"I think … I feel …": using projective techniques to explore socio-cultural aversions towards Indigenous tourism

Afiya Holder [a,*], Lisa Ruhanen [b], Gabrielle Walters [b], Mucha Mkono [b]

[a] *The Business School, Tourism Research Centre, Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland, Edinburgh, EH14 1DJ, UK*
[b] *The University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD, 4032, Australia*

ABSTRACT

Socio-cultural aversions encompass a multitude of avoidant behaviours expressed in different forms and intensities. While there has been an increase in research on aversions that are somewhat underpinned by racism and discrimination, little research to date explores the existence of these aversions within an Indigenous tourism context. This study utilises projective techniques to explore the extent to which socio-cultural aversions may exist and how they manifest towards Indigenous tourism in Australia. Three major themes identified suggest that implicit and explicit socio-cultural aversions exist: 1) racial and stereotypical projections, 2) implicit cultural distancing and avoidance, and 3) ambivalence and indifference. Although less prevalent, non-aversive sentiments were also identified. The study makes a theoretical contribution to Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), specifically to the "consumer identity", "socio-historic patterning", and "marketplace culture" streams of research. Practically, product repositioning and marketing strategies are provided for destination managers and tourism stakeholders responsible for Indigenous tourism experiences.

1. Introduction

Media-influenced stereotypes have facilitated the romanticizing of Indigenous tourism, peoples, culture, and places as traditional, exotic, and different (Butler & Hinch, 1996). In Australia, these representations portray Indigenous lifestyles as self-sufficient, isolated in remote bushlands and waterways, enduring harsh and underdeveloped environments, or on suburbia's outskirts (Foley, 2006). These ideologies permeated perceptions about Indigenous communities and their tourism offerings (Arnould & Thompson, 2015). Graham and Dadd (2021, p. 454) noted that tourists stereotypically view Indigenous peoples as being primitive, living ancient lives, and genetically "dark-skinned". Other research implies that Indigenous operators are perceived as racially inferior and less competent business operators compared to non-Indigenous tourism operators (Scheyvens et al., 2021).

Despite these challenges, Indigenous tourism has promising potential for sustainable development (Carr, Ruhanen, Whitford, & Lane, 2017), reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2003) and societal transformation for Australia (Walker & Moscardo, 2016). Scheyvens et al. (2021) proposed that Indigenous tourism can bridge cultural gaps and help reshape societal norms to

benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups. Yet, in countries such as Australia, there is relatively low uptake of Indigenous tourism experiences. Some scholars argue that tourists are averse to feeling shame, guilt and other moral discomforts when encountering tourism interpretations of colonial historic content (Waitt, Figueroa, & McGee, 2007). Other authors highlight reasons such as negative perceptions and preferences (Moscardo & Pearce, 1999), service quality and unprofessionalism (Holder & Ruhanen, 2017), inauthenticity (Boag, Martin, & Bell, 2020; Hodgson, 2007), limited product and accessibility (Altman, 2005; Hinkson, 2003), and lack of social capital and legitimacy in the marketplace (Shoebridge, Buultjens, & Peterson, 2012). Researchers also point to racism and discrimination as underlying challenges, prompting calls for an examination of the possible influence of socio-cultural aversions and potential solutions (Holder, Ruhanen, Mkono, & Walters, 2021; Ruhanen & Whitford, 2016). However, further research is required to draw a clearer understanding.

To explore the possible influence of socio-cultural aversions, this study applies a projective technique to examine the overarching questions: 1) *what forms of socio-cultural aversions influence Indigenous tourism demand; and 2) how are these aversions projected?* By extension, the study also interrogates how domestic tourists interiorize Indigenous tourism to

uncover possible aversive and non-aversive sentiments. According to Campe and Weber (2014), interiorization occurs when one applies strategies and modes of thought, feelings and reactions to argue for, express, establish or make sense of one's world based on internal and external influences. This happens for instance, when one flouts the status quo of their external world to justify subjective assertions on topics such as religion, politics, or policy that oppose their beliefs or values (Asadi Zeidabadi, 2022). As such, socio-cultural patterns and distinctions of one's subjectivity and unconscious evaluations of the internal and external worlds seem to reconcile themselves. It is thus imperative in the methodological approach of this study to understand the inherent perceptions, sentiments and reactive responses that are projected by asking participants to talk about someone else (the character(s) in the image). In doing so, they inadvertently reflect upon and disclose their opinions, beliefs and biases about Indigenous tourism experiences.

The study is informed by Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), a lens that illuminates the contextual, cultural and symbolic intergroup dynamics of consumption that shape consumer experiences, identities and the marketplace (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). CCT can extend our understanding of the role that factors such as cultural, political, and to some extent, racial dynamics play when considering Indigenous tourism experiences.

2. Literature review

2.1. Socio-cultural aversions

Socio-cultural aversions are multidimensional and capture the collective meaning of different avoidant consumer behaviours. Within the scope of this study, tourist socio-cultural aversions is described as "avoidance associated with an ingrained dislike for, and distancing from, a tourism product, experience, or interconnected system of consumerism, representative of a particular social or cultural group's identity (implicit or explicit; assumed or real)" (Holder et al., 2021, p. 443). These aversions can be challenging to identify, address and manage due to their varied classifications, forms, and intensities. This is even more present due to the complex variables that exist within different socio-cultural contexts, tourist markets and tourist/host compositions.

Seminal work in this area has tended to focus on singular concepts. For instance, within sociological studies, scholars have explored the influence of cultural biases and discrimination on minorities' access to graduate education and employment (Daniel, 2007). In law and policy research, findings highlight the bureaucracy and over-policing of minority cultures (Hudson, 2016). Scholarly research in geography and urban planning studies also highlights the impacts of cultural distancing and avoidance of ethnic spaces, as well as discriminatory practices experienced by minority residents and businesses. Residents and businesses encounter challenges such as the denial of financial support and mortgages, poor quality infrastructure, schools and recreational facilities (Teixeira, Lo, & Truelove, 2007; Wang & Lo, 2007).

Various factors account for aversions, such as those from tourism providers, marketers, and tourists. For marginalised peoples, recognition of, support for and sustaining a successful business venture become more challenging due to biases, stereotypes and discriminatory purchasing behaviour (Hill & Paphitis, 2011; Lee, Motion, & Conroy, 2009). Minority business face supplier-related issues such as over-dependence on government support and unskilled (Bates, 1995), but demand-related issues linked to socio-cultural aversions significantly impact their success (Foley, 2010). The most common themes in research include the different degrees of avoidance or resistance towards products and services, in addition to the racial and ethnic tensions within different cultural contexts. Service research highlight barriers to participation based on location and place-related factors (Graham & Dadd, 2021; Hinkson, 2003), what Rosenbaum and Montoya (2007)

refer to as "place-likening" or one's assessment and subsequent approach or avoidance of a destination, location or setting based on a majority presence of employees and customers from a specific socio-cultural and ethnic background different to their own. Other studies found hosts discriminating against specific ethnic groups such as Black Americans and Asians (Dillette, Benjamin, & Carpenter, 2019; Li, Li, Law, & Paradies, 2020), and racist tourist reviews containing hate-based speech and name-calling of marginalised people in tourism contexts (Li et al., 2020). Marketing and media messaging have also been reported to influence tourist aversive behaviour. For instance, destination images portraying stereotypical representations, such as the 'gauchos' of the South American pampas and the 'cowboys and Indians' of the American West (Cohen, 2015).

