Mediating Climate Change Agency:
A Grounded Theory of Travellers’ Climate Change Perceptions and
Influences on Travel Behaviours

Ulrike Erika Kachel
MTourism (Ecotourism)
Dipl.-Ing. System Analysis

Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and Sport Management
Griffith Business School
Griffith University

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

January 2012
ABSTRACT

Within scientific and policy debates, climate change has been identified as a serious threat to the world’s societies, environments, and economies. As one of the world’s largest industries, tourism is dependent on destinations’ natural and built environments in order to fulfil people’s travel desires. Besides predicted potential climate change threats to tourism industries and destinations, tourism has also been identified as a contributor to climate change based on its dependence on fossil fuel-based modes of transportation and energy-dependent tourism operations. Tourism policies address such threats and contributions predominantly through focusing on industry adaptation and mitigation, as well as envisioning the adoption of sustainable tourism criteria. From an industry point of view, however, it is pivotal to understand how climate change threats to tourism as well as tourism’s contributions to climate change will effect travellers’ decisions and travel behaviours. Travellers’ voices, however, tend to be unheard in tourism policy, industry, and research discourses. Travellers’ perceptions, therefore, were the focus of this research.

A grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency was developed based on travellers’ perceptions of climate change and connectivity to travelling. The research revealed a multitude of perceptions that were shaped by climate change information generated and delivered through a variety of social institutions. Such information engagements as well as social interactions with peers and social institutions were the basis of travellers’ reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making. Such processes were filtered by travellers’ cultural and social embeddedness, as well as their self-identity as citizens and travellers. Within their narratives, participants evaluated climate change causes, impacts, and implications for tourism, and reflected on their personal lifestyles and travel behaviours. The grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency enables an understanding of the mediating processes that influence and shape travellers’ perceptions of and responses to climate change. It shows that travellers demonstrate personal agency based on their knowledge of climate change issues, sense of responsibility, and evaluation of efficacy. Such
agency was demonstrated through varied engagements with climate change issues, adoption of environmental lifestyle practices, as well as changes in travel behaviours.

The insights from this research will enable the tourism industry to better understand how travellers perceive and respond to climate change within their lifestyle practices as well as their travel behaviours. Within this research, five behaviour groups were identified, which represent travellers’ knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and agency with regards to climate change. These groups represent the ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’ travellers. The research suggests that in order to increase environmentally friendly travel behaviour, tourism organisations and industries must consider not just information aspects but also need to address travellers’ sense of responsibility and perceived level of efficacy. How the mediation process of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy can be influenced may be the focus of further research.

The research applied a postmodern constructivist paradigm and a grounded theory approach in particular. Representing a holistic-inductive research framework, empirical material was collected from two online sources. In a preliminary study existing online discussions within the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum were interpreted and provided initial insights. For the main study, a research website, the Climate Change Research Lounge, was developed and participants based on the Australian Lifestyle Survey (ALS) were invited to provide their reflections. The online environment was chosen as a research setting because travellers use online spaces for their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to travelling and climate change.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Ulrike Erika Kachel
3 January 2012
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ....................................................................................................................... i
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY ..................................................................................... iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS ..................................................................................................... iv
LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................... viii
LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................. ix
LIST OF BOXES .............................................................................................................. x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................. xi
PREFACE ....................................................................................................................... xiii

PART I: RESEARCH OUTLINE & APPROACH .................................................................. 1

CHAPTER ONE RESEARCH OUTLINE AND SIGNIFICANCE ........................................... 2

1.1 Research significance ............................................................................................... 3
1.1.1 Grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency ....................................... 4
1.1.2 Holistic-inductive research framework ................................................................. 5
1.1.3 Voices leading ....................................................................................................... 7
1.1.4 Typicalities .......................................................................................................... 7
1.1.5 Grounded theory demonstration ........................................................................... 8
1.1.6 Researcher reflexivity .......................................................................................... 9
1.1.7 Critically reflexive research ................................................................................. 10
1.1.8 Application of grounded theory ......................................................................... 11
1.2 Thesis structure and use of terms ........................................................................... 13

CHAPTER TWO PARADIGM, METHODOLOGY, AND METHODS .................................... 17

2.1 Paradigmatic considerations .................................................................................... 18
2.1.1 A postmodern constructivist paradigm .................................................................. 20
2.1.2 Postmodern influences within this research context ........................................... 23
2.2 Qualitative methodology ......................................................................................... 25
2.2.1 Grounded theory ............................................................................................... 26
2.2.2 Empirical material collection ............................................................................ 27
2.2.3 Empirical material interpretation ....................................................................... 29
2.2.4 Procedures to ensure rigour ............................................................................... 30
2.3 Methods ................................................................................................................ 32
2.3.1 The setting: Travellers’ online discussions and reflections .................................. 34
2.3.1.1 Existing discussions: The Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum .......................... 36
2.3.1.2 Online reflections: Climate Change Research Lounge ............................... 39
2.3.2 The toolbox: Internet-mediated interviews and memos .................................... 43
2.3.2.1 Email ............................................................................................................ 45
2.3.2.2 Blog ............................................................................................................. 47
2.3.2.3 Forum .......................................................................................................... 49
### 2.3.2.4 Webform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.3.3 Memos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.4 Ethical considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.5 The different voices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.5.1 The voices within the Thorn Tree forum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.5.2 The voices within the Research Lounge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.5.3 My voice and positionality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.6 Interpretation process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.6.1 Lonely Planet interpretation process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.6.2 Research Lounge interpretation process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.7 Presentation of participants’ voices and my interpretations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PART I

PARTICIPANT VOICES & INTERPRETATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER THREE

TRAVELLERS’ CLIMATE CHANGE DISCUSSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.1 The Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.2 Online discussions: Travellers’ positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.3 Online discussions: Social institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.4 Online discussions: Role of information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.5 Online discussions: Travellers’ reflexivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.6 Online discussions: Travellers’ personal and social agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.7 Online discussions: Meaning- and sense-making processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER FOUR

MEET THE RESEARCH LOUNGE BELIEVERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.1 Climate change is real: I believe it, I can see it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.2 Climate change is real: How do we know, whom do we trust?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.3 Climate change is real: We need to act, we need to change, time is crucial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.4 Climate change is real: I care for nature, I respect nature, I depend on it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.5 Climate change is real: Travelling is changing, destinations are threatened

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.6 Climate change is real: Travelling is bad, travelling is good?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.7 Climate change is real: Know your footprints, reduce your footprints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.8 Climate change is real: To travel or not to travel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.9 Conclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER FIVE

MEET THE RESEARCH LOUNGE NON-BELIEVERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.1 The climate is always changing: It’s a natural cycle, climate science is faulty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.2 The climate is always changing: We know information is compromised by self-interests and underlying agendas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 The climate is always changing: We respect nature, we depend on it, we’ve damaged it. ................................. 147
5.4 The climate is always changing: It has nothing to do with travelling ................................................................. 150
5.5 The climate is always changing: Carbon footprints are a fairy-tale ................................................................. 154
5.6 The climate is always changing: Travel as usual .................................................................................................... 155
5.7 Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................................... 157

CHAPTER SIX
MEET THE RESEARCH LOUNGE UNDECIDEDS ................................................................. 160

6.1 Climate change could be real: Sitting on the fence ................................................................. 162
6.2 Climate change could be real: Confusing information on too much doom and gloom ........................................ 165
6.3 Climate change could be real: Preserve what’s left, we depend on it ........................................ 166
6.4 Climate change could be real: If true, then travelling contributes .............................................. 169
6.5 Climate change could be real: Footprints are good, footprints suck .......................................... 175
6.6 Climate change could be real: To travel or not to travel? ......................................................... 179
6.7 Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................................... 181

PART III
GROUNDED THEORY & DISCUSSION .................................................................................. 184

CHAPTER SEVEN
THEORISING AND GROUNDED THEORY ............................................................................. 185

7.1 Comparing the studies: Lonely Planet Thorn Tree, Climate Change Research Lounge ........................................ 186
7.2 Step 1 - Comparing the groups: Believers, Non-believers, Undecideds .............................................. 188
7.3 Step 2 - Overall grounded theory concepts and grounded theory themes ................................................... 197
7.4 Step 3 - Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making ........................................... 203
7.5 Step 4 and 5 - A grounded theory of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and influences on travel behaviours: Mediating Climate Change Agency ................................................................................................................................. 207
7.6 Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................................... 213

CHAPTER EIGHT
MEDIATING CLIMATE CHANGE AGENCY ............................................................................. 215

8.1 Meaning-, sense-, and decision-making: What does it mean? How do we decide what to do? ................................................................. 217
8.2 Knowledge: What do we know? What do we need to know? ......................................................... 221
8.2.1 Attitudes: What is our perspective on climate change? ................................................................. 223
8.2.2 Understandings: Do we understand what climate change is? ......................................................... 227
8.2.3 Scientific knowledge: What do we know and think about it? ......................................................... 230
8.2.4 Common knowledge: Making sense of climate change? ................................................................. 233
8.2.5 Trust: Whom and what do we trust? ................................................................................................. 235
8.3 Responsibility: Who is responsible to take actions? ........................................................................... 240
8.3.1 Values: Do we value nature? ............................................................................................................... 242
8.3.2 Ethics: Climate change actions with others in mind? ........................................................................ 244
8.3.3 Morals: Feeling guilty about behaviours? .......................................................... 246
8.3.4 Social norms: What are we expected to do? ......................................................... 248
8.3.5 Actors: Who should act - I, we, or others? .......................................................... 250
8.4 Efficacy: Are we able to change? ............................................................................. 254
8.4.1 Ability: Not sure if we can? ................................................................................... 256
8.4.2 Constraints: We would if we could? ................................................................. 257
8.4.3 Impacts: Would it make a difference? ............................................................... 259
8.4.4 Uncertainties: Who knows what the future will bring? ......................................... 261
8.5 Agency: What are we doing? ..................................................................................... 264
8.5.1 Engaging: We engage with climate change ....................................................... 267
8.5.2 Practicing: We do what we can ......................................................................... 271
8.5.3 Changing: We changed our travel behaviour .................................................... 275
8.5.4 Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 279

CHAPTER NINE
FINAL REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ......................................................... 280

9.1 Research process .................................................................................................. 281
9.2 Grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency ....................................... 284
9.3 Applicability .......................................................................................................... 287
9.4 Looking back and looking forward ....................................................................... 290
9.5 Research Lounge participants’ recommendations .................................................. 293

REFERENCES ................................................................................................................. 295

APPENDICES ................................................................................................................. 317

Appendix 1: Paper on autoethnographic account of the research process, presented at CAUTHE 2011 conference ........................................................................... 318
Appendix 2: Research information sheet .................................................................... 323
Appendix 3: Consent form ........................................................................................... 327
Appendix 4: Open-ended questions as downloadable Word document ....................... 328
Appendix 5: Paper on Lonely Planet study, presented at the CAUTHE 2009 conference .................................................................................................................. 332
Appendix 6: Mind map of Research Lounge Undecideds’ human – nature relationship ........................................................................................................... 336
Appendix 7: Succinct mind map of Research Lounge Undecideds’ human – nature relationship .................................................................................................... 337
| Figure 2.1: | Screenshot Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum overview | 37 |
| Figure 2.2: | Homepage of the Climate Change Research Lounge | 41 |
| Figure 2.3: | Mind map of Research Lounge Undecideds’ human – nature relationship | 74 |
| Figure 2.4: | Succinct mind map of Research Lounge Undecideds’ human – nature relationship | 75 |
| Figure 4.1: | Research Lounge Believers’ climate change frames | 99 |
| Figure 4.2: | Research Lounge Believers’ calls for action | 106 |
| Figure 4.3: | Research Lounge Believers’ understandings of climate change impacts on travelling and destinations | 115 |
| Figure 4.4: | Research Lounge Believers’ travel experiences and influences on travel behaviours | 122 |
| Figure 4.5: | Research Lounge Believers – continua from believing to acting | 132 |
| Figure 5.1: | Research Lounge participants’ climate change frames – focus on Non-believers | 157 |
| Figure 6.1: | Research Lounge participants’ climate change frames – focus on Undecideds | 182 |
| Figure 7.1: | Interconnections between grounded theory concepts and theoretical constructs | 209 |
| Figure 7.2: | Grounded theory model construction: Mediating Climate Change Agency | 210 |
| Figure 7.3: | Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making with regards to travellers’ climate change position and travel behaviour | 212 |
| Figure 8.1: | Knowledge: Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making with regards to travellers’ climate change position and travel behaviour | 222 |
| Figure 8.2: | Responsibility: Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making with regards to travellers’ climate change position and travel behaviour | 241 |
| Figure 8.3: | Efficacy: Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making with regards to travellers’ climate change position and travel behaviour | 255 |
| Figure 8.4: | Agency: Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making with regards to travellers’ climate change position and travel behaviour | 266 |
| Figure 9.1: | Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making with regards to travellers’ climate change position and travel behaviour | 286 |
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Postmodern links to the three main research themes ...................... 23
Table 2.2: Improvements through theoretical sampling processes ................. 29
Table 2.3: Grounded theory evaluation criteria ........................................... 32
Table 2.4: Overview of selected Thorn Tree discussion threads ................... 39
Table 2.5: Characteristics of applied Internet-mediated interviewing ......... 44
Table 2.6: Essentials for the interview relationship ...................................... 45
Table 2.7: Characteristics of face-to-face and different Internet-mediated ......... 44
Table 2.8: Advantages of memos in grounded theory research .................... 50
Table 2.9: Participants’ profile characteristics ............................................ 61
Table 2.10: Selection criteria for addresses from the Australian Lifestyle ... 63
Table 2.11: Overview participation rate based on Australian population ........ 64
Table 2.12: Participants’ nationality and country of residence ..................... 65
Table 2.13: Education and generations per gender ..................................... 67
Table 3.1: Thorn Tree discussions including climate change topic .......... 82
Table 3.2: Towards a grounded theory of Lonely Planet travellers’ ......... 91
perspectives on climate change and connectivity on travel
decision-making .......................................................................................... 91
Table 7.1: Interpretation focus ‘Position or stance’ ................................. 189
Table 7.2: Interpretation focus ‘Role of information’ ................................. 190
Table 7.3: Interpretation focus ‘Call for action’ ......................................... 191
Table 7.4: Interpretation focus ‘Human-nature relationship’ ...................... 192
Table 7.5: Interpretation focus ‘Climate change impacts on travelling’ .... 193
Table 7.6: Interpretation focus ‘Tourism’s contribution’ ......................... 194
Table 7.7: Interpretation focus ‘Carbon footprints’ .................................. 195
Table 7.8: Interpretation focus ‘Influences on travel behaviour’ ............... 197
Table 7.9: Grounded theory concepts and themes focussing on Knowledge and Understandings .......................................................... 199
Table 7.10: Grounded theory concepts and themes focussing on Lifestyles and Practices ................................................................. 200
Table 7.11: Grounded theory concepts and themes focussing on Tourism and Travelling ................................................................. 202
Table 7.12: Theoretical construct of knowledge: Narrative examples and associated theoretical concepts ................................. 204
Table 7.13: Theoretical construct of responsibility: Narrative examples and associated theoretical concepts ........................................ 205
Table 7.14: Theoretical construct of efficacy: Narrative examples and associated theoretical concepts ................................. 205
Table 7.15: Theoretical construct of agency: Narrative examples and associated theoretical concepts ................................. 206
LIST OF BOXES

Box 2.1: Invitation email based on members’ engagement in climate change discussions ................................................................. 46
Box 2.2: Online open-ended questions ................................................................. 53
Box 2.3: Example of research journal entries ................................................................. 55
Box 2.4: Example of analysis memo entries ................................................................. 56
Box 2.5: Example of coding memo entries ................................................................. 57
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I describe in the Preface, I was not alone on this PhD journey and, therefore, want to acknowledge those that travelled with me. First of all, I want to thank the participants in my research for providing insights into their thoughts, experiences, and perceptions. Their perceptions were the focus of my research and their voices are at the centre of this thesis.

I would not have been able to do, and to finish, this journey without the great supervision that I received. Foremost, I want to thank my principal supervisor Adjunct Professor Gayle Jennings for her advice, guidance, and friendship. She always made time to provide feedback and to motivate me when I was struggling. Although her own journey led her away from the University environment, she continued her supervision, and I am very thankful for that. I also want to thank Professor Beverley Sparks who became my principal supervisor when Gayle left Griffith University. I admire Bev for her dedication and support that helped me to stay focussed on the tasks needed. Thanks also to my associate supervisor Dr. Helen Perkins who always had encouraging words and expressed her faith in my abilities when I doubted myself. At earlier stages of my journey, Dr. Carl Cater, Dr. Glen Hornby, and Professor David Weaver provided supervision and I am grateful for their support during that time. Overall, I want to thank all these supervisors for their valuable feedback and support of my research. I have learnt from each of you and you have helped me to become the researcher I am today.

I would also like to thank the Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and Sport Management at Griffith University for providing the opportunity to pursue this journey, as well as the resources to do so. Furthermore, I want to thank Griffith University for the financial support that I received through the Griffith University Postgraduate Research Scholarship (GUPRS). My thanks also go to the International Sustainable Tourism Research Initiative (ISTRI) at Griffith University for the Tuition Fee Scholarship; without which this it would have been a much more difficult journey. Thanks also goes to the Centre of Tourism, Sport and Service
Innovation (TSSI) at Griffith University for the provision of further funding for my final recruitment phase, a conference travel grant, as well as a grant to attend a PhD completion workshop. I further want to acknowledge the support for the development of my research website, which was set up by the eResearch group at Griffith University and later modified and hosted by Mark Brennand from ACTiVEiNGREDiENT. Thanks also to Claire Rodway for the proofreading of my thesis. All resources, funding and support that I have received have enabled me to pursue and to complete this journey. More importantly, however, I am thankful to those who made the decisions for such support, showing that they believed in me.

I would also like to acknowledge the support, feedback, encouragement, and companionship that I received from friends, other postgraduate students and researchers, and my family: my friend Dr. Peter Wood who is somewhat responsible for planting the seeds for this journey at the end of the Master of Tourism course we both did at James Cook University; my long-time friend Josef Depenbrock who always believed in me and to whom I owe more than just thanks; and other postgraduate students with whom I shared this journey and who became friends, particularly Sandie Kensbock, Mary-Anne Smith, Simon Mzungu and Adele Pavlidis. Thanks also go to Professor Ralf Buckley who challenged my thinking especially at the start of my journey, and Adjunct Professor Joseph Reser for his inclusiveness and support of my career as a researcher. A special thank you goes to Jack for his companionship, for always having time to listen and to provide feedback on publication drafts. I probably should have listened more to your advice regarding taking breaks and relaxation. And a final thank you goes to my family, particularly my mum who was already proud of me for just pursuing this journey regardless of its end.
My interest in this research was linked to the aim of achieving a PhD degree and thus these two, interest and aim, are interlinked and together metaphorically represent a journey or expedition into an unknown land. I use this metaphor to describe how I saw and approached my research. The goal of my expedition was to find a place (my theory); however, I did not know where or what it would look like. I did not even know if I would like it, but there was a desire to find it and to make the journey. On my expedition, I had rivers to cross and mountains to climb, and many other challenges to face that I could not have anticipated when I began. Initially, I did not know the way or what places I would discover or what they would look like. These have emerged along the way. I engaged with a lot of information to prepare myself and to find clues about the route(s) I should take to reach my goal. I have documented in this paper what I found, how I planned to approach my expedition, and what I discovered at the end. Others had completed or started similar expeditions and I studied their experiences in order to be prepared for what I would have to face. My challenges, however, have been different challenges, especially the personal ones.

For an expedition, it is important to be prepared and to have good equipment; therefore, I had to choose my tools carefully. I could not carry everything with me so I had to decide which tools would be the most useful. Along the way, I realised not all tools worked well and I had to find new ones. On the way I met a lot of people; in fact, I invited some to join me on my journey. Some came the whole way; some only joined for a while. Some were helpful and others did not really care. They all helped me to find my way. However, in the end, I had to decide which route to follow. At the beginning, the journey was slow and seemed to go nowhere and tensions arose. At times, I felt lost and alone, but finally, with the support of good friends, I made good progress and the journey became a joyful one.

Some of my companions had similar motivations in joining my expedition; others had different interests and totally different goals. The people I met came from
different countries, different cultures, different social backgrounds, and had different demographics. We were only able to communicate in one language, which was not always the first language for everyone and, therefore, not everyone might have been able to fully express what he or she wanted to say. Our different cultural and social backgrounds, the experiences we shared, and the interests we had in this expedition made the journey interesting and demanding. I had to respect where my companions were coming from and make sure everyone was treated in a fair and ethical way. I acknowledge that some of my companions might have had different ethical values than I have. I could not have made this journey alone. The people I met and the stories they told were important in helping me find my way and reach my goal. In fact, their stories became the journey’s tale.

Expeditions need supporters. For my expedition, I had the support of a large organisation that provided me with information and tools that I needed during the preparation, exploration, and reporting of my expedition. I was able to convince this organization that my expedition was worth doing and was well planned; thankfully, they also provided some funding. Further, I had supporters who were experienced explorers and had done similar journeys. They provided valuable advice not just at the beginning but also during the exploration, as I stayed in contact with them throughout my expedition.

From the outset I documented every step I took. I collected my companions’ stories, and information that other people provided or that I found along the way. In memos, I reflected on my personal thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Being reflexive during the journey helped me to stay focused, to interpret the information I found and to reflect on the steps that I had taken. This helped me to better plan the steps ahead. I also encouraged my companions to share their reflexive thoughts. In addition, I documented what I experienced and the contributions my companions made. With their help, I could finally, from a distance, see the place I had been aiming for. Although the end of the journey seemed close, the final part was a long and strenuous course. When I finally reached the place to which I aimed, I was able to draw a map and document the expedition and my companions’ stories. In the first part of this documentation, I describe the journey’s route, the settings, and the tools. This part also recounts some of the challenges I faced. The second part of the
documentation is reserved for my companions’ voices. In re-telling their stories, I am providing my interpretation of their stories. In the third and last part of this document, I reflect on what I found in the stories I heard and draw conclusions about what my interpretations mean. This paper, resultantly, enables others to follow the journey, to learn about the experiences my companions and I have had, to see what we saw, and to be informed of what we found. This journey now is over, but I am looking forward to embarking on new expeditions.
PART I:

RESEARCH OUTLINE & APPROACH
CHAPTER ONE

RESEARCH OUTLINE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Travellers’ perceptions of climate change are constantly co-constructed and re-constructed using reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making within cultural and social contexts and through traveller self-identity filters. Travellers’ engagements with and evaluation of climate change knowledge, sense of responsibility, and judgment of efficacy mediates their climate change agency. Such agency is performed by engaging with climate change discourses, practise environmentally friendly lifestyles and changing travel behaviours.

(Grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency)

Travellers’ reflections with regards to climate change were at the heart of my research, as travellers’ voices tend to be unheard within policy, industry, or research discourses on climate change. Within such discourses, the meaning of climate change and its role within the tourism context are co-constructed and re-constructed by tourism organisations, industry, and tourism researchers. Such meanings, however, do not tend to reflect or demonstrate travellers’ understandings of climate change and how they perceive connectivity between tourism and climate change. Living in a postmodern world, such understandings and perceptions of climate change and travelling are multiple, complex, fluid and interconnected, and are embedded within travellers’ narratives.

The nexus between tourism and climate change has been identified by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) as a ‘two-way relationship’ (UNWTO, 2003). Climate change impacts on tourism through changing climates and environments, and tourism contributes to climate change through carbon emissions,
especially through transportation. Research on tourism and climate change has been criticised for its focus on either climate change impacts or tourism’s contributions (Patterson, Bastianoni, & Simpson, 2006). Others stress the fact that tourism’s contribution to climate change has only recently become a focus in tourism research (Becken & Simmons, 2005; Gössling, 2005). Patterson, et al. (2006) further criticise that the two-way relationship between tourism and climate change neglects human activity, which represents important feedback to tourism-climate change systems. For them, the traveller is a main actor in tourism and contributes to climate change through his or her travel activities. So far, travellers’ participation in the climate change context has only been viewed as an adaptation resulting in changed travel patterns (Mather, Viner, & Todd, 2005). In order to understand such adaptation behaviour, however, we first need to understand what travellers’ perceptions are with regards to climate change and travelling. Moreover, we need to understand how individuals’ self-identity and social embeddedness shape their perceptions or are shaped and changed through their perceptions. My research, therefore, focuses on travellers’ voices within the co-construction and re-construction of climate change meanings. Furthermore, my research explores travellers’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change and travelling. Consequently, the aim of my research was to gain a deeper understanding of travellers’ climate change perceptions and influences on their travel behaviours.

Within this chapter, I present the contributions my research makes with regards to theory, methodology, tourism knowledge, and to the tourism industry. By outlining the research significance, I am also introducing my research methodology, research settings, the participants, as well as the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency. This theory was stated at the opening of this chapter. At the end of the chapter, I outline the structure of the thesis as well as introduce some of the terms I am using throughout this document.

1.1 Research significance

This opening chapter of my thesis represents the final stage of my reflections within the research process. I set out to gain a deeper understanding of travellers’ climate change perceptions and influences on travel behaviours; the grounded theory,
however, was only one contribution that emerged from my research. In exploring new settings and tools for empirical material collection within qualitative online research, my research also contributes to methodological aspects within tourism research. These aspects include:

- The application of a holistic research framework;
- Theory construction led by participants’ voices;
- Demonstration of typicalities;
- Provision of insights into the construction of a grounded theory;
- Demonstration of researcher reflexivity;
- Demonstration of critically reflexive research.

Furthermore, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency, derived from travellers’ reflections, provides insights that are significant and applicable for tourism organisations and policy makers.

### 1.1.1 Grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency

The grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency is an original construction that I developed based on this research. It provides a framework for an understanding of how travellers’ diverse climate change perceptions are co-constructed and re-constructed within reflexive *meaning-, sense-, and decision-making* processes. These processes are filtered by travellers’ cultural and social embeddedness as well as their self-identity as citizens and travellers. The main constituents of these processes that were identified in this research are *knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and agency*. These theoretical constructs are interconnected, fluid, and influence each other. Furthermore, for each of the theoretical constructs, several associated theoretical concepts have been identified, which represent the different aspects of the constructs. The *knowledge* construct contains the associated concepts of *attitudes, understandings, scientific knowledge, common knowledge*, and *trust*. For the construct of *responsibility*, the associated theoretical concepts of *values, ethics, morals, social norms*, and *actors* have been identified. The *efficacy* construct includes the associated theoretical concepts of *ability, constraints, impacts*, and *uncertainties*. For the construct of *agency*, *engaging, practicing*, and *changing* were identified as associated theoretical concepts. Overall, travellers’ climate change *agency* is mediated through *knowledge* evaluations, sense of *responsibility*, and
judgement of efficacy. Grounded in participants’ narratives, climate change agency is demonstrated through engaging with climate change and related issues, practicing environmentally friendly lifestyle practices, as well as changing travel behaviours.

The grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency emerged from the participants’ reflections on climate change and travelling. These reflections are deconstructed and reconstructed throughout Chapter 3 to Chapter 8. To ensure that the construction of my grounded theory is sound, my interpretations and theorising were informed by Charmaz’s (2005, 2006) grounded theory evaluation criteria. These criteria focussed on credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness of my research and guided the evaluation through reflective questioning. Grounded in such evaluations, my research contributes to tourism knowledge as it provides fresh insights into travellers’ climate change perceptions and influences on travel experiences. Furthermore, the constructed grounded theory adds to knowledge on how such perceptions are co-constructed and re-constructed within travellers’ reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, as well as filtered through participants’ cultural and social embeddedness, and self-identity as citizens and travellers.

1.1.2 Holistic-inductive research framework

The research demonstrates a holistic-inductive research framework for research on climate change perceptions. The contributions through such a holistic-inductive research framework were threefold.

Firstly, through the use of a postmodern constructivist paradigm, qualitative methodologies, and grounded theory in particular, I was able to achieve a wider perspective of the studied phenomenon. The use of qualitative methodologies is associated with holistic-inductive research (Jennings, 2010), which is still limited within tourism research (Jennings, 2010; Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). As a limited understanding of travellers’ climate change perceptions still exists, the application of grounded theory enabled a holistic view of how such perceptions were co-constructed and re-constructed within participants’ everyday lives and travel experiences. As O’Dell (O’Dell, 2005) argued, such co-constructions and re-
constructions are “highly personal, subjectively perceived, intangible, ever fleeting and continuously on-going” (p. 15). Within tourism research and the tourism industry there is a multiplicity of constructions and re-constructions regarding the meaning of experiences (Jamal & Everett, 2004) and these do not always resonate with travellers’ interpretations of climate change and travel experiences. By using a holistic-inductive research framework, my research adds further insights to this contested space.

Secondly, the holistic-inductive approach was supported by the use of different online environments for engagements with participants. The Internet is seen as a crucial platform with regards to changing travellers’ behaviour (Buhalis & Law, 2008), and travellers are using it to search for and share travel information and experiences. For my exploration I conducted two studies. In the first study, I explored existing climate change discussions on the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum. The selected online discussions enabled me to gain initial insights into the relevance of climate change for the Lonely Planet participants as part of their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. These insights supported the grounded theory approach as they enabled me to purposefully create further research questions and purposefully select further participants. Following on from the Lonely Planet study, the Climate Change Research Lounge, a research website with community features, was developed for the second study to collect travellers’ reflections on climate change and explore connectivity to travel decision-making.

The exploration of different online environments for empirical material collection highlights nuances of an emergent research design. Online travel communities increasingly play a crucial role regarding travellers’ information searches and exchanges within the tourism-marketing context (Chung & Buhalis, 2008). Their role as a platform for travellers’ meaning- and sense-making processes with regards to climate change is still relatively underexplored. Utilising an online community website for qualitative online inquiry on climate change perceptions, my research, therefore, importantly contributes to such an emerging research approach. As Fischer, Lyon, and Zeitlyn (2008) state, online research is still emerging and will influence all social science research, as online phenomena become an integral part of everyday lives.
Lastly, the holistic-inductive research framework was supported by an interdisciplinary approach that allowed the situating of the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency within wider related literature. For my research, I considered literature primarily from tourism, environmental science, environmental psychology, psychology, sociology and marketing. Within such an interdisciplinary approach, the different disciplines complement each other and allowed me to “more adequately understand tourism” phenomena (Darbellay & Stock, 2012, p. 454). By using multiple holistic disciplinary lenses, the grounded theory was contextualised within participants’ everyday lives as well as tourism situations. Barr and Gilg (2007) affirm that in order to enable conceptualisation of environmental behaviour in the context of everyday experiences, disciplinary boundaries have to be crossed.

1.1.3 Voices leading

The voices of my participants lead the theorising process rather than an a priori theory leading the research. This process allowed themes and concepts to emerge that could have been missed by using an existing research framework. As Wilson and Hollinshead (2011) argue, “we [as researchers] need to make space and give support for voices to come alive (both participant and researcher)” (p. 5). The grounded theory approach of my research provided such spaces and support for participants by allowing them to reflect on climate change and tourism in their own voices. The voices of the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum participants are presented in Chapter 3. Their voices represent existing discussions within the Thorn Tree forum that I selected based on their discussion focus on climate change. Chapter 4 to Chapter 6 present the voices of the Research Lounge participants. These participants were invited via an email mailing based on addresses from the Australian Lifestyle Survey (ALS) database. They were active travellers who used the Internet to search and exchange travel information. The voices chapters allow the reader not just to ‘hear’ the participant voices but also to ‘hear’ my interpretation of their voices. My voice, however, is a passive one within these chapters, as my participants’ reflections are the subjects of my research. Following Hertz (1996), finding my (the researcher’s) voice represents a continuous evaluation of how to present my self in the text while writing and presenting my participants’ voices. By giving space to participants’ voices, I am providing dialogic power and space for dialogic negotiation (Jamal &
Hollinshead, 2001) for participants to be heard as active participants within the co-construction of climate change and tourism meanings.

