free text next column
Single code AUS CAN NZ USA ASIA AFR EUR MIXG	Geographical context Australia Canada New Zealand North America Asia Africa Europe Combination free text
Single code QUAL QUAN MM CS	Research method Qualitative Quantitative Mixed methods Case study
Single code IND GR/FI MULTI INST COMM	Unit of analysis Individual Groups or firms Multiple units Institutions Communities
Single CON TOU HEA TRAN ART RET AGR MAN EDU OTH	Industry sector Construction Tourism and hospitality Health and social care Transport Arts Retail Agriculture Manufacturing Education and training Other: note in free text
Single ENT MAR ACC HR ORGB CSR FIN LEA ORGD	Main research area Entrepreneurship Marketing Accounting Human resources Impacts human behaviour on organisations Corporate social responsibility Finance, including micro-finance Leadership, e.g., leadership styles, motivation, teams Organisational design, governance, networks, social capital; knowledge (incl. transfer)
Single (main theme) CSN CAP LAND ORG OTH	Field of study Culture and social norms Skills, experience, education Land and resource Organisational drivers and constraints, institutions, and governance Other: note in free text
URB RUR REM MIXL	Location Urban study context Rural study context Remote study context Combination free text
Free text box	Definition of Indigenous entrepreneur/business
Single or combination of codes ET PI PR RFR MIXRF	Relevancy of findings Extend theory Practical implications Practical recommendations business / managers / government / agencies Recommendations future research Combination free text