From a demand perspective, many forms of tourists' aversive behaviour can be classified on a continuum from implicit/passive to explicit/aggressive (Holder et al., 2021). For instance, researchers provide evidence of avoidance or cultural distancing (Tjiptono & Yang, 2018); boycotting or explicit damaging of brands from specific ethnic groups (Yu, McManus, Yen, & Li, 2020); xenophobia towards hosts and foreign tourists (Kock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2019); and racial discrimination (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2016). Tse & Tung, 2021 identified less explicit forms of racism, aversive racism which is harder to detect compared to overt racism (e.g. physical attacks and over policing based on racial profiling). While overt racism can be characterised by blatant hatred for and explicit discrimination against racial/ethnic minorities, aversive racism is much subtler and more difficult to detect due to subtler, complex expressions and attitudes driven by prejudice towards other races (e.g. minimising success of minority entrepreneurs to government support or perceiving their products as subpar) (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004).

Previous studies found tourists' perceptions of Indigenous culture to be largely mediated by their cultural stereotypes, ethnocentrism and perceived superiority of their worldviews, rather than a desire for cultural awareness and learning from their travel encounters (Laxson, 1991). Increasingly, tourism studies exploring sociocultural aversions have examined various aversions including ethnocentrism (Kock, Josiassen, Assaf, Karpen, & Farrelly, 2018) and xenophobia (Kock et al., 2019) and racism (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2016) with general lens. Given the multifaceted nature of aversions, consumer culture theory (CCT) is a suitable theoretical framework to underpin this study, as it offers a holistic, non-linear, multi-modal lens that is transient beyond temporal or performative bounds (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Belk, 2017).

2.2. Consumer culture theory

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) is an established research stream encompassing various theoretical perspectives on consumer identity, socio-historic patterns, and marketplace cultures affecting consumer behaviour. CCT pioneers Arnould and Thompson (2005) and (Belk, 2017) emphasized the need to understand consumer behaviour within cultural and social contexts influenced by intricate symbolic worlds. CCT examines consumer affective, behavioural and cognitive states impacted by social and cultural factors of consumption (Arnould & Thompson, 2015; Belk, 2017). Touristic aversions align with CCT as it encapsulates emotions, thoughts, interpretations, actions and the socio-cultural complexities of intergroup dynamics and exchange behaviours in socio-cultural contexts that negotiate cultural contradictions and tensions (Arnould, Crockett, & Eckhardt, 2021; Belk, 2017; Holt, 1995).

CCT research delves into socio-cultural, symbolic and ideological aspects of consumption and marketplace behaviours (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). These studies share commonalities in their theoretical and contextual orientations, focusing on the dynamic and complex socio-cultural aspects like attachment-aversion towards consumers and brands (Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013), or boycotts and political consumerism (Neilson, 2010). They acknowledge the heterogeneity of

socio-cultural meanings and interconnected market forces that exist in the globalised economy.

CCT distinguishes four main elements affecting consumer culture (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 871) relevant to this study. Firstly, CCT focuses on *consumer identity,* or how consumers seek and make sense of their internal (self) and external (social) identity. For instance, studies explore the role identity plays in consumers' sense-making and decision-making. White, Argo, and Sengupta (2012), for example, used CCT to explore consumers' sub-culturally associative and dissociative reactions to identity-linked products that threatened their social identity. They found that subcultural differences in ethnicity and cross-cultural differences led to avoidance and disassociation of products that threatened one's self and social identity. Arguably, a deeper understanding of tourists' identity-related aversions towards tourism product likened to dissociative social groups (e.g. Indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups) is valuable to optimize marketing appeal (Holder et al., 2021).

Second, the *socio-historic patterning* of consumption suggests institutional factors such as the family, education, politics, religion and community, and systematic factors such as class, gender and ethnicity have influences on consumer culture. Several scholars and practitioners have examined the role of socio-political systems, as well as the influence of cultural and social capital that inhibits consumption value and choice of products (Arnould et al., 2021; Kates, 2000). One such case of socio-historic patterns is exemplified in the Westernized acceptance, cultural branding and consumption of products/services in global economies such as Asia (e.g., the brands of Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Tinder) (Üstüner & Holt, 2010). In another example, Kates (2000, p. 503) found homophobic messaging of "gays under attack by the government, the Church and corporate America, especially during the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the early 1990s" influenced discrimination towards LBGT + communities. Here, evidence points to gay identity politics and other socio-historic influences on consumer behaviour.

Third, *marketplace culture* also has relevance to this study and addresses how consumers interact in a consumption world as cultural groups—what Maffesoli (1996) labelled "neotribes". This stream of CCT aligns with anthropological studies focusing on consumption practices and preferences for like socio-cultural groups and associations. For example, marketplace culture is shaped by brand communities and servicescapes that assign social connotations based on status and ethnicity of the owner, staff, community, and other consumers, as well as their social density and the presence of ethnic signs, symbols and artefacts (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007). Minority businesses outside these "neotribes" often struggle with low appeal especially in countries such as America, Australia and the United Kingdom (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007; Üstüner & Holt, 2010). Further, consumers have reported feeling uneasy in unfamiliar or seemingly inaccessible marketplaces, perceiving them as low-status or associated with criminal activities (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007; Teixeira, 2006; Üstüner & Holt, 2010).

Fourth, CCT examines *mass-mediated ideologies* and how consumers interpret, develop attitudes and respond to normative media messages of consumer identity and lifestyles as portrayed in traditional and digital media. More recently, CCT scholars have also explored subconscious biases influenced by media-meditated and marketer-controlled algorithms using technologically mediated encounters and big data-driven digitalized representations (Kozinets, Patterson, & Ashman, 2016; Rokka, 2021). Rokka (2021) provided examples where polarized and ideologically driven brands have led to movements such as the "Black Lives Matter" protests in the USA.

However, CCT has yet to be utilised as a theoretical paradigm within tourism, except for two conceptual studies (Holder et al., 2021; Jensen, Lindberg, & Østergaard, 2015), even though CCT is considered to be valuable for critically examining consumer behaviour (Belk, 2017; Levy, 2015). This study seeks to extend this research agenda within tourism and broaden empirical insights as to whether socio-cultural aversions

may offer a possible explanation for touristic aversions, low market appeal and consequent demand for Indigenous tourism experiences.

2.3. Indigenous tourism

According to Hinch and Butler (2009), Indigenous tourism refers to tourism experiences where there is some degree of control, involvement and participation of Indigenous peoples and where culture serves as a distinctive part of the experience. However, the sector has suffered from relatively low demand, attributed to a combination of ineffective marketing, poor representations, as well as negative perceptions and attitudes towards Indigenous tourism experiences (Holder, Walters, Ruhanen, & Mkono, 2022).

Portrayals of Indigenous peoples and culture have fostered stereotypes and misconceptions, stemming from longstanding systemic racism (Mika, Warren, Foley, & Palmer, 2017), and stigmatized colonial structures, narratives and ideologies (Everingham, Peters, & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2021). Such misrepresentations present challenges that include misunderstandings and non-recognition of "cultural multiplicity" and the co-existence of traditional and contemporary Indigenous culture (Peters & Higgins-Desbiolles, 2012, p. 77). Non-recognition and the ambivalent attitudes of domestic tourists towards Indigenous tourism also result from perceived familiarity, referred to "backyard syndrome" by Ruhanen, Whitford, and McLennan (2015, p. 81), as well as negative media attention and perceived illegitimacy contribute to tourists' disinterest (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2016). However, the impact of social desirability bias has made it difficult to fully comprehend these issues linked to tourist aversions (Smith, 2007), resulting in calls for innovative methods. For instance, Tremblay (2007) called for methods that provide contextual stimuli to unearth tourists' perceptive and emotive reactions towards Indigenous tourism. Also, Hindley and Font (2017) suggested projective techniques to circumvent socially desirable responses and to reveal subconscious or hidden beliefs.