1.1.4 Typicalities

The constructed grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency demonstrates typicalities through its applicability in the different research environments of an online travel community and the purposefully built Research Lounge. Such typicalities were achieved as “experiences and perceptions [have been identified as] ‘typical’ for the phenomenon under study” (Holloway, 2008, p. 109). Within my research, travellers’ positionalities and perceptions with regards to climate change showed similarities across different research settings. Such similarities included, although not exclusively, participants’ position on human-induced climate change, which grouped them into Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. Further, participants across both studies reflected on aspects of climate change knowledge, information, distrust in social institutions, and roles of different actors, influencing their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. The identified typicalities allow interpretations and/or concepts to be transferred between different settings with similar contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Such contextualisations represent substantive cases. According to Charmaz (2006), transferability across substantive cases demonstrates the potency of grounded theory. Within my research, such cases were represented through the Thorn Tree forum and the Research Lounge setting. In providing insights in these settings as well as thick descriptions of participants’ voices, the reader is enabled to transfer typicalities or interpretations to other contexts.

1.1.5 Grounded theory demonstration

My research provides a specific model of grounded theory, a demonstration of how the concepts were constructed as well as the theorising process. Turner (1981) argues that there is an “absence of detailed information about exactly how qualitative data should be processed in order to develop grounded theory” (p. 226). Although applications of grounded theory have grown over time since Turner made his statement, so also have different approaches to grounded theory. As Jennings,
Kensbock, Junek, Radel, and Kachel (2010) state, “there are ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological perspectives and positions associated with the varying styles of grounded theory” (p. 21). By applying a postmodern constructivist approach, I was guided by Charmaz’s (2006) approach of constructing grounded theory. However, I also developed my own approach based on the research design I chose (qualitative online research), the type of empirical material (existing discussions and open-ended reflections) I collected via the online environments (Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum and Climate Change Research Lounge), as well as through the way I approached my grounded theory interpretation via the use of different software tools (NVivo, Excel, MindManager). Within this document I have provided insights into my empirical material collection and interpretation, and the theorising process. These insights also relate to the use of literature within grounded theory research. Although within a constructivist’s approach engagements with related literature occur concurrently with interpretations (Charmaz, 2006), I decided to follow Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) original advice to delay engaging with literature until after my interpretations. Accordingly, I delayed engaging with related literature until my discussion of the grounded theory. This enabled me to construct the theoretical concepts and constructs based on the emergent themes and my interpretations of them instead of forcing these based on literature and existing frameworks or theories. I have to note, however, that I engaged with some literature for the purpose of developing the research proposal as part of Griffith University’s requirements. Based on the emergent character of my research, that literature proved to be of limited relevance for my grounded theory. Furthermore, in writing this thesis, I also demonstrate one way of presenting grounded theory interpretations and the grounded theory itself. As such, my research provides one example of how to construct grounded theory.

1.1.6 Researcher reflexivity

As a qualitative researcher I am taking an emic or insider perspective through my situatedness in the research. My research resultantly demonstrates researcher reflexivity of the meaning- and sense-making processes as a qualitative researcher. As Hertz (1996) states, reflexivity “permeates every aspect of the research process challenging us to be more fully conscious of the ideology, culture and politics of
those we study and those whom we select as our audience” (p. 5). Besides thinking about participants and audience, the qualitative researcher also has to reflect on his or her social situatedness. Jennings, et al. (2010) argue that “as researchers, [we are] socially situated and contextualised human beings” (p. 28). Such situatedness is defined by my personal and professional background as a white, German, mature-aged female, with degrees in information systems and tourism, as well as determined through the way I engaged with (potential) participants throughout the research process. Such engagements were established via email and on my research website. My roles within the research setting of the Research Lounge website were that of a researcher, a facilitator, a moderator, and a participant. Being reflexive about my roles, beliefs and biases, allowed me to acknowledge and consider such researcher biases during the research process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This therefore adds trustworthiness to my research interpretations.

1.1.7 Critically reflexive research

Although reflexivity is generally associated with the researcher’s social situatedness, reflexivity also plays an important role within emergent qualitative research designs. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) argue that the qualitative researcher has to critically reflect on the research design process throughout the research and modify it if needed. In exploring new ways of qualitative inquiry, I was critical and reflective about my explorations, the tools I employed and their usefulness for the research purpose. My research represents critically reflexive research with regards to:

- Online research environments.
- The development of an online research platform.
- Research engagements that were facilitated by different online research tools.

As the use of qualitative online methods is still limited in tourism research, my research offers insights with regards to the development of an online community platform and use of different online methods like email, forum, blog, and webform. This critically reflexive account provides insights for other researchers who want to explore similar approaches. Such an account has been achieved through the writing of memos during the research process as well as the thick descriptions provided throughout this document. As such, the thesis provides a research audit trail (Lincoln
& Guba, 1985) that allows the reader, as an auditor, to follow my experiences and to simultaneously co- and re-construct my interpretations.

The application of an online community to facilitate qualitative research is a new area within online research. To my knowledge to date, a purposely build research website with community features has not been applied as a tool for qualitative inquiry within tourism or climate change research. The use of specific online tools like blogs or fora for the collection of qualitative responses, however, is growing (Chung & Buhalis, 2008). In building my own research platform and utilising different tools like blogs and fora for online engagements, I am contributing to such growing interests in online methods within tourism research. Furthermore, based on the emergent character of the research, I had to adapt, change tools or introduce further tools (Hine, 2005b). These modifications were needed, as I was not able to establish successful research engagements with participants who enabled me to collect sufficient empirical material. My reflections on the usefulness of specific tools within my research setting within the Research Lounge website provide other researchers with valuable insights into possible challenges they could face as well. The usefulness of such reflections was confirmed by feedback that I received after presenting the challenges I faced at the Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) conference in 2011: ‘It is refreshing to hear about things that didn’t work out’ (B. Hay, personal communication, 11 February 2011).

1.1.8 Application of grounded theory

The grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency provides insights for action on climate change by policy makers, industry, and researchers. It highlights the importance of travellers’ sense-making processes that require a recognition and inclusion into policy developments, marketing, and tourism research. In order to achieve sustainability goals, decision-makers within policy development have to consider individuals’ perceptions. A neglect of public views can result in misunderstandings or rejections of policies by the public, and bears the risk of communication failures (Lorenzoni & Pidgeon, 2006). In addition, my research contributes further evidence that travelling is an integral part of (Western) travellers’
lifestyles (Barr, Shaw, Coles, & Prillwitz, 2010; Becken, 2007). Demonstrating a holistic view of climate change perceptions, my research also provides insights into how such perceptions have to be considered within everyday lives and travel contexts. Travellers’ cultural and social embeddedness as well as their self-identity (Giddens, 1991) as citizens and travellers play a significant role in their co-construction and re-construction of climate change meanings. Adger, Barnett, Chapin III, and Ellemor (2011) argue that considerations of “what people care about” (p. 2), through a focus on place and identity, provide a greater force in engaging people in climate change actions. The grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency provides a framework for an understanding of what travellers care about with regards to climate change and travelling. For example, participants generally welcomed environmentally friendlier travel solutions, however, they perceived that such solutions are limited or access to them was constrained. In order to improve travellers’ climate change agency with regards to sustainable travel, the industry has to consider the theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy. These constructs emerged from this research, which provides insights into their mediating role with regards to travellers’ climate change agency. Considerations of these theoretical constructs and their associated theoretical concepts within policy and product development, as well as policy communication and product marketing, support defining and achieving goals of sustainable tourism developments.

Furthermore, my research also demonstrates the importance online environments have for travellers’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to travelling and climate change. The use of online spaces for engagements with other travellers is of particular interest, as conversations amongst travellers are a growing trend (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009). Such conversations include meaning- and sense-making processes with regards to climate change, and in addition, contain connectivity to travel decision-making. Sustainable tourism developments need to consider such online spaces as they provide insights into travellers’ demands with regards to sustainable travelling, which, if understood, support the successful development and marketing of sustainable tourism products.

By demonstrating the research significance through the above-discussed points, the research methodology, research settings, and participants have been introduced. To
reiterate, I am employing a postmodern constructivist paradigm and a grounded theory approach. For empirical material collection I explored different online environments. In a preliminary study I interpreted existing climate change discussions that I collected within the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum. The insights of the Lonely Planet study were used to develop the Climate Change Research Lounge website, a community website for online engagements with travellers. The exploration of different online tools was part of a critically reflexive research process, which involved changing and adding tools in order to collect sufficient empirical material. The online reflections that were collected via an open-ended webform enabled me to construct the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency. This theory provides a framework for understanding travellers’ climate change perceptions and influences on travel behaviours. The voices of the Lonely Planet and Research Lounge participants are at the heart of my research and I provide space for them in my thesis to be heard. In the following text I now outline the thesis structure and introduce some use of terms.

1.2 Thesis structure and use of terms

The thesis consists of three parts which organise the nine chapters into Research Outline & Approach; Participant Voices & Interpretations; and Grounded Theory & Discussion (Table 1.1).

*Chapter one – Research Outline and Significance* - provides an introduction into my research. It highlights the research significance and aim, and introduces the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency. By outlining the research significance, the chapter also introduces the research settings, research methodology, and participants.

*Chapter two – Paradigm, Methodology, and Methods* - discusses the paradigm (postmodern constructivist), methodology (grounded theory), and methods (Internet-mediated interviews) that I applied for my research. Within the chapter, I expand on the research settings of the Lonely Planet study and the Research Lounge study, as well as on the different online tools (email, forum, blog, webform) that I used. Furthermore, the different voices of my research are introduced. These voices are
represented by the Lonely Planet participants, the Research Lounge participants, and by my own voice as the researcher and author of this thesis. Within chapter two, I not only reflect on how I approached my research and the empirical material collection, but also on how I interpreted the empirical material and constructed my grounded theory.

Chapter three - Travellers’ Climate Change Discussions - presents the voices of the Lonely Planet study. The study was based on selected online discussions by members of the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree community.

Table 1.1

Thesis structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thesis part</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Chapter focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part I: Research Outline &amp; Approach</td>
<td>Chapter one: Research Outline &amp; Significance</td>
<td>Research aim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thesis structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter two: Paradigm, Methodology, and Methods</td>
<td>Postmodern constructivist paradigm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grounded theory approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Online research settings and tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethical considerations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Voices within the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part II: Participant Voices &amp; Interpretations</td>
<td>Chapter three: Travellers’ Climate Change Discussions</td>
<td>Lonely Plant study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Voices within the Thorn Tree discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter four: Meet the Research Lounge Believers</td>
<td>Research Lounge study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research Lounge Believer voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter five: Meet the Research Lounge Non-believers</td>
<td>Research Lounge study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research Lounge Non-believer voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter six: Meet the Research Lounge</td>
<td>Research Lounge study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research Lounge Undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part III: Grounded theory &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>Undecideds</td>
<td>voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter seven: Theorising &amp; Grounded Theory</td>
<td>Theorising Grounded theory: Mediating Climate Change Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter eight: Mediating Climate Change Agency</td>
<td>Discussion Grounded theory: Mediating Climate Change Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter nine: Final Reflections and Recommendations</td>
<td>Conclusion Reflections Recommendations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter four - Meet the Research Lounge Believers** - presents the voices of the Research Lounge Believers. These participants believed that humans contributed to climate change and the chapter presents their diverse perceptions with regards to climate change and travelling.

**Chapter five - Meet the Research Lounge Non-believers** - presents the voices of the Research Lounge participants who did not believe that human activities contribute to climate change.

**Chapter six - Meet the Research Lounge Undecideds** - presents the voices of the Research Lounge participants who were still undecided with regards to what or who causes climate change.

**Chapter seven - Theorising and Grounded Theory** - demonstrates the theorising process and introduces the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency.

**Chapter eight - Mediating Climate Change Agency** - discusses the identified theoretical constructs and associated theoretical concepts. This discussion demonstrated how the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency is grounded within participants’ narratives and situates the grounded theory within extant related literature.
Chapter nine - Final Reflections and Recommendations - summarises the thesis and presents implications and recommendations for policy makers, tourism industry, and research. It concludes with recommendations that were voiced by participants.

Throughout the thesis, I have used certain expressions that, for some readers, might have different ideological or disciplinary meanings. I therefore want to clarify my use of those expressions or terms within the thesis. In this research, I use the term ‘climate change’, which represents the terminology used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). ‘Climate change’ has been used interchangeable with ‘global warming’ within other research and the public domain. According to Whitmarsh (2009), the “choice of terminology affects how the public understands and evaluates the issue” (p. 416). In her research, Whitmarsh found that people associated ‘global warming’ more with human causes, and ‘climate change’ more with natural causes. Resultantly, such associations influence people’s perceptions and actions on climate change. I am therefore aware of possible influences my use of ‘climate change’ had had on participants, and the reader needs to keep this in mind while reading the thesis.

Furthermore, I am using the expression ‘travel behaviour’ throughout my thesis to differentiate participants’ overall travel behaviours from ‘environmental practices’ at home. Such environmental practices tended to focus on practices that referred to recycling, and reducing, but also involved some other lifestyle behaviours such as buying environmentally friendlier products within their everyday lives. By using the word ‘behaviour’ I am not addressing behaviourism, which is generally associated with a psychological perspective. I am acknowledging that a sociological perspective on behaviourism has been discussed and criticised within the wider literature. Accounts of these can be found, for example, in Homans’ (1988) discussion on the influences of psychology on social behaviourism. Homans defines behaviour as ‘social’ (Homans, 1988, p. 66) and states “a person’s behaviour is determined by his [sic] past experience in interaction with his [sic] present circumstances” (p. 73). My use of ‘travel behaviour’ refers to a socially constructed behaviour that is influenced by travellers’ perceptions, past experiences, and interactions with others. Such behaviour does not simply reflect how a traveller ‘behaved’ in terms of, for example, offsetting a flight or reducing travelling, but also represents his or her knowledge,
responsibility, and efficacy with regards to climate change actions. Within my research, based on participants’ narratives, I constructed five behaviour groups that represent participants’ knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and agency with regards to climate change and travelling. I called these groups the ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’ behaviour groups.

Having introduced my thesis aim and significance, as well as outlined the thesis structure and use of terms, the following chapter now discusses my paradigmatic stance, methodology and methods used.
CHAPTER TWO

PARADIGM, METHODOLOGY, AND METHODS

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I marked the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

(Frost, 1916)
As Robert Frost concluded in his poem, and true for my research journey, the road less travelled made all the difference. In my research, I wanted not only to gain a deeper understanding of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and how these influence their travel behaviours, but also to challenge myself by using the Internet as a setting and Web 2.0 functionalities as tools for my qualitative inquiry. My interest in exploring new ways of online inquiries is rooted in my previous professional work experiences. Before I decided to pursue further studies in the field of tourism, I was working in the Internet industry for around ten years. That work experience provided me with a certain level of knowledge in developing Internet projects. Despite my previous knowledge and experiences, however, the field of Internet technologies and possibilities is wide and new challenges lay ahead.

Over the last decade the Internet has become an increased research focus in tourism research and other disciplines, with researchers using different quantitative and qualitative online methods for their inquiry. To date, however, I still have not come across a research project developing and utilising a community website the way I did, and my experiences therefore could provide other researchers with valuable insights. In this chapter, I outline how I approached my research, the underlying paradigm, methodologies and methods, as well as introduce the different voices within my research, describe ethical considerations, ways of analysis, and presentation of findings.

2.1 Paradigmatic considerations

A paradigm is defined as a set of basic beliefs with distinct guiding principles (Guba, 1990) and represents the underlying biography (social situatedness) of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This set of beliefs can be discussed based on ontology (how we see the world and reality), epistemology (how we know what we know), methodology (quantitative or qualitative) and axiology (our values and ethics) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). These guiding principles then provide the foundation for how we approach our research within our research tradition (Kuhn, 2003).
The tradition of tourism research has been dominated by a positivistic/postpositivist paradigm, Western belief systems (Jennings, 2007, 2009) and quantitative methodologies (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004; Riley & Love, 2000). Such domination, however, does not imply that this is the best and only way of doing research, or that one way is superior to another. The choice of a research paradigm should be based on the most suitable with regard to the research purpose (Jennings, 2010). The still dominating positivistic/postpositivist approach is based on an ontology that acknowledges a universal truth and a reality able to make predictions, an epistemology with an objective stance to knowledge creation, a quantitative methodology, and a value free axiology (Jennings, 2010; Lincoln, et al., 2011). This places the researcher ‘outside’ the research phenomenon, and aims to make predictions based on a universal truth that is found through objective and value-free quantitative measurements. A positivistic/postpositivistic approach with a quantification of predefined perceptions on climate change only measures how such predefinitions are accepted or not. It does not provide insights into what travellers think, and therefore does not offer an understanding of what travellers’ climate change perceptions are, how they are constructed and what kind of travel behaviours they might influence. As research on travellers’ perceptions of climate change is still limited and focuses on specific behaviours (for example, mode of transportation) rather than a holistic perspective, a qualitative approach that places the researcher ‘inside’ the research context is more appropriate. Additionally, tourism research needs to cross or push disciplinary boundaries, utilising an interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary, or post-disciplinary research approach (Coles, Hall, & Duval, 2006 2006; Echtner & Jamal, 1997; Jafari, 1979; Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001; Stear, 1981). Such a disciplinary approach is needed, despite the fact that the case for tourism itself representing a discipline is still in discussion (Tribe, 2006). In order to gain an understanding of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and influences on travel behaviours within an online research environment, I engaged with different disciplines such as tourism, information and communication technologies, environmental sciences, climate change science, as well as marketing and psychology. Such a multidisciplinary approach is reflected in the literature I engaged with throughout the research process and within this document. Based on such a multidisciplinary approach and the need for a qualitative perspective on climate
change perceptions within the tourism domain, I chose a postmodern constructivist paradigm on which I reflect in the following text.

### 2.1.1 A postmodern constructivist paradigm

Constructivism, or the interpretive social science paradigm (Jennings, 2010), is placed under the label of postmodernism (Gergen, 2009) or is seen as being distinctive to a postmodern paradigm (Lincoln, et al., 2011). For me, postmodernism, first of all, is a movement of thoughts that is opposed to modernists’ thoughts. As such, postmodern thoughts influenced the way I approached a constructivist research project. However, "postmodernism is difficult to define" (Punch, 2005, p. 138), and after engaging with a certain amount of literature in postmodern thinking, I also would add that postmodernism is difficult to understand; a view that is shared by other authors of postmodern texts (for example, Ritzer, 1997; Webster, 2006). The difficulty lies in the postmodern approach itself. Postmodernism breaks with traditional norms and belief systems, and furthermore, tends to reject and deconstruct any form of grand theory, which changes how we see reality and knowledge (Punch, 2005; Webster, 2006). In postmodernism everything is possible, reality/truth are only illusions. In saying this, one could argue that postmodernism also rejects any definition on postmodernism, which would explain why postmodern writers are not unified (Jennings, 2007; Malpas, 2001). The research literature acknowledges the presence and legitimacy of a postmodern paradigm and refers to a postmodern moment, turn, perspective or representation within more established paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln, et al., 2011; Patton, 2002; Punch, 2005), or places a postmodern paradigm as equal to the latter (Jennings, 2005a, 2010). Even though constructivism may be placed under the label of postmodernism (see Gergen, 2009), not every researcher utilising a constructivist approach would label him- or herself as a postmodernist. Postmodern constructivism in itself does not ‘explain’ what postmodernism stands for or how postmodern thoughts influence a constructivist approach. I see postmodernism as a ‘state of mind’ (Lyotard & Massumi, 1987), a movement towards a post-industrial phase (Baudrillard, 1983). As Ritzer (1997) summarises, “the idea of postmodern encompasses a new historical epoch, new cultural products, and a new type of theorizing about the social world” (p.6). Although for some, postmodernism might
be a new epoch, for others like Beck (1992) and Giddens (1984) it is a continuation from modernity, leading to a reflexive modernity.

Constructivists believe that “knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by mind” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 125). Constructivism is also known as social constructivism, and often synonymously used as social constructionism or constructionism. Although these terms or constructs have evolved based on similar philosophical thoughts, differences seem to have blurred over time. The main difference is based on the aspect that “constructivists tend to place meaning within the mind of the individual, while social constructionists locate the origin of meaning in relationships” (Gergen, 2009, p. 26). For my research, the focus is on the individual, but I do also acknowledge, that our social environments play an important role in how we construct and shape our individual minds, and therefore I am moving within both traditions. Furthermore, constructivism or constructionism themselves are seen as social constructions (Gergen, 2009), and like other postmodern paradigms their meaning is constantly deconstructed and reconstructed. In tourism research, the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of tourism spaces and experiences by its actors is recognised; however, ‘a more person-focussed’ approach, on the individual, is still limited (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Focussing on travellers’ perceptions of climate change, therefore, will further an understanding of how individuals construct meaning.

Postmodern philosophies and thoughts influenced the way I approached my research. From a postmodern perspective, I am critical of modernity’s achievements that led to environmental destructions and increased risks of climate change. I am also sceptical that modernist approaches are able to solve such problems. Furthermore, I am sceptical of knowledge productions led by scientific institutions with the aim of finding a universal truth. I believe knowledge is constantly co-constructed and reconstructed, and embedded in social, cultural, spatial, and temporal contexts. I am reflexive of my positionality as a researcher, consumer, and traveller, representing multiple subjectivities (Wearing & Wearing, 2001) that contribute to knowledge productions, and participate in consumptions within everyday life and during travels. That being said, a postmodern constructivist approach was the most appropriate for my research.
A postmodern constructivist approach is based on a relativist ontology that rejects a universal truth, acknowledges a world that is constructed of multiple realities, of which none is superior (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Jennings, 2010; Lincoln, et al., 2011). Knowledge is co-constructed within social and cultural contexts, representing multiple realities, multiple truths, which co-exist. Perceptions and realities of climate change, therefore, are multiple, and influenced by people’s social and cultural situatedness. Epistemologically, the postmodern constructivist researcher is positioned within the research context, is self-reflexive, and is sceptical of grand theories as knowledge is constantly co-constructed and re-constructed as well as contextualised (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Jennings, 2009; Lincoln, et al., 2011). As a postmodern constructivist, I am part of the research process and co-create the findings and representations of the researched area; I am propositional, transactional, and instrumental (Jennings, 2010). This form of engagement with the research problem, the setting and participants requires being reflexive. This reflexivity permeated every aspect of my research and made me aware of my own positions and interests (Hertz, 1997). From a postmodern constructivist standpoint, I also wanted to include my participants in the process of defining or redefining the research problem and wanted them to play an active role in how to approach it (Lincoln, et al., 2011). As a research setting, therefore, I developed an online community website that would enable such co-creation processes. A postmodern constructivist, furthermore, has a value-laden axiology, is reflective of positionality, and is constantly involved in deconstruction processes (Jennings, 2010; Lincoln, et al., 2011). Values and ethics are an important part of interpretive inquiries, and influence the choice of the research problem, the paradigmatic stance we take and how we want to approach the research problem (Lincoln, et al., 2011). As a researcher, and a research instrument (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), I also have to be critical of the different selves I am bringing into my research (Hertz, 1997; Reinharz, 1997). Having elaborated on my paradigmatic stance, I now want to describe the postmodern influences on my research that have been shaped through my axiological position, as well as engagements with postmodern philosophies and thinking.
2.1.2 Postmodern influences within this research context

How does postmodern thinking relate to my research area? In exploring travellers’ perceptions of climate change with regards to their travel behaviours within an online research environment, I am looking at three major themes: environmental concerns and climate change, the role of the Internet and knowledge constructions, and travel consumptions and experiences. From a postmodernism perspective, as outlined below and summarised in Table 2.1, these themes demand solutions that acknowledge nature’s equality to humans, places information and knowledge in the context of a hyper-reality that emphasises the irrelevance of ‘truth’, and highlights travellers’ consciousness and reproductions of experiences.

Table 2.1
Postmodern links to the three main research themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Postmodern links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Environmental concerns and climate change   | * Modernity places science and technology over nature (Barry, 2007)  
* The monolith of materialistic and naturalistic science is questioned (Clegg & Slife, 2009)  
* The exploitation of nature resulted in an ecological crisis (Barry, 2007)  
* A postmodern stance can provide a solution (Barry, 2007; Gare, 1995)  
* Focus has to be placed on relationships between individuals and nature, and between tourists and communities (Wearing, McDonald, & Ponting, 2005) |
| Role of the Internet and knowledge construction | * Everyone to add information and construct knowledge  
* Information and knowledge is a ‘capital’ of the current time (Lyo{}ard, 1984)  
* Knowledge no longer inherits a possession of truth (Benton & Craib, 2001; Lyotard, 1984)  
* Hyper-reality: a society of reproduction of copies and images (Baudrillard, 1998; Benton & Craib, 2001; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003) |
| Travel consumptions and experiences         | * Consciousness about being a tourist, about modified realities, and the impacts of tourism (Urry, 2002)  
* Experience is just a reproduction of images and signs (Baudrillard, 1998; Urry, 2002)  
* Hyper-tourism experience, consumption of media images (Jansson, 2002)  
* Freedom of leisure choice and of wasting time (Baudrillard, 1998) |
Postmodernists claim that modernity places science and technology over nature, the latter only a resource for human's exploitation (Barry, 2007). Such a view of the natural environment has resulted in an ecological crisis, to which solutions can be developed using a postmodern stance to the environment and humans’ relation to it (Barry, 2007; Gare, 1995). From a tourism perspective, not just the relationship between individuals and nature but also between tourists and communities have to be placed in the focus of research (Wearing, et al., 2005). I see humans as an equal and not as a superior part of the environment, and that exploitations of the environment only end in exploitations of our selves. In recognising our influences and impacts on the environment we have to nurture our responsibility for the creation of a sustainable future. Such nurturing is linked to people’s knowledge and perceptions about the environment and associated issues, which have to be placed within the research context.

The Internet in particular has enabled a growth of information and knowledge, with possibilities for everyone to add information and to construct knowledge. Postmodernists like Lyotard (1984) describe the possession of information and knowledge as the ‘capital’ of the current time. However, we no longer can claim this ‘capital’ inheres a possession of truth, based simply on the amount of knowledge (Benton & Craib, 2001; Lyotard, 1984). We are living in a society of reproduction of copies and images, where truth and reality is left behind (Benton & Craib, 2001; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003), which is what Baudrillard (1983) defines as ‘hyper-reality’. Although we may not be able to find truth on the Internet, we have become part of knowledge construction processes by providing, constructing, reconstructing, copying, reproducing, and representing information and images in an online environment. This includes people’s narratives and discussions of climate change as well as its connectivity to travel behaviours.

The traveller in a postmodern world is conscious about being a traveller or tourist, about modified realities, and the impacts of tourism (Urry, 2002). Baudrillard’s earlier mentioned notion of hyper-reality also relates to the tourism experience, which is just a reproduction of images and signs; a view also shared by Urry (2002). Tourism experiences have become hyper-tourism, a consumption of media images
In postmodernism, holiday and leisure are also associated with freedom; the freedom of choice, and the freedom of wasting time (Baudrillard, 1998). If we are recognising tourism as a staged, reproduced, and impacting concept, we should reflect on this and direct our freedom of choice towards change.

The focus of my research was on travellers’ perceptions of climate change and influences on travel behaviours. Discussion and information seeking processes within online environments play important roles for the construction of our understandings of climate change. Within such discussions we construct our understandings of what climate change is, the issues associated with it, and the way in which climate change might impact on our ways of life or lifestyles. As Gergen (2009) puts it, “in a broader sense, we may say that as we communicate with each other we construct the world in which we live” (p. 4). Climate change, therefore, is socially constructed (Gergen, 2009) within scientific, economical and political dialogues, media reports, discussions within the general population, and discussions between these different groups.

In the above text, I have provided the paradigmatic context of my research, described my research interest and axiological influences, and emphasised postmodern thinking as a main influence on choices I made with regard to my research aim. In the following sections I describe methodological aspects of my research and methods that I chose.

2.2 Qualitative methodology

Based on a postmodern constructivist paradigm, I applied a qualitative methodology. When looking at perceptions and meanings, and trying to gain a deeper understanding of these, a qualitative methodology is appropriate (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2011). As a value-laden qualitative researcher, I was situated within the research context, engaging with (potential) participants in different online environments. As qualitative studies tend to be holistic and try to describe situations in greater detail, this enabled me to capture the complexity and to comprehend the context of the studied phenomenon (Punch, 2005) of climate change perceptions. Although, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, 2011), qualitative researchers...
think qualitative methodologies may capture a better picture of the participant’s view, I am aware that they may just tell a different story. As a qualitative researcher I am a ‘bricoleur’, someone who constructs or creates something new based on different parts or images (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2011). These different parts and images constitute different types of online engagements via a travel community website as well as a purposely built research website. These online engagements were exploratory and evolved over time. I therefore had to define and redefine the methods I intended to use as well as the way in which I used them throughout the research process (Hine, 2005b). Adopting new tools or techniques as needed is salient within qualitative online research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2011; Markham, 2005). It is acknowledged that the Internet influences how travellers communicate and interact (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009), which resultantly also influences how tourism researchers conduct research. Online environments offer still relatively new research contexts, for which traditional research methodologies and methods have been adapted, and new forms are continuously being created. While researchers may feel anxious regarding the usefulness of traditional methods for technologically mediated interactions, the development and maintenance of such interaction-based relationships online is crucial (Hine, 2005b). Qualitative inquiry is based on communication and with the introduction of new information and communication technologies for mediated communication, we then have to question how this influences our methodological assumptions (Hine, 2005a; Markham, 2005). In placing my research in the online context, I had to decide how and to what extent to adapt my research strategy to an online environment. My research strategy was guided by a grounded theory approach, which enabled me to analyse participants’ perceptions based on a constant comparative analysis. From a methodological perspective, the use of grounded theory did not need to be ‘adapted’ for the online environment, however, I had to define and redefine methods for empirical material collection for my research.

2.2.1 Grounded theory

For my research project, I chose to apply a grounded theory approach for empirical material collection and interpretation. Following Jennings (2010), I used ‘empirical material collection’ and ‘interpretation’ instead of ‘data’ and ‘analysis’ to emphasise
the qualitative perspective I took. Grounded theory, since its development, or discovery, in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss (1967), has evolved from a positivistic epistemology to a constructivist and lately, postmodernist epistemology. Such epistemological considerations have implications for the research design, empirical material collection and interpretation. A positivist grounded theorist assumes that the theory is already embedded in the data and can be discovered with an objective, value-free stance to the research context and its data (Charmaz, 2003, 2006; Corbin & Holt, 2005). I followed Charmaz (2005, 2006) and Clarke (2005), who define grounded theories as co-constructions of realities from past or present experiences or interactions. In following a postmodern turn of grounded theory, I was aware of my positionality and contributions to theory construction, which required a reflexive empirical material collection, interpretation, and representation (Clarke, 2005). As my research intended to gain a deeper understanding of travellers’ climate change perceptions, the application of grounded theory offered a set of principles and practices that allowed me to gain such deep understandings of a complex phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It also enabled me to develop a theory that is grounded in participants’ narratives and reflections. As a qualitative researcher, I took an emic, or experience-near (Geertz, 1983), view of the studied phenomenon by engaging with travellers in online environments. Given that for this study context still only limited research exists, the generation of a substantive rather than formal theory was to be expected (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Such a substantive theory represents “a set of well-developed categories (themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains a phenomenon” (Hage, 1972 cited in Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 55).