3. Methods

In this study, qualitative methods combining in-depth interviews encompassing choice ordering and third-person projective questioning were utilised to examine domestic tourists' socio-cultural aversions and non-aversive attitudes towards Indigenous tourism. Pragmatic epistemology was applied throughout the research, from design to the final draft. Both classical pragmatists and neo-pragmatists approaches were deemed useful as it tends to address societal and humanitarian issues (Hickman, Neubert, & Reich, 2009; Rorty, 2020).

Rorty (2020) neo-pragmatist approach influenced this study, considering the temporal and dynamic realities of data construction based on intangible influences such as culture, history, and politics. During data analysis, this approach focuses on participants' "real-to-us" experiences rather than conventional beliefs or assumed "realities" (McWilliams, 2016, p. 13). For example, in some cultures, tardiness is viewed as disrespectful, while in others it is acceptable. This analytical approach involves iterative framing and reframing of participants' narratives, eliminating dominant thinking that restricts open inquiry and the pursuit of detailed understanding of social truths. Forester (2013) claims this approach helps bridge the gap between theoretical and pragmatic aspects of society. Rigour and integrity of the research process are further enhanced through inter-coder reliability and consulting with expert panels. The pragmatic approach enables consumer culture researchers to examine and combine insights from both the tangible and intangible world often influenced by politics, culture, spirituality, education and law (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, de Waal, Stefurak, & Hildebrand, 2016). This approach also encourages critical reflexivity which tends to reveal biases often overlooked in tourism research due to dominant ideologies and epistemologies. As a result, it provides a holistic alternative for addressing the study's aim to unearth participants' subjective assertions and projective evaluations of

Indigenous tourism from their socio-cultural lens.

In tourism research, choice-ordering has been used to collect qualitative data through participants' critique of visual stimuli enabling participants to draw on subconscious thoughts, feelings and hidden interpretations while minimising social-desirability bias (Hindley & Font, 2017). For instance, a study on tourists' sustainable perceptions used choice-ordering to reveal significant values, unconscious motives and elicited meanings from personal holiday photographs (Font & Hindley, 2017). Studies on sustainable tourist behaviour and Indigenous tourism demand face similar research limitations due to social desirability bias and sensitivity arising from factors such as guilt and shame (Mkono & Hughes, 2020, pp. 1–22; Ritchie, Sie, Gössling, & Dwyer, 2020). Subsequently, photo-elicitation and third-person projective questioning, where participants share their views on the roles of characters in the image is adopted in this study (Donoghue, 2000). Klopfer and Taulbee (1976) established that this technique allows psychological past and present conflicts to surface as their own attitudes and feelings are revealed through the character in the stimuli. The third person technique limits social pressure to be politically correct or defensive and so participants more freely share their underlying feelings and attitudes.

3.1. Study design

A combined purposive sampling method was adopted involving an Australian consumer research panel and snowball sampling techniques. The dual approach aimed to increase the sample size (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) due to recruitment challenges resulting from Australia's extended COVID-19 lockdowns. Data was collected from August 2020 and March 2021, with saturation reached at 41 interviews when researchers concluded additional interviews were unlikely to garner more insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2021). Projective techniques typically have smaller sample sizes, averaging 25 participants due to the exploratory nature and time constraints to prevent participant burnout (Donoghue, 2000). The sample size consisted of local residents and had a diverse population of participants based on age (age ranges: 18–29, 30–44, 45–64, 65–79 years; average:35), gender (females:63%, males:37%), identified ethnicity and cultural ancestry (Europeans: 63%, Asians: 24%, Mixed ethnicity: 7%, African: 2%), education (high school: 7%, undergraduate:51%, postgraduate:41%), geographic location (New South Wales: 24%, Victoria: 27%, Queensland: 49%) and income (average: AU$120-190 k). Appendix A provides a comprehensive overview of the descriptive characteristics of the interviewees.

Online interviews were recorded via Zoom with the average interview 50 min (ranging from 30 to 90 min). A Caucasian Australian-born research assistant conducted the interviews, while the Black Caribbean principal researcher remained incognito to minimize social bias. This allowed the researcher to record their observations, essential for capturing emotional reactions elicited from the participant (Flick, 2018).

An advisory group of six Indigenous tourism industry experts (5 Australian Indigenous and 1 non-Indigenous) chose images representative of Indigenous Australian tourism experiences. Images were sourced from Tourism Australia (2019), the national tourism marketing organisation and depicted diverse offerings including water-based, land--based, culinary-based, and city-based Indigenous tourism experiences. Nine images were chosen based on the advisory group's consensus. However, the university ethics committee explicitly prohibited the use of images in reporting the study results as unfavourable viewpoints could be attributed to individuals and businesses. In addition, Tourism Australia has since decommissioned the use of these images and require deletion and discontinuation of their public use. Therefore, only written descriptions of the images (alt text) are provided in Appendix B.

All images were presented to participants without descriptions to reduce bias. An interview guide of sample questions was created and refined during pilot testing. During the interviews, an ice-breaker question was asked, and participants were encouraged to share their thoughts on Indigenous tourism in Australia. Establishing rapport was crucial due to the sensitive nature of the research (Chilisa, 2011). Second, the choice-ordering process was explained, and participants chose their favourable and unfavourable images. These selections led to the photo-elicitation and third-person projective questioning stages. Here, participants describe, hypothetically, the characters' potential thoughts, feelings, actions, and attitudes. The photos present typical situations aimed to evoke genuine reactions (implicit and explicit) and uncover possible associations and attitudes. Participants were then prompted to discuss their thoughts and emotions concerning the characters depicted (e.g., imagining oneself as the tourist in the photo, and describing thoughts, feelings, and potential conversations). This method encouraged participants to reveal their deep thoughts, emotions, and responses. The images and questioning also helped trigger discussions of personal experiences and memories (Matteucci, 2013).

3.2. Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim, and an iterative process of content analysis was conducted based on the research objectives. To start, manual open coding helped in familiarization and generating initial categories and codes. A hybrid analytical approach that included both deductive and inductive coding was then adopted, allowing reveal of creative insights and theoretical advancements (Morse & Mitcham, 2002). Deductive coding was applied based on pre-existing concepts and meanings of concepts explored within Holder et al. (2021) conceptual framework of tourist socio-cultural aversions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Inductive coding was used to fully explore the research objectives and make meaning of emerging concepts (Thomas, 2006).

Axial coding of the data was performed where the data were synthesized and organised into a coherent and structured format using NVivo 12 Pro software. This was a non-linear process and allowed for the emergence of categorical themes and codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Following the iterative process of defining, refining and developing themes and codes, the principal investigator engaged the co-investigators on a final round of reviews and discussions to ensure intercoder reliability of the codes and themes. Intercoder-reliability was established to ensure the consistency, trustworthiness and objectivity of the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To complement the qualitative analysis that produced thick descriptions and projections revealed by participants, the images derived from choice-ordering, themes and codes were also sorted, tabulated and given numerical values. The systematic evaluation of participants' responses and inclusion of quasi-statistical values supported the key findings (Levy, 1981).

4. Findings

The central objective of this study was to examine socio-cultural aversions towards Indigenous tourism. Choice-ordering revealed the most favourable image to be an Outback Australian setting featuring the iconic Uluru, and Indigenous elders' storytelling with a smiling and engaged Caucasian couple around a bonfire. Conversely, the least favourable image featured the Sydney Opera House with an Indigenous guide talking to a Caucasian mature aged woman. Favourable images featured group interactions, nature, food, and cultural experiences in remote or rural settings, while images without Indigenous interactions and in urban areas were least favourable.

The final analysis of the projective techniques utilised in this study produced two major themes revealing the existence of implicit and explicit forms of tourist socio-cultural aversions as well as non-aversive sentiments as elaborated in this section.

4.1. Socio-cultural aversions

The theme **"socio-cultural aversions"** was represented in a total of 176 participant excerpts. References related to this theme projected a

spectrum of negative sentiments organised into three thematic categories: 1) racial and stereotypical projections; 2) overt cultural distancing and avoidance; and 3) ambivalence and indifference. Both explicit and implicit socio-cultural aversions were revealed. However, implicit aversions were more prevalent and often self-moderated by excuses or explanations (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). For example, these participants implicitly assert socio-cultural distancing while decrying racism:

> I have this thinking that these people are so sensitive. Like if you do something, if your actions are not acceptable to them, you might not receive a very good reception. So … It seems interesting but culturally it may end up costing both of us … me offending them and they making me feel guilty for something I did not do. [P19, 45–64 years, Male, European/Asian].

4.1.1. Racial and stereotypical projections

Adapted from Ouellet's (2005) notion of consumer racism, an aversion towards a specific non-dominant ethnic group's tourism offering which is seen as inferior in quality or value expressed in ambiguous ways and often justified by aversions other than racist-driven bias and stereotypes, this was the most prominent theme with 92 references revealing racial profiling and stereotypical projections. Most participants in their responses alluded to *phenotypical identity markers (generalized traits)* (Arnould et al., 2021) and *"them versus us"* rhetoric (Laxson, 1991), often positioning themselves as superior, during their discussions:

> He is light-skinned. [laughs]. I know we shouldn't judge into [racial] code … as a consumer from the outside, you will want to see someone that is a darker shade of brown. [P06, 30–44 years, Male, European]

> They look legit. Their facial features, their hair, even the logo, uniform, and the matching hats … but the chef is clearly White. [P23, 18–29 years, Female, North American/Latino]

White et al. (2012) found cognizance of stigmatized identity influenced Caucasian consumers who tend to respond to marginalised service providers with resistance, over-policing, over-evaluation and oftentimes avoidance of product and service offerings. The link between stigmatized identity and avoidance is a core theme in CCT literature (Lee et al., 2009; Visconti et al., 2014). For instance, Visconti et al. (2014) highlights the impact of ethnic segmentation, adaptation of ethnic products, and ethnic groups being demonised, misrepresented, and excluded from the marketplace. Likewise, evaluations towards Indigenous tourism consumption reveal projections influenced by socially constructed stereotypes and assumptions that Indigenous peoples fit a dark-skinned racial profile similar to empirical accounts of Holder & Ruhanen, 2019 and what consumer behaviour scholars found to be consumer racism (Hill & Paphitis, 2011).

The tendency to reconstruct stigmatized Indigenous identity was also evident in the data. For instance, some participants projected biases relating to the stereotypical representations of Indigenous peoples and culture:

> They may be racist and they don't like the Aboriginal people and they have a kind of privilege, I think … Maybe other countries did it [presenting Indigenous tourism] better … in Australia there's too much cross fighting and segregation so why not just keep it [tourism offerings] mono rather than multicultural. [P40, 45–64 years, Male, European]

These participants project a common ideology prevalent among non-Indigenous locals which posits Australian dominant cultural homogeneity should prevail over multiculturalism (Hage, 2002). Reflections of this ideology also pervade the growing populist far-right rhetoric of White dominance and calls for abolishing Indigenous rights and recognition in Australia (Sengul, 2021).

Participants also alluded to stereotypes that reposition *gendered cultural differences* as inferior practices:

> hmm there's a lot of young kids. Often the First Nations of any nation they [women] like to reproduce. [P20, 30–44 Age range, Male, North American]

Another participant recalled her unfavourable personal experience interpreting how 'different' women are treated, stating:

> Culturally, the food that the "real" villagers were eating were very basic …. A lot of it was home-cultivated vegetables and home-slaughtered animal. Women would sit around, prepare all the vegetables … and the men would sit around drinking [Laughs] Sheer ridiculousness. So, it was very different culturally that the women were expected to sit and cook. [P05, 45–64 Age range, Female, European]

These participants exhibit Westernized worldviews, stereotypes, and biases, as evident in their comments on the role of Indigenous females and their reproductive practices. Here, participants display their relative positions of privilege ignoring the complex realities of Indigenous women who depend on tourism to preserve culture (Stinson, Grimwood, & Caton, 2021), for economic dependence (Harvey, Hunt, & Harris, 1995), and for self-determination (Taylor, 2017).

Tourists have also become more aversive towards experiences that confront their worldviews (Chien & Ritchie, 2018), or when pressured to assume ethical responsibility for their Western ancestors (Espinosa Abascal, Fluker, & Jiang, 2015). Holder et al. (2021, p. 441) offer insights related to these implicit forms of socio-cultural aversions whereby tourists tend to avoid experiences "where they felt out of place". Some participants expressed *cultural aversions* that revealed racist sentiments:

> Look, I think it's too confronting for a lot of people. A lot of people don't want to confront [colonial past wrongs]. [P33, 45–64 years, Male, Australian]

> … so many things that come over as sensitive topics: you can't ask, you can't touch, you can't do … it's a bit too much and creates problems … that's why I stay away from those things, its nonsensical. [P04, 30–44 years, Female, European]

4.1.2. Implicit cultural distancing and explicit avoidance

Was another recurrent theme with 68 references that revealed implicit and passive, as well as explicit aversions towards Indigenous tourism (Tjiptono & Yang, 2018). Aversions characterized by complex expressions and attitudes driven by marginalising outgroups was most prevalent (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). Education is a key influence of CCT's socio-historic patterning and marketplace culture according to Arnould and Thompson (2005). This is also supported by participants' comments:

> I did all my schooling in Australia, and you do learn about Indigenous culture but in a way that you're very detached from it … you don't interact with it, or even want to, if that makes sense. [P01, 18–29 years, Female, Mixed race (Madagascar, French]

These findings are telling of the ingrained influence education can have on multiple generations. Other studies also attest to similar socio-historic patterns of consumer learning influencing scepticism, suspicion, and reservations towards Indigenous tourism experiences deemed alien or non-confirmative to social expectations (Espinosa Abascal et al., 2015; Holder & Ruhanen, 2019).