2.2.2 Empirical material collection

Grounded theory development, regardless of the epistemological position, is based on constant comparative interpretations that begin with the empirical material collection and end with theory development (Charmaz, 2006). Empirical material was represented by substantive cases, comprising meaningful reflections of travellers’ perceptions of climate change that were collected via online discussions and reflections. Theoretical or purposeful sampling as a sampling strategy guided my
research process. Theoretical sampling enabled me to generate categories from empirical material until I reached theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006). As theoretical sampling focuses on the selection of cases or people that support the development of the envisaged research aim (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), I had to decide where and how I would find those cases. In a preliminary study, I decided to explore travellers’ online discussions with an online travel community. I chose the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum for this purpose as it represents a well-established travel community. I expand further on the characteristics of the Lonely Planet study in Section 2.3.1.1 of this chapter. The preliminary study allowed an initial theoretical sampling based on forum members’ online discussions about climate change. This enabled me to identify first codes and categories. Furthermore, concepts that emerged during iterations of empirical material collection and interpretation informed further theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). In the further theoretical sampling, I selected potential participants from a wide range of online travel communities and travel blogs for participation in the main study. For the main study I developed a purposely build research community website, the Climate Change Research Lounge. The Research Lounge study aimed to engage travellers in further in-depth online engagements on the research website. As the theoretical sampling approach did not generate sufficient active participants, I decided to employ a more general purposeful sampling strategy and bought a set of addresses based on the Australian Lifestyle Survey (ALS) database. Based on the previous theoretical sampling approach, the selection criteria for these addresses included travel activities and Internet uses. I present the characteristics of the Research Lounge participants in my research in Section 2.3.1.2. Although I employed a more general purposeful sampling approach, the emerging themes and concepts matched the categories that were developed in the preliminary study. Resultantly, selecting the cases for interpretations can be compared to further theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling was also embedded in the memo writing process, as my reflections on the empirical material collection and interpretation supported identifying codes and categories. This directed the further theoretical sampling of cases or participants’ online reflections and improved the research process (see Table 2.2) (Charmaz, 2006).
Table 2.2

*Improvements through theoretical sampling processes*

- Specifying the relevant properties of your categories
- Increasing the precision of your categories
- Providing the substance to move your material from description to analysis
- Making your analysis more abstract and generalisable
- Grounding your conjectures in data
- Explicating the analytic links between or among categories
- Increasing the parsimony of your theoretical statements

*Note. Adapted from Charmaz (2006)*

As summarised by Jennings and Junek (2007) and true also for my research, grounded theory in tourism research can be recommended for studies of behaviour, understanding of experiences, development of theory within social processes and furthering holistic understandings, and is also valuable when no previous theory exists. From a postmodern constructivist viewpoint, I did not intend to find a single basic process to base my theory on, but aimed instead to describe, interpret and understand the complexity of the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005). According to Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist perspective, it is important to contextualise grounded theory to avoid (over)simplification by forcing empirical material into generalisations. Findings of my study are grounded within the study context represented by participants’ online discussions and reflections, and further studies in different settings may reveal different findings. In applying grounded theory, I was aiming to gain a deeper understanding based on thick descriptions from a relatively small sample, which will further an in-depth understanding of the studied phenomenon.

2.2.3 **Empirical material interpretation**

In my research, I adopted grounded theory as a methodological approach as well as a method of empirical material interpretation. In this section, I describe constant comparison as a method of grounded theory interpretation. Empirical material collection and interpretation in grounded theory is conducted simultaneously and builds the basis for a constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In constant comparison, I made comparisons between empirical
material, codes and categories at all stages of the interpretation process (Charmaz, 2006). The empirical material interpretation begins with open coding by looking for pattern and concepts, which emerged from the empirical material and assisted the construction of categories (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After conducting further empirical material collection and interpretation, axial coding as a second step was employed to interconnect the open coded categories. Through axial coding, categories have been sorted, synthesized and organized, and served to identify major categories (Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005; Creswell, 2003). With the next step of selective or theoretical coding, relationships between categories were specified and related to major categories. These categories helped to identify a story or line within the categories and directed towards the development of theory (Charmaz, 2006; Sarantakos, 2005).

The coding process was an iterative process. Categories and codes were tested against new and earlier empirical material in order to reinterpret empirical material and reconstruct categories (Jennings & Junek, 2007). The emergence of information, pattern and categories during empirical material interpretation continued until no new information led to new categories, which is defined as theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Development of theory not only includes the interpretation of empirical material, but also the review of relevant literature in order to position the findings and theory within existing research and knowledge (Charmaz, 2006). The empirical material interpretation concluded with the development of theory and writing of the thesis. I reflect further on how I interpreted my empirical material in Section 2.6. In the following section I reflect on the procedures I applied to ensure rigour.

2.2.4 Procedures to ensure rigour

In discussing rigour, I am mindful of the fact that the chosen paradigm and methodology have an important influence on how to ensure rigour. The still dominant terms of reliability, validity, and generalisability are based on the positivistic/postpositivistic paradigm and imply an underlying universal truth (Kvale, 1996). In applying a postmodern constructivist research approach, I acknowledged multiple constructed realities and a universal truth concept therefore is not
appropriate. For my qualitative research, the concept of trustworthiness was used and comprehended through a reflexive research process and crystallisation (Lincoln, et al., 2011; Patton, 2002). Reflexivity permeates the whole research process (Hertz, 1997), and I discuss my reflexivity in Section 2.5.3. The concept of crystallisation not only acknowledges the different multiple constructed realities, but also allows observation of the researched phenomenon from different angles in order to discover the underlying meanings (Lincoln, et al., 2011; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). I crystallised my research by using different methods of empirical material collection, my reflexive writings, and most importantly through the representation of my participants’ voices. Their voices were interwoven with my interpretations and represented as a narrative story.

Fontana and Frey (2000) state that the researcher has to be reflexive during empirical material collection and interpretation, as well as while reporting on the findings. As researcher, I had influence on what empirical material I selected and reported on (Fontana & Frey, 2000). My memos, therefore, also included explanations about decisions I made during the research process (e.g. selection of participants, empirical material, codes) and the comparisons I made between empirical material, codes, and categories. I also gave narratives and interpretations to other researchers, within ethical clearance requirements, to ensure I had captured the underlying meaning of the empirical material. These processes of reflexivity, documentation and reviewing ensured the trustworthiness of my research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

All research has also to be evaluated according to guidelines and procedures related to the methods used (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Evaluation criteria provide guidelines for the researcher and should be modified to fit the research situation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), these criteria can also be helpful for those who have to evaluate or judge the research. A question form is a common structure used by qualitative researchers (Charmaz, 1999, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To ensure rigour of my research, I adopted Charmaz’s (Charmaz, 1999, 2006) evaluation criteria for grounded theory: credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness (see Table 2.3). According to Charmaz (2006), the higher the resonance and usefulness of the research, the greater
will be the value of my contribution. Resonance and usefulness themselves are influenced by a strong combination of originality and credibility. In the evaluation process, during and after theory development, I questioned my research findings based on these evaluation criteria. This reflexivity along with memo writing and crystallisation served to ensure rigour was grounded in my study.

Table 2.3

*Grounded theory evaluation criteria*

**Credibility**
- Does my empirical material collection cover a wide range of empirical material?
- Has my research achieved intimate familiarity with the studied topic?
- Have I made systematic comparison between the collected empirical material and between categories?

**Originality**
- Are my categories fresh and do they offer new insights?
- Does my interpretation provide a new conceptual rendering of the empirical material?
- What is the social and theoretical significance of my work?

**Resonance**
- Do my categories portray the fullness of the studied phenomenon?
- Does my grounded theory make sense to my participants (member checking)? And does my interpretation offer them deeper insights about their lives and worlds?

**Usefulness**
- Does my interpretation offer insights that tourist operators can use in their every-day world?
- Can my interpretation spark further research in other substantive areas?
- How does my work contribute to knowledge?

*Note. Adapted from Charmaz (2006)*

Having described the methodological aspects of my research, I now expand on the methods that I employed.

**2.3 Methods**

For my research, the Internet was both a focus in exploring travellers’ perceptions of climate change and a set of research tools for qualitative inquiry by developing my own community website. The focus on travellers’ online discussions represents the
setting of my research, in particular my empirical material collection within the
Internet environment. Although the exploratory aim of my research was to develop
and use my own community website to engage with my participants, my initial
interest in this research developed when I engaged myself in online discussions on
existing community websites. The setting for my research consisted of different
types of online environments. Firstly, I focussed on existing discussions within
different travel community sites and chose the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum as
one setting for my empirical material collection. Secondly, I developed my own
community website, the Climate Change Research Lounge, to engage with
(potential) participants and to be able to direct questions regarding climate change
and travelling. And lastly, I engaged with an endless number of other types of
websites like blogs, social networks, as well as media and organisation websites that
contained online discussion or reflections on climate change issues with regards to
travelling or other lifestyle decisions. These engagements helped me to sensitise
myself with the studied phenomenon, to identify empirical material, and to promote
my own website to potential participants. Based on my theoretical sampling
approach, I, as the researcher, decided which discussions, responses, comments, and
other information to include within my grounded theory approach, and the diversity
of sources for empirical material collection enabled me to gain the aspired deeper
understanding of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and influences on travel
behaviours, and to ground my findings.

Within this method section, I begin with a description of the different settings I
engaged with in order to collect my empirical material. Internet developments like
email, online communities, weblogs and social networking sites provide not just a
base for users to share information and experiences but also offer researchers new
technologies to collect sought after empirical materials. According to Jones (1999),
Internet-related issues have to be studied by way of applying new theories and
methods in order to gain knowledge on social phenomena, as existing theories and
methods are not satisfactory. Although online tools like email, instant messenger,
forum, blog, or webform provide new methods for qualitative online inquiry, the
methodological foundations for their use are based within the tradition of
interviewing. In the second part of this method section, I present the online tools I
used for such Internet-mediated interviewing, and I describe how they supported my
empirical material collection. And finally, in the last part of this method section, I focus on how I used memos and notes to document my research process, and to engage with reflexive writing during empirical material collection and analysis. Such memos and notes are essential parts of a qualitative research tradition.

2.3.1 The setting: Travellers’ online discussions and reflections

The Internet over the last two decades has changed the way we search for information, buy products, and communicate with others (Buhalis & Law, 2008). On one hand the vast amount of information available today via the Internet influences how we engage with learning new things and creating new knowledge. On the other hand, this vastness makes it more difficult for us to construct knowledge, as information is not only vast but also diverse, and often opposing. Discussions on climate change permeate throughout the Internet on a wide range of different types of websites like communities, blogs and social networks, and are operated by different groups like governments, academia, media, NGOs, climate change activists (pro and con), and individuals, to name just a few. New or modified knowledge about climate change may influence people's perceptions, beliefs, knowledge, and motivations in their daily lives as well with regard to their travel experiences. Online travel communities promote a direct exchange of information and experiences between travellers, and were therefore most relevant for my research context.

In the tourism context, information retrieval and exchange behaviour are constantly influenced by new technological possibilities and communication needs. Within the tourism research literature, Internet research has a strong focus on the Internet as an information channel. Literature on information channels, however, provides only limited insights into how travel consumers use the Internet for the construction of meaning with other consumers. Also, in studies on information channels within the tourism context, the Internet is generally employed as a uniform medium. Furthermore, within the context of the different types of website resources such as product or destination marketing websites, online travel agencies or trip planning sites (Jun, Vogt, & MacKay, 2007), online travel communities and blogs are still only limitedly acknowledged. Overall, research has tended to concentrate on the supply-side of products and destination websites (Beldona, Morrison, & O'Leary,
2005) rather than on consumer-to-consumer interactions within online communities (Kim, 2006).

A community within the online environment is an Internet-mediated network of people, representing social capital in cyberspace (Jeong, 2005). With improved technological applications, social networks represent one major trend in Internet developments (Kim, 2006; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010), and demonstrate the growing importance of communities for consumer-to-consumer communication. In community networks, people seek others with the same or similar interests. The main reasons for participation in online communities are friendship, offering information and seeking advice, self-presentation and expression of thoughts (Jeong, 2005; Kim, 2006; Noor, Hashim, Haron, & Ariffin, 2005 & Ariffin, 2005; Ridings & Gefen, 2004). Self-presentations, upload of travel experiences and personal travel photos fulfil members' psychological motives, whereas the search for travel information satisfies functional motives, and social motives include relationships and interactivity with other members, which can move from the online to the offline world (Jeong, 2005). A lack of understanding of how travellers interact and exchange their experiences continues to need further research.

With improved technological applications, the number and sizes of online travel communities has increased over the last decade. The main uses of travel communities are represented by categories such as information sharing, as in the case of virtualtourist.com; looking for travel partners, for example travelersmeet.com; and offering resources like a place to stay to travellers, for instance, couchsurfing.com (Jeong, 2005). Sharing of travel experiences and looking for travel information and advice are the main aims of travel community members and visitors (Jeong, 2005; Noor, et al., 2005). Looking at the growing importance of online interactions between travellers is one reason why I placed my research on climate change discussions in an online environment. Besides a focus on interactions that fulfil information search and exchanges for travel purposes, research to date has only addressed in a limited way how discussions about climate change are connected to travel decision processes.
In order to understand how travellers discuss climate change issues, I firstly explored online discussions within the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum. This exploration developed into a preliminary study that informed my further research and the development of my research website, the Climate Change Research Lounge. I expand on both studies, Lonely Planet and Research Lounge, in the following sections.

2.3.1.1 Existing discussions: The Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum

As mentioned in the preceding text, existing online discussions within the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum represent an important part of my empirical material collection. The Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum provides an open access platform for travel-related discussions between travellers. The Thorn Tree forum founded in 1996 is one of the oldest online travel communities. Besides the travel community, the Lonely Planet website offers travel information based on its travel guides, which are the main product of the company that started in the early 1970s. According to Lonely Planet (2008), the website “lonelyplanet.com receives over a million unique visitors per week, and 5,000 messages are posted a day on […] the Thorn Tree”. This demonstrates the growing importance of communities for consumer-to-consumer communication. The publishing company of the Lonely Planet Travel Guides has always encouraged readers to contribute to the development and updates of their travel destination guides. Through incorporating travellers’ personal travel experiences as well as feedback on provided travel information, the Lonely Planet Travel Guides could be perceived as co-constructions of past and future travel experiences. In this tradition, the Thorn Tree forum developed as an online community, where travellers seek information, share experiences, and discuss travel-related issues. Online information sharing between travellers is generally perceived to be of higher quality than travel information via guidebooks (Schwabe & Prestipino, 2005). Through the provision of online discussion spaces, the Lonely Planet website is viewed as a trustworthy provider of travel information. This context made the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum a valuable source for online discussions for my research.
According to Lonely Planet, the forum has over 100,000 active discussions at any time and over half a million users (Maxwell, 2008). Discussions within the forum are grouped, ranging from region focussed travel questions, travel-related issues, to other community relevant discussions (Figure 2.1). The language used in the forum is English. All parts of the discussions are accessible for the wider Internet community, and registration is only needed if a traveller wants to contribute to the discussions, either in posting a question or topic, or to provide an answer or feedback. To create a user account, only basic information is needed, and in most cases only a creative user name or pseudonym is visible to other participants. This anonymity provides a form of security for participants; however, it does add some challenges from a research perspective, as participants in climate change discussions cannot be grouped into certain demographics. I expand further on participant relevant aspects in Section 2.5.1. Although, specific information about the community members might have been desired, they were not necessary for the purpose of my research. The aim of the Lonely Planet study was to explore how travellers discuss climate change issues and if these discussions influence their decision-making. These explorations then

Figure 2.1. Screenshot Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum overview
influenced my further research on my research website, where I was able to collect demographic information about my participants.

For my research I selected discussion threads based on a general search within the Thorn Tree forum. Search keywords were ‘climate change’ and ‘global warming’, and hundreds of threads were collected. From this collection of discussions, I selected 31 threads for empirical material interpretation as the thread subject indicated a strong focus or relation to climate change debates. Based on this sampling process and the time when the threads were selected, the discussions occurred between January 2006 and September 2008. These selected discussion threads are listed in Table 2.4, which also shows that the duration of a discussion ranged from one to 27 days with one to 212 replies or posts for a discussion thread.

Overall, the Thorn Tree forum discussions on climate change were not only informative for my research but also informed the development of my own community website as well as theoretical sampling. As community members were using certain functionalities (for example, to post a reply), I used such well-established functions to inform the usability and design of my own community website. Such functionalities were not unique to the Thorn Tree forum, and other community websites I engaged with certainly also informed the development of my website. Moving within such community websites and reading the climate change discussions also helped me to develop ‘sensitivity’ for the studied phenomenon. For Corbin and Strauss (2008), this sensitivity means “having insight, being tuned in to, being able to pick up on relevant issues, events, and happenings in data” (p. 32) and as the researcher, it enabled me to understand the different views and perceptions of my participants, and to immerse myself in the empirical material.
### Table 2.4

**Overview of selected Thorn Tree discussion threads**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thread heading</th>
<th>First post</th>
<th>Last reply</th>
<th>Average duration in days</th>
<th>Number of replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offseting Air Travel- thoughts/experiences?</td>
<td>23/1/06 7:49</td>
<td>13/2/06 13:53</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oops, we helped ruin the planet...</td>
<td>4/3/06 5:26</td>
<td>7/4/06 16:50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Inconvenient Topic</td>
<td>3/10/06 10:19</td>
<td>26/2/07 7:56</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Warming - ??? Greenpeace etc??</td>
<td>20/10/06 22:12</td>
<td>16/11/06 5:15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon emissions - ferries vs planes?</td>
<td>26/12/06 5:15</td>
<td>9/1/07 4:31</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Warming</td>
<td>15/1/07 3:26</td>
<td>30/12/07 16:48</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARBON OFFSETTING</td>
<td>18/1/07 11:42</td>
<td>27/2/07 1:07</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Warming - public opinion may not be what you think</td>
<td>7/2/07 9:03</td>
<td>11/3/07 11:01</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>global warming</td>
<td>7/2/07 14:10</td>
<td>19/2/07 7:09</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baffled by science...</td>
<td>31/5/07 1:36</td>
<td>5/7/07 14:22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Inconvenient Truth</td>
<td>2/7/07 6:44</td>
<td>2/7/07 7:38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alarmist global warming claim melt under scientific scrutiny</td>
<td>2/7/07 11:11</td>
<td>9/7/07 15:46</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Global Warming Swindle</td>
<td>12/7/07 16:15</td>
<td>13/7/07 6:48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well, that's global warming solved!</td>
<td>19/7/07 0:34</td>
<td>19/7/07 10:11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global warming: This will get the bees buzzing...</td>
<td>13/8/07 12:50</td>
<td>19/8/07 14:10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Sector Must Take Action Against Climate Change</td>
<td>8/10/07 3:35</td>
<td>18/10/07 2:36</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change.</td>
<td>19/10/07 3:50</td>
<td>19/10/07 4:34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon catastrophe</td>
<td>19/10/07 15:21</td>
<td>19/10/07 15:30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000 march for climate change action</td>
<td>10/11/07 23:44</td>
<td>11/11/07 15:19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Global Warming total bunk?</td>
<td>16/11/07 10:37</td>
<td>17/11/07 1:13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>global warming?</td>
<td>19/11/07 1:32</td>
<td>19/11/07 8:23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Climate Change - To act or not?</td>
<td>23/11/07 15:58</td>
<td>23/11/07 16:08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So much for &quot;Global Warming&quot;</td>
<td>30/11/07 8:08</td>
<td>30/11/07 10:45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forget global warming</td>
<td>1/12/07 8:31</td>
<td>4/12/07 13:31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More on climate change and travel guilt</td>
<td>13/2/08 21:22</td>
<td>27/2/08 7:43</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global warming good for North America.</td>
<td>19/5/08 14:02</td>
<td>20/5/08 18:18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change</td>
<td>7/6/08 20:55</td>
<td>9/6/08 17:23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Travel = Global Warming?</td>
<td>30/7/08 21:04</td>
<td>2/8/08 8:22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites with global warming balance.</td>
<td>22/8/08 23:43</td>
<td>9/9/08 20:43</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes to global warming!</td>
<td>3/9/08 9:37</td>
<td>4/9/08 8:40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Real Cause of Global Warming</td>
<td>18/9/08 22:31</td>
<td>19/9/08 8:50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 6.1 | 960 |

### 2.3.1.2 Online reflections: Climate Change Research Lounge

The Lonely Planet study provided valuable insights into travellers’ discussions of climate change within an online travel community. These insights, however, also showed some limitations with regards to travel decision-making, as these were...
difficult to extract and to relate to certain types of travellers. In order to gain further insights, especially with regards to influences on travel behaviours, I developed my own research website, the Climate Change Research Lounge. The aim of the Research Lounge website was to engage participants in online discussion and to be able to guide these discussions through specific questions around climate change and travelling. The rationale behind developing my own website was threefold. Firstly, access to travel community members was controlled by community managers. Secondly, on my own platform I was able to engage with participants from different existing communities or other related websites where website visitors engaged in discussions. And lastly, I was able to provide additional content about the research project, and could introduce changes in functionalities as necessary.

The concept of the Research Lounge was based on an online community approach because such communities were already frequently used by travellers as the Lonely Planet study showed. I developed the research website by using the open-source system Drupal. According to the Open Source Initiative (OSI, n.d.) open source is “a development method for software that harnesses the power of distributed peer review and transparency of process. The promise of open source is better quality, higher reliability, more flexibility, lower cost, and an end to predatory vendor lock-in”. Open-source in this context does not just refer to the freely available source, but represents a system that is co-developed by a community of web developers based on a rigorous peer-review process. I thought this co-constructive, peer-reviewed process would fit my website requirements but also my research approach and my budget. Reflecting on the development process and different phases of changes would exceed the purpose of this section. Appendix 1 contains an autoethnographic account of this process presented at the Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) conference in 2011. Here, below, I reflect on the main aspects of the research website’s major challenges and changes.

The website contained a public and restricted area to ensure online group discussions could not be manipulated by non-participating Internet users (Figure 2.2). Within the public area, I placed information about the research project, including consent information and information about me as the researcher. I created a few pages with information related to climate change and tourism in order to evoke interest in the
research topic for potential participants. The restricted area contained the community functionalities I employed, a forum and blogging functions, which I used for Internet-mediated interviews. I expand on these tools in the next section of this chapter, including changes I introduced as the first concept of the website proved to be challenging. These challenges refer to recruitment of participants and sustaining discussions within the online forum. Choosing the right research design and methods generated some challenges (Lankshear & Leander, 2005), which, for my research, related to communication and interactions within an online research environment.

Figure 2.2 shows the homepage of the Research Lounge at the final stage, which also included the webform or online form that I employed to guide participants’ reflection through a set of open-ended questions. I promoted these questions on the homepage, via an email mailing, as well as on other websites like Facebook or Twitter. The open-ended questions were accessible in the public area under ‘Have your say’ in order to recruit a sufficient number of participants. If people had to create a user account first, this might have detracted potential participants.
Overall, I planned to interact with my participants purely on a textual basis via email and within the online environment of my research website. As online spaces often tend to be temporary, participants’ engagements in online discussions and the research can therefore be short-lived (Lankshear & Leander, 2005). This was indeed one major challenge for the recruitment process. Another consideration was anonymity; as participants in an online environment may not present their ‘real’ personality, thoughts and identity, authenticity of the collected empirical material, therefore, could challenge the research process (Lankshear & Leander, 2005). However, as an online researcher I trusted my participants; if they “define[d] situations as real, [then] they [were] real in their consequences” (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 527). Consequently, as a researcher, I had to establish a trusted relationship with my participants. Whereas a face-to-face interview may be influenced by visual sympathy or antipathy between interviewer and interviewee, the mutual self-disclosure and ongoing interaction in an online environment establishes trust, and is the key for a successful relationship (Kivits, 2004; Mann & Stewart, 2000). On my research website therefore I provided information about my research and myself. Furthermore, I had to consider ethical implications and consent processes, provide an open and welcoming environment, as well as consider feedback from participants during my research and on research outcomes (Sharf, 1999). I reflect on ethical considerations in Section 2.4.

While aiming to develop a holistic and comprehensive picture of travellers’ perception of climate change and influences on travel behaviours, I applied different methods of material collection, which provided different types of information (Patton, 2002). As previously stated, the empirical material collection via my research website was based on Internet-mediated interviews via email, online forum groups, blogs, as well as guided reflections via a webform. Furthermore, I created memos and notes to document my research experiences, for reflexive writing during the research process, as well as for reflections during empirical material interpretation. In the following sections I now expand on the tools I used.
2.3.2 The toolbox: Internet-mediated interviews and memos

Interviews have become part of our everyday lives (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Holstein & Gubrium, 2003), and "[o]ne cannot escape being interviewed" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 646). Interviews are represented in the media through fictional and non-fictional inquiries, in market or academic research, in business situations when applying for a new job or project, or when filling out insurance forms or visiting the doctor. We are living in an interview society (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002) based on an increasing number of interviews in our everyday lives. Such interviews are prevalent in face-to-face environments, but have also been adapted and incorporated into online environments, with new forms of ‘virtual interviews’ evolving concurrently with the further development of Internet technologies (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Although the adaptation of electronic forms of interviewing has been taken up largely in quantitative research with the employment of quantitative online surveys (Fontana & Frey, 2000), qualitative forms of online inquiry are increasing and used in online ethnographies (Hine, 2005a; Markham, 1998, 2004) as well as other qualitative forms of Internet-mediated interviews. By using the term Internet-mediated interviews, I am referring to virtual or electronic interviews using Internet technologies, which support different types of online or transmitted conversation. In my research I employed technologies like email, forum, blog, and webform for qualitative inquiry (Table 2.5). Several other forms of technologies (for example, chat rooms) exist that would allow qualitative inquiries; however, online communities commonly used email, forum and blog technologies, and therefore were most pivotal for my research. Moreover, a more structured form of interviewing was supported through a webform. Structured inquiries are generally not used within qualitative research (Jennings, 2005b); however, this more structured form of online inquiry proved to be useful for my qualitative material collection as it allowed cross-interpretations of participants’ reflections.

The reason for using different technologies for interviewing was that I wanted to offer my participants the opportunity to choose the style of communication they felt competent in and preferred to use (Kivits, 2005). Technical challenges could limit the participation of participants regarding online discussions on climate change and by offering different modes of communication such challenges would be reduced.
All applied Internet technologies (Table 2.5) offered asynchronous ways of communication that were one-to-one and/or group-focussed. Resultantly, these influenced the type of relationship I as the interviewer could establish with my interviewees or participants. These technologies also allowed the exchange of textual and/or visual contents, as well as the possibilities to conduct unstructured, semi-structured, or structured styles of interviews.

Table 2.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview technology</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Content type</th>
<th>Interview style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>One-to-one</td>
<td>Text/visuals</td>
<td>Unstructured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Text/visuals</td>
<td>Unstructured/semi-structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>One-to-one/group</td>
<td>Text/visuals</td>
<td>Unstructured/semi-structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webform</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>One-to-one</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Structured</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the research process, I followed Kivits’ (2005) advice on how to establish a good interview relationship (see Table 2.6) with my participants. These essentials guided email interviews, forum and blog discussions, as well as the development and implementation of my qualitative questionnaire.

Overall, in applying a postmodern lens, these Internet technologies did not just offer new ways for empirical material collection via Internet-mediated interviews, but also provided my participants a platform for the (re)presentation, (co)construction and sharing of their perceptions on climate change with regard to their travel experiences.

In the following sections, I provide a more detailed insight in how I employed each of my Internet-mediated interview tools.
Table 2.6

Essentials for the interview relationship

Pre-interview

- Mutual self-disclosure: exchange of personal information between interviewer and interviewee
- Interviewee becomes familiar with the research project
- Creating of a friendly atmosphere and a comfort zone

During interview

- 'Listening' to conversational elements within the text-based context
- Adaptation to personal communication style of each interviewee
- Interviewee’s personal life permeates the email communication
- Being receptive to the interviewee's live world
- Explicit and implicit reassurance of interviewees quality of participations and the interview progress
- Reassurance of the presence of the researcher
- Balance of communication between research interest and maintaining a personal and close interview relationship

Note. Summarised based on Kivits (2005)

2.3.2.1 Email

The use of emails did not only provide an asynchronous way of Internet-mediated interviewing, but also allowed me to establish an interview relationship with some of my participants (Kivits, 2005). I used emails for general communication with my participants who were focussed around recruitment, participation, the use of provided functionalities, as well as automated notification emails for new posts on my research website. In that sense, email was more than a tool for qualitative inquiry, but also an important communication tool regarding my research and the website. Although this purely text-based style of conversation lacks facial or oral information, an important input within face-to-face, I anticipated communication via email would contain more socially desirable content as participants had more time for writing, thinking, editing at their own pace (Dholakia & Zhang, 2004; Walther, 1996). Because of their asynchronous dimension, email interviews, as a form of multiple sequential interviews (Charmaz, 2003), also supported my earlier discussed grounded theory approach. As grounded theory is based on a simultaneous collection and interpretation of empirical material, reflections on early email conversations directed
the formulation of new questions in order to gain a deeper understanding of my participants’ experiences (Charmaz, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In my research, I intended to interview several participants via email simultaneously over a period of time, before inviting these interviewees into online discussions on my research website. I selected potential participants based on their engagements in other existing community website, mostly travel communities. Following grounded theory principles, people who already engaged with others in climate change discussions where purposely selected. I sent an initial email (see Box 2.1), usually via the community system, to see if they would have an interest in participating in my research. Once a potential participant showed interest in my research, I then sent an email with the research information sheet (see Appendix 2) and consent form (see Appendix 3), and asked for sending their consent via reply email.

Box 2.1

Invitation email based on members’ engagement in climate change discussions

Hello [member name],

I read your contribution on BootsnAll Travel, in which you discussed carbon offsetting issues. As you are interested in climate change issues and travelling, I thought you might be interested in participating in my research project.

My name is Ulrike and I am a PhD candidate at Griffith University, located on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia. In my research, I aim to gain a deeper understanding on how online discussions of climate change influence tourists’ travel experiences, and the future growth of sustainable tourism. The research is purely online and you can find some more information about me and my research on the research website http://www.researchlounge.net. Please have a look.

What would your participation entail? We will have a conversational style of interview via email. I am interested in your knowledge, perceptions, thoughts and experiences regarding climate change and travelling. Everything important to you will be important for my research. On the research website, you will also have the opportunity to engage with other participants via blogs and online forums. Your participation is only limited by your interest and time.

If you are generally interested in participating in my research, please let me know (via email to u.kachel@griffith.edu.au) and I will send you some further information. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

I am looking forward to your reply.

Regards,

Ulrike

Ulrike Kachel
PhD Candidate
Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and Sport Management
Griffith Business School
However, online recruitment in other community websites showed only limited success and I was only able to establish first email conversations with four participants, of which three of these conversations ‘died’ after the first exchange. These participants obviously changed their mind regarding participation, and although not withdrawing, did not reply anymore. The interviews were unstructured, open-ended and provided a form of text-based conversation. As Mann and Stewart (2000) state, rich empirical material can be gathered in such email interviews; however, this depends on the participants’ engagement. The engagement of participants influenced the frequency of communication, response speed and duration of the email interviewing process. However, this process was certainly also influenced by my (in)ability to engage my participants in email conversations. Overall, recruiting participants for the email interviewing process did not seem to provide enough positive responses and engagements to proceed further with opening discussions on my community website; at least not within the envisaged time frame for empirical material collection. I therefore decided to curtail the effort of recruiting participants for email interviews, and concentrated instead on other recruitment strategies in order to start discussions and reflections on my research website. For these discussion and reflections I employed blogs and a forum, on which I expand in the following sections.

2.3.2.2 Blog

A weblog or blog is an Internet-mediated diary used by individuals or groups to write about issues they are concerned with, or just about everyday life experiences (Herring, Scheidt, Wright, & Bonus, 2005). In the literature on qualitative inquiry, blogs are seen as a rich source of empirical materials on people's experiences (Dholakia & Zhang, 2004), rather than as a tool for inquiry. The use of paper diaries for research, however, is not new. Markwell (2001) used paper diaries, written by
tourists during their travels, as well as photos and travel brochures to gain a deeper understanding of travellers’ lived experiences. The task for writing the diary was explained to the tourists before their travels and a content analysis was conducted after the journey had finished (Markwell, 2001). The use of a blog as a diary for writing and reflecting on travel experiences during travels is meanwhile a widely adopted practice amongst travellers, and research has started to see such blogs as sources of rich empirical material (for example, Martin & Woodside, 2011). Online travel communities like travelblog.org, for example, focus on blogging rather than providing forum functionalities for their members. Interactions on blogs are similar to interactions via email and online fora. Such blogs often offer functions to include non-textual content like images or videos, which might be promising regarding gaining a deeper insight in travellers’ knowledge and perceptions of climate change. Subsequently, blogs were deemed as a rich source of reflections within climate change discussions on the Research Lounge, and I therefore decided to utilise blogs as a tool for qualitative inquiry. Based on the communicational aspects of a blog and an interactive process of empirical material collection, I regard blogs as a postmodern interview method for qualitative inquiry, as an interview cannot any longer be seen as a question-answer continuum (Fontana, 2003).

Like emails and forums, the communication via blogs is asynchronous. Whereas emails are sent and received as single instances, and the mode of storage is up to the communicators, contributions and messages on a blog are ‘bound’ together on a specific website. Blogs also provide a mode of interaction, as visitors or other members are able to reply to posts, leave comments or ask questions. Furthermore, blogs usually impart functionalities to include graphical content and to link to other websites. These functionalities are the main innovations regarding the use of blogs for empirical material collection, as they offer interviewees the opportunity to express their thoughts, ideas, and experiences not just textually but enriched with audiovisual information and connected to other information. Such added information may provide a deeper insight into what shaped or shapes participants way of knowing and sharing regarding online discussions on climate change and their travel experiences.
I offered every participant of the Research Lounge the use of a personal blog to present thoughts, ideas, and experiences, or just images, videos, links or other documents. Each blog was visible to all participants and, based on communicational features, participants were encouraged to ‘talk’ about and share information they considered relevant for the research focus. The degree of self-disclosure, on how much personal information participants wanted to share, was up to each participant. Although the blogs were accessible for all participants, it was important that the writer of the blog has full control of the content (Mortensen & Walker, 2002).

Within my research, the use of blogs as an inquiry tool was challenging. I started to blog some reflections on climate change on my blog in order to demonstrate to participants how they could utilise the blogging function. A few participants took up the opportunity and replied to my posts or started a blog post themselves. Overall, however, discussions within these blogs were limited and had a strong focus on environmental issues not related to climate change or travelling. While reconstructing the research website in order to optimise functionalities for empirical material collection, I therefore decided to deactivate the blogging function for participants. I still used the function for general posts relating to the research project, which supported building rapport with (potential) participants. Besides utilising blogs, I also aimed at group discussions via a forum, however, similar to blog interactions, forum engagements were limited.

2.3.2.3 Forum

Online group interviews can be conducted synchronously or asynchronously, depending on the application used. The three main types of applications for online focus groups are synchronous via chat software, asynchronous via online forum or an asynchronous mailing list via a listserver (Table 2.7). Similar to email interviews, I applied an asynchronous form of group interviews using an online forum application within my community website. My decision for employing a forum application was based on an easy access and facilitation through the web interface of my website, and the fact that forum applications were commonly used in travel communities to facilitate discussions that included climate change discussions. One of such fora was represented by the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum. Furthermore, the asynchronous
online environment supported the recruitment and research process, as potential participants were located in different time zones, which would have made it difficult to participate in a synchronous group discussion (Kenny, 2005; Mann & Stewart, 2000).

Table 2.7

*Characteristics of face-to-face and different Internet-mediated group interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Face-to-face</th>
<th>Chat</th>
<th>Forum</th>
<th>Listserv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode</strong></td>
<td>Offline</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Synchronous</td>
<td>Synchronous</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connectivity</strong></td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>Web interface</td>
<td>Web interface</td>
<td>Email client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time arrangement</strong></td>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location arrangement</strong></td>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>Easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technical constraints</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transcription needed</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Verbal/visual</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Replies</strong></td>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
<td>Chronological</td>
<td>Chronological</td>
<td>Simultaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflections</strong></td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expressions</strong></td>
<td>Voice/face</td>
<td>Text/emoticons*</td>
<td>Text/emoticons*</td>
<td>Text/emoticons*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *An image or representation of a facial expression such as :-)*

The forum on my research website facilitated group interviews, or focus groups, that provided the opportunity to ‘question’ all participants at the same time (Fontana & Frey, 2000). I anticipated that the forum discussions on my website would become a focal point of my empirical material collection; however, discussions were limited. As the recruitment via email interviews did not provide enough participants to start the online discussions, I decided to expand my recruitment strategy and to open up the website for self-registration and add an incentive of a prize-draw. With the self-registration and incentive in place, I was able to promote my research and the website to a wider audience. The recruitment or promotion process for the group interview aimed to attract potentially interested participants (Morgan, 2001), which therefore was congruent with theoretical sampling of my grounded theory approach. Such promotions included direct invitations via Facebook adverts and Twitter
updates, so called tweets. Furthermore, I used the tweets to promote my research indirectly by tweeting about climate change and travelling issues. This way I increased the number of followers, with each new follower receiving a direct message via Twitter that invited them to have a look at my research website. I was able to recruit some participants via Twitter and Facebook promotions, via postings on other websites and furthermore, through snowball sampling via contacts with an interest in travelling and environmental issues. In my unstructured group interviews or group discussions, all participants had a common interest in climate change and/or travel related issues, which enabled some discussions between participants to evolve almost unguided (Morgan, 2001). Compared to one-to-one interviews, group discussions were challenged by these unguided interactions and, therefore, required some form of moderation (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Other challenges included the domination of the discussions by one or more participants, refusal to participate or silence of participants, and a lacking of full topic coverage (Merton et al., 1956, cited in Fontana & Frey, 2000). As the researcher or interviewer, I therefore needed to moderate discussion directions through an active participation and was sensitive to group interactions (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Morgan, 2001). Overall, group discussions were limited and also challenging in order to collect sufficient empirical material. I therefore decided to introduce a more structured approach by employing a webform that allowed me to create a structured set of open-ended questions.

### 2.3.2.4 Webform

A webform or online form provides a functionality to collect empirical material in a structured way. Although structured interviews or questionnaires are predominately associated with quantitative research, a structured approach within an online environment can generate rich in-depth empirical material. Ogle (2009), for example, applied a structured approach collecting in-depth reflections of hotel managers on eight open-ended questions sent via email. However, I am aware of the fact that such a structured approach compared to less or un-structured approaches limits interactions with participants and might position me as the researcher as an outsider rather than an insider (Jennings, 2005a). As other tools for empirical material collection such as the forum did not enable sufficient material within the set time frame, I had to employ other tools like the webform in order to reach saturation. On
the other hand, such a structured online tool provided some advantages. One advantage of asynchronous online forms of communications compared to face-to-face or telephone qualitative real-time interviews was that participants could reflect at their own pace without the presence of the researcher who can cause pressure or influence responses. To ensure that participants took advantage of such ‘independence’ of time and researcher presence, I not only provided my open-ended questions via the webform but also as a downloadable word document that participants could fill out and return via email (see Appendix 4). In order to improve the quality of the aspired in-depth reflections, I also provided motivational and clarifying information within the webform (Smyth, Dillman, Christian, & Mcbride, 2009). Such information, for example, explained that the length of the reflections was not restricted by the size of the provided fields, and that participants should write what comes to their mind, as there were no right or wrong answers.

The webform allowed me to guide participants’ in-depth reflections. The webform contained nine open-ended questions on climate change and tourism, environmental issues, the use of the Internet and other information media, as well as a general question that would allow my participants to add whatever they considered as being important and had not been matched by the other questions (Box 2.2). The questions were framed in a particular way in case there was no opportunity for follow-up. Furthermore, the webform contained some demographic questions asking about gender, year of birth, level of education, nationality, and country of residence. In order to only guide and not ‘direct’ participants’ reflections, it was crucial to frame the questions as openly as possible. Other research (Krosnick, 2010; Leviston, Leitch, Greenhill, Leonard, & Walker, 2011; Yeager, Larson, Krosnick, & Tompson, 2011) has identified that the way questions or statements within climate change surveys (predominantly quantitative ones) are framed influence people’s answers or the degree of agreement or disagreement with statements. Asking if people thought that ‘climate change is caused by humans’ versus ‘is climate change caused partly by humans’ can result in different outcomes. This example demonstrates the importance of qualitative research that allows participants to reflect rather than respond to ratings or degrees of (dis)agreements. Such reflections are more meaningful and demonstrate that people do have different perceptions about the causes of climate change and the degree to which humans contribute to these.
Box 2.2

*Online open-ended questions*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>What are your thoughts about climate change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What are your thoughts about the impacts of climate change on travelling and destinations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Conversely, what are your thoughts about tourism’s contribution to climate change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>As a traveller, what kind of travel experiences are you looking for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Could relate to the way you travel, whom with, purpose, duration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>When planning your travels and informing yourself about desired travel experiences, what are your experiences with using social networking sites, media or other websites?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>How would you describe the way you value the environment and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>One part of the climate change discussions focuses on environmental or carbon footprints. What are your thoughts about environmental and carbon footprints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>In what way, if at all, have climate change discussions (online or offline) influenced the way you think about your carbon footprint and travelling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>What role do the media, publications, organisations, or social groups (offline or online) play for you in order to gain knowledge about environmental issues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Is there anything else you would like to comment on? Some other tourism, climate change, or environment related topics? Or some of your own personal experiences?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An invitation to participate in my project and provide reflections on the open-ended questions was sent out to a set of 4,400 addresses bought from the Australian Lifestyle Survey (ALS) database. In addition, I promoted the research project online on travel community websites, via Facebook, and on other websites I engaged with that offered functions to post content or comments. In order to increase participation, I successfully introduced a prize-draw of three $100 AUD Visa gift cards. The employment of the webform to guide participants’ reflections was a successful way of empirical material collection within this research project. I collected 146 usable reflections, mainly from participants who had previously participated in the ALS. I expand on the participants of the webform in Section 2.5.2.
2.3.3 Memos

Finding the right tools for empirical material collection and re-defining them during the research process was an important part of utilising an online environment, and my Research Lounge in particular, for the purpose of my research. In order to capture my experiences and to develop my grounded theory, I employed memos as part of the grounded theory and general research process. My writing of memos was an essential intermediate process between empirical material collection and writing the draft of my research thesis (Charmaz, 2006). As a crucial method in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), it was an important step in interpreting and coding empirical material, and capturing thoughts, connections and comparisons I made throughout the research process (Table 2.8). Furthermore, writing itself is a process of learning, and writing memos furthers clarity and precision (Charmaz, 1999). In my research, memos represent both a method of empirical material collection and a platform for, and a process of, interpretation within grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2006).

Table 2.8

Advantages of memos in grounded theory research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Memos help to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stop and think about empirical material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treat qualitative codes as categories for interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a writer’s voice and writing rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spark ideas to check out in the field setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid forcing empirical material into extant concepts and theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop fresh ideas, create new concepts, and find novel relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate connections between categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover gaps in empirical material collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link material-gathering with empirical material analysis and report-writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build whole sections of papers and chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep involved in research and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase confidence and competence as a researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Adapted from Charmaz (2006)*

First of all, memos represent a conversation with myself (Charmaz, 2006), and therefore might even be compared with interviews, although interviewer and
interviewee are the same person. Memos, however, are ‘deeper’ and supported my qualitative inquiry through Internet-mediated forms of interviews, as the reflective process of interpretation brought me closer to the studied phenomenon, and helped to develop ideas and fine-tune the research process (Charmaz, 2006). Besides thoughts and interpretative processes, memos contained or collected different kinds of empirical material, which I considered as being valuable for my research. These materials represented references, quotes, maps, or links to other memos. Furthermore, memo writing was an important tool to be reflexive of my position as a researcher in the research process (Hertz, 1997). Hertz (1997) describes reflexivity as an ongoing conversation that permeates the whole research process while questioning or evaluating one’s self and the participants’ position within the research context. In doing this, I acknowledged my participants’ contribution to the research and also documented the research process.

Memos can be constructed as voice recordings, as diaries or field notes via pen and paper, or as computerised notes or annotations; however, whatever way is used, it is important to record the time and context (Jennings, 2010). For my research, I wrote different types of memos in different levels of abstraction. I utilised a memo in the form of a research journal to write down thoughts, problems, and decisions that were concerned with the development of my research website, participant recruitment, and thoughts regarding other material or literature that I saw as relevant for my research. For this type of memo I used a chronological approach as it was related to the research process. Box 2.3 provides some example entries of my research journal that was written in a Word document.

Box 2.3

*Example of research journal entries*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 October 2009</td>
<td>Was looking for participants again today. Updated my TravBuddy profile and ‘smiled’ at a few people. Funny, how this is different from other communities. It seems to generate more interaction between the participants, but it looks like these are quite superficial. [Member name] commented on my research and so I wrote back to see if he might be interested in participating. Contacted a few other people as well and received one positive reply from [member name] who is an Australian but living in Belgium. He has a blogging website outside of TravBuddy and I could see that he is an immunologist and has a PhD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 November 2009</td>
<td>Will try and use Twitter for tweets on climate change and travel issues. See if I can generate...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a few more followers. The great thing is, I can combine my Twitter updates with my Facebook updates. All my tweets automatically appear as a status update on Facebook. That’s fantastic. Saves time to update both and hopefully will also be interesting for my Facebook friends, a lot of whom are tourism academics.

26 April 2010
Looking again into using the webform functionality on my platform. However, first of all I have to think about what type of questions I want to ask. I still do have my set of initial research questions, which I haven’t really utilised yet as I was hoping for more emergent content. I also have the first questions I developed regarding offsetting behaviour, but I am not sure if that should be my first webform. In order to develop further topic areas I also looked into the value scales I found in the Handbook of Marketing Scales. Although these refer to quantitative research, I might be able to adapt them for a more open-ended qualitative approach. I find Hofstede’s five dimensions quite interesting, which I imagine could guide me regarding interpreting the existing discussion. Another one would be Stone, Barnes and Montgomery’s Ecoscale regarding the type of questions I could ask. I would have to develop a set of questions that ‘fit’ into their seven dimensions.

Originally I was looking at Rokeach’s The Nature of Human Values, but I don’t think his terminal and instrumental values are suitable for what I want to do, as they don’t give enough leeway for content to emerge. Also should look at Dunlap’s New Environmental Paradigm, which I am using in my literature so far.

Other types of memos that I utilised for my research, were memos on the interpretation and coding process. I wrote these memos within NVivo, which I used for my empirical material interpretation. As I imported all empirical material texts into NVivo, this enabled me to connect my memos and interpretation with my empirical material. In my interpretation memos, I ‘recorded’ thoughts about the interpretation of participants’ reflections (Box 2.4). As the notes I made within these memos were grouped around coding themes, I edited and added notes around such themes rather than in a chronological order.

Box 2.4

*Example of analysis memo entries*

**What do respondents think about climate change impacts on tourism and destinations?**

I had problems to get my head around the interpretation of question two. A lot of participants made comments that fit better question 3 regarding tourism’s contribution to climate change, so I will interprete these together with the responses at question 3. There are two main categories, where I coded responses that relate to possible or modelled changes or effects on travelling or destinations, and responses I coded under travel decisions as these related to influences on travel decisions. Some comments I also coded as evidence or doubts.

Looking at the believer responses only, I started with the possible or modelled changes, but also included responses I coded under evidence or doubt, as these still seem quite similar. I tried developing manual listings, but then thought, before noting everything down on a piece of paper, I can do this directly in a mindmap. I had different goes with the mindmap but finally developed a map that contains all statements in a few main categories. Focussing
only on the believer is certainly influenced by the fact that I spend some time yesterday to
develop a possible structure and story for my thesis. In my thesis, based on the current draft
structure, I will present the responses, either from the researchlounge or Lonely Planet,
together for each position or stance. This means I will have a chapter each for believers,
non-believers, and undecideds. Therefore, in my interpretations I won’t try to bring the
different groups together in one mindmap, but in individual maps. This way I can ‘portray’
the different groups independently and should be able, based on the emerging themes, to
develop the common themes and my grounded theory. Before I go into the discussion of the
emerging main themes, I have to make sure I am again looking at all responses for each
question to make sure I reflect on those responses that didn’t fit the question or showed that
a person did not have an answer or understanding of the issues. In other words, I have to
make sure I don’t just look at what is said, but I also have to look at what is not said.

See mindmap Believers’ thoughts about possible impacts on travelling or destinations

The believers’ thoughts on climate change impacts on travelling or destinations can be
grouped as changes on landscapes or destinations, loss of natural attractions, weather, sea
level rise, experiencing impacts and other economic, social, or environmental impacts.

In the memo of the coding process (Box 2.5), I noted down decisions I made on
coding, including all changes to the coding structure. This memo enabled me to
reflect on the coding process and to see how my coding structure developed over
time. Notes I made on the coding structure were organised around the coding areas
that were based on the webform questions rather than organised in a chronological
order.

Box 2.5
Example of coding memo entries

Q01 Thoughts about climate change

The first question or answers on the first question seem to be quite easy as the position each
respondent took regarding climate change was quite clear to identify. I already did a first
grouping of ‘Believers’, ‘Non-believers’, and ‘Undecideds’ in the excel spreadsheet where I
collected all responses. As the theme of believing in climate change or not is like in the
Lonely Planet discussions one of the main issues concerning the climate change discussions,
this category might be of the highest hierarchy.

The answers to question one, however, did not just contain the position or stance the
respondent has to climate change, but also related to the proof or disproof of climate change,
actions to take or necessary reactions, as well as dealing with groups of agents or actors
within the climate change discussions. These resulted in three further groups of codes or
categories: ‘(Dis)Proof’ (Evidence, Facts, Shortcomings), ‘(Re)Action’ (Adaptation,
Management, Preservation, Protection), and ‘Agent or actor’ (Media, Politicians, Scientists).
Further sub-categories might be added during the further coding process.
Added 'Alternatives' under '(Re)Action' to collect quotes regarding alternative or other energy sources.

Added 'IPCC' under 'Agent or actor' as the role of the IPCC is often criticised, so might be worth while looking at it separately.

Added 'Businesses or industry' under 'Agent or actor' as comments refer to enterprises.

Added 'Change' under '(Re)Action' as comments refer to initiating change.

Renamed 'Same or equal' to 'Some or equal'. Some people talk about impacts, but there is no indication of the level of impact. I didn't want to add another level for 'Some', but might have to do it at a later stage?

Added 'Individuals' under 'Agent or actor' as some refer to 'we' or the society

Changed 'Individuals' to 'Individuals or society' as that's better matching.

Added 'Al Gore' under 'Agent or actor', although not sure how many more will comment on him.

Added 'No need to act' under '(Re)Action' as some people seem to think it wouldn't change anything.

Having described my research settings as well as the tools or methods I applied for my empirical material collection, I now want to discuss ethical considerations related to my research.
2.4 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations for my research can be divided into two categories. The first category represents the ethical requirements of Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee (Griffith University, n.d.), which I followed in my research. The required research information and the consent form (see Appendix 2 and 3) were available for download on the research website or were sent out via email. In the recruitment process, participants were requested to confirm their consent via email reply of a consent form email, by expressing consent through participation in the online reflections, or through the creation of an online account on the research website. Based on the challenges I had with recruitment and online engagements, I had to change the use of the tools as discussed previously, which also required changes to the ethics documents. Such changes were reported to the Ethics committee and after confirmation of ethical compliance applied to the research website.

Furthermore, in case participants had concerns with the ethical conduct of the research, I provided contact details of my principal supervisor and the Manager of Research Ethics at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee. Neither of these was contacted during the research process. My research did not involve any deception and all participants were fully informed of the study details and how their contributions and information would be interpreted, stored, destroyed, and reported. Personal information like participants’ home addresses were not obtained; however, email contact details were essential and were stored securely by limiting the access to such empirical material on the server of the researcher and trusted technical support personnel. In respecting and protecting participants’ identity when reporting on their perceptions within this document, I created pseudonyms for the Research Lounge participants and kept member information anonymous for the Lonely Planet participants.

The second category of ethics is based on general ethical considerations identified through former studies with regards to the online environment. For research in an online environment, trust was identified as an important issue (Mann & Stewart, 2000). As participants did not have direct (face-to-face) contact with me as the
researcher, who may be located on the other side of the world, participants had to trust that the information she or he was giving would be handled confidentially and appropriately. As a researcher, I had to trust that information provided by participants was trustworthy. As a trust-building task, I therefore provided information about my research and myself as a researcher on the research website. Being a value-laden qualitative researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Jennings, 2009), such ethical considerations were also connected to my axiology. In being reflexive of my positionality within the research discussions and as the owner and facilitator of the research website, I had to consider how these different roles may influence participants’ contributions. I expand on my positionality in Section 2.5.3. Furthermore, the collection of existing discussions like the Thorn Tree discussions required different ethical considerations (Hine, 2005a). Although possessing a member account for the Thorn Tree forum, I decided not to initiate or to participate in climate change discussions as other members might have felt they were being researched and that was not the reason why they had contributed to such discussions. The development of my own research website was therefore essential. As already discussed, I did draw on existing discussions within the Thorn Tree forum for empirical materials as these were readily accessible in public domain.

Having reflected on the ethical considerations of my research, I now expand on the different voices in my research.

2.5 The different voices

Within this section, I reflect on the different voices within my research. These are the voices of the Thorn Tree forum members in discussions that I selected for my research, the voices of participants on my Research Lounge, as well as my own voice and positionality within the research. I based my target population on the people who used the Internet to search for, share, or exchange information with regards to travel planning or travel experiences in general. Participants within the Lonely Planet study may have come from different demographic, social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, and may have been located worldwide; however, such personal backgrounds were only limitedly available. Participants within the Research Lounge study provided some demographic information like age or education level. As a
common base, all participants were able to express themselves in English, had travel experiences or plans, and engaged with online travel information or travel communities (Table 2.9). Participants may have been recruited mainly from developed countries, as these countries have highly developed Internet networks and globally produce the majority of tourists. Although my research population may represent mainly such developed countries, I acknowledge, different cultures and people from less developed countries may have different perceptions on climate change, which are no less valid or important than those perceptions of developed countries. Ethical considerations are addressed in Section 2.4.

Table 2.9

Participants’ profile characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile element</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English (must be able to express themselves)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Adults and adolescents who make their own travel decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online activities</td>
<td>Participating in Thorn Tree discussion; online information search, sharing, and exchanges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel activities</td>
<td>Pre, during, and post travel experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change interest</td>
<td>Online discourses related to climate change; interest in providing reflections on climate change and travelling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regards to the two studies, Lonely Planet and Research Lounge, I expand on the different voices of these studies in the following text.

2.5.1 The voices within the Thorn Tree forum

The Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum requires a user account in order to participate in the discussions. To create a personal user account, only basic information is required and in most cases only a chosen user name in the form of a pseudonym is visible to other participants. Therefore, as mentioned previously, participants in the Thorn Tree climate change discussions cannot be grouped into certain demographics. Based on a 2008 visitor survey, the Lonely Planet website visitors in general are between 18 and 34 years old with the majority older than 24 (Lonely Planet, 2008). Furthermore, 57.5% are male and 42.5% female, with overall 67.5% having at least one basic
degree, and 65% earning more than $USD 60k. The majority of website visitors indicated that they were frequent travellers, and 85% used the Internet for an information search before travelling. The survey addressed all website visitors and did not indicate who of these visitors participated in the Thorn Tree discussions. Based on such limited information about forum members, I am not able to provide a more specific ‘image’ of the participants of those discussions that I collected and used for interpretation. Furthermore, the 910 posts of the selected 31 discussion threads represent a large number of forum members, of which the majority of members were the authors of only one or two posts. However, demographic insights were not necessary, as the preliminary study within my grounded theory research did not aim to generalise interpretations. The selected discussions provided sufficient insights in order to gain a deeper understanding of how Thorn Tree members used the forum for their meaning-making processes with regards to climate change.

2.5.2 The voices within the Research Lounge

Based on the previously discussed challenges to recruit sufficient participants for email interviews and online discussions on my research website, I decided to introduce a more focussed approach. This approach included a set of open-ended questions that were facilitated via a webform on my research website in order to guide participants’ reflections. The recruitment of these participants was based on a mailing as well as further online promotion. The mailing was sent out to a set of 4,400 addresses from the Australian Lifestyle Survey (ALS) database, which I purchased for my research. The ALS contains questions on lifestyle activities related to, for example, travelling, which was one of the main selection criteria (Table 2.10) for the addresses. The ALS is conducted by Australia Post on a yearly basis, and participants in the survey indicated an interest in participation of further surveys. Potential participants should have had some experiences in travelling, including overseas travels. Furthermore, as the research was situated in an online environment, potential participants should have had Internet access. The ALS selection was a random sample of the Australian population within the ALS database. Based on the available selection criteria, I decided to include ALS contacts that travel frequently and took an overseas holiday within the last year, and who had had Internet access at home for more than two years.
Table 2.10

Selection criteria for addresses from the Australian Lifestyle Survey (ALS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Travelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Nationally (all</td>
<td>* Have Internet for more than 2 years</td>
<td>* Travel 3+ times per year for pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian states)</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Have taken an overseas holiday in the last 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Random selection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mailing was sent out via a personalised email in order to maximise the participation rate (Heerwegh, Vanhove, Matthijs, & Loosveldt, 2005). Online reflections were collected over a period of around four months between 23 July and 9 December 2010, with the majority of reflections received within the first month. The ALS mailing enabled me to recruit 128 participants who contributed their reflections on the open-ended questions. A further two participants were not included in the interpretations as they only reflected on a few questions. A further 18 participants were recruited via promotions in other online environments and are discussed below. Although I did not aim for representativeness, ALS participants covered all Australian states and territories in correspondence to the percentage of population in these states and territories (Table 2.11). Furthermore, male and female participation rates also corresponded with the general Australian population, despite the fact that two thirds of the addresses I received from ALS were females.

Most of the 128 ALS participants noted that they would like to take part in the advertised prize-draw of the three $100 AUD Visa gift cards, which indicates that the prize-draw was an important incentive regarding participation in the research project. However, their genuine interest in the research project was demonstrated through their in-depth reflections. Of the 128 ALS participants, 39 also created an account on
Table 2.11

Overview participation rate based on Australian population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State or territory</th>
<th>Population end Sep 2010 in '000</th>
<th>Population Percentage</th>
<th>Australian Lifestyle Survey</th>
<th>Research Lounge Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ALS Addresses Received</td>
<td>ALS Addresses Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>7253.4</td>
<td>32.4 %</td>
<td>1301</td>
<td>29.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>5567.1</td>
<td>24.8 %</td>
<td>1003</td>
<td>22.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>4532.3</td>
<td>20.2 %</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>25.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>1647.8</td>
<td>7.4 %</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>6.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>2306.2</td>
<td>10.3 %</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>8.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>508.5</td>
<td>2.3 %</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>230.2</td>
<td>1.0 %</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>359.7</td>
<td>1.6 %</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>2.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia(b)</td>
<td>22407.7</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>4400</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Gender             |                                   |                       |                             |                             |                             |                          |                        |
|                    | unclear                           | 14                    | 0.3 %                      | 0.0 %                       | 0                           |                          |                        |
|                    | Female                            | 3001                  | 68.2 %                     | 2.3 %                       | 69                          | 53.9 %                  |
|                    | Male                              | 1385                  | 31.5 %                     | 4.3 %                       | 59                          | 46.1 %                  |

|                                  | 100.0 %                           | 4400                  | 100.0 %                    | 2.9 %                       | 128                         | 100.0 %                 |

Note: (a) Population data based on information obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website (ABS, 2011); (b) Includes other territories comprising Jervis Bay Territory, Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands; (c) Percentage based on number of population within state or territory; (d) Based on June 2009 data.

the Research Lounge; however, only one of these posted a comment within the forum. Although the participation rate with 2.9% was relatively low, 128 in-depth reflections were more than what I anticipated. Reasons for such low response may be related to the qualitative approach that asked people to provide reflections in their own words rather than rating given responses, or a lack of interest climate change discussions. Another reason could be related to the fact that these ALS addresses might have been contacted previously by other researchers and people felt ‘tired’ of participating in further research projects.

As mentioned above, besides the mailing based on the ALS addresses, I also promoted the webform and the prize-draw in other online environments. These
online environments included Facebook, Twitter, my profile sites on travel community websites, as well as posts I placed on websites that discussed climate change issues related to travelling. Such promotions also generated some snowball effect. Via these online promotions I managed to recruit a further 18 participants for the online reflections. A few more also created an account on the Research Lounge, but again, only one of these placed some comments. This together with the previous limited contributions in the research website forum meant that the online discussions on the Research Lounge website did not generate sufficient empirical material for a grounded theory interpretation. I therefore decided to concentrate the empirical material interpretation on the total 146 online reflections that participants contributed guided by the open-ended questions. However, besides reflecting on the recruitment strategy by which these participants came to the Research Lounge, what else characterises them?

The majority of participants felt comfortable in providing some demographic information. This information referred to gender, year of birth, highest level of education, nationality, and country of residence. A total of 121 participants defined themselves as Australians or of a mixed Australian nationality (Table 2.12). 25 participants indicated a foreign nationality, but only seven of these participants lived

Table 2.12
Participants’ nationality and country of residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Country of Residence</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>112</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Australian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British / Australian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maltese / Australian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish / Australian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian / Australian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealander / Australian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South African</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beninese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealander</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 (NZ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (Japan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (UAE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in another country other than Australia. Among these seven was one participant had been recruited via the ALS mailing. Overall, the sample had an Australia focus.

Table 2.13 provides an overview of the level of education per generation and gender. I chose to group them into generations as such cohorts have been associated with different types of behaviours. A little over a third of the 146 participants were baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), with slightly more male than female. Within generation X (born between 1965 and 1981), however, female participants were in the majority. Overall, this indicates that female participants tended to be younger than male participants. Around a third of female and male participants indicated a postgraduate degree as their highest level of education. Taken as a whole, participants were well educated with female participants, overall, tending to be higher educated than male participants. The relatively high level of education may be related to the fact that persons with lower levels of education might not have participated in the ALS, that my selection criteria (travel frequently and have Internet access at home) may not be representative for a lower education group of society, or that a general interest in climate change issues may be related to education levels.

Participants in the Research Lounge reflections were well travelled, mainly Australians, with the majority being older than 30 years old, and well educated and with female participants being slightly younger and higher educated than male participants. Possessing an Internet connection for more than two years was one of the selection criteria, and participants reflected on using the Internet for travel information search, information exchanges, as well as buying travel products online. As there was only limited indication that participants were active visitors or participants of online travel communities, this was a main difference to the participants of the Thorn Tree discussions.
Table 2.13

*Education and generations per gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Silent Generation</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female Participants</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College cert./diploma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade qualification</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10 or less</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total percentage</strong></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Male Participants** |     |                   |             |              |              |       |                  |
| Education            |     |                   |             |              |              |       |                  |
| Postgraduate         | 1   | 1                 | 13          | 9            | 2            | 25    | 35%              |
| Undergraduate        | 1   | 3                 | 5           | 3            | 15           | 11    | 21%              |
| College cert./diploma | 4  | 4                 | 2           | 1            | 9            | 15    | 15%              |
| Trade qualification  | 1   | 1                 | 3           |              | 5            | 7     | 7%               |
| High School          | 1   | 1                 | 6           | 1            | 9            | 13    | 13%              |
| Year 10 or less      |     |                   | 1           | 1            | 2            | 3     | 3%               |
| N/A                  | 2   |                   | 1           | 1            | 4            | 6     | 6%               |
| **Total**            | 7   | 12                | 30          | 14           | 8            | 71    |                  |
| **Total percentage** | 10% | 17%               | 42%         | 20%          | 11%          | 100%  |                  |

| **All Participants** |     |                   |             |              |              |       |                  |
| Education            |     |                   |             |              |              |       |                  |
| Postgraduate         | 1   | 7                 | 20          | 19           | 4            | 51    | 35%              |
| Undergraduate        | 1   | 3                 | 10          | 11           | 12           | 37    | 25%              |
| College cert./diploma | 6  | 7                 | 11          | 1            | 2            | 27    | 18%              |
| Trade qualification  | 1   | 1                 | 4           |              | 6            | 4     | 4%               |
| High School          | 2   | 3                 | 9           | 1            | 3            | 18    | 12%              |
| Year 10 or less      | 1   | 1                 | 1           |              | 3            | 2     | 2%               |
| N/A                  | 2   |                   | 1           | 1            | 4            | 3     | 3%               |
| **Total**            | 11  | 24                | 55          | 34           | 22           | 146   |                  |
| **Total percentage** | 8%  | 16%               | 38%         | 23%          | 15%          | 100%  |                  |
All participants who provided their online reflections were active travellers and reflected on the type of travel experiences they were looking for. Participants were generally looking for relaxation or pleasure experiences, as well as experiences that offer something new or different, giving them a thorough or in-depth experience. A large group of participants described cultural experiences as being an essential part of their holiday experiences. Nature experiences, ranging from being in nature or just enjoying a nice landscape, was mentioned less as being an important aspect of their holiday experiences. This relatively low importance of nature experiences indicates that participants within the Research Lounge reflections were not biased towards nature or ecotourism experiences, which may have generated different perceptions on climate change and travelling. My interpretations and the grounded theory are therefore bounded by the participants who were recruited for the research.

Having described the participants of the two studies, Lonely Planet and Research Lounge, I reflect on my own voice and positionality in the following text.