Participants' assessment and subsequent avoidance of well-known Indigenous communities, sites, locations or settings based on a majority presence of Indigenous peoples—what Rosenbaum and Montoya (2007) called *place-likening* was also evident. For example:

… there're obviously parts of Melbourne that I wouldn't go to, parts of Queensland they [Indigenous peoples] are in pockets that you wouldn't go to. [P10, 45–64 years, Female, Australian]

Then [Indigenous] tourism can be dangerous if there isn't a commensurate level of security felt by the person who's passing through … a Western pair of eyes wants to feel safe. [P17, 30–44 years, Male, Irish]

Sentiments expressing avoidance carried a more explicit tone and demonstrated influences of *place-likening and safety concerns*, respectively. Explicit avoidance of tourist destinations has been reported before in other cases with a majority presence of employees and other tourists of non-dominant ethnicities as well as the presence of ethnic signage (e.g. street art, murals), or where they perceive threats and violence exists (Espinosa Abascal et al., 2015; Graham & Dadd, 2021). Likewise, findings emerging from this study revealed Indigenous peoples were viewed as contained references about safety concerns and aversions based on the social servicescape. Remarks were also made about Indigenous peoples that participants perceived to be angry, unapproachable, or threatening, causing avoidance based on factors such as the guide's appearance and places they deemed unsafe. For example, one participant noted he would avoid participating in an Indigenous tour due to the location and the appearance of the Indigenous guide:

No, even if there was nothing else to do I would rather just go for a walk or jog in the park or around the harbour. [P40, 45–64 Age range, Male, European].

Another participant was also adamant that she would avoid any Indigenous experiences, recalling an unpleasant previous encounter:

… they [Indigenous peoples] were just fighting on the streets and drinking and passed out. And my kids were quite frightened … That barbaric behaviour is not cool, and I need to protect my family, so I would avoid that [experience]. [P21, 45–64 years, Female, European]

4.1.3. Ambivalence and indifference

This theme had 16 references that revealed implicit aversions that mostly expressed mixed emotions and a low desire to participate in Indigenous tourism (Penz & Hogg, 2011):

As I said it's not something I will choose or pursue. If I see these guys there … I might join them if I feel a good vibe but I don't see Indigenous tourism that way really … I will quicker choose to go on a catamaran sunset cruise or something like that. [P40, 45–64 years, Male, European]

Other empirical work on the challenges of Indigenous tourism demand also attributes perceived 'backyard syndrome' or minimising of Indigenous culture and peoples due to a sense of familiarity, such as from having an Aboriginal neighbour (Ruhanen et al., 2015, p. 81). Similar sentiments were found:

I feel to some extent that living in Australia, that I have some obligation to engage with that a little bit more to gain some deeper understanding of that culture … There is that desire somewhere, but whether that desire would cause me to book a holiday one day, it hasn't gotten to that so far. [P37, 30–44 years, Female, African]

Similarly, participants from a study by Espinosa Abascal et al. (2015) expressed low desire for Indigenous tourism and feeling saturated with Indigenous culture from exposure to history in schools and engaging with neighbours and friends who were Indigenous. This has particular relevance to CCT's socio-historic patterning, in the sense that stereotypical representations and images of Indigenous peoples have been romanticized, diluted and anchored by histories, stories, media and advertising (Graham & Dadd, 2021). These representations have been suggested by consumer culture theorists to impact consumers'

perceptions and consumption practices (Read-Bullock, 2018).

4.2. Non-aversive sentiments

While a high number of aversions were evident, a pattern of **"non-aversive sentiments"** also emerged from the data. Three main themes were evident: 1) desire for Indigenous connection and cultural exchange; 2) pursuit of novel experiences; and 3) quest for normalised beliefs and reconciliation. Interestingly, the non-aversive sentiments were mostly expressed by participants who also revealed ambivalence and other implicit forms of socio-cultural aversions.

4.2.1. Desire for indigenous connection and cultural exchange

Seventy-six (76) participants' excerpts revealed non-aversive sentiments including a desire to connect with Indigenous peoples to share and exchange cultural stories and practices. Participants expressed elements of self-identity and social identity with their Indigenous tourism experience which has explicit relevance to CCT's consumer identity (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). For instance, one participant expressed curiosity over the differences of social aspects of identities between Western and Indigenous family cultures:

I know that the system, their family system is quite complicated. It's not the same as ours like Western society … the Indigenous family are quite different, so they have their own system, their lore system and the family system, it's quite different from ours. So, I'd love to know about that. [P30, 30–44 years, Female, German]

Consumer identity is a critical research stream acknowledged in CCT highlighting the impacts of consumptive experiences and interpretations in constructing one's self and social identity. (Arnould & Thompson, 2018). Here, positive experiences can lead to integration and mutual respect (Walker & Moscardo, 2016). However, negative experiences can lead to ridicule, resentment, boundary setting and avoidance in extreme cases, oftentimes influenced by cultural and socio-economic power relations of the ingroup/outgroup or tourist/host (Hunter, 2011).

4.2.2. Pursuit of novel experiences

These non-aversive sentiments revealed participants' interest in novel Indigenous experiences with 35 references from the data. Noteworthy, however, participants often downplayed the Indigenous cultural elements in their responses, an observation also made by Holder and Ruhanen (2017). Underpinned by CCT's tenets of consumer identity, participants also asserted self-identities such as "foodies" to qualify their desire towards Indigenous tourism if novel experiences were offered. For example:

Food. I do like the kind of food over there [Northern Territory]. But culture-wise, nothing really appealing as such. [P11, 30–44 years, Female, Australian]

Maybe visiting artists' studio, or more Indigenous style restaurants, something where there's a bit more connectivity and interactiveness rather than just having a guide. [P36, 45–64 years, Male, British]

Such assertions are closely linked to novelty-seeking neophiliacs who display an adventurous attitude to try new things which can influence tourists' affinity to Indigenous cultural identities and symbolic representations of food or experiences produced by Indigenous peoples (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2009). The participants' narratives evidence an affinity towards novel Indigenous experiences, particularly for those identifying as "wellness-seekers" and "eco-conscious tourists" was also evident:

This is just a thought that's occurred to me for really harnessing and marketing Indigenous experiences for some of the superior knowledge that it does have, like in terms of … environmental integrity and some of the medicinal purposes of their [native] plants and food and ways of life … because right now there's a lot of healing and wellness

paradigms that people are heavily invested in and could certainly increase interest, especially for me. [P07, 45–64 years, Female, European]

The above assertion is testament to tourist's affinity towards Indigenous sustainable value systems, cultural practices, connection to land, as well as their use of tourism as a tool for self-determined development and enterprise (Scheyvens et al., 2021).

4.2.3. Desire for national healing and reconciliation

Twenty-two (22) excerpts from the data emerged within this category. This interacts with CCT's socio-historic patterning and consumer identity categories, where in this case participants mostly challenged how Indigenous tourism is represented and expressed interest in normalising Indigenous tourism and working towards reconciliation, decolonisation, healing and unity (Curtin & Bird, 2022; Stinson et al., 2021). Some participants discussed the need for unity and reconciliation to become a social norm within the tourism industry and Australia's society:

Indigenous Australia is the real Australia after all so why isn't that pushed as the mainstream. [P13, 30–44 years, Male, European]

Another postulated that the critical challenge lies in addressing Australia's national history and identity:

We haven't found our Indigeneity as a nation. We haven't found that place in our national history and national identity yet. I'm really worried that whatever marketing we try and do at the moment is still going to be banging your head on a wall until we can push it there. [P14, 45–64 years, Male, Aboriginal Australian/Irish]

Such sentiments challenge the romanticizing of Indigenous cultures within historic colonial narratives. Tourism scholars are increasingly insisting on the value of tourism that foregrounds Indigenous knowledge, identities, and representation that resist, reshape and retell colonial narratives to restore Indigenous cultures, ontologies and livelihoods (Stinson et al., 2021). Additionally, participants' comments regarding Australian *socio-historic patterns and identity* were resonant with indicative references containing the pronoun "we" to suggest a desire to Indigenise Australian society through acknowledgement, connection, understanding and unity.