2.5.3 My voice and positionality

As a qualitative researcher, my engagements with the research problem, the setting and participants required being reflexive. Reflexivity permeates every aspect of my research and makes me aware of my own positions and interests (Hertz, 1997). As a researcher, and a research instrument (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), I have to critically evaluate the different selves I am bringing into the research (Reinharz, 1997), and be conscious of my demographics, culture, and ideologies (Hertz, 1997), as well as my ethics and values that influence my axiological stance. As a postmodern constructivist researcher, I am reflexive about my positionality within the research, what I defined as my empirical materials and how I interpreted them (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). According to Hine (2005b), the use of new research methods like Internet-mediated interview methods may stimulate reflexivity on methodological commitments and research methods, as they provide time and space for a more reflexive textual communication. Within this chapter, I reflect on paradigmatic and methodological aspects of my research. In this section, I reflect on my positionality as the researcher and how this influenced the relationship with my participants.
The choice of a research ‘problem’ and research methods is influenced by who we are as researchers. I am a white, Western, mature-aged female, born and brought up in Germany, with English being my second language. My family ran a little dairy farm, and my childhood was moulded by green pastures, a forest to play in, and an understanding of humans’ dependence on what nature produces. I have a graduate degree in information systems and a postgraduate degree in tourism with a focus on ecotourism. I love being in nature, especially when going travelling. As a value-laden researcher, I am bringing these personal and professional backgrounds into my research. My interest in this research is based on my concerns regarding climate change and a tourism industry that I do not see as being sustainable. Furthermore, I see a responsibility for a more sustainable form of tourism not just on the side of the tourism industry but also on the side of travellers, including myself. I also see the Internet as an important tool or platform for information search and sharing, and interactions with mutually interested Internet users as a way to escape hegemonic information delivery shaped by political or economical interests of governments and organisations. Therefore, placing this research on climate change and travelling, into the online environment and interacting via Internet-mediated methods with my participants was a decision influenced by my different selves, experiences, and perspectives. My reflexivity also assisted my interpretations. The following section reflects on the process of my interpretation.

2.6 Interpretation process

As already stated, to gain an understanding of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and influences on travel behaviours, I carried out two studies. The first study was conducted within the online environment of the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum, the second on the Climate Change Research Lounge, a purposely built research website. These two studies generated different types of empirical material, existing discussions threads and guided online reflections. In this section, I focus on the interpretation processes of both studies rather than providing detailed insights into the interpretations. I reflect in particular on the strategies and tools I used for coding and the grounded theory interpretations.
2.6.1 Lonely Planet interpretation process

The Lonely Planet study enabled me to gain initial insights into the climate change issues that were relevant to discussion participants. Immersing myself within the Thorn Tree discussions that were related to climate change, I also gained a better understanding of differences in such discussions. Some of these discussions addressed climate change in the context of weather and ‘best time to travel’; discussions that were more general mentioned climate change only briefly, and other discussions were specifically initiated to discuss climate change issues. Immersing myself in the discussions, therefore, supported the purposeful selection of relevant discussion threads for my grounded theory interpretation. In order to interpret the discussions, I retrieved the threads through a ‘copy and paste’ process from the website and generated a word document for each of the selected 31 discussion threads. I decided to code the discussions manually by printing them and noting emerging themes next to the posts. Re-reading the themes I generated, I started grouping them into categories for further interpretation. To ensure rigour, I discussed the emerged themes with my supervisor who had been given a series of the discussion threads. My supervisor also interpreted the threads and we compared codings and interpretations. This co-interpretation ensured that my interpretations had a ‘goodness of fit’ and were not forced. The six main themes that emerged from this process were travellers’ positions on climate change, social institutions, role of information, travellers’ reflexivity, travellers’ personal and social agency, as well as meaning- and sense-making processes. The main categories I developed referred to participants’ position on climate change, grouping them into Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. These categories represent Lonely Planet participants’ stance on human-induced climate change; however, as the categorisation was based on my interpretations, I acknowledge that discussion participants might not have agreed with such ‘labels’. The themes and categories are presented in Chapter 3 and supported by the quotes of Lonely Planet participants’ discussions in order to present their voices. For the presentation of these quotes, I decided to remove any identifying information despite such identifiers being clearly available in the public domain. The insights of the Lonely Planet study were also presented at the CAUTHE 2009 conference (see Appendix 5). Feedback from colleagues at that presentation and via review processes further affirmed the goodness of fit of my theorising.
The interpretation of the selected Thorn Tree discussion threads provided a first insight regarding the issues that were relevant based on online discussions. Furthermore, they also showed the limitation of such discussions in terms of gaining an understanding on how climate change issues influence travellers’ decision-making processes, and resultantly, their travel behaviours. The first insights and interpretations of these discussions therefore influenced how I further approached my research. Such an approach resonates with the emergent nature of qualitative research and particularly with grounded theory. In particular, these first insights and interpretations influenced the development of the open-ended questions for the online reflections, to ensure these reflections included participants’ perceptions of climate change and connectivity to travel decision-making.

2.6.2 Research Lounge interpretation process

As previously stated, I concentrated my empirical material collection via the Research Lounge on the webform, guiding participants’ online reflections, as the other employed tools (email, blog, and forum) did not generate sufficient empirical material. The open-ended reflections were stored in an online database and downloadable as an Excel file. For the interpretation of the reflections, I used different types of software products at different stages of the interpretation process. For an initial exploration and later cross-interpretation of the reflections, I utilised Excel as it allowed me to use sorting and filter functionalities that supported the exploration and interpretation. The initial exploration was followed by the grounded theory interpretation process based on open, axial, and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I employed NVivo for the open and axial coding phases as it provided specific coding functionalities that support qualitative interpretations. For the theoretical coding, I used MindManager, a mind mapping program, as it enabled me to visualise my interpretations, which supported the theorising process. The developed concepts, categories, and theory are presented in Chapter 7. In the following text, I reflect on the different phases of the interpretations process that are represented by initial exploration and the grounded theory interpretation process.
In my first phase of exploration, I placed and read participants’ reflections in an Excel spreadsheet in order to get a ‘feeling’ for the quality of the reflections and to see how general insights compared to the Lonely Planet study. Similar to the existing Thorn Tree discussions, the online reflections also contained statements relating to participants’ position on climate change. This reaffirmed the authenticity of the main categories of Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds and I applied this categorisation also for the Research Lounge participants. I added the appropriate category to the reflections of each participant to identify them as Believer, Non-believer, or Undecided, again, acknowledging that participants themselves might have not agreed with such labels. Utilising the Excel spreadsheet structure and the filter function enabled me to explore participants’ demographics with regards to the categories and to the later developed behaviour groups. Furthermore, I added a general pseudonym for each participant, consisting of a serial number, and if available gender and age (for example, ‘118 Female 27’ or ‘035 Male’). I used these pseudonyms in my memos and during the interpretation process. These pseudonyms are also used throughout this document when presenting my Research Lounge participants’ voices in Chapters 4 to Chapter 6. In presenting my interpretations and participants’ voices, I also decided to add ‘Research Lounge’ or ‘Lonely Planet’ to the categories of Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. This enables the reader to identify to which of the two research studies they refer.

For the following grounded theory interpretation process, as previously stated, I employed NVivo and MindManager. To conduct the open and axial coding of the Research Lounge reflections I had to import the reflections into NVivo. In order to do so, I had to generate a Word document for each participant or reflection, utilising the Word serial letter function that generated the documents based on the Excel file. Each Word file was named according to the participant’s pseudonym, that also allowed an easy linking between NVivo coding and the Excel file. I started my open coding by reading a set of responses per open-ended question and developing some initial codes. I also provided the same set of responses to my supervisor in order to see if these or similar codes were identified. Discussions of both coding results guided the further refinement and development of the codes. As previously noted, I kept a coding memo in which I reflected on the initial coding structure as well as all changes within this structure. Such changes reflect the axial coding of the Research
Lounge reflections, as axial coding is based on sorting, synthesising, and organising the developed themes and concepts (Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005; Creswell, 2003).

In my interpretation process of the online reflections, I began with open coding the first 50 reflections. After coding these reflections, I conducted axial coding, before continuing with coding another set of 40 reflections. Within grounded theory interpretation, codes or themes, concepts, and categories are constantly compared against each other in order to reinterpret empirical material and reconstruct categories (Jennings & Junek, 2007). This continued axial coding process was used to compare the established codes and concepts, leading to further axial coding, redefining and reorganising codes. Although I developed a large number of codes and concepts, I still felt unable to ‘see’ my grounded theory emerging. In a next phase, I therefore decided to follow a crystallisation approach by looking at my empirical material and the themes from a different angle (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) and utilising a visual approach. For this approach, I used the mind mapping program MindManager. With the mind maps, I created visual representations of the emerged themes and concepts that enabled me to ‘see’ my theory emerging. An example of such a map is shown in Figure 2.3 (for a larger version see Appendix 6), which visualises the coding of Research Lounge Undecideds’ relationships with nature. Some of the Research Lounge Believers’ mind maps covered several pages in a print out, as Believers were the largest group within the Research Lounge participants.
Figure 2.3. Mind map of Research Lounge Undecideds’ human – nature relationship

Within these maps, I pasted quotes from my participants under the themes that I previously created in NVivo. While this process required going again through the empirical material, I realised that some of the quotes did not really fit with other quotes under a theme and I recoded them. This process was part of the axial coding process. It helped me to redefine my codes and enabled me to look at my empirical material in a different way via visual representations. In a next step towards theoretical coding, I looked at the quotes that I placed under a certain theme and started to re-interpret what I was seeing in these quotes. I merged some codes together and regrouped quotes together under sub-codes as they represented a common meaning. This way I created a more succinct version of the mind maps, which started to tell a story rather than just representing what participants said. For example, as shown in Figure 2.4 (for a larger version see Appendix 7), it appeared that although Research Lounge Undecideds reflected on ‘stewardship’ with regards to their relationship with nature, such ‘stewardship’ had different or multiple meanings for participants.
Based on the succinct mind maps that I created, I started presenting my participants’ voices in a narrative style. I present these voices in Chapter 4 to Chapter 6 by focussing on each group, Research Lounge Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds, separately. The writing process itself continued to be part of the interpretation process, as I tried to make sense of what I saw in the maps and within participants’ reflections. I reflected on similarities and differences of perceptions and practices between the three groups, and only then, the five behaviour groups emerged. Based on shared perceptions and practices with regards to lifestyles and travelling, participants were grouped into the 'no need', 'stay the same', 'more aware', ‘do my bit’, and 'changed' behaviour groups. However, besides identifying emerging themes and behaviour groups, what were the overarching themes and underlying processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making? In order to crystallise these, I had to explore my participants’ responses and my interpretations further. I extracted and summarised the overarching grounded theory themes and concepts (see Chapter 7), and identified the embedded theoretical concepts of the four underlying theoretical constructs. These theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and agency were identified as constituents of the meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, with knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy mediating agency. Based on the overall grounded theory themes and concepts, as
well as the theoretical constructs, I developed my grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency, which I present in Chapter 7. Within the next section, and final section of this Chapter, I discuss how I present my interpretations and my participants’ voices within the following voices chapters.

2.7 **Presentation of participants’ voices and my interpretations**

As a postmodern constructivist researcher, I was concerned with how to represent my participants’ voices and my reflexivity as parts of my findings in my writings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The possibilities are diverse and could include creative writing styles with the researcher becoming, for example, a storyteller, poet, dramaturge, using personal narratives and first-person accounts (Janesick, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Throughout this chapter, I have used a first-person account as I reflected on my decisions with regards to paradigm and methodology, and my experiences in employing Internet-mediated methods and how I interpreted the empirical material. Within the voices chapters (Chapter 3 to 6) I present my participants’ voices and therefore, within those chapters, I do not use a first-person account. My interpretations are represented in a third-person account using a narrative style. Within these interpretations I made general references to the number of participants who reflected on a certain theme, as this matches the narrative style of my qualitative study. By referring to ‘a few’ participants, I generally referred to a small group of that participant group. ‘Some participants’ reflects more than ‘a few’, ‘the majority’ reflects more than fifty percent of that participant group, and ‘most’ reflects more than a ‘majority’. Such references are made wherever I thought an indication of how many participants reflected on a certain theme was necessary; otherwise I just refer to ‘participants’. However, such ‘number’ references also have to be seen in the context of the total number of participants within the three groups, as Non-believers and Undecideds were far smaller groups than the Believers. Furthermore, as my interpretations are grounded in my participants’ online discussions and reflections, I included examples or text excerpts of participants’ narratives. As Patton (2002) states, “[d]escription and quotation provide the foundation of qualitative reporting. Sufficient description and direct quotations should be included to allow the reader to enter into the situation and thoughts of the
people presented in the report” (p. 503). With regard to these quotations, I made the following decisions.

- I corrected typos within the quotes as respondents would have corrected these themselves if they had more time, and to make the text easier to read for my audience. However, I did not correct sentence structures if these were grammatically incorrect.
- Where sentences seem to lack context, sometimes due to extracting only specific parts from a longer narrative, I added such context and indicated this by using brackets [ ] around the added context.
- Wherever participants used unconventional words or politically incorrect expressions (e.g. man-made), I indicated these with [sic] to show that these were the words used by the participant.
- When sentences or paragraphs were long, I only used those parts of the narrative that were relevant for the quotation. Deleted words or parts are then indicated through the use of ellipses.

In Chapter 3, I present my interpretations of the preliminary Lonely Planet study. The voices of the Thorn Tree discussion participants are represented through excerpts from their narratives. In order to respect participants’ anonymity, I decided not to use their Thorn Tree pseudonym, although their discussions are freely accessible online. Furthermore, as the selected Thorn Tree discussions represent a large number of participants, the selected quotes generally represent different persons. Creating a pseudonym for the purpose of this research, therefore, would not have had any relevance. The Thorn Tree quotes, therefore, do not contain any identifying information.

In the Chapter 4 to Chapter 6, I present my interpretations of the Research Lounge study. Each of these chapters focuses on one of the three groups, Research Lounge Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. This allows the reader to ‘meet’ my Research Lounge participants and to co-interpret (Patton, 2002) what I was seeing in their narratives. Each of these three chapters starts with a vignette that was constructed based on my interpretations of the groups. Such vignettes are “representative, typical, or emblematic” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 81) and
represent a constructed voice of a ‘typical’ Research Lounge Believer, Non-believer, or Undecided. My interpretations of the Research Lounge reflections are, again, complemented with excerpts from participants’ narratives. Unlike the Lonely Planet treatment with regard to ‘anonymity’, these quotes contain the pseudonyms I created for the Research Lounge participants. As previously outlined, they are based on a serial number, and, if available, gender and age information.

In Chapter 7, I summarise and compare my interpretations of both studies and the three groups within the Research Lounge study. Within this chapter, I also demonstrate how I developed my grounded theory, and introduce this at the end of the chapter. By using a narrative style to present my interpretations and participants’ voices, as well as my theorising chapter, I decided not to relate my interpretations to the relevant literature in these chapters. This is congruent with Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) original approach of grounded theory development that suggests reviewing the literature after completing the interpretation. The four theoretical constructs of my grounded theory together with their associated theoretical concepts provide a structure for the discussion chapter (Chapter 8). In discussing the theoretical constructs and associated concepts, I draw on the relevant literature and demonstrate how my interpretations and grounded theory are situated within the current state of related knowledge with regards to climate change perceptions and travelling.

Within this chapter, I presented my paradigmatic stance, the methodology, and methods used, as well as reflected on the research process and decisions I made. From a postmodern constructivist point of view, there is no one-way but multiple ways of representing my interpretations, my participants’ voices, and my grounded theory. In the following chapters, I now present the way I have chosen.
PART II:

PARTICIPANT VOICES & INTERPRETATIONS
CHAPTER THREE

TRAVELLERS’ CLIMATE CHANGE DISCUSSIONS

Of course we’re going to see a lot of what we do migrating to new platforms. I keep saying people will still want travel books, whether they’ll be on paper is a different question. And climate change and the ‘should I fly?’ question is going to be [a] huge challenge to anybody involved in travel, but we’re not going to solve the problem by sitting on our hands and saying ‘stay home.’

(Interview Tony Wheeler, Lonely Planet co-founder, Williams, 2007, 24 May)

Online travel communities have become an increasingly important platform for travellers in order to search for and share travel information, as well as for discussions of travel-relevant issues like climate change or global warming. This raises two questions. Firstly, how do travellers discuss climate change issues in an online environment? And secondly, do climate change discussions influence their travel decisions? This chapter presents interpretations of existing online discussions that took place in the Thorn Tree forum during the period January 2006 to September 2008. This time frame ‘emerged’ based on the discussion threads that were selected until no new insights emerged. The aim of this preliminary study was to explore how travellers utilise an online travel community to discuss climate change issues and to investigate if climate change discussions were relevant for their travel decision-making. Using grounded theory, six major themes that emerged from the chosen discussions were identified. These were travellers’ positions on climate change, social institutions, role of information, travellers’ reflexivity, travellers’ personal and social agency, as well as meaning- and sense-making processes.
3.1 The Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum

The Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum, one of the oldest travel fora, offers travellers an open-access online environment for information exchange and discussion, focussing around geographical areas of travel interests (e.g. Asia, Thailand) or specific travel issues (e.g. women travellers, activities & gear). The Thorn Tree forum groups such foci into discussion branches or themes, which enables users to search or provide information and commentary in an easy structured way. The Thorn Tree forum also offers a search function for a more specific search, which was utilised. Discussions that contained ‘climate change’ or ‘global warming’ were identified in order to explore what issues or themes were the foci of such discussions. As outlined previously, both terms ‘climate change’ and ‘global warming’ are used interchangeably and for this research, the specific term ‘climate change’ was used. The search revealed that climate change discussions (including discussions that used the term ‘global warming’) were ‘happening’ not just in a specific forum branch but also within all forum branches. The degree to which climate change was discussed within the discussion threads was quite diverse (see Table 3.1). Some of the search results showed that people referred to climate change within their discussions on weather situations at a certain destination. Such discussions often only referred briefly to changing climatic conditions, but the main focus was the travel destination and not climate change. Within a few other discussion threads, climate change was discussed or mentioned for a short time or within a few posts; however, generally people (re)focused on other travel issues. Other discussions, however, were specifically started to discuss climate change related issues. Through theoretical sampling, discussion threads or commentaries were purposefully selected to reach saturation. To reiterate, the purpose of the Lonely Planet study was to gain an understanding of how travellers utilise a travel community website to engage in climate change discussions and how these influence their travel decisions.
### Table 3.1

**Thorn Tree forum discussions including climate change topic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion focus</th>
<th>Travel destinations</th>
<th>General discussions</th>
<th>Climate change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate change relevance</td>
<td>Mentioned in the context of weather and time to travel</td>
<td>Coming up within other discussions once or in a few replies</td>
<td>Specifically started to discuss climate change issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>“I was also thinking about maybe Sumatra or Sulawesi in Indonesia. Can anyone tell me their advice (maybe having been October 2007). What with climate change- are the internet sites [weather information] actually accurate?”</td>
<td>“OP, the answer to your &quot;questions&quot; is Climate Change!!! Al Gore (and to a lesser extent David Suzuki) has struck the fear of god into all North American companies regarding global warming and as such they are doing everything in their power to “save the planet”.”</td>
<td>“Do you believe in man made [sic] global warming or climate change (the GHG like CO2 etc = warming link)? And do you even care?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What were the issues that people focussed on, and what themes emerged from these discussions? The majority of the 31 selected discussion threads (see Chapter 2) focussed on the veracity of climate change and associated science. A few discussions addressed more travel-related issues; however, the veracity of climate change was still discussed. As mentioned previously, the following major concepts emerged from the grounded theory interpretation: travellers’ positions, social institutions, role of information, travellers’ reflexivity, travellers’ personal and social agency, and their meaning- and sense-making processes. In the following sections, each of these is considered, accompanied by examples of participants’ narratives. As previously stated, identifying information such as names and dates were removed to de-identify the various posters’ identities despite such identifiers being clearly posted in the public domain.
3.2 **Online discussions: Travellers’ positions**

Climate change discussions within the Thorn Tree forum embraced a strong emphasis on clarification of, or arguments about, the reality of climate change as a global phenomenon, it being caused or accelerated by humans, and possible resulting consequences for travelling and lifestyles in general. Regarding their individual position on human-induced climate change within these discussions, participants were grouped into Lonely Planet Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds.

**Lonely Planet Believers** based their position on the ‘truth’ or consensus of expert knowledge within the scientific community.

The IPCC, who are an incredibly conservative bunch but represent expert consensus on this are now convinced it’s caused by humans which is good enough for me.

Such scientific consensus has even been acknowledged by climate change-sceptic governments, which gave Lonely Planet Believers more confidence on their position.

Pretty much the whole [of] the climatology profession thinks global climate change is real. Hell, even the Bush administration finally admitted it.

Besides a general position on climate change, Lonely Planet Believers’ narratives also referred to reasoning for a more sustainable form of living.

Even if one was to hold the position that it is not true, what is wrong with pursuing cleaner air, sustainable living and alternative energy sources?

For some, however, the point in time to initiate change towards sustainable living in order to combat climate change had already past.
In fact, I am inclined to think we have ignored it for too long now and there really isn’t much we can do to reverse things. We had a lovely planet and we've done the best we can to screw it up.

Contrary to the Believers, the Lonely Planet Non-believers argued more vocally against a human-induced or -contributed climate change discussion. For them, nature was ‘running the show’.

It is mankind’s arrogance, puffed up self-importance, and hubris to state that WE are the drivers of global climate change. Nature is running the show, and if she is sick of man on earth, she’ll get rid of us, at her pleasure.

Besides placing nature in the focus of climate change discussions, non-climate related causes like solar activities seem to be, for Lonely Planet Non-believers, a more accepted cause of climate variations.

All this global warming stuff is bullshit. The chief cause is solar activity and the earth’s temperature changes periodically.

Lonely Planet Non-believers also perceived climate change discussions as propaganda of self-interested organizations or institutions (e.g. media) and as an invasion of personal lifestyles.

Don’t believe the propaganda. Any climate change is generated by that big yellow ball in the sky, our impact and more specifically my SUV’s is minimal at best.

What is more, Lonely Planet Non-believers’ personal lifestyles might even benefit from predicted climatic changes as cooler climatic regions will get warmer.

Besides, even if there was some truth to global warming, why must we assume it is all bad news. I could do with an increase of 5-10 degrees here in Vancouver.
However, there was a tendency amongst Lonely Planet Non-believers to utilise climate change debates as a platform to address general sustainability issues. In particular, a few Lonely Planet Non-believers reflected that environmental degradation and resulting impacts on more sustainable lifestyles were important, although not especially related to climate change issues.

I suspect a good many people out there arguing against the global warming alarmists agree that cutting down pollution is a good thing.

With Lonely Planet Believers agreeing with, and Lonely Planet Non-believers rebutting human-induced climate change theories, the Lonely Planet Undecideds within the discussions were not sure if humanity contributes to climate change.

Whether those changes have been caused by the activities of humans, as some people believe with religious fervour, seems open to question.

For them, scientific proof was not yet sufficient and resultantly the concept of climate change was doubted.

I’m not sure anyone really knows what’s happening, let alone prove it.

An increase in natural changes and disasters, however, was acknowledged by some Lonely Planet Undecideds as providing some non-scientific evidence to the climate change discussions.

I don’t know who to believe, Al Gore’s “An Inconvenient Truth” or the “Great Global Warming Swindle” but there certainly seems to be some significant events happening around the world to back up ol’ [sic] Al.

The provision of information and more convincing scientific evidence, however, seemed to have repositioned some Lonely Planet Undecideds as Lonely Planet Believers.
The evidence is getting more convincing. I used to think it could be due to natural climate cycles, but after attending a conference last year (no brain washing involved) I now believe that emissions from humans (especially CO2) are to blame.

Overall, Lonely Planet Undecideds rationalised climate change knowledge and positions based on a majority-minority base or on personal experiences.

There just seems to be a whole lot of us that are very unsure of this whole thing.

Although participants’ general positions within the discussions served to differentiate the Lonely Planet community members, all three groups: Lonely Planet Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds, showed commonalities within their narratives. The roles of social institutions and information were especially discussed from a critical stance within all three groups. Such debates focussed on a general discussion of climate change rather than a travel-relevant focus.

3.3 Online discussions: Social institutions

Besides positioning themselves in the climate change discussions as Lonely Planet Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds, discussion participants generally advocated distrust of social institutions, particularly the media and governments.

For most of us, there is a large element of trust in people we do not know, in science we do not understand, in leaders that have agendas.

So let’s not stress and worry about things that are said in the media. Things that untrustworthy politicians are telling us. Things that scientists cannot conclusively prove.

The role of the media was perceived by Lonely Planet Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds as especially critical in global climate change debates.
We rely on “the media” to contact credible sources and interpret them for us. The biggest shame is that they are not doing a very good job at this.

For discussion participants, distrust of the media emanated from, and was related to, the media’s organisational self-interests, their mediation roles between scientist and the public, and evidences of untrustworthy news or information platforms and provisions.

I rarely believe the media and their impending doom scenarios every night... give it five years and it will be something else....

Despite such criticisms of social institutions, especially the media, discussion participants perceived information as crucial regarding climate change consensus and actions.

3.4 Online discussions: Role of information

Participants in the Thorn Tree climate change discussions acknowledged the embedded nature of knowledge within information texts and discourses. There was also an acknowledgment of the responsibility to act on this knowledge in order to come to a conclusion about the ‘truth’ of climate change and to act responsibly.

It’s our responsibility to act on the information we have.

So, what we then have to do is gather all information available to us, all of our understanding of climatic systems, and come to some sort of “expert’s” understanding.

While climate change discussions are not new, these discussion participants emphasised the importance of improved scientific measurements within the climate science as well as increases in information over time.
I think some of the global warming/climate theory is due to the fact the humans have never had the capacity for such concise measurements/record keeping of climatic data as in the last 20 years.

Whereas the need to act on climate change was most evident amongst Lonely Planet Believers, all three groups agreed on the need for pro-environmental actions and voiced this in their narratives. Within these narratives, discussion participants were reflexive on their personal roles with regards to lifestyle changes, including travelling.

3.5 **Online discussions: Travellers’ reflexivity**

In online discussions, participants reflected on their roles as a traveller, citizen and consumer by acknowledging a responsibility for pro-environmental behaviour regardless of the truth of climate change.

I think we should all be intelligent enough to know that whether you believe in ‘global warming’ or ‘climate change’ or not.... most of what people are being asked to do is common-sense anti-pollution stuff.

Some participants also admitted that there was a contradiction between climate change facts and lifestyle choices, which did not necessarily lead to a change in behaviour.

Even armed with current information about the direct link between human CO2 emissions and global-warming the majority of people have made little or no effort to make meaningful changes to their lifestyles.

While the impact of information was perceived as having minimal influences on lifestyle changes, discussion participants recognised that individual people had the ability to influence others by demonstrating personal lifestyle changes, including changes in travel behaviour, or in the course of social interactions.
If you change the way you travel and people ask you about it then you may change how they think about climate change.

Participants’ reflexivity demonstrated an engagement with climate change discussions that could lead to changes in behaviours. In particular, there was a noted emphasis on the nature and types of actions that participants pursued both personally and socially while making travel decisions or during travels.

3.6 Online discussions: Travellers’ personal and social agency

Besides reflecting on their personal roles and changes in behaviour, discussion participants critically talked about possible actions on climate change. As travellers, participants demonstrated personal and social agency by reporting on their personal travel choices and lifestyle changes.

I’ve personally started to ponder more about holidaying locally within the UK and Europe using alternate transport like trains which (arguably) have less impact on the environment rather than flying to Spain or Greece for the weekend!

Low impact travels, partly based on offsetting programs, as well as more responsible choices of travel destinations and durations, were viewed as ways to act more responsibly on a personal level.

I’m travelling around the world right now and trying to make the trip as low impact as possible.

The good thing about offsetting orgs [sic] is that it puts your carbon footprint at the top of people’s minds. People are now becoming increasingly aware of the impact of flying / driving a car.

Furthermore, recognition of individual responsibility to change travel behaviours and lifestyles was also related to consumer power as part of a social agency. This could lead to product changes within industries.
If we as consumers/tourists don’t change our ways, then we're silly to expect any different from the industry.

Consideration of personal and social agency by travellers stimulated debates amongst the discussion participants. Such debates were at the heart of their meaning- and sense-making processes. For each of the three groups, however, these processes were of different importance.

3.7 Online discussions: Meaning- and sense-making processes

Thorn Tree discussion participants’ narratives reflected not only their general stance on climate change, but also showed differences in how participants utilised online discussions for their meaning- and sense-making processes. The following matrix (Table 3.2) represents the emergent processes of meaning- and sense-making of the Thorn Tree participants’ regarding climate change. Lonely Planet Believers engaged in climate change discussions to share information and experiences regarding climate change, especially with like-minded people. The Lonely Planet Non-believers on the other hand tried to uncover climate change misconceptions held by climate change proponents, within and outside online discussions. Situated between Lonely Planet Believers, Non-believers, and their narratives, the Lonely Planet Undecideds still tried to make up their mind in order to take a position on climate change.

From a meaning-making and sense-making perspective, such online discussions might be most important for Lonely Planet Undecideds, helping them to construct their own position. The foci of discussions also reflected the different reasons for participation for each group, information, arguments, and reflections on pros and cons of a human influenced or caused climate change.
Table 3.2
Towards a grounded theory of Lonely Planet travellers’ perspectives on climate change and connectivity on travel decision-making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Believers</th>
<th>Undecideds</th>
<th>Non-believers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for participation</td>
<td>* Sharing of information and experiences</td>
<td>* Trying to make up their mind</td>
<td>* Making their point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Seeking advice from like-minded people</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Revealing climate change misconceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foci of discussion</td>
<td>* Exchange of pro-climate change information</td>
<td>* Asking for conclusive information or evidence</td>
<td>* See climate change/global warming as a big scam or myth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Discussion on evidence, actions, solutions</td>
<td>* Unsure if humans’ actions play a role</td>
<td>* Humans are too insignificant to have influence or to change anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Reflexive on humans’ influences on climate</td>
<td>* Unsure if climate change is only a natural occurrence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resulting conclusions or actions</td>
<td>* General pro-environmental attitudes</td>
<td>* Still in doubt</td>
<td>* No reason to change anything, especially not own lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Keep on talking and acting pro-climate change</td>
<td>* And/or see reason for pro-environmental actions (regardless if climate change is true or not)</td>
<td>* Looking forward to warmer climates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Reduce carbon emission while travelling and at home</td>
<td></td>
<td>* Partly agreeing to pro-environmental actions, independent of climate change discussions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But how do such meaning-making and sense-making processes reflect participants’ actions? Participants’ narratives revealed a general tendency rather than a definitive stance. Lonely Planet Believers tended to voice their actions on climate change or pro the environment more than Lonely Planet Undecideds and Lonely Planet Non-believers. For them, reducing carbon emissions at home and during travels, as well as talking about it, was the resonating theme. Lonely Planet Undecideds and Lonely Planet Non-believers focussed more on general pro-environmental actions that were viewed as necessary regardless of any position on climate change. Lifestyle changes based on climate change actions, however, were rejected by Non-believers. For them a warming climate was perceived as a means that could potentially benefit their
current lifestyles. Overall, the belief or disbelief in humans’ contributions to climate change was at the core of possible changes in travel behaviours.

3.8 Conclusion

The interpretation of climate change discussions within the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum provided initial insights into the diversity of travellers’ climate change perceptions, possible responses to climate change and associated actions. The discussion participants were reflective regarding their personal stance and actions, and demonstrated personal and social agency within their commentary. Furthermore, participants within the climate change discussions disclosed their distrust of information on climate change. Such distrust was also related to social institutions that ‘produced’ or disseminated climate change information. Although the role of information was seen as crucial, dissemination, especially through the media, was perceived as influenced by self-interests and misinformation. The meaning- and sense-making processes within online discussions were therefore important acts for participants in order to develop their position on climate change.

The grounded theory that emerged from the Thorn Tree discussions was framed as:

Travellers’ perspectives of the climate change are influenced by information generated by a broad range of social institutions. This information is reflexively filtered according to its meaning and quality through the social processes of meaning-making and sense-making supported by and in online fora. These online fora enable travellers to demonstrate personal and social agency with regard to information sharing and distillation, climate change and connectivity to travel decision-making.