To sum up the findings, it is noteworthy that all participants expressed some level of bias regardless of age, gender, education, or income. Across every segment, participants projected implicit and explicit aversions in the form of distancing, fear, or mere disinterest. However, some participants also held positive or ambivalent sentiments regarding Indigeneity and Indigenous tourism representing an expression of potential willingness to participate.

5. Discussion

This study extends existing research in Indigenous tourism that address low demand (Espinosa-Abascal, Fluker, & Jiang, 2016; Holder & Ruhanen, 2019; Ruhanen & Whitford, 2016). The findings reveal most participants exhibited a spectrum of socio-cultural aversions from explicit racial bias to more complex forms such as ambivalence. While some expressed non-aversive attitudes demonstrating curiosity and desire to learn and interest in normalising Indigenous culture and reconciling with Indigenous peoples. In addition, contributions to CCT theory are made with clear links to the consumer identity and socio-historic patterning streams. This section discusses the main findings, as well as the theoretical, practical, and methodological contributions.

Findings in the choice-ordering stage revealed that most socio-cultural aversions emerged when participants were engaged in discussing low ranked images where experiences took place in urban settings, and those that featured traditional experiences such as tours, cultural

centres, museums and cultural talks. These mirror revelations on low appeal for cultural experiences in Holder and Ruhanen (2017) study. Interestingly, the present study adds new insight beyond tourists' low interest in cultural elements to reveal high interest in certain experiences such as learning about Indigenous knowledge on native plants, medicines, foods.

Three key themes of socio-cultural aversive attitudes and biases emerged from participants' references: racial and stereotypical projections, implicit cultural distancing and explicit avoidance, and ambivalence and indifference. The first two themes encompass both explicit and implicit racial and stereotypical tendencies, marked by differences in phenotypical identity and cultural practices (Rokka, 2021). Under the theme "racial and stereotypical projections", participants often gave stereotypical explanations and expressed cultural distancing cues, for instance, their perceptions of the appearance of an Indigenous guide (how they "should look"), and Western assumptions of authenticity. Participants explicitly revealed their stereotypical bias, finding it amusing and unrealistic to have a light-skinned Indigenous guide, as they expected a darker-skinned version. This supports the literature that link tourist avoidance to racial biases and stereotypes (Holder et al., 2021; Ruhanen & Whitford, 2016). These findings contribute to CCT's consumer identity stream in relevance to participants' self and social identity and their stereotypes about Indigenous peoples and culture.

Cultural distancing and discomfort due to safety concerns were also prevalent and attributed to Indigenous cultural content and location. The findings indicate the influence of media, education and other socio-historic patterns under CCT played a role, with participants often citing their schooling and the media's influence. This justifies the prominent influence of cultural interpretation and place-likening on tourists' attitudes (Lee et al., 2009). For instance, participants made specific references to parts of Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory to justify their avoidance. Participants concern for these places were not solely limited to the tourism experience itself but travelling to these locations. For instance, when one participant questioned the safety and quality of the travel journey due to possible bad weather and driving in isolated areas: "What if it's too hot … What if there's a storm?.. What if there are freaks on the road like Wolf Creek?" [P02, 18–29 years, Female, Asian]. Such sentiments suggest additional challenges for remote Indigenous tourism operators (Ashwell, 2015).

The third theme exposes the more implicit socio-cultural aversions highlighting mixed emotions and indifference towards Indigenous tourism. These excerpts illuminate how tourists tend to justify and qualify their hidden or often passive aversions (Penz & Hogg, 2011). Ambivalence and hesitation towards Indigenous offerings may denote implicit and symbolic socio-cultural relations bounded in socio-historic patterns existing in Australian society for decades (Foley & O'Connor, 2013). This is a stark indication of how socio-historic and socio-cultural factors can shape consumers.

In addressing socio-cultural aversions towards Indigenous tourism, this study also contributes to knowledge on the social and cultural dynamics of tourist consumption in the dominant Westernized system of Australian societies. Overall, these findings support claims in tourism research that tourists are more aversive towards tourism experiences that confront, challenge, or conflict with their identity, lifestyle and overarching ideologies (Chien & Ritchie, 2018; Holder et al., 2022). Previous studies exploring tourist sentiment post-experience have also found that both domestic and international participants tend to feel polarized and uncomfortable in Indigenous tourism experiences that deliver mostly cultural content (Espinosa-Abascal et al., 2016).

Participants also expressed non-aversive sentiments towards Indigenous tourism and Indigenous people. They offered counternarratives that captured the desire for Indigenous connection and cultural exchange, novel experiences, and the potential to facilitate national healing and reconciliation. As some scholars have argued, Indigenous tourism can be an avenue for decolonizing Indigenous identities,

histories and representations, establishing and celebrating cultural commonalities, building cultural awareness, trust and legitimacy, but also for fostering reconciliation and national healing (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2003). As Galliford (2010, p. 227) suggests, "Indigenous tourism may have the capacity to effect change in the perceptions and attitudes of Australian tourists towards Aboriginality and their sense of national identity and belonging". These findings have relevance to prospective tourists who may be ambivalent or are experiencing mixed emotions.

Theoretically, the study extends Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) and offers insights into the internalised socio-cultural nuances (Belk, 2017), that influence the emotions, perceptions and reactions towards Indigenous tourism. Consumer identity, socio-cultural patterning and marketplace culture showcase relevance in understanding both the aversions and the non-aversive sentiments t towards Indigenous tourism which can inform how Indigenous tourism is developed, represented, and marketed. Aspects of consumer identity were particularly relevant to touristic evaluations of Indigenous tourism experiences that show discriminatory (implicit/explicit) aversions towards Indigenous identities and representations (Arnould & Thompson, 2018). For example, participants' responses frequently referred to phenotypical identity markers (genetic traits) and betrayed a "them versus us" mindset. There were also recurrent references to national identity in participants' projections on Indigenous tourism. Tourists revealed elements of self-identity and social identity to express their strong desire for Indigenous connection and cultural exchange of stories and practices. Likewise, participants asserted consumer identities when expressing their interest in pursuing novel Indigenous tourism experiences that resonated with their values and identity around food, wellness, and sustainability. Noteworthy, tourists are agents in consuming experiences that shape their self and social identities and how they use the marketplace as a stage to enact these representations (Graham & Dadd, 2021; Tjiptono & Yang, 2018).

The socio-historic patterning elements of CCT were significant and contextually applied in this study. For instance, the theme "implicit cultural distancing and explicit avoidance" reflects established patterns formed from education and social meanings placed on Indigenous culture. Terms like "too abstract", "detached" and "checked-out" reflect Western perceptions and social representations of Indigenous culture as different, confronting, inferior, and unprofessional (e.g. Boag et al., 2020; Holder et al., 2022). Assertions of mixed emotions also reveal how the accumulation of Indigenous cultural meaning imbedded in Australia's society preserves passive avoidance and implicit aversions, such as "ambivalence and indifference". Alternatively, these socio-historic patterns and beliefs revealed participants' "pursuit for normalised beliefs and reconciliation". Here, participants emphasized revisiting Indigenous tourism representation in Australia, urging society to shift from separation towards reconciliation and unity.