The key category that emerged from the Thorn Tree discussions was the position or stance a participant had regarding his or her beliefs on humans’ influences on or causes of climate change. These positions were classified as one of three types: Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. The classification was founded on how participants framed their general position on human-contributed climate change
within their narratives. Participants often used the word ‘believing’, or a relevant synonym, to express their beliefs or disbeliefs. Generically, a belief can be defined as “a mental attitude of acceptance or assent toward a proposition without the full intellectual knowledge required to guarantee its truth” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In this study of the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree discussions, belief represents the proposition that humans influence or contribute to climate change. From this study, I therefore ‘defined’ Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds as follows:

- A Believer is a participant who clearly stated that humans influence or contribute to climate change, or, more indirectly, that humans need to change practices in order to combat climate change.

- A Non-believer is a participant who stated that climate change is a natural cycle that is independent of humans’ actions, or was not happening at all.

- An Undecided is a participant who expressed an unclear position on what to believe, human influenced or caused, or just a natural cycle.

In conclusion, the Thorn Tree climate change discussions provided a first understanding of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and how these might relate to their travel behaviours. However, participation within such discussions seemed to be very transient and provided only limited accounts of an individual participant’s perception on climate change and travelling. In order to achieve a better understanding of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and influences on travel behaviour, further empirical material needed to be collected to attain more focussed perspectives from individuals. The Climate Change Research Lounge website was developed to achieve this by recruiting a group of participants and focussing their responses through a set of open-ended questions (see Chapter 2). These questions were developed based on the insights gained through the Lonely Planet study and provided more focussed responses that advanced an understanding of travellers’ perception and connectivity to travel decision-making. Similar to the interpretation of the Thorn Tree discussions, the three groups of Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds also emerged from the Research Lounge responses. The focussed responses of the Research Lounge study enabled a deeper interpretation of individual
participant’s narratives and provided a holistic picture of travellers’ diverse perceptions. The following chapters present these perceptions according to the three groups: Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. So let’s meet my Research Lounge participants.
CHAPTER FOUR

MEET THE RESEARCH LOUNGE BELIEVERS

Climate change is here and our over-consumptive lifestyles have contributed to it.

To what degree, however, is unclear.

The discussions on climate change are not very helpful and the media is not very good in providing unbiased information.

Most of us are doing what they can, recycling, saving energy and so, but we need better information on what’s really helping the environment.

However, governments and businesses are not leading the way. We need more environmentally friendly choices and technology, but they often come with costs.

Travelling is so important for our economical and personal wellbeing, and any future impacts through climate change could be devastating for some destinations.

We can’t just stop travelling, but we can try to reduce our impacts.

(Vignette Believer)

Travellers’ online discussions within the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum revealed discussion participants’ positionality on human-induced climate change. Forum participants were grouped into Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds, which reflected their general acceptance of humans’ contribution to climate change. Corresponding with the Lonely Planet study, Believers in the Research Lounge study accepted the premises that humans influence or contribute to climate change. Within the Research Lounge responses, Believers numbered 113 participants out of 146 and thus represented the largest group. Besides Research Lounge Believers’ general stance on climate change, it became clear that these Believers were not a homogenous group. Differences were revealed with regards to how much humanity contributes to climate change, as well as the way in which Research Lounge Believers framed their beliefs. These frames included beliefs that humans are the main or sole reason for climate change, humans’ lifestyles contribute to or accelerate climate change, to beliefs that climate change was predominantly a natural cycle and
humans’ contribution was only a minor issue. Furthermore, an overall cross-
interpretation of responses revealed that Research Lounge Believers could be
grouped into four behaviour groups regarding their perceptions and resulting actions.
These four groups varied from complete inaction, increased awareness, pursuing
environmental practices, as well as already changed travel behaviours. Accordingly,
the groups were named ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’
Believers.

This chapter provides insights into how the Research Lounge Believers articulated
their perceptions of climate change, how they related climate change to travelling,
and what influences climate change discussions had on their personal travel
behaviour. Firstly, how Research Lounge Believers framed their beliefs on climate
change and how they engaged with information on climate change is presented.
Research Lounge Believers further shared an understanding that actions on climate
change are needed, although they questioned the type of actions and associated
responsibility. Then, how Research Lounge Believers voiced their relationship with
nature, and what their understandings were regarding a connection between tourism,
travelling and climate change is introduced. These understandings included
reflections on how climate change might impact on travelling or destinations, and,
vice versa, what tourism’s contribution to climate change might be. Climate change
impacts on different regions in the world are constantly reported on in the media, but
does this imply that travellers are aware of possible impacts on destinations they
want to visit or what impact their personal travel activities might have on a certain
destination? Looking at Research Lounge Believers’ thoughts about footprints
reveals that carbon footprint was not a generally well-understood concept. Based on
their diverse understandings and perceptions, the chapter concludes with how climate
change discussions influenced Research Lounge Believers’ personal travel decisions,
leading to inaction, increased awareness, environmental practices, and changes in
travel behaviours.
4.1 Climate change is real: I believe it, I can see it

As mentioned above, Research Lounge Believers accepted the premise of humans’ contribution to climate change; the extent of this contribution, however, was framed in different ways. Most* Research Lounge Believers defined climate change as a natural process or cycle to which humans’ lifestyle practices contribute.

It is a natural process (whether change towards warmer or colder climate); however, this normally natural process has been significantly altered by human interactions with the environment.

132 Female 26

Some Research Lounge Believers stressed that this contribution through humans’ lifestyles and consumption accelerates the natural processes of climate change.

We are in a warm part of an ice age and the climate will inevitably change. It is feasible that human activity is accelerating the progress of climate change through pollution and disrupting the planet's ecological balance through habitat clearing, over fishing, agriculture and consumption of non-renewable resources.

081 Female 43

* Humankind, for some Research Lounge Believers, has to take the main or even sole responsibility for climate change, and immediate action is required to not just slow down but even try to reverse the process of climate change.

I believe climate change is happening and that humankind is responsible for the rapid increase in temperatures around the globe and the increase in major weather aberrations occurring such as unusual flooding, droughts and other extreme weather conditions reported in the media. Land clearing, fossil fuel burning and

* Readers are reminded that the terms ‘few’, ‘some’, ‘most’, or ‘majority’ are outlined in Chapter 2, page 77.
consumption of energy by industrialised nations are major contributions to the rise of greenhouse gases and planetary temperature increases. Immediate action to slow or reverse climate change by embracing alternative sources of energy and implementing active policies to reduce carbon emissions are vital.

095 Male 55

A sole responsibility, however, was questioned by a few Research Lounge Believers and was still open for debate, as natural processes have to be taken into account.

There is sufficient evidence to know that climate change is taking place - whether it is solely man made [sic] or part of natural evolution is debatable.

099 Male 64

However, other Research Lounge Believers did not see climate change as such a big issue at all, as, for them, it is mainly a natural cycle and human activities only play a minor role within the climate change progression.

Changes in weather patterns are cyclic and has been happening for years. I believe humans have caused a vast amount of damage but do not believe climate change is a massive issue.

018 Female 26

As shown in Figure 4.1, Research Lounge Believers’ narratives on climate change beliefs were diverse and represented by the degree of humans’ contribution to which they subscribed.
Besides the above general statements on their beliefs, some Research Lounge Believers based their beliefs on ‘evidence’ that climate change is happening, and was something they were already experiencing in their daily lives. Such evidence referred to climatic changes, which they themselves had noticed, changes they had heard about, as well as narratives on the severity of such changes. Research Lounge Believers who **noticed climate change impacts** usually referred to something they **saw or experienced** in their direct environment.

Frightening-------- can people not see that the weather we are experiencing around the world are all as results of climate change? I can notice it in my own garden.

051 Female 69

Other Research Lounge Believers’ narratives referred to reports on climate change impacts they **heard about or saw on the media**.

---

**Figure 4.1.** Research Lounge Believers’ climate change frames
Climate change is real and is happening. Only this morning I heard that several fish species are now being recorded in southern Australian waters that were previously considered warm temperate species.

014 Female 44

In some of such reports, climate change events were reported to already impact on humans’ lives or lifestyles, and that society or humanity has to deal with such impacts.

For the past five years my real experience of climate change has been through extreme seasonal conditions never seen before, which resulted in dire social, political and economical consequences around the world. As I am writing here, there are several hundred thousands of people in Pakistan who are still without shelters from the flooding.

147 Male 32

The severity of some climate change impacts, however, was something a few Research Lounge Believers questioned. To what extent for example will islands or low-lying areas disappear? Although climate change was seen as a global issue, additional impacts have to be looked at from the perspective of regional or local relevance.

I think it’s real and accept the merits behind it but at the same time find the supposed results of climate change a little far fetched. For example suggesting that all island nations will simply disappear to me is very unlikely; many island nations are volcanic meaning they are constantly expanding, therefore, even if the water levels do rise a certain amount I still find it hard to believe the islands will go underwater.

016 Male 19

However, as one Research Lounge Believer was concerned, we might not be able to predict to what degree climate change will impact on our lifestyles.
I am concerned that I cannot obtain a definitive answer to impacts of climate change on various aspects of our lifestyle.

087 Male

Besides the severity of climate change events, conflicting information or assumptions about climate change issues were critiqued as well.

There is no one version of the truth so it’s difficult for everyone to determine what the facts are and the range of potential outcomes. The predictive modelling is only as good as the assumptions and much of this is questionable. While on the balance of probabilities there is an impact, it is not clear the direction and order of magnitude is.

068 Male 35

For some Research Lounge Believers, the science behind climate change was not in question, but our (in)action to solve the problem.

Climate change is real, the science is sound, and we have a limited time in which to turn around the situation before we reach a point of no return.

052 Male 59

Though, not all Research Lounge Believers were sure of how much, if at all, the natural process of climatic change was considered within the climate change sciences and related discussions.

I believe that climate change is a real issue of concern and should be looked at as one of contemporary societies’ priorities for the immediate future. Added to this however is my belief that throughout the history of our planet we have experienced ever changing climatic conditions. I do not believe that this is brought to the fore, as it should be because it negates some of the idealised urgency that certain groups like to sensationalise.

034 Male
For some Research Lounge Believers, however, it was just **irrelevant** whether climate change was a natural cycle or influenced by our lifestyles, as there is a need for environmental action.

Climate change, whether it is a man made [sic] phenomenon or a cyclical event is a good reason to start a conversation about environmental awareness and responsibility.

096 Female 30

Such conversations take place not solely within the scientific community but also within the public sphere. The question is, do Research Lounge Believers get involved in such discussions, whether active or passive, in order to gain knowledge on climate change? Besides those Research Lounge Believers who reflected on experiencing effects of climate change, how do Research Lounge Believers know about climate change issues?

**4.2 Climate change is real: How do we know, whom do we trust?**

The media, in its various forms of print, online, and broadcasting, was mentioned as the main information source accessed by all participants within the Research Lounge study. Research Lounge Believers’ narratives on how they perceived the role of different information sources (media, publications, organisations, social groups, etc.) focussed on the general role these sources had for engaging with climate change or environmental information, as well as the (dis)trust that was embedded within such information. Some Research Lounge Believers reflected on the importance to engage with a variety of **different information sources** in order to gain knowledge on climate change issues.

I do read fairly widely and am interested in some media programs on television and radio dealing with these issues and do try to keep up to scratch with current opinions.

053 Female 81
For a few Research Lounge Believers, especially the media played a role in raising awareness or disseminating information on environmental issues.

Without them, we may not have ever known about the greenhouse effect so they are highly important.

012 Male 51

Not every Research Lounge Believer, however, engaged widely in information gathering, and for them, the media, including print, online, and broadcasting, was the sole information source.

To be honest the media is probably the only channel through which I glean information regarding climate change and environmental issues.

049 Male 64

Learning and gaining knowledge on climate change issues was seen by some Research Lounge Believers as an important aspect of their engagement with the different information sources.

These community groups/organisations if you will, and media and publications such as local newspapers and local advertising material about the local environment initiatives all are educational and learning material of some sort so they certainly do play a very large role in knowledge being passed on to others/other groups.

015 Male 25

Such information engagement processes could even lead to changes in behaviours as they provide information on how to act on climate change.

They keep the discussion at the forefront of my thinking and challenge me to establish some knowledge and become involved in the solutions.

081 Female 43
Although, for a few Research Lounge Believers, these information sources were not yet sufficient in providing education on climate change issues.

I believe the media, some organisations and some social groups can play a role in awareness of environmental issues, but not necessarily accurate education of these issues.

132 Female 26

Besides the daily information delivery through the media, some Research Lounge Believers reflected on doing their own research, especially on the Internet, on issues that interest them or to follow up on information received through different news channels. This then helps them to get further viewpoints and develop their own opinions.

A great deal, by listening and comparing various sources, one can get a great a lot of [sic] information; one then can follow up using the Internet.

067 Male 71

For a few Research Lounge Believers, doing their own research resulted in further discussions with peers or participation in environmental groups or actions.

Clean up Australia day is another great way to get the community involved - however more advertising and events such as this should happen at least 3 times a year I believe.

030 Female 22

But how trustworthy did the Research Lounge Believers perceive the information they received through the different information sources? The notion of trust and whom to believe was embedded in most Research Lounge Believers’ narratives, as information, especially delivered by the media, could not be trusted.
I keep in touch with the news and other media events through a number of sources. Not all tell the truth though and one has to be careful about how much to believe.

066 Female 60

Such distrust was for some Research Lounge Believers based on the quality of information, which was not grounded on consented facts or was of limited quality because of **conflicting information.**

Hopefully one will be able to find some truth somewhere. Unfortunately there is too much conflicting information issued.

060 Male 68

The majority of Research Lounge Believers reflected in their narratives on self-interests of different institutions and a **biased** view based on such interests.

I try to be rational about a lot of these things. I believe that a lot of people on the environmental track are there for their own gain. There is a lot of money to be made in this and I am cynical enough to know that not everybody who is involved in it believes what they are preaching.

054 Female 68

Such biased views and self-interests were seen as the reasons for an **unbalanced** information discussion, especially within the media.

Many media reports and publications also give a one sided approach and not the full picture where people could make an informed decision.

099 Male 64

Furthermore, a few Research Lounge Believers were critical about media organisations for providing propaganda and creating **media-hypes** rather than delivering facts and information.
I am not a fan of sensationalism and often the media tends to attach this to environmental issues.

126 Female 30

Overall, Research Lounge Believers’ narratives showed that most Believers engage with a variety of different information sources, as they were critical of unbalanced or biased information that was driven by organisations’ self-interests. Arising from Research Lounge Believers’ perspectives and knowledge of climate change issues, Believers reflected on the need to act on climate change. But whose responsibility is it?

4.3 Climate change is real: We need to act, we need to change, time is crucial

In believing in humans’ contribution to climate change, most Research Lounge Believers acknowledged a need for action, as well as reflected on their personal responsibility and agency (Figure 4.2). Research Lounge Believers’ narratives contained reflections on personal changes in lifestyle behaviours, addressed the responsibility for change within institutions, groups, or by other people, and questioned if one’s personal changes would make a positive contribution that could be experienced in one’s life time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Demand action</th>
<th>Inaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am doing my bit; changing my behaviour</td>
<td>Nations, governments, organisations, the tourism industry, other people have to act, have to change</td>
<td>I can’t make a difference; not in my life time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.2. Research Lounge Believers’ calls for action*

There was a common understanding amongst Research Lounge Believers regarding the need to act on climate change and to change consumptions or lifestyle behaviours. As the act of consumption was seen as a contributing factor within the
climate change discussions, the call for change can be seen as a (re)action in order to slow climate change down or reverse it.

More needs to be done on both an individual and global scale to reduce the rate of climate change.
019 Female 20

The timing for this (re)action was seen as a crucial factor and reflections were represented in the narratives by pressing the need for action before it is too late.

I think it is such a cumulative effect that we won't really know what we've done until it's too late.
004 Female 27

In the case of inaction, specific or more general consequences would have to be expected for humans’ life on Earth.

I think climate change is the most significant issues facing the planet and something that could (and will if we do not act) have massive consequences for life on Earth.
020 Male 29

But how can we address change in our everyday lives? Some Research Lounge Believers emphasised the need to change the way we do things, become more resourceful, and consequently reduce emissions that contribute to the climate change process.

I am concerned, however, I feel the media and government are not educating the public in the correct way; effective change in how we live our lives is needed. We all need to pull together e.g.: the water restrictions and how everyone now thinks differently to how to use water compared to the past.
050 Female 43
Examples in other countries, where alternative energy projects are already common, were seen as a direction for change.

I believe it is happening and I would like to see more done about it. I recently went to Germany and in rural towns I noticed that they all had solar panels on their roofs! Germany doesn’t get as much sun as we do but they have more solar panels than I have ever seen- I don’t understand (beside cost) how there aren’t more in Australia- the sunny nation!!

044 Female 20

In order to change consumption behaviours or lifestyles, Research Lounge Believers reflected on themselves and on their personal actions. ‘Doing my bit’ was seen as a reasonable contribution on a personal level in order to reduce climate change.

It is everyone’s responsibility to do their bit to assist. Climate change is more noticeable each year that passes and I, for one, will try to do whatever I can to assist treading softly on our planet.

058 Female 62

But how much can we change? And if we can change, will our actions lead to the desired outcome and reduce or revert climate change? As climate change is a large global issue, some Research Lounge Believers doubted that their own contributions would make a difference.

It doesn't really concern me. I know it exists, but there is little I can do to influence its outcome.

028 Male 28

Another kind of (re)action was evident in narratives by a few Research Lounge Believers who did not seem to be hopeful that humanity will be able to stop or reverse the climate change process.
I believe we have gone beyond the tipping point of fixing this problem.

011 Female 56

The calls for action also implies looking at whose responsibility it is to act. The role of governments and private organisations was seen by some Research Lounge Believers as initiators of change, on a national and individual level.

I think it is a serious issue, which must be addressed urgently. I also think the biggest hurdle with tackling climate change is the question of who is responsible in terms of initiating change -- which places a majority of the responsibility on governments and leading private enterprises as these groups need to initiate changes at the individual level by educating and making sustainable alternatives available to the general public.

003 Male 27

Besides looking at their own consumptions or what society can do, some Research Lounge Believers perceived real change to be only possible if climate change issues would be addressed on a wide global scale. Nations with high carbon emissions need to be part of the change.

Like most things in life the almighty dollar will decide what happens here. The big corporations and successive governments (both international & local) will determine what we need to do with regard to Climate Change, but unless we have full cooperation from India, China the US, Russia, England, Japan, Germany, then all it will do is go around and around, but you can guarantee the people will pay even though it will do nothing to help them.

025 Male 53

Research Lounge Believers’ responses revealed that they see different actors, including themselves, as being responsible to act on climate change. But do Research
Lounge Believers really care about the environment, and if yes, what relationships do they have with nature?

### 4.4 Climate change is real: I care for nature, I respect nature, I depend on it

Research Lounge Believers’ relationship with nature focussed on stewardship, respect, and interdependence. Stewardship was based on the need to preserve or care for the environment and was voiced by most Research Lounge Believers in their narratives. A few Research Lounge Believers perceived humans as part of the environment, which implied a responsibility or need for care.

I see humans as part of the environment and as we have a more negative impact than any other creature, we have a responsibility to adjust the way we live so that future generations can live in the same way; find a balance that is sustainable.

081 Female 43

Most Research Lounge Believers expressed such a responsibility for care through reflections on their personal environmental practices. Such practices usually evolved within or around their households and Research Lounge Believers described the kind of practices they performed. These practices included saving water and energy, reuse and recycle, responsible choices regarding products and food, as well as pursuing a self-sufficient lifestyle.

I am very conscious of the environment. My household actively supports recycling, water saving strategies, natural heating and cooling techniques, solar energy, organic food products etc.

059 Female 58

Such environmental practices were generally seen as sufficient to ‘do their bit’ or ‘try to do their best’ for the environment.
I value the environment highly, and try and take care of the environment, recycle, less carbon emissions and I have solar throughout my house. I try my best.

056 Female 29

One reason for performing such environmental practices was expressed through some Research Lounge Believers’ concerns regarding rubbish and pollution in general that were deteriorating environments.

I like to refrain from carelessly leaving rubbish around, and not to waste energy but at times it seems pointless when my actions are counteracted by others who don’t care about maintaining clean air, water and land.

089 Female 57

Although most Research Lounge Believers reflected on a need for more responsible choices, following environmental practices, making such choices and changing behaviour was perceived as a difficult task.

I value the environment highly, but I'm also acutely aware that this is not necessarily backed up by my behaviour. Increasingly I try and minimise my ‘footprint’ but it is challenging when one participates in a consumer society.

096 Female 30

A few Research Lounge Believers also reflected on constraints, as economic situations or a lack of available responsible choices were making such transitions difficult.

For me personally, everyday activities can sometimes feel like a helpless burden, as one is forced to consider the immediate economic aspect of life and be forced to ignore the environmental impact. I have great value for the environment, much more than I do for economic
returns, however, as we live in an economic system, it becomes harder to make the choices we'd really want to make.

003 Male 27

Besides stewardship, Research Lounge Believers also reflected on their respect for nature, which they based on their environmental values by referring to their upbringings or a need for balance in order to protect the environment.

I was always brought up to respect nature and the environment. Now being a parent I try to pass this on to my children.

029 Female 42

Nature’s own power to recover, regardless what human kind would do to it, was respected by a few Research Lounge Believers.

You don’t get very far if you don’t take care of the environment. But I do believe that long before the last tree has gone Mother Nature will have decided she needs trees more than human beings.

106 Male 56

While for some respect for nature was based on nature’s power, for a few Research Lounge Believers it referred to enjoyment. They expressed their respect for nature through narratives on their admiration for the environment, the beauty of nature and enjoyment it gives as part of their lives.

I believe that the rarity and beauty of our natural environment is a gift for all of mankind [sic] to enjoy. I believe therefore that all of us need to be mindful of how we treat our environment.

034 Male

For others, nature and the environment was perceived as part of their quality of life.
Environment is my habitat. If I want to live well for as long as I wish, I have to live as green as possible to protect the environment and the next generation.
141 Female 33

The importance of nature for one’s life was also expressed through comments referring to interdependency between humans and nature. A few Research Lounge Believers commented on personal influences that nature has on their lives, as nature sustains them.

The environment is as important as anything else in my life. Without the natural environment, life would be very dull and unhealthy.
020 Male 29

Besides such personal influences, some Research Lounge Believers reflected on the fact that humans depend on nature and what it provides for survival.

The environment creates the living condition for human beings. The healthier the environment, the healthier the people living in it. Unfortunately, people often don’t see and feel consequences of their action (in regards to the environment) right away.
131 Male 54

However, the survival of the human race was only part of their concerns. Other Research Lounge Believers worried about possible losses or destructions of nature in general or their personal environments in particular, which implied the need to care for or protect nature.

I place tremendous value on the environment because it is both vulnerable and resilient. It has withstood incredible insult, but if it reaches the point where it is no longer able to continue to adapt, where do we go? It is our only environment, it’s not as if we can create another one.
052 Female 59
Such a responsibility for protection of nature was also expressed in some Research Lounge Believers’ concerns for future generations that might not be able to enjoy nature’s beauty or would experience degradation of natural resources.

I value the environment because I have children and they have children. I don’t want them to have to live in an environmentally degraded world that is torn apart by resource wars and climate wars.  
149 Male 58

Such environmental concerns were expressed for nature’s future and related to humanity’s survival as well enjoyment of nature. If Research Lounge Believers see humans contributing to climate change as part of their lifestyles, as well as acknowledge a need for protection of the environment, how then do Research Lounge Believers perceive climate change impacts on travelling or destinations?

4.5 Climate change is real: Travelling is changing, destinations are threatened

For most Research Lounge Believers, it seemed to be clear that climate change would impact on destinations, attractions, and their own travel experiences. They reflected that landscapes, destinations and the weather will change, sea levels will rise, and biodiversity and natural attractions might disappear. For the Research Lounge Believers, consequences of such effects were related to environmental, economic, and social issues that resultantly would influence travel experiences (see Figure 4.3).
Some Research Lounge Believers saw climate change as corresponding with changes in weather patterns or extremes. Research Lounge Believers referred to the weather in their narratives by talking about changes such as the weather being hotter or cooler, or wetter or drier, being more erratic, constantly record breaking, or more intense.

It is not simply a case of not going to the US at Christmas because it is winter or not going to Asia during November - April because of the monsoon. Climate change is having an affect on the weather of our travel destinations and you need to be mindful of this when making plans.

013 Female 37
Such weather changes were also perceived as leading to certain effects like drought related fires, overflowing rivers, floods, or increased storm events. These effects were expected to impact on destinations in form of natural and human disasters, and were seen by some Research Lounge Believers as consequently leading to a reduction of tourism.

If the theories are true then I guess the effects on the weather would have an impact on where to travel and the likelihood of travel being affected by a ‘natural disaster’ more prevalent.
029 Female 42

Such weather events or effects will directly impact on landscapes or destinations that will be or are already affected by droughts or floods, or just become wetter or drier, and vegetation will change.

I think with certain destinations one would find that the tourism would reduce substantially, e.g. the Pacific Islands and the areas that have experienced incredible destruction caused by the weather.
054 Female 68

A few Research Lounge Believers showed concerns that changed landscapes or climates might even lead to the effect that destinations become fewer or less attractive.

I think it affects travelling in the sense many places that are now accessible and possess extreme beauty are slowly getting affected by climate change. There may be a time in the future that places we have previously visited are no longer there or in the same condition.
126 Female 30

On the other hand, however, some landscapes or destinations may become more attractive or appealing because of changed climatic conditions.
Weather wise - I guess with less rainfall and hotter summers, this could improve travel during the warmer months to those places that usually enjoy a milder change through the seasons.

118 Female 27

This could also include an increase in travel activities as conditions are likely to change and people want to see places before they are gone (forever).

There will probably be marginally increased demand to see nature destinations that are thought to be disappearing.

008 Male 63

Some Research Lounge Believers were concerned about a possible loss of certain natural attractions or biodiversity in general. Famous and favourite landmarks could be destroyed or disappear because of a changing climate or extreme weather events.

Famous and favourite landmarks, oceans and mountains will no longer exist or become destroyed. Making it harder to see or even be there.

056 Female 29

Attractions like the Great Barrier Reef or the Antarctic were already affected and might disappear altogether.

We’re losing so many of our natural travel destinations (e.g. Great Barrier Reef) and climate change appears to play a major part in this.

004 Female 27

Such climate change effects could also impact on species inhabiting such affected landscapes or destinations, and a loss of biodiversity would be possible.

Species diversity will diminish, destinations may become fewer, because of changes in weather.

031 Male 67
Some Research Lounge Believers focussed in their narratives on their understandings of possible sea level rises as a consequence of melting pole ice. **Sea level rises** would particularly impact on low lying destinations and island destinations like Maldives, Pacific Islands, islands around Mauritius, Greek Islands, Fiji and Noumea, and Venice.

If the ice caps continue to melt at the alarming rate they are at the moment, then some of the beautiful beaches around the South Pacific and other countries will be lost due to the rising sea levels.

107 Female 58

Certain landscapes or **destinations** would disappear, or could be **too affected** for visits in the future.

But climate change will impact the places we are able to visit as if they are underwater as a result of rising sea levels; it will make it rather difficult to visit them!

020 Male 29

A few Research Lounge Believers reflected on **having experienced** climate change impacts already during their travels. Melting glaciers in Asia, sandstorms in Beijing, hot weather in Eastern Europe and Russia, as well as the drought in Australia were part of such reflections.

Travelling... I have had to find alternate means when unexpected floods have washed out rail lines or airports having “freak” weather conditions.

045 Female 68

However, for a few Research Lounge Believers, possible impacts of climate change on travelling or destinations were something that would only be experienced in the future and **not affecting their lives.**
If the worse case scenario is realised, it may have an impact on some low-lying destinations but as I indicated above, the outcome is not clear so will probably not have an impact at least in my lifetime.

068 Male 35

Overall, there was a shared understanding of possible climate change impacts on future travel. **Tourism** at affected destinations will **change** and trips to such destinations would be different in the future.

If the environment changes, even if the tourism destination is not wiped out as in the first example, e.g. Venezia [sic] may have increased water levels, but it may not necessarily wipe out the town (well, we hope not), but we may find that the tourism will vary and will not be the same.

015 Male 25

Such changes were seen as influencing or sparking **economic, social, or environmental issues**, which consequently could influence travel decisions and experiences. A few Research Lounge Believers addressed **monetary concerns** as climate change may impact on economies and disposable incomes, which could lead to social degradation.

It will most certainly impact on the incomes of a large part of the population who do travel, as things get worse. Poverty and unemployment will increase.

012 Male 51

Or it could make travelling to **affected areas cheaper**, as those economies are dependent on tourism income.

It can make it cheaper I guess. For example, Bali, Pakistan, Thailand, Philippines. These places have become significantly cheaper to visit immediately after a natural disaster as people become scared of a
possible future event. There are seemingly more frequent natural disasters, which are being blamed on climate change.

118 Female 27

However, tourism was not seen as the ultimate justification for action, or inaction.

It is important that tourist destinations that are vulnerable to the impact of climate change are acknowledged, and steps taken to protect such destinations. The tourist dollar should not be the ultimate justification for doing nothing.

059 Female 58

Furthermore, consequences for developing tourism industries and tourism in developing nations were perceived as being more severe than for developed nations, which may be able to lessen some effects.

It is likely to affect island nations, which now rely on tourism so will have drastic economic consequences for them. Other areas likely to be badly affected, e.g. northern Europe and northern America will feel the effects more slowly and may be able to implement measures to lessen the effect because they are more developed scientifically.

053 Female 81

As climate change affects the whole planet and was perceived as big trouble or danger, a few Research Lounge Believers feared that inequalities between or within nations could lead to possible disputes.

Ultimately, some places may become too dangerous because of water shortages and associated disputes.

031 Male 67

However, one Research Lounge Believer reiterated that it could be difficult to differentiate between climate change impacts caused by humans and impacts resulting from natural or cyclical climate change.
It will be used as a rationale for some sale destinations. The impact will be difficult to differentiate from other impacts because of the advertising used and the mass appeal generated in areas like animal-based tours.

008 Male 63

Climate change impacts on destinations overall were perceived by a few Research Lounge Believers as only a small issue, when compared to the possible impacts on their personal lives. The latter being more concerning.

I am concerned about climate change globally but I am more concerned about the impact to my immediate living environment/country than travel destinations.

146 Female 23

And lastly, not every Research Lounge Believer was aware of possible climate change impacts on travelling or destinations.

I am not aware of how it will affect destinations.

136 Female 33

With all these described possible impacts on travelling and destinations, as well as humans’ lifestyle contributions, do Research Lounge Believers perceive travelling as an activity that should be avoided?

4.6 Climate change is real: Travelling is bad, travelling is good?

As outlined above, Research Lounge Believers agreed that humans contribute to climate change through consumption and their lifestyles in general. Travelling as part of such consumption and lifestyle behaviours therefore contribute. But are Research Lounge Believers aware of such contributions, and, if yes, how ‘serious’ do they perceive this contribution? Most Research Lounge Believers acknowledged in their narratives that tourism is contributing to climate change. However, besides
contributing to climate change, tourism’s contributions were also related to general environmental or socio-economic issues (Figure 4.4).

![Figure 4.4. Research Lounge Believers’ travel experiences and influences on travel behaviours](image)

The acknowledgement or awareness of tourism’s contributions, however, was expressed on different levels. Some Research Lounge Believers expressed their awareness through comments concerning how tourism as an ‘activity’ or as an industry contributes to climate change.
In the past thirty years since I started travelling to overseas and local destinations I have seen a huge increase in the amount of tourists. This must have a certain effect on the atmosphere.

054 Female 68

However, not every Research Lounge Believer could see a connection between tourism and climate change.

I am unaware of how tourism has contributed to climate change.

136 Female 33

And for a few Research Lounge Believers tourism only contributes in minor ways, if at all, to climate change.

I think tourism and travel contributes insignificantly to the overall climate change equation.

125 Male 42

Other Research Lounge Believers compared tourism’s contribution to climate change to other industries or activities. For them, it was clear that tourism is not the biggest contributor.

Though tourism is a huge industry it probably doesn’t even come close to the same impact that a well-off person has just driving longer distances to work every day has.

012 Male 51

Tourism and travelling as a major contributing factor, in particular through air travel, was only seen by a few Research Lounge Believers.

Tourism, as it exists today, is dependent upon air travel and is therefore a major contributor to global climate change.

149 Male 58
But what exactly are Research Lounge Believers’ perceptions on tourism’s contribution to climate change? Besides issues around transportation, Research Lounge Believers talked about impacts through pollution and resource use. Research Lounge Believers saw transportation and the burning of fossil fuel as the main reason for tourism’s contribution to climate change.

Jet engines produce massive carbon dioxides in the atmosphere - contributing to the problem. Travelling by automobile is another issue. Rapid Transit for travellers like euro rail can mitigate some of this production.

024 Female 70

Therefore, ‘action’ is needed and some Research Lounge Believers concentrated their concerns on technological advancements, which should lead to greener travel choices.

I strongly believe in the ability of engineering. Smart people will find technical solutions that will create alternative ways (if funded) to drive a car or fly airplanes; hence transportation will no longer add CO2 emissions etc. Numbers of tourist at endangered destinations can be controlled. I believe “green” ways of travelling will be found.

131 Male 54

However, besides developing greener travel options, a few Research Lounge Believers were a bit more critical regarding travelling in general, and claimed too much travel is done or that tourism could be seen as ‘unnecessary’ travel.

Certain trips do not have to be made, so many interstate trips happen daily for business people who show up in suits and ties and drink frappacinos [sic], unnecessary travel.

065 Male 32

Above and beyond causing environmental impacts through transportation, tourism as an industry was in general seen critically. Some Research Lounge Believers were
concerned about resource uses and destructions through tourism developments, in particular in developing nations.

Tourism has a huge impact on the environment, whether it is aeroplane emissions, destruction of habitats for tourist infrastructure (hotels etc.), increases in visitors to delicate ecosystems and the desire for developing countries to cater to developed country living standards, no matter the cost or compromise to their environment (i.e. air-conditioning).

096 Female 30

Once the tourism industry is developed at a destination, the ‘competition’ for resources with local residents continues.

I am aware of tourists using up local resources by wanting swimming pools, golf courses, air conditioning. This is a big problem in Indonesia where rice paddies have been abandoned for lack of water. The water has been diverted (sometimes corruptly) to tourist development.

045 Female 68

Waste and pollution that come with tourism transportation and operations were especially seen as some of tourism’s impacts that have to be dealt with.

In addition, tourism increases the need for fast food. Whether it be restaurants or hot dog stands. All use energy and energy is not regularly produced without pollution. Lets not forget packaging. Most packaging is paper or cardboard. Napkins etc. all require the use of a natural resource. Then there is the plastic: cutlery, plates etc., which create landfill if not recycled.

118 Female 27
Such awareness made a few Research Lounge Believers reflective regarding environmental impacts a small holiday trip can have – besides contributing to climate change.

One being the long-term effects of climate change on a destination of choice - as some landscapes may lose their appeal over the coming years due to climate change related issues (while some might become more appealing in the process?). The second perspective, and perhaps a great concern for me at a personal level, is the impact a small holiday has on the environment itself.

003 male 27

But whose responsibility is it to make tourism a ‘greener’ industry and a small holiday less impactful?

Tourism brings funds which converts to livelihoods. Therefore again there needs to be a balance found, there it causes another question: WHO should decide the cost vs. balance vs. environment vs. people’s RIGHT to choose.

050 Female 43

A few Research Lounge Believers draw their attention back to governments, which need to set up the right policies in the first place.

And it takes brave Government, such as New Zealand to close or limit access to areas that are endangered.

074 Female 60

Tourists then also have to become more responsible, more aware and less impacting.

Not many people consider how they impact the environment when they travel. More needs to be done to increase awareness.

019 Female 20
But in order to be able to make responsible choices, some Research Lounge Believers demanded the tourism industry and operators become active to ensure tourism products are less polluting, impactful, and resultantly reduce their contributions to climate change.

The tourism industry may have to introduce strategies such as showing how they are working to offset the carbon contribution of people travelling to visit various areas.

052 Male 59

Research Lounge Believers therefore welcomed sustainable tourism practices that help to protect the environment or lessen the impacts.

The tourism [industry] is now moving to protect our environment by educating their customers.

083 Male 59

Tourism in general, besides its negative impacts on the environment and climate, can even help to fight climate change. For some Research Lounge Believers, tourism increases awareness, especially when faced with environmental impacts or pristine nature during their travels.

Then at the other end of the spectrum, if people are travelling to affected places, they are being exposed to the reality of what is happening, and may therefore feel convicted [sic] to do something about reversing the climate change to preserve our beautiful earth (could be a long shot!)

021 Female 26

And tourists, through their actions, can positively influence destinations by demanding and raising awareness about environmental practices.

However, tourists often play a part in teaching the locals how to look after the environment. I lived in Indonesia for some years and saw
tourist pressure cause rubbish bins to be installed in towns and littering reduced. The concept of re-using water bottles and re-cycling other things came from tourist demand.

045 Female 68

Besides such environmental improvements, tourism was also seen as an important economic factor. Research Lounge Believers’ narratives contained positive and critical comments regarding tourism’s economic role for destinations. Economic benefits were perceived as tourism developments and operations would help destinations, especially in developing countries, to grow and increase their quality of life in the long run. However, at what cost do such life improvements come?

In the past, I believed that tourism per se has had a dual effect on climate change. In one way by visiting the more off the beaten track destinations we have assisted the economies of these countries and allowed them to improve their standards of living, on the other hand we have damaged the environment.

074 Female 60

Furthermore, besides environmental impacts, tourism developments do not necessarily benefit everyone. They can even make things worse.

Scarce resources are used to develop destinations and this only serves the elite business people. The locals are disadvantaged financially and socially.

011 Female 56

For a few Research Lounge Believers, in terms of reducing tourism’s impacts, nothing will change because of economic reasons. Environmental initiatives require investments, which are overruled by profit interests.

It’s all about the dollar ... so where there's a buck to be earned ... buggar [sic] the climate change and impacts.

117 Female 41
And reducing travelling as a tourist would hurt not just the destinations’ economies.

Tourism has contributed to climate change. However, tourism is also important for countries income, many rely on the money they can earn from tourism.

135 Female 33

However, a complete inaction of climate change could also lead to economic impacts as destinations become less attractive or disappear.

I think tourists and operators need to be concerned about their impact on the environment they’re visiting and minimise this. People need to realise that care needs to be taken to maintain the environment or tourism could drop dramatically.

004 Female 27

Overall, most Research Lounge Believers were aware about tourism’s contribution to climate change as well as other environmental impacts. Does this awareness, however, include an awareness of Research Lounge Believers’ personal contribution to climate change?

4.7 Climate change is real: Know your footprints, reduce your footprints

Research Lounge Believers’ discussions around tourism and climate change revealed that they generally had an understanding of a connection between travel consumptions, especially air travel and car uses, increases in carbon emissions, and a resulting contribution to climate change. Furthermore, Research Lounge Believers were aware of possible impacts climate change would have, or already had had, on travelling or destinations. Although reducing carbon emissions was seen as a common aim, so-called carbon footprints were not a concept that was understood by every Research Lounge Believer. Some Research Lounge Believers described carbon footprints as a method for measurement, a concept for evaluation, or as an indicator for the degree of carbon emissions an activities has.
I think it is a good indicator of how much damage an activity has on the environment. Out of a few carbon footprint calculators I have tried online, I feel the results are made easy to understand.

003 Male 27

Such measurements were for some Research Lounge Believers a **tool for learning** and understanding of how much environmental impact one’s actions have had based on their own carbon emission.

Carbon footprints allow people to learn how much their lifestyle contributes to climate change and therefore can only be a good thing.

020 Male 29

This learning effect was confirmed by a few Research Lounge Believers, who reflected on their **personal carbon footprints**. The realisation, of how high their personal contribution to carbon emissions was, was perceived as an important part in understanding how lifestyles contribute to climate change.

I once did complete some questions to figure out what my footprint was, and I remember not feeling too proud of myself! I think it’s good to make people know their individual footprint, how they as an individual are contributing to the overall effect. There’s not enough explanation of what it means, and how to reduce it.

021 Female 26

Some Research Lounge Believers however, admitted in their narratives that they **had no understanding** of what carbon footprints were or how they work.

Not sure I agree with carbon footprints... seriously what the heck is that all about?

117 Female 41
Carbon footprints were perceived by some as just ‘creations’ within media or political discourses.

I don’t understand a great deal about carbon footprints despite the term being used frequently in the media.

096 Female 30

Such lack of understanding was confirmed by other Research Lounge Believers. They reflected in their narratives that discussions about carbon footprints did not contain sufficient information in order to achieve an understanding by the broader community.

I’m not sure the discussion has matured sufficiently to allow people to understand what this means. If it results in a carbon tax, then the general community while supportive of reducing climate change are not yet ready to embrace the living cost impacts and potential job losses that will result.

068 Male 35

Even though there was a general acknowledgement that carbon emissions have to be reduced, could such a lack of understanding of the carbon footprint concept have an influence on travel decisions?

4.8 Climate change is real: To travel or not to travel?

If climate change is evident, and Research Lounge Believers acknowledge that humans, which includes themselves, contribute to climate change through their lifestyle consumptions and decisions, how then, will this influence their travel behaviour? Furthermore, the majority of Research Lounge Believers were aware of tourism’s contributions to climate change as well as of possible resulting impacts on travelling or destinations. Most Research Lounge Believers also acknowledged the need to reduce carbon footprints, on a personal and corporate level, or at least to reduce pollutions and other environmental damages. What then are Research Lounge Believers’ resulting actions for reducing these footprints or damages while travelling
or planning to travel? Research Lounge Believers’ narratives revealed different levels of influences, which groups the Research Lounge Believers into the four behaviour groups of ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and the ‘changed’ Believers. Research Lounge Believers were represented almost equally within these behaviour groups, with the unchanged Research Lounge Believers being a slightly smaller group. The different levels of influences were represented through differing degrees of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy (Figure 4.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Lounge Believers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From believing to acting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not my responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t make a difference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.5. Research Lounge Believers – continua from believing to acting*

The ‘stay the same’ Believers showed or expressed no influences in their behaviour through climate change discussions, although they agreed that humans contribute to climate change. The question would be why have they not changed? The ‘stay the same’ Believers’ narratives generally did not reflect an understanding of the carbon concept and tourism’s role within the climate change context.

In my opinion, climate change is due to industrial and commercial sectors, not tourism.

028 Male 28

Furthermore, most ‘stay the same’ Believers did not understand or accept the carbon footprint concept, saw carbon talk as profit driven, or were just not concerned about carbon footprints.
I like the concept of not wasting resources. But carbon footprints feel too much like another mass media/profit driven hype.

085 Female 22

This lack of understanding was then reflected in inaction on climate change and no influences on travel decisions.

To me personally I do not organise any of my travel plans based on what expectations I have to the effects of what climate change may have on any destination for the immediate future.

034 Male

A few ‘stay the same’ Believers showed more understandings of the carbon concept did not change, as they did not see a personal responsibility for changes.

I refuse to pay an airlines carbon offset fee, as I believe the company should be responsible for reducing their carbon footprint. I pay for a service and am asked to pay for their actions to reduce emissions.

017 Male 48

Whereas the ‘stay the same’ Believers tended to have a limited understanding of the carbon emission concept and tourism’s role, the second sub-group of Research Lounge Believers reflected at least on an increased awareness. These ‘more aware’ Believers showed more understandings of carbon emissions and tourism’s contributions to climate change. Such contributions varied from minor to major contributions.

I think tourism is a minor factor in overall climate change, it is the people and industries in their own local cities which are doing much more damage.

016 Male 19

Their narratives also reflected some understandings of carbon footprints as well as their personal contributions. Although there was a common understanding that
carbon emissions have to be reduced, a personal responsibility was not always the key.

It will help build a more sustainable environment, by encouraging businesses to think about how they can help improve the carbon footprint and the affects it has on our environment.

073 Female

Overall, this increased awareness made the ‘more aware’ Believers reflect on their personal impacts through travelling; however, it did not lead to any behavioural changes yet.

In the past few years I have increasingly become more conscious of the environmental impact travel has on our planet, but I don’t know what the solution can be. I think I would try and reduce the number of plane flights I take where possible, however this is likely to be affected by ability to choose alternate travel options either from availability, time constraints or cost.

096 Female 30

The ‘more aware’ Believer, however, was more likely to change his or her travel plans because of extreme climate events or future impacts on certain destinations.

I do worry a bit about the consequences of climate change—particularly because I am travelling to South America in January next year. I seem to hear constantly of record-breaking weather (and not just in South America). Whether it’s the coldest/hottest winter/summer on record or highest flood levels. And I don't know if it directly links to climate change but it does make me wonder and has affected my views on travelling to South America.

044 Female 20

Overall, the ‘more aware’ Believers seemed be more likely to reflect on their travel impacts, which could lead to a future change in behaviour. Compared to the ‘more
Aware Believers, the ‘do my bit’ Believers had already changed their environmental practices, but had such environmental decisions influenced their travel behaviour? Similar to the ‘more aware’ Believers, the ‘do my bit’ Believers’ narratives showed diverse comments on tourism’s contributions to climate change.

More travelling equates to more burning of fossil fuels, which probably does affect the climate to a certain degree.

040 Female 54

Also similar to the ‘more aware’ Believers, the ‘do my bit’ Believers demonstrated understandings of carbon footprints and agreed with the need for reductions.

I need to consider my carbon footprint more. I have taken some steps e.g.: lighting options, turning off appliances where I can. However, I realise that there is a lot more I could be doing. Some elements of laziness and some of convenience stop me from doing so.

088 Male 37

Different to the ‘more aware’ Believers, however, the ‘do my bit’ Believers reflected on a wide range of environmental practices they were doing in order to reduce their own footprints. These Research Lounge Believers often voiced doing their bit, whatever they could do, or were trying their best to help.

I do what I can. I take shorter showers, uses environmental bags, recycle, use energy saving light globes, recycled toilet paper, do not litter etc. However, I drive to work on my own because it would cost me more to catch two busses than it does to drive.

118 Female 27

But did the ‘do my bit’ Believers apply such environmental considerations and practices when making travel decisions?
Not at all. I am with the hypocrites on that one. I will go where I want and do what I want. My lack of travelling because of the effect it may have on my “carbon footprint” would be ludicrous.

054 Female 68

Comparing the ‘do my bit’ Believers with the ‘more aware’ Believers, narratives showed commonalities within their understandings of climate change issues. The main difference was that the ‘more aware’ Believers reflected on an increased awareness and their personal contributions, whereas the ‘do my bit’ Believers reflected on personal environmental practices. An increased awareness and consciousness of one’s action could imply practices; however, those participants might not have felt the need to state what exactly they were doing. Although both groups generally did not change their travel behaviour, the ‘do my bit’ Believers seemed to ‘excuse’ their inaction regarding changing their travel behaviour with their actions in environmental practices. Compared to the ‘do my bit’ Believers, overall, the ‘more aware’ Believers’ narratives contained slightly more reflections on considering travelling to destinations before they were gone.

The last behaviour group is the ‘changed’ Believers, who stated they already had changed behaviours. Climate change had influenced their travel decisions. The ‘changed’ Believers group included Research Lounge Believers, who had commented on paying offsets for their flights, or Research Lounge Believers, who had considered choosing more environmentally friendly travel products or reducing travel activities. Similar to the ‘more aware’ and ‘do my bit’ Believers, the majority of the ‘changed’ Believers had an understanding of tourism’s contributions to climate change.

We will need to be mindful of the pollution we cause through transportation and choose clean transport options. Living in Perth we are the most isolated city in the world and we travel by air a lot. We need to rethink how we travel.

081 Female 43
The ‘changed’ Believers also reflected on carbon footprints, their own contributions, as well as responsibilities that come with it.

There needs to be much greater emphasis on our individual carbon footprints, but also on the carbon footprints of industry, so that people can make a judgement about the viability of such an industry, or that pressure should be put on it to reduce its footprint.

052 Male 59

Besides changing travel behaviours, some ‘changed’ Believers also talked about environmental practices in their daily lives.

I have a solar water heater, my vehicle uses LPG, I take the green power option, I have planted many trees, we walk instead of driving as much as possible and we try to minimise our waste production, I painted my roof white to reflect solar radiation back and so on.

012 Male 51

More than half of the Research Lounge Believers within this behaviour group commented on offsetting their carbon emissions, in particular for personal flights. However, some noted that financial concerns were still influencing offsetting decisions.

This is a tough one, because I love to jump on a plane and travel around the globe. Since the introduction of the carbon tax on flight tickets, I have always included that fee.

009 Male

The remaining ‘changed’ Believers reflected on influences on the choices of travel products or amount of trips overall.

It has influenced me and definitively I try to use public transport where I can. I ensure if I stay in a hotel they are environmentally
aware. That I stay in a location local to where I wish to visit in other words within walking distance :)

050 Female 43

However, a few ‘changed’ Believers were also attracted to visit some of the threatened destinations.

It influenced me to take a trip to the Antarctica. On the Antarctic trip, there were two comments, which influenced my thinking - 1. Plan in small groups to avoid impact on where you go, and 2. Leave only your footprints.

060 Male 68

The preceding narratives demonstrate that there is no strict separation between the four behaviour groups within the Research Lounge Believers. Overall, however, the four different groups revealed that Believers, besides a shared acceptance of human-induced climate change, vary in their understandings, perceptions, and especially in their practices and actions on climate change.

4.9 Conclusion

Research Lounge Believers’ narratives showed that Research Lounge Believers understandings were diverse with regards to a carbon emission concept, its relation to travelling, as well as their personal contributions and carbon footprints. Scientific facts, general information, and experienced effects were crucial in their meaning-making and sense-making processes about climate change. However, the media and governments were especially perceived as providing biased or unbalanced information. Moreover, Research Lounge Believers demanded actions by governments, businesses, and other institutions, as they deemed them as being responsible for climate change actions. However, Research Lounge Believers also acknowledged a personal responsibility and expressed this through their care for nature and personal actions.
Reflecting on all the similarities and differences, within Research Lounge Believers’ narratives, the four Believer groups provide a sound basis for understanding travellers’ perceptions of climate change and its influences on travel decisions. Overall, the four behaviour groups embodied different levels of engagement with climate change discussions and actions. The ‘stay the same’ Believers represent the least engaged travellers within the Research Lounge Believers. The ‘more aware’ Believers expressed a limited understanding of the carbon concept and no personal (re)action. Compared to the other three behaviour groups, for them, the connection between travelling and climate change was less acknowledged and therefore did not lead to any influences on their travel behaviours. Although the ‘more aware’ Believers had a better understanding of the carbon concept and its relation to travelling, this understanding neither provoked actions on climate change nor influences on travelling. That being said, the ‘more aware’ Believers admitted that changing climates or weather could influence their choice of destination in the future. Instead of climate change action, they were focussed on climate change adaptation, adapting their travel choices to changing climatic conditions and destinations. On the other hand, the two remaining groups were more (re)active and reflexive regarding their personal climate change actions. The ‘do my bit’ Believers talked about their environmental practices, which, for them, seemed to be sufficient or just all they were able to do. This was reflected in their use of expressions like ‘doing my bit’, ‘do my best’ or ‘what I can’. Such reflections on environmental practices, however, were only related to activities in their everyday lives and did not include travel activities. The only group that reflected on changes in their travel behaviour was the ‘changed’ Believers. Offsetting carbon emissions was especially seen as a way of taking climate change action with regards to travelling. Additionally, reducing travel activities or choosing more environmentally friendly travel products were also considered as appropriate changes to travel behaviours.

Considering the different, fluid rather than distinctive, parts in the continua of believing to acting that each of the four Believer groups were in, the following questions could be asked:

‘Stay the same’ Believers: What could influence them to move to the next stage?
‘More aware’ Believers: What would make them act on climate change?
‘Do my bit’ Believers: When do they extend their actions to travelling?

‘Changed’ Believers: How could these help to promote change?

As for the ‘stay the same’ Believers, a lack of knowledge and understanding of the carbon concept with regards to travelling and footprints were the main issues. In order to make them more aware, these knowledge gaps need to be filled. A better understanding of climate change issues could also increase their personal responsibility to take action. The ‘more aware’ Believers showed a better understanding of the carbon and footprint concepts, but did not state any specific actions on climate change. Although their awareness of personal contributions to climate change might imply some form of environmental practices, these certainly did not involve travelling. On the contrary, ‘more aware’ Believers felt more encouraged seeing destinations before they might be damaged or destroyed by climate change effects. Further increasing their awareness on personal contributions as well as possible personal actions could bring the ‘more aware’ Believers to the next points or parts on the continua.

Respectively, while the ‘do my bit’ Believers reflected on their environmental practices, these did not include travelling. In order to extend their practices to travelling, the question is what initiated their practices in the first place and how could this be transferred to their travel practices? As participants’ responses did not provide enough insights on this, other research on environmental practices might help to answer the question, and is considered within the discussion chapter (see Chapter 8). Lastly, the ‘changed’ Believers had already reflected on changes in their travel behaviours. Looking back at the Thorn Tree findings, forum discussion participants commented on influencing others through talking about their responsible travel choices. Such peer influences could have a positive effect on travellers that would belong to one of the other three groups, helping them become more aware or pursuing environmental practices, that consequently could change their travel behaviour.

This chapter represented the voices of the Research Lounge Believers, who believed that humans through their lifestyle and travel consumptions contribute to climate change. Their perceptions with regards to climate change and travelling, however,
were diverse, and were influenced by their climate change knowledge, as well as their perceived personal responsibility and efficacy with regards to climate change agency. Based on these influences that were evident in their narratives, Research Lounge Believers were grouped into the ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’ Believers. The following chapter now presents the voices of the Research Lounge Non-believers, who believed that climate change is part of a reoccurring natural process and that humans had no influence on such a process.
CHAPTER FIVE

MEET THE RESEARCH LOUNGE NON-BELIEVERS

The climate has changed in the past, it’s all part of Earth’s natural cycle. Governments and businesses ‘invented’ climate change for their own benefits. They can’t be trusted, neither can the media. Humans are too insignificant to influence climates. And travelling has nothing to do with it. When travelling you take the weather into account, that’s it. All these offsetting programs and carbon footprints are profit-driven and don’t help the environment. However, we have to look after the environment, it’s the only one we have and we depend on it.

(Vignette Non-believer)

The Non-believers within the Research Lounge study were a much smaller group than the Believers; however, their reflections showed that, compared to the Believers, Non-believers were a much more homogenous group with regards to their perceptions. In the Research Lounge study, Non-believers numbered 18 out of 146 participants. As stated previously, Non-believers within the research did not accept the premise that humans contribute to climate change. So, if Non-believers do not believe in human-induced climate change, what do they believe? For Non-believers, climate change is a natural process or cycle. This chapter presents how Research Lounge Non-believers framed their understandings of climate change, which was based on distrust in climate science and social institutions. Such distrust was extended to the media, who were perceived as portraying biased and unbalanced climate change discussions. Besides rebutting that humans contribute to climate change, Research Lounge Non-believers reflected on their relationship with nature, which was linked to stewardship, respect, and interdependency. Although in this sense similar to the Research Lounge Believers, Research Lounge Non-believers reflections focussed more on nature as a resource. Based on their disbelief in human-
induced climate change, Research Lounge Non-believers tried to correct perceived misconceptions on climate change, including carbon emissions and carbon footprints. As carbon footprints are a myth and carbon emissions do not contribute to climate change, Research Lounge Non-believers also affirmed that ‘climate change’ was not affected by travel activities and did not impact on destinations. What did this mean for their travel behaviours? For Research Lounge Non-believers, there was ‘no need’ to change lifestyles or travel behaviours. For them, climate change is just a natural cycle.

5.1 The climate is always changing: It’s a natural cycle, climate science is faulty

For all Research Lounge Non-believers, climate change was a natural process that has not been influenced through human activities. Research Lounge Non-believers referred to climate change as a natural process that is cyclic and has been (re)occurring for millions of years.

The facts are that our planet is a dynamic system that has been changing constantly and evolving over millions of years, and the reason that we are here.

035 Male

But what exactly does ‘climate change’ stand for? A few Research Lounge Non-believers questioned the term or concept of ‘climate change’ - its meaning and to what it refers. Was it just a change in temperature; does it refer to extremer weather conditions?

A more interesting question, which no one seems to be able to answer, is - how does one quantify climate change? Is it an increase/decrease in the following - global temperature (whatever that is), cyclones, sea level, global ice extent, droughts, floods, cloudiness, the mating habits

* The terms ‘few’, ‘some’, ‘most’, or ‘majority’ are described in Chapter 2, page 77.
of hairy-nosed wombats. No one knows.

098 Male 62

Besides the question of what ‘climate change’ is, Research Lounge Non-believers also questioned its measurement. The ‘science’ behind climate change was doubted by some Research Lounge Non-believers, as this was based on limited historical climate records.

There maybe some change in the temperature but there have only been records of the temperature and climate for the last 300 years or less that can be relied on.

035 Male

On the other hand, some Research Lounge Non-believers perceived historical evidence on past climatic changes as sufficient to prove that climate change was just part of a natural process.

I believe the planet is changing temperature naturally as it has done since the beginning of time. We already know that our planet has gone through ice ages and obviously melted … otherwise it would be much colder here at the moment I feel (pardon the pun). Are we going to try and suggest the Dinosaurs Created Climate Change too for goodness sake? I believe what we’re experiencing is a natural event that has occurred before, not man-made [sic].

130 Male

Overall however, the credibility of scientists was in question as there had been damaging reports on manipulation of climate change data, labelled as ‘climategate’ within the media.

I do not believe the underlying premise of climate change and my doubts were cemented when the media reported scientific “fiddling” with the data to create a desired outcome.

101 Male 52
With the credibility of climate science and scientists at issue, some Research Lounge Non-believers felt the urge to correct misconceptions of human-induced climate change and provided their personal scientific understandings in their narratives.

Carbon as an element is heavy, which means it doesn’t float, it is absorbed by water and trees but as uninhibited cutting of old forest has accelerated, less absorption by forest and water catchments has diminished and no amount of tax can fix that.

091 Male 64

Since climate change was seen as a natural process, one Research Lounge Non-believer concluded that humanity just had to continue adapting to the ever-changing climatic conditions, which implies that there was no need for action on climate change.

The Mother Earth’s climate is constantly evolving and changing. Humanity has been resilient in adapting to these changes historically and needs to continue to adapt to stay successful as a species.

061 Female 22

Actions and changes in behaviour were only seen as necessary in order to reduce pollution in general. This pollution was perceived as having no influence on changing climate but on the environment in general.

When you think of the pollution of about 70,000 largely untested-for-safety chemicals deposited on the earth in the last 70 years or so, and correlating increase in disease and allergies we must wonder what we are doing to this planet.

124 Female 70

Based on the lack of sufficient climate science data and the credibility of climate scientists in question, what then are the underlying drivers of climate change
discussions? As some Research Lounge Non-believers advocated, climate change discussions were only motivated by political and commercial interests.

I think it is politically motivated; I believe the world continually evolves and history tells us that extreme changes are part of the global pattern.

039 Female 57

Such underlying agendas were also seen as present within media or institutional discourses. How then do Research Lounge Non-believers perceive the role of information, the media and other institutions?

5.2 The climate is always changing: We know information is compromised by self-interests and underlying agendas

Research Lounge Non-believers focussed on the issue of (dis)trust when reflecting on the role information and information sources had for gaining knowledge on climate change. Similar to the Research Lounge Believers, Research Lounge Non-believers reflected on bias or self-interests, media-hypes, conflicting information, and an unbalanced discussion. However, for the Research Lounge Non-believers, engagement with climate change information was not described as a learning experience. Research Lounge Non-believers’ trust in information was linked to scientists or other promoters of anti human-induced climate change commentary.

I am so thankful for the honest scientists and their blogs that provide the truth and are outside of the control of the AGW government funded gravy train.

061 Female 22

Reports on human-induced climate change, especially in the media, were perceived by Research Lounge Non-believers as being driven by self-interests and underlying agendas. In the main, information was seen by most Research Lounge Non-believers as biased and unbalanced.
A very important role, but it is important to sort the grain from the chaff. And to recognise the agenda of the organisation or person behind it. This is a remarkably easy exercise in most cases.

098 Male 62

Besides being impacted by underlying agendas, the quality of information was also critiqued. Some Research Lounge Non-believers’ narratives referred to contradicting information, badly researched facts, or unproven scientific issues.

I think they simply confuse the issue. Governments willing to spend trillions on an unproven scientific issue concern me. The US has shown fiscal responsibility and restraint pending some “real” data.

098 Male 62

With Research Lounge Non-believers not accepting the premise that humans influenced climate change, as well as being critical of the distributed climate change information, one question that arises is, how do Research Lounge Non-believers perceive environmental issues in general? What are Non-believers relationships with nature?

5.3 The climate is always changing: We respect nature, we depend on it, we’ve damaged it

Are Research Lounge Non-believers concerned about environmental issues at all? As some of the previous Research Lounge Non-believers’ narratives contained comments on pollution and environmental damage, this revealed that some did have environmental concerns. Such concerns were also embedded in Research Lounge Non-believers narratives on their relationships with nature. Similar to Research Lounge Believers, these relationships referred to stewardship, respect, and interdependency. Differently to Research Lounge Believers, Research Lounge Non-believers’ reflections on stewardship focused less on the need for care, but more on the reasons for care that was related to environmental damage. Such reasons focussed on reducing or avoiding pollution and exploitation of natural recourses.
I do value the environment. In particular how it is affected by over-irrigation, deforestation, intensive (and not very clever) farming, aerosol pollution, soil pollution, marine pollution due to toxic chemical run off, rubbish, plastic bags etc.

098 Male 62

Two Research Lounge Non-believers reflected in their narratives on personal environmental practices in order to take care of the environment, but again, the reason for this was not climate change but rather cost savings.

I have installed a heat pump hot water cylinder and am presently getting prices for a wind turbine to generate my own household power. This is mainly because of the cost of power going up, not because of climate change.

027 Male 51

A responsibility for stewardship was only expressed by one Research Lounge Non-believer.

I value the environment, as I believe we should all be responsible for its care.

037 Female 52

Besides that comment on stewardship, some Research Lounge Non-believers reflected on their respect for nature and the environment. Such reflections focused mainly on a balance with nature.

I have the utmost amazement and respect of sea creatures and the reason everything is on this earth, unfortunately we as humans try to change the natural order both in our respect for the planet and relationships; we are male and female, Ying and Yang, and nature should not be tampered with.

091 Male 64
For a few other Research Lounge Non-believers, their respect for nature was grounded in their admiration for or **enjoyment** of nature. This enjoyment was based on their engagement with nature or activities in natural settings.

I am a long-term skier and bushwalker.
112 Male 73

Most Research Lounge Non-believers, however, expressed their relationship with nature through comments that referred to interdependency with nature. A few Research Lounge Non-believers described the environment or Earth as the **place which we live in**; the only planet we have.

Mother Earth is where we all live. We should do our best to leave it better than how we found it.
061 Female 22

The role of the environment or the planet as expressed by some Research Lounge Non-believers was to **sustain humanity**.

The environment is essential for living, therefore anything that degenerates that environment must be of concern.
086 Male 76

But not only does the current population have to be sustained through nature. Some Research Lounge Non-believers emphasised the need to care for nature in order to ensure that **future generations** could enjoy the environment or be sustained by it as well.

I do value the environment I live in and I believe we need to look after it now for future generations to be able to live, enjoy and sustain life.
130 Male

Compared to Research Lounge Believers, the main reasons expressed by Research Lounge Non-believers for caring for the environment were to sustain life or for
enjoyment rather than a deep rooted responsibility and balance. Although Research Lounge Non-believers were aware of damages humans did or still do to the environment, such damages were not related to climate change. That being said, Research Lounge Non-believers did not reject the concept of climate change per se, instead they rejected humans’ contribution to it. As Research Lounge Non-believers do believe that climate change is a natural cycle, do they also believe that this natural cycle can lead to environmental impacts? And if so, do such changes have an influence on Research Lounge Non-believers’ travel behaviour?

5.4 The climate is always changing: It has nothing to do with travelling

Research Lounge Non-believers’ thoughts on climate change impacts on travelling or destinations can be grouped around weather, sea-level rise, no impacts and not thought about it. Although this grouping had some similarities with the Research Lounge Believers, the narratives within these groups were quite different. Research Lounge Non-believers that reflected on weather changes saw such changes as a natural process or were opposed to a warming trend.

Having made several trips, locally and overseas each year for the last 15 years, I’m getting used to rotten weather when I expected a warm summer in the North - Australia and Northern hemisphere. Mostly I am experiencing COLDER and wetter days than expected in Asia and also Europe. Sure, there are a few exceptionally, unseasonably HOT days, but in balance it is colder and wetter.

086 Male 76

The weather in general was seen by some Research Lounge Non-believers as something that needs to be considered when travelling.

I don’t believe that it has any effect on travel but one should be aware of any weather alerts conditions etc when travelling anywhere.

039 Female 57
A few Research Lounge Non-believers’ narratives referred to **sea level rises** that could be seen as a possible impact of climate change, natural or human-induced; however, for them the science behind a rising theory was still contradicting itself.

I don’t think there will be a great effect on travelling, if what I have heard from the media a few months ago sea levels on the small islands in the Pacific fell. This seemed to be the biggest effect of climate changed that people were reacting to.

035 Male

Although natural reoccurring climatic changes could impact on destinations, not every Research Lounge Non-believer made such a connection between climate change and destinations. As they **did not see any impacts on travelling or destinations** at all, there was no reason to take climate change into account when planning a holiday.

I don’t think the 2 are related in any way

078 Male 52

Whereas climate change and travelling were not connected for some Research Lounge Non-believers, a few others admitted they just had **not given it any thought**.

I hadn’t given it any thought. Cannot see any reason to take it into account when looking at a destination.

027 Male 51

Overall, Research Lounge Non-believers did not see any climate change impacts on destinations or did not think about it when planning to travel. Similarly, most Research Lounge Non-believers also stated that tourism made **no contributions** to climate change.

I do not think that tourism would have an impact on “climate change”.

124 Female 70
One Research Lounge Non-believer reflected on a possible contradiction, which was only relevant, however, if one accepts that human activities contribute to climate change. If human-caused climate change threatens destinations, and if this threat might lead to an increased travel activity to such regions, then such travel would even hasten the disappearance of such destinations.

The perception of climate change has probably heightened tourists’ desires to travel to areas affected (e.g. ice caps). If there is any truth to climate change being impacted by carbon, perhaps the increased travel is the ultimate irony; hastening the rate of change.

101 Male 52

For Research Lounge Non-believers, however, travelling did not contribute to climate change. Within their reflections on transportation and carbon emissions, they focussed therefore on righting the ‘science’ on carbon emissions.

None at all, Jets emit carbon but it turns to Ice crystals and returns to the surface.

091 Male 64

For some, the science around carbon emissions was wrong. For one Research Lounge Non-believer, the logic behind increased emissions was dubious. If fuel was not used for travelling, it would just be used for something else.

To be frank, I see NO contribution to climate change by tourists travelling around the world: some people go from a country and others take their places even for a short time. If the fuel - petrol, diesel, avgas [sic] wasn’t being used for tourism, it would be used for other commercial enterprises for big business.

086 Male 76

Similar to Research Lounge Believers, Research Lounge Non-believers also reflected on socio-economic and environmental aspects. Specifically, increasing tourism activities might have some economic benefits for local communities; however,
Research Lounge Non-believers mostly reflected on negative impacts on communities.

Tourism is having more of an effect on the way that more people [are] travelling to smaller out of the way places around the globe and even in Australia, that the areas are becoming more westernized and hence affecting their local traditional way of life. This is not to say that them getting better facilities and services in those areas to accommodate the tourists is a bad thing, but this has to not impact on their way of life and traditional values.

035 Male

And if tourism was to contribute and cause impacts, as one Research Lounge Non-believer stated, then travelling might become an **unaffordable activity**.

It does not need to make a contribution and if it does, then they will have to increase prices and then people will not be able to afford to have holidays and all the hotels might as well close now and increase the unemployment lists and then taxpayers can pay benefits to them.

080 Male 65

Besides such socio-economic impacts, increased travel might also increase **impacts on the environment**.

I don’t think that it has any effect on climate but in some cases, large numbers of tourists can have an effect on the local environment.

039 Female 57

However, a few Research Lounge Non-believers stated that tourism could help to **protect the environment** through ecotourism and an increased awareness of the value of environments through tourism.
Tourists wanting a ‘green’ experience in rain forests and jungles may dissuade further deforestation in Borneo and the Amazon basin.

036 Female 66

Overall, as stated above, Research Lounge Non-believers did not see a connection between climate change and travelling; however, they reflected on general environmental or socio-economic impacts through tourism activities. Based on their general perception of climate change, what then do Research Lounge Non-believers think about carbon footprints?

5.5 The climate is always changing: Carbon footprints are a fairy-tale

Continuing from Research Lounge Non-believers perspectives on climate change and travelling, carbon footprints were for the majority of Research Lounge Non-believers just a fairy-tale, a myth, or simply a load of rubbish.

When I think about carbon footprint, I think of the Yeti footprint. The Yeti, of course, is a fairly tale animal not related to reality. That is the relationship between the environment and carbon-just a fairy tale.

061 Female 22

Only two Research Lounge Non-believers stated that they did not have an understanding of what carbon footprints were.

I don’t understand them at all.

112 Male 73

For other Research Lounge Non-believers, the carbon concept was wrong, based on misconceptions, or just not the right problem to look at.

This is part of the natural cycle. The carbon has always been there and gets cycled by nature. [Becomes] matter and can neither be created or destroyed in a chemical reaction. Basic Chemistry.

036 Female 66
Although Research Lounge Non-believers did not accept the carbon concept as a ‘truthful’ theory, one Research Lounge Non-believer acknowledged that the resulting move to green energy is still a welcomed step in order to further secure energy needs and supply, and reduces costs.

The impact of carbon footprints still seems to be a “science of best guess”. Certainly a move to harness “clean energy” such as solar is a smart move, transitioning from macro grid to micro grid eases the burden on the public purse and utilises existing grid infrastructure to deliver co-generation of electricity.

Research Lounge Non-believers’ standpoints regarding the carbon concept were expressed as a strong rejection of carbon footprints. This corresponded with their general beliefs regarding humans’ contribution to climate change through travelling. Did this stance also correspond with their personal travel behaviours?

### 5.6 The climate is always changing: Travel as usual

The previous sections show that Research Lounge Non-believers did not believe in humans’ contribution to climate change. In this sense, Research Lounge Non-believers were opposed to Research Lounge Believers. Based on their general position on human-induced climate change, for Research Lounge Non-believers, activities like travelling, therefore, were not related to climate change. All Research Lounge Non-believers reflected that climate change discussions or carbon footprints did not influence their travel decisions.

I do not think about my carbon footprint. I have no idea what mine is, nor have I ever attempted to calculate it. It is a meaningless concept and as such plays no role whatsoever in my travel plans.

098 Male 62
With the rejection of the carbon concept, for some Research Lounge Non-believers, activities like **carbon offsetting** were perceived negatively because travel companies were taking advantage of customers’ climate change concerns.

I think it is sad that the discussions about our ever-changing climate have been hijacked by the alarmists such as the IPCC and CSIRO with their junk science. Travel organisations that offer “carbon offsets” are just taking advantage of the uninformed and the weak minded by robbing their pocketbooks for no useful purpose that has no effect on our ever changing climate, but is a great profit provider for the moral criminals in the carbon trading mafia.

061 Female 22

And as stated previously, **environmental practises** at home were only initiated to save costs rather than the environment. Would these Research Lounge Non-believers consider a ‘green’ holiday if it would be cheaper than a conventional one?

None of the discussions have or will influence(d) my travelling. At home, we have introduced solar power, water tanks, and many other domestic changes to assist mainly in water saving: and electricity costs.

086 Male 76

The only aspect Research Lounge Non-believers acknowledged to consider when planning a holiday was the **weather**. Such considerations, however, were independent of possible climatic changes based on natural or cyclical climate changes.

I check the likely weather, that’s it.

103 Male

As Research Lounge Non-believers did not see a connection between travelling in general and climate change, there was just no need to take climate change into account when planning to travel. Therefore, the Research Lounge Non-believers
travelled as usual. Looking back at the Research Lounge Believers, these showed four different levels of influences, grouping them into the ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’ Believers. The Research Lounge Non-believers on the other hand, seem to be a homogenous group with regards to their reflections on influences on travel behaviour or other lifestyle changes. Given the fact that they rejected the theory of human-induced climate change and therefore did not see the need to change anything, the Research Lounge Non-believers have been grouped into a fifth behaviour group of ‘no need’.

5.7 Conclusion

Contrary to Research Lounge Believers, Research Lounge Non-believers did not believe that humans contribute to climate change (Figure 5.1). Based on their knowledge and understandings, climate change was a natural cycle that has been

![Figure 5.1. Research Lounge participants’ climate change frames – focus on Non-believers](image_url)
reoccurring over thousands of years. Research Lounge Non-believers overall were very sceptical of climate change science and information, and they expressed this through their comments on scientists, governments, and the media. For Research Lounge Non-believers, similar to Research Lounge Believers, information was laden with hidden agendas and self-interests of organisations, which led to a biased and unbalanced discussion of climate change issues. But would a more perceived balanced discussion, with an equal representation of opposing scientists, change Research Lounge Non-believers perception? Probably not. For them, climate change was part of a natural process. This was confirmed for Research Lounge Non-believers by scientists who debunked climate change and human influences. For Research Lounge Non-believers, their aims were to right perceived misconceptions on climate change issues. In this regard, the Research Lounge responses corresponded with the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum discussions. Research Lounge Non-believers’ rejection of a human-induced climate change theory and climate change actions does not, however, reflect their general stance to the environment. Similar to Research Lounge Believers, their reflections on their relationship with nature were linked to stewardship, respect, and interdependency. Different to the Research Lounge Believers, however, Research Lounge Non-believers saw the environment more as a resource and valued its importance for our and future generations’ survival, which was seen as critical. Their actions, furthermore, did not reflect a personal environmental responsibility. The exceptions were avoiding waste and pursuing environmental practices, with the latter only perceived as money-saving solutions. Responsibility for environmental actions was seen more as a government and business responsibility rather than a personal responsibility, and personal or any carbon footprints were just a myth.

With regards to travelling, Research Lounge Non-believers did not see travelling as a contributing factor, which was consistent with their climate change position. Research Lounge Non-believers, therefore, also did not reflect on climate change impacts on travelling or at destinations. Although they did agree regarding climate change being a natural process, Research Lounge Non-believers perceived possible resulting changes as not as dramatic as described by climate change proponents. Doubting the causes of climate change, Research Lounge Non-believers, therefore, also doubted the predicted effects of climate change, and this, for them, was
confirmed by reports on contradicting research referring to rising and falling sea level rises. The only aspect Research Lounge Non-believers did take into account when travelling was the weather; however, such weather changes were not related to climate change. In this sense Research Lounge Non-believers seem to be similar to the ‘stay the same’ Believers; however, these Research Lounge Believers still reflected on a need for action with regards to climate change. Research Lounge Non-believers, therefore, were classified as a ‘no need’ behaviour group, reflecting the fact that they did not see a need for action as humans have no influence on climate change. In the case the weather at destinations was changing - based on natural climatic changes - Research Lounge Non-believers might adapt to changing conditions or other destinations. It did not, however, influence their travel behaviours in general.

The voices of the Research Lounge Non-believers that were presented in this chapter clearly showed that Research Lounge Non-believers were opposing the Believers’ position on climate change. However, they also demonstrated similarities to the Research Lounge Believers regarding their relationship with nature as well as their distrust of the media and other social institutions. Furthermore, their perceptions on climate change and resulting actions with regards to travelling were also influenced by knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy. Research Lounge Non-believers, however, did not match any of the behaviour groups identified within the Research Lounge Believers’ narratives. As Research Lounge Non-believers did not see a need to act on climate change, they were grouped into a fifth group of ‘no need’. In the following chapter, the voices of the Research Lounge Undecideds are presented. These participants were still undecided with regards to their beliefs in human-induced climate change.
CHAPTER SIX

MEET THE RESEARCH LOUNGE UNDECIDEDS

I am not sure what to believe. Maybe it’s just a natural cycle? There does not seem to be a certainty, scientists are still arguing.

Although the weather seems to be changing. Some destinations might even disappear because of sea level rises or extreme weather conditions. However, I am not sure if travelling contributes to climate change. Who knows? There is a lot of confusing information out there. And everything is so negative. Surely it can’t be good to blast all the emissions into the air. We certainly need to take care of the environment, less pollution and destruction. So the following generations can enjoy it like we did.

(Vignette Undecided)

Research Lounge Believers’ and Research Lounge Non-believers’ responses showed that Research Lounge Believers were quite diverse regarding changing behaviour in general and with regards to travelling, whereas Research Lounge Non-believers seemed to be united in their position. Research Lounge Believers were grouped into the four behaviour groups of ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’ Believers. Although all Research Lounge Believers agreed that humans contribute to climate change, they were a diverse group based on their actions or inactions. The Research Lounge Non-believers rejected the premise that humans contributed to climate change as for them climate change was just a natural cycle. Research Lounge Non-believers, therefore, did not see a need for changing their travel behaviour and were classified as a fifth ‘no need’ group. In addition to the Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers there was a third group which were the Research Lounge Undecideds. What were their perceptions regarding climate change, travelling, and possible changes in their travel behaviour?
The Research Lounge Undecideds numbered 15 of 146 participants within the Research Lounge study. Research Lounge Undecideds’ narratives contained diverse perceptions of climate change, matching both Research Lounge Believers’ and Non-believers’ reflections. Although this could position them as Research Lounge Believers or Non-believers, Research Lounge Undecideds clearly stated their undecided position, which placed them on the ‘fence’. Not having made up their mind, Research Lounge Undecideds questioned climate change science and actions by social institutions. Similar to Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers, Research Lounge Undecideds perceived the role of the media as especially critical in providing reliable information. However, distrust, again, was apparent and led some Research Lounge Undecideds to disengage with the media. Another similarity with the two other participant groups was shown in Research Lounge Undecideds’ relationship with nature, particularly stewardship, respect, and interdependency. Research Lounge Undecideds expressed diverse perceptions with regards to carbon footprints, and questioned what to do, what are the possible effects, and who has to take responsibility. With regards to travelling, Research Lounge Undecideds similarly reflected such diverse perceptions. Some reflected on impacts on destinations like Research Lounge Believers; others questioned conflicting science like Research Lounge Non-believers. For most Research Lounge Undecideds, tourism might contribute in some form, but economic and personal benefits through travelling were also needed to be taken into account. Overall, most Research Lounge Undecideds had an understanding of carbon emissions and carbon footprints as well as their personal responsibility for actions. Matching Research Lounge Believers’ and Non-believers’ reflections, this placed them into the five established behaviour groups of ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’. Although not sure with regards to humans’ contributions to climate change, some Research Lounge Undecideds felt responsible to change their personal behaviours with regards to lifestyles and travelling. Why then are they still undecided?
6.1 Climate change could be real: Sitting on the fence

The Research Lounge Undecideds, so far, have not made up their minds whether climate change is influenced by human activities or if it is just a natural process. Within their narratives, they state that they are not convinced, open-minded, doubtful, sitting on the fence, two ways, hesitant, or just not sure that humans contribute to climate change.

Something that sits on the fence with me. Still unclear on the effects of pollution on climate change or the earth’s natural deterioration process???
076 Female 25

For some* Research Lounge Undecideds, there has not been enough research done yet, or the research is not sufficient for them to decide whether humans contribute or not.

I don’t know if I believe in it or not. I don’t think there is enough evidence to support it. However, when you see the polar caps melting then you have to think twice.
105 Female 26

Whether natural changes had been considered within scientific explanations was questioned by a few other Research Lounge Undecideds.

I am aware that historically there have been climate changes described as the Ice Age for instance. I wonder if the climate changes that we are experiencing are a part of this long-term weather pattern.
071 Female 61

* Again, the terms ‘few’, ‘some’, ‘most’, or ‘majority’ are described in Chapter 2, page 77.
Additionally, the **credibility of the scientific community and the media** was also questioned by some Research Lounge Undecideds.

Some scientists appear convinced that it is and are proposing to return to the Stone Age in case it turns out to be a Bad Thing. A few others seem willing to risk their careers by swimming against the research funding tide and the intellectual current and suggesting that climate change isn’t happening or isn't man-made [sic] or both. […] Too much of the science is being played out in the media and the antics of the IPCC, Britain’s Hadley Centre and specifically the Climate Change Research Unit of UEA have done great damage to their cause.

001 Male 48

Similar to some Research Lounge Non-believers, a few Research Lounge Undecideds referred to **limited historical climate records** that might not be sufficient to understand causes and processes of climate change.

I am not a sceptic but I am not sure that weather patterns are set on a schedule … i.e. it must rain in May, we always have x mm per annum.

How long have accurate records been kept etc?

082 Male 65

Additionally, if climate change is happening, such changes do not necessarily have to be negative, as one Research Lounge Undecided argued. **Possible benefits** of climate change, according to him, should be included in the climate change discussion.

Most pundits appear to believe that climate change would be a bad thing and don’t consider any of the possible benefits for longer than it takes to dismiss them.

001 Male 48

**Technological advances** that would be more energy efficient or more climate-appropriate were seen by some Research Lounge Undecideds as a key to overcome
some environmental challenges. However, from Research Lounge Undecideds’ perspectives, priorities and actions of governments did not reflect this.

So much money is wasted on emissions trading when perhaps it could be better spent on creating technology, which will be more energy efficient in the long run. Too much short term, not enough long term.

006 Female 22

Investments into technological advances are limited due to global financial constraints and a lack of leadership. Otherwise, investments into fusion nuclear power, as one Research Lounge Undecided demands, could provide an answer our energy dependency.

We need fission nuclear power now and fusion nuclear power asap, but that will require money and political leadership which are spread rather thin in these credit crunch stricken times.

001 Male 48

However, technological advances might have brought us into the situation of a changing climate in the first place. And with Earth’s natural warming cycles, as another Research Lounge Undecided frames it, there might be nothing we can do anyway.

I’m two ways on climate change. I do not worry about it too much though because ‘what will be will be’. If the earth warms then so be it because the earth has warmed before.

033 Female 52

Overall, Research Lounge Undecideds were just not convinced that humans contribute to climate change and technological solutions might not help to prevent it. Their narratives also revealed critical voices regarding climate change science and governments. Furthermore, the media played a critical role with regards to climate change information. Why was such information perceived as critical by Research Lounge Undecideds?
6.2 Climate change could be real: Confusing information on too much doom and gloom

Research Lounge Undecideds reflected in their narratives on a wide range of different information sources, but the media especially was criticised for the way they disseminated such information.

I prefer the insight of colleagues in the environment arena to the babbling of media junk journos [sic]... seeking the sensational oneliner’ [sic].
082 Male 65

(Dis)trust, therefore, was a theme Research Lounge Undecideds shared with Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers. Biased and self-interests of media and other institutions were seen as one reason not to rely on what is publicised.

More confusing. Getting reliable information is difficult. Most commentators have their own point of view, which they will push. Unbiased info is hard to find.
005 Male 69

Furthermore, climate change discussions often provide an unbalanced view. As some Research Lounge Undecideds framed it, this makes it difficult to get the true picture.

I think most forms of information only provide one point of view on the environment rather than the real BIG PICTURE.
143 Male 29

Consequently, information presented to Research Lounge Undecideds was perceived as not sufficient, or just confusing. With not enough reliable information and an abundance of information available, some Research Lounge Undecideds felt overloaded. This could represent one reason why Research Lounge Undecideds were still sitting on the fence.
Over abundance of information.... that basically is confusing, misleading and possibly overkill. More agreeable information based on proven facts along with stronger leadership from Government.

007 Male 48

Research Lounge Undecideds shared the themes of (dis)trust and biased, unbalanced, and confusing information with Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers. Similar to the Research Lounge Non-believers, Research Lounge Undecideds did not reflect on information engagements as a form of learning experience. On the contrary, some Research Lounge Undecideds referred to disengaging with information, as climate change information was too much doom and gloom.

I try not to watch the news or read papers and magazines. It’s all too negative these days and upsets me more than anything. When the Al Gore movie came out that made me realise that the world has gone crazy about climate change.

105 Female 26

Overall, available climate change information did not seem to help Research Lounge Undecideds to make up their mind and to take a clear position on climate change. Information was perceived as not trustworthy and often just too negative, which even led to disengagement. With such an undecided position on climate change, how then do Research Lounge Undecideds value the environment and describe their relationship to nature?

6.3 Climate change could be real: Preserve what’s left, we depend on it

Similar to Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers, Research Lounge Undecideds narratives on their relationship with nature referred to stewardship, respect, and interdependency. Some Research Lounge Undecideds who reflected on stewardship voiced a responsibility to preserve what is left, perceiving the natural environment as limited because of population and overuse. The need for
preservation of the environment was seen as more important than population or economic growth.

I travel to experience the environment, natural and some man-made. I always leave as found if not in a better state. It is extremely important, more than business growth, and growing an economy or growing a population; both of these all need to reduce to save what we only have left.

007 Male 48

Such a responsibility was also expressed by one Research Lounge Undecided who demanded that we humans should live by the law of nature.

We should be building buildings according to our climate - educating our children and living on our planet according to its laws not ours.

043 Female 61

Besides accommodating to climates, the reduction or avoidance of pollution and waste were seen as critical issues to ensure nature’s survival. And we all are part of this responsibility.

I hate it when people just dump/leave rubbish anywhere. It is not that hard to find a bin!! And big messes such as BP had in the Mexican Gulf really bother me.

005 Male 69

Such responsibility was perceived by a few Research Lounge Undecideds as engaging with personal environmental practices. Pursuing such practices was a way to demonstrate their care for nature.

I value the environment as much as possible - recycling, saving water/electricity, taking the best route to places that’s better for the air.

076 Female 26
Research Lounge Undecideds that reflected on issues referring to respect were only a few, and such a respect was mainly expressed through their admiration for nature and the enjoyment it gives them.

I value the environment for its natural beauty. I have travelled extensive distances in the past just to check out a pretty waterfall, or stayed out at night to gaze up at the stars far from the light pollution of the cities.

006 Female 22

Enjoying nature was also part of one Research Lounge Undecided’s interdependency with nature; for her, engaging with nature was relaxing and therefore sustaining.

To me, big cities around the world are becoming more and more similar, but the natural environment will be different everywhere you go. It's somewhere you can just go to relax and get away from it all.

006 Female 22

Besides such spiritual dependency, most Research Lounge Undecideds reflected on a more physical interdependency. Such interdependency was based on a need to care for nature, as the environment is the place we live in, the only one we have, and that we need its resources for our survival.

The environment is what we all live in - without it we would not exist.
It can have good and bad sides.

094 Male 46

Such survival and resultant need for care was for some Research Lounge Undecideds important with respect to their children and grandchildren. Future generations need to survive in the same environment, from the same resources, as well as be able to enjoy its natural beauty.
We live in the environment and need it to survive, but more importantly, we have been given the Earth to steward (not ravage) it for future generations. This is a divine command.

001 Male 48

But not all Research Lounge Undecideds were on the same page. For example, whereas one Research Lounge Undecided demanded living by the law of nature, another Research Lounge Undecided opposed and demanded that nature has to be integrated into society and economic processes. Such a wide spectrum of opinions shows that Research Lounge Undecideds seem to be torn between Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers’ positions.

My attitude towards it, however, is a pragmatic one and I believe that the environment needs to be incorporated into the economic structure to ensure that it can be preserved in a way that fits in with our society without damaging the economy.

143 Male 21

Overall, Research Lounge Undecideds narratives showed that there was an overlap with Research Lounge Believers as well as Research Lounge Non-believers. Most comments referred to stewardship and interdependency, reflecting Research Lounge Undecideds ambivalent positions regarding care for and use of nature. How then does such care and use spectra relate to Research Lounge Undecideds’ perceptions on climate change with regard to travelling?

6.4 Climate change could be real: If true, then travelling contributes

Research Lounge Undecideds' thoughts on climate change related to travelling seem to, again, reflect comments from Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers. Although Research Lounge Undecided participants were fewer in numbers, their thoughts on climate change impacts on travelling and destination could also be grouped into changes on landscapes or destinations, loss of natural attractions, weather, sea level rise, experiencing impacts, other economic, social, or environmental aspects, as well as not thought about it. Similar to the Research
Lounge Believers, a few Research Lounge Undecideds’ narratives referred to climatic changes within landscapes or at destinations.

Some places seem to be drier and hotter and the Arctic summer ice certainly seems to be less extensive and thinner.

001 Male 48

Changing weather conditions that can cause flooding at destinations were especially perceived as present examples of already changing conditions in destinations like Pakistan or India. For Research Lounge Undecideds, changing weather conditions therefore need to be considered when planning a trip.

Well you wouldn’t want to go to Pakistan at present. I think some thought and common sense needs to be exercised when deciding where to go.

005 Male 69

In the long term, such changes could have impacts on natural habitats or natural wonders, as a few Research Lounge Undecideds expressed in their concerns. As a consequence, destinations would become less appealing.

It could potentially make some destinations less appealing to tourists, such as loss of coral reefs.

134 Male 29

And some low-lying destinations could even be lost if sea levels rise as often portrayed.

I wonder if Venice will survive the global warming phenomena.

071 Female 61

However, not all Research Lounge Undecideds subscribed to a rising prediction reflecting more of a Research Lounge Non-believer perception, that is, doubting the science behind sea level rises.
Sea level rise is much modelled, but rarely measured - scientists don’t seem to agree whether rises are happening or not.

001 Male 48

Also like Research Lounge Non-believers, a few other Research Lounge Undecideds admitted that they have not thought about possible impacts.

Haven’t really thought about it.

033 Female 52

Or they referred back to their doubts that climate change is happening at all; just confirming their undecided position of climate change and humans’ contribution.

I don’t have any idea. As I said above, I’m not sure that there is such a thing as climate change.

105 Female 26

With such a variety of impact perceptions that were also seen previously in Research Lounge Believers’ and Non-believers’ narratives, how then did Research Lounge Undecideds perceive tourism’s contribution to climate change? The emergent themes within Research Lounge Undecideds’ comments were very similar to the Research Lounge Believers’ themes, referring to transportation, the environment, pollution, and responsibilities. Overall, most Research Lounge Undecideds agreed that tourism or travelling must have some sort of impact.

Having been to Europe recently I was very interested in the number of aeroplanes flying over and the massive amount of vapour trails left behind. That must be having an effect of some sort.

005 Male 69

Others reflected on a minor, if at all, contribution to impacts; however, such impacts might just be on the environment in general.
Nothing much - tourism has not contributed too much to climate change.

076 Female 25

Research Lounge Undecideds’ reflections on transportation revealed that there was a common understanding that transportation, especially air travel, produces large amounts of carbon emissions that cannot be good for the environment.

If it is true that carbon emissions are the greatest cause of accelerated climate change, then the travel component of tourism must be contributing.

110 Male 58

Transportation issues, therefore, need to be addressed, in order to provide alternative or less polluting transportation solutions.

Aircraft emissions are indeed a serious issue ... more magnó [sic] electric land trains ... like in Europe and Asia ... it’s an end of an era for such extravagant travel.

007 Male 48

But even with cleaner transportation options in the near future, there are already long-term impacts like ocean acidification, as one Research Lounge Undecided was concerned.

Even if we manage to do that, we still need to reduce the concentration of carbon dioxide in the oceans after that.

001 Male 48

Besides carbon dioxide emissions through transportation, tourists themselves cause damage to environments. Such impacts were caused by tourists’ unconsidered behaviour.
I think it is great to point out to tourists the effects that they are having on the natural environments and how they can minimise the effect they are having.

006 Female 22

Pollution and waste were especially mentioned by a few Research Lounge Undecideds, as leisure and business travellers cause too much pollution and damage to pristine or urbanised areas.

In the Everest region of Nepal for example, there is no local rubbish disposal method. Therefore, all rubbish, which is created by tourists, stays up there and pollutes an incredibly beautiful area. Before I went on a trek in this region I was educated about the effects that buying bottled water can have when you can treat water in your own reusable bottle, which I thought was, while small, good points to make and valuable to the region.

006 Female 22

Research Lounge Undecideds that reflected on responsibilities within their narratives also expressed their concerns that tourists are not aware enough, or educated enough, about damages they cause and more needs to be done.

Tourists generally do not care about adverse impacts of their visit to a destination ... e.g. the cruise ships visiting small Caribbean islands etc. or the low water reserves in the warmer countries.

082 Male 65

And besides travelling for leisure, a few Research Lounge Undecideds were critical about travelling for business purposes, including travels to climate change conferences.

Climate change officers travel the world to attend conferences, what is the difference to that and people going on holiday? What is good for one section of society is good for the other. I am horrified at the
amount of travel officers do around the world under the guise of climate change conferences.

032 Female 72

Similar to Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers, Research Lounge Undecideds also reflected on socio-cultural and economic aspects. One Research Lounge Undecided commented that travelling has a huge economic importance for the world.

The world survives on people moving around.

032 Female 72

But besides such economic importance, for a few other Research Lounge Undecideds travelling referred to personal growth. With such benefits from travelling, impacts on the climate might be negligible.

Some may say that travelling in itself is adding to the problems with so many planes flying around the place, but I feel that is negligible in comparison to what one’s gains from travelling and the different perspectives and views they are able to take into consideration. By educating yourself through travel, I feel that you will be more able to understand others and their views in the day and ever-increasing globalisation.

006 Female 22

However, as one Research Lounge Undecided stressed, there has to be an overall balance between benefits of travelling and impacts on the climate or just use of resources.

The contribution to climate change that tourism makes should be balanced by the contribution to an understanding and sharing of other cultures and beliefs and therefore more tolerance between races and religions.

071 Female 61
And travelling could even help to achieve such a balance if the tourism industry helps to raise awareness of the impacts of climate change.

Overall, I think that the tourism industry has the potential to show people the beauty of the environment and why we need to protect it, which could help further the environmental cause.

Overall, comparing Research Lounge Undecideds’ narratives with the Research Lounge Believers’ and Non-believers’ comments, the narratives show that most Research Lounge Undecideds, like Research Lounge Believers, have an understanding of carbon emissions and acknowledge that alternative modes of travelling have to be found. However, admitting that carbon emissions are bad does not imply that Research Lounge Undecideds agree that climate change is influenced by human activity. Such impacts through carbon emissions might just be impacts on the environment in general. Looking at their narratives on climate change related to travelling, Research Lounge Undecideds really seem to be sitting on the fence between Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers. However, comparing their comments with the other two groups, most Research Lounge Undecideds on this fence were looking towards the Research Lounge Believers’ side. With Research Lounge Undecideds’ perceptions on climate change and travel revealing a position leaning more towards Research Lounge Believers, how then does this reflect on their perceptions of carbon footprints?

6.5 Climate change could be real: Footprints are good, footprints suck

Research Lounge Undecideds’ narratives on carbon footprints referred to themes of knowledge, responsibilities, and technologies. Like Research Lounge Believers, some of the Research Lounge Undecideds described carbon footprints as a tool or measure to understand or learn about one’s personal impact on the environment.

I think that they are a valid and important measure of how individuals are affecting the environment. By giving this personal measure it
helps make environmental consequences more personal and relatable

to encourage people to think about what improvements they can make.
143 Male 21

But **not every** Research Lounge Undecided had an **understanding** of what carbon footprints are. Some had not thought about it, or were undecided as they were in general regarding climate change.

Don’t really understand exactly what this means. I know running a car leaves a mess!!
005 Male 69

The “truth” about credibility of carbon footprints was **criticised** by other Research Lounge Undecideds, as scientists and the media present opposing positions. More research might be needed.

New world jargon. When scientists start talking in a language that the average intelligent person can understand, the more I will think about it. I have heard many radio reports, interview addresses and find it double talk and no one is clear about what they mean.
032 Female 72

Another opinion was that with all the information out there everyone is **already doing what he or she** can to reduce his or her footprint.

I believe that we are so aware of the carbon footprints through television, radio, newspaper information that we (the wider community) are doing what we can to minimise our footprint.
071 Female 61

However, not every Research Lounge Undecided was hopeful that such personal actions would really **make a difference** in order to prevent climate change.
While I think we can all take steps to reduce our carbon/environmental footprint, I don’t think it really makes that much difference in the scheme of things.

006 Female 22

Besides understanding what carbon footprints are, some Research Lounge Undecideds reflected that it is everyone’s responsibility to change their practices and