The role of marketplace culture, although less prominent, is an established domain that emerged in references related to place-likening or, engagement in touristic settings (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007), and the socio-cultural meanings assigned to a particular location. References made by participants in this study provide examples of how Indigenous tourism experiences situated in remote locations, or communities with a high social density of Indigenous peoples as well as well-known Indigenous sites can trigger aversions. More specifically, this points to racial tendencies, expressions of implicit cultural distancing, as well as explicit avoidance influenced by lifestyle and place-likening.

6. Conclusion

Theoretically, this study extends CCT literature (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Belk, 2017) in three ways. One, *consumer identity* was central to how prospective tourists navigated their social and cultural worldviews as they relate to Indigenous tourism, representations, and peoples. Two, the *socio-historic patterning* of consumption is evident in deep-seated educational, socio-cultural, historic, and political influences

shaping touristic norms and beliefs towards Indigenous tourism. Lastly, *marketplace culture* dynamics were influential on tourists' evaluations of Indigenous tourism offerings.

The findings also provide novel qualitative insights on a range of implicit and explicit aversions pertinent to Indigenous tourism consumption in Australia (Holder et al., 2021). On a more positive note, non-aversive sentiments offer a more optimistic narrative for Indigenous tourism and its potential role in Australia's reconciliation trajectory (Curtin & Bird, 2022).

Methodologically, photo-elicitation and projective techniques (Hindley & Font, 2017) enabled in-depth revelation of tourists' implicit and explicit aversions by minimising social desirability bias. This is crucial for exploring implicit and subconscious biases that constitute aversive racism. Participants directly and indirectly project how they think and feel about Indigenous tourism, peoples and culture. The method allowed participants to interiorize and reflect on their experiences, share collective identity, establish meaning, and construct their reality, thus revealing socio-cultural affinities and aversions (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011).

The findings have practical implications for both the demand and supply of Indigenous tourism. Socio-cultural aversions are apparent towards Indigenous tourism and are influenced by socio-historic patterns, information and marketing practices that play an active role in influencing Westernized ideology, stereotypes, misinformation and unequal representation of Indigenous peoples, culture, and associated tourism offerings. Educating tourists on the positive attributes of Indigenous tourism highlighted in this study could help combat aversions. For instance, participants' views suggest a strong case for an Indigenous tourism product that is marketed plurally, drawing on the gamut of experiences rooted in Indigenous knowledges encompassing culinary, wellness, medicinal and environmental practices. These product attributes and expectations can help disarm some of the aversive attitudes highlighted in this study.

Understanding the transformative possibilities of Indigenous tourism, as suggested by some participants in this study, can also inform DMOs, travel trade operators and Indigenous tourism providers. The findings suggest tourist appeal for Indigenous tourism products that foster mutual cultural exchange, learning, connection, interactivity, inclusivity, and relatability, notwithstanding the evidence of aversive tendencies. A bottom-up approach, sanctioned by Indigenous tourism businesses and host communities would contribute towards reconciliation and decolonizing Indigenous tourism representation in the marketplace. Additionally, it's crucial to present counter-narratives and tourism offerings that encompass diverse representations and encourage mutual cultural exchange to mitigate aversions. A further exploration of the social forces related to the supply-side and institutions that influence media, education and policy is needed.

6.1. Limitations and future research agenda

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the Australian Commonwealth imposed travel ban, the sample only included domestic participants. Future studies could engage a more diverse sample including international visitors to Australia. Future research could further validate the themes emerging from this study by developing quantitative research with key variables that cover the different socio-cultural aversions and non-aversive sentiments.

Theoretically, there is value in more CCT research within tourism studies where cultural, social, political nuances are key (Zenker & Kock, 2020). Explorations of other dimensions of tourist socio-cultural aversions through theoretical lens such as the 'tourist gaze' (Urry & Larsen, 2011), 'worldmaking' (Hollinshead, Ateljevic, & Ali, 2009) or 'social identity theory' (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) are needed. These theoretical applications could offer insight on tourist post-consumptive experience, their self-identify and social identity in the marketplace.

Future studies could also examine the relationships between socio-

cultural aversions and other categories such as ethnicity, age, income, and education. There is also future scope to measure marketing interventions developed from the non-aversive sentiments as informed by this research. Finally, given the lack of Indigenous voices in the present study, future studies could provide a more balanced analysis of the supply and demand factors from the perspective of Indigenous suppliers, who are rarely allowed the opportunity to speak for themselves.

Author contributions

Dr Afiya Holder is the leading author who conceptualised, designed the research method, collected the data, coded and analysed the data, interpreted and writing up of the paper. Dr Lisa Ruhanen, Dr Gabrielle Walters and Dr Mucha Mkono provided support in the design, coding, analysis, interpretation, and critical review of writing drafts to ensure the high quality of the manuscript.

Impact statement

Social tensions, conflicting worldviews, contested places and other underlying socio-cultural frictions continue to permeate Australian society and the tourism sector by extension. This research adds new theoretical perspectives to include the multilayered conceptual framework of tourist socio-cultural aversions (implicit/explicit) and its application to multiple streams of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) within the context of Indigenous tourism in Australia. The findings

illuminate three significant themes that address a range of implicit and explicit socio-cultural aversions towards Indigenous tourism, namely *racial and stereotypical projections, overt cultural distancing and avoidance*, as well as *ambivalence and indifference*. On a more positive note, the findings also reveal a desire for Indigenous tourism products that foster mutual *cultural exchange, connection, reconciliation*, and a *pursuit for novelty*. Participants' accounts present a strong case for Indigenous tourism products that are marketed beyond stereotypes, drawing on experiences rooted in Indigenous ancient wisdom and contemporary experiences encompassing Indigenous culinary, wellness, medicinal and environmental practices. With these insights, Indigenous tourism managers and marketers can reassess and develop tourism experiences that embrace and celebrate both Indigenous ancient knowledge and novel experiences that facilitate mutual cultural exchange, reconciliation, respect and awareness between Indigenous hosts and their guests.

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Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

APPENDIX A. Interview participants descriptive statistics

Number of participants	Participant ID	Years (Age range)	Gender	Self-identified Ethnic background	Educational Background	Location	Income
1	P01	18–29	Female	Mixed race (Madagascar, French)	Bachelor degree	NSW	50 k-120 k
2	P02	18–29	Female	Asian (Vietnamese)	Master degree	QLD	50 k-120 k
3	P03	18–29	Male	Asian (Chinese)	Master degree	QLD	50 k-120 k
4	P04	30–44	Female	European (Hungary)	Master degree	QLD	50 k-120 k
5	P05	45–64	Female	European	Master degree	QLD	190 k −260 k
6	P06	30–44	Male	European (French)	Bachelor degree	QLD	50 k-120 k
7	P07	45–64	Female	European	High School	VIC	50 k-120 k
8	P08	18–29	Female	North American	Bachelor degree	NSW	less 50 k
9	P09	65–79	Male	European	Bachelor degree	VIC	less 50 k
10	P10	45–64	Female	Australian	High School	VIC	50 k-120 k
11	P11	30–44	Female	Australian	Associate degree	NSW	50 k-120 k
12	P12	45–64	Female	European	Doctorate	QLD	250 k+
13	P13	30–44	Male	European	Master degree	QLD	250 k+
14	P14	45–64	Male	Aboriginal Australian/Irish	Doctorate	VIC	250 k +
15	P15	30–44	Female	European	Bachelor degree	NSW	50 k-120 k
16	P16	30–44	Female	European	Bachelor degree	QLD	50 k-120 k
17	P17	30–44	Male	Irish	Master degree	QLD	250 k +
18	P18	45–64	Female	European	Graduate certificate	QLD	190 k-260 k
19	P19	45–64	Male	Asian/European	Master degree	QLD	50 k-120 k
20	P20	30–44	Male	North American	Bachelor degree	VIC	120 k-190 k
21	P21	45–64	Female	European	Bachelor degree	NSW	50 k+
22	P22	45–64	Female	European	Associate degree	VIC	120 k-190 k
23	P23	18–29	Female	North American/Latino	Master degree	VIC	less 50 k
24	P24	30–44	Male	European	Bachelor degree	NSW	120 k-190 k
25	P25	30–44	Male	Indian	Bachelor degree	VIC	190 k-250 k
26	P26	30–44	Female	PNG/Australian	Associate degree	QLD	120 k-190 k
27	P27	18–29	Female	Chinese	Master degree	QLD	less 50 k
28	P28	45–64	Female	European	High School	VIC	50 k-120 k
29	P29	30–44	Female	Chinese	Master degree	NSW	120 k-190 k
30	P30	30–44	Female	German	Master degree	NSW/ QLD	250 k+
31	P31	18–29	Female	Vietnamese	Bachelor degree	QLD	50 k-120 k
32	P32	45–64	Male	Anglo-European	Associate degree	VIC	120 k-190 k
33	P33	45–64	Male	Australian	Bachelor degree	NSW	Prefer not to say
34	P34	30–44	Male	Indian	Bachelor degree	VIC	120 k-190 k
35	P35	18–29	Female	Chinese	Master degree	QLD	50 k-120 k
36	P36	45–64	Male	British	Bachelor degree	NSW	120 k-190 k
37	P37	30–44	Female	African	Doctorate	QLD	120 k-190 k
38	P38	30–44	Female	European	Doctorate	QLD	120 k-190 k
39	P39	30–44	Female	European	Bachelor degree	QLD	190 k-260 k
40	P40	45–64	Male	European	Associate degree	QLD	Above 260 k
41	P41	30–44	Female	Japanese	Master degree	NSW	120 k-190 k

APPENDIX B. Alternative text descriptions of images table

Image 1	An image of an Indigenous tourism experience comprising of a culinary and adventure activities in the Outback. There are a group of Caucasian tourists including a family of four (a man, woman and two kids) and a friend are sitting at a dining table placed in a river during low tide. On the dining table is a red and white tablecloth featuring Indigenous artwork, wine glasses, a bottle of wine and a bottle containing drinking water. There are two tour male guides. Both guides identify as Indigenous, one is of dark-skinned hue the other is lighter skinned complexion. One guide is at the table sharing information with the tourists. The other guide is in the background looking on.
Image 2	An image of an Indigenous tourism experience comprising of a Bush Food Experience. There are a group of tourists including and two male, Indigenous operators: a chef and a guide. The guide is standing at a table and is presenting a bush berry and other bushfoods to two tourists. One of the tourists is of Asian background and the other is Caucasian background. The Asian tourist looks on curiously and the Caucasian tourist looks on with interest and a smile. The Indigenous chef looks on while holding a wooden spoon inside of a silver mixing bowl with a flour like substance.
Image 3	An image of Indigenous Art Display in the Melbourne Museum. The art installation is an Aboriginal Memorial of 200 hollow log coffins from Central Arnhem Land. The hollow log coffins are like hollow bamboo sticks adorned with different Indigenous artwork. They are placed in the ground sticking in the air at different lengths and are surrounded by small pebbles. There is a tiled walkway snaking through the installation with two tourists. The two tourists appear to be a couple, a man and woman of Caucasian background. They are holding each other, smiling and pointing at a specific log while they walk through the art installation. They are unattended and there is no guide or staff present.
Image 4	An image of an Indigenous art workshop comprising of painting and personalising a boomerang. There are a group of four tourists sitting by a table with black boomerangs, paints and sticks used to place dots of paint on the boomerang. The tourists are seniors and are Caucasian. The tourists are unattended by a guide or instructor.
Image 5	An image of an Indigenous tourism experience comprising of a bushfire and storytelling in the Outback. There are three Indigenous, male guides, all of a dark-skinned hue. Two of the guides are Indigenous elders with grey hair and the other middle age. There are two tourists that appear to be a couple, young professionals and are Caucasian. The five characters in the image are sitting in front the iconic Uluru Rock. The Indigenous guides have different sticks in their hands that could be ancient tools.
Image 6	An image of a Rock Art Tour. There are a group of three tourists including and one Indigenous guide. The Indigenous guide is male, light-skinned in complexion and is wearing a hat and a polo shirt with Indigenous artwork on the sleeve. The tourists are Caucasian background and consist of two young adults and a middle-aged woman. The guide is standing and pointing at Indigenous rock art painted in red. The guide is standing within a closure blocking off part of a large boulder, while the tourists are standing outside the closure leaning on the railing. The tourists look on with interest and a smile.
Image 7	An image of an Indigenous City Walking Tour including a tourist and an Indigenous guide. The tour setting is in front the Sydney Opera House. The Indigenous guide is brown skinned in complexion and is wearing a headband and a polo shirt with a logo. She is also wearing a scarf and holding a bag that is adorned with Indigenous artwork. The tourist is a mature-aged woman and of Caucasian background. The tourist is wearing a long black puffer jacket, jeans, sneakers, a red scarf. The guide has seashells in her hand and is pointing in the far distance. The tourist is looking at the guide with a curious face.
Image 8	An image of an Indigenous Cultural experience. There is a young Caucasian boy and one male Indigenous performer. The Indigenous performer is dark-skinned in complexion and is wrapped in a red cloth on his lower body and adorning with paint on his face, arms and legs. The performer is holding a ball of dry hay with smoke coming from it. The boy also has face paint on and a pair of clapsticks. The boy is blowing the ball of dry, smoking hay. There are other tourists in the background that are barely visible through the smoky air.
Image 9	An image of two kids (young boy and girl) and a tourist attempting spearfishing. The characters are by a river in Western Australia. The tourist is a young adult of Caucasian background. Both kids are dark-skinned in complexion. The girl wearing a red t-shirt and a black knee-length pants while the boy is wearing a black t-shirt and pants. The girl is in the water holding the spearfishing rod above her shoulders while she looks into the distance at the water. The tourist is smiling and looking into the direction the girl is looking at. The boy sits above the water on a rock looking on.

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Dr Afiya Holder (PhD, MSc (Advanced), BSc (Hons), FHEA) is a Lecturer at The Business School, Tourism Research Centre, Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, EH14 1DJ, Scotland, UK. Email: a.holder@napier.ac.uk

Professor Lisa Ruhanen (PhD, GCEd, BBusHons) is Associate Professor and the Director of Education at the UQ Business School, The University of Queensland, Brisbane QLD 4072 Australia, Email: l.ruhanen@uq.edu.au

Associate Professor Gabrielle Walters is Associate Professor at the UQ Business School, The University of Queensland, Brisbane QLD 4072 Australia. Email: g.walters@uq.edu.au

Dr Mucha Mkono is a Lecturer at the Business School, The University of Queensland, Brisbane QLD 4072 Australia. Email: m.mkono@uq.edu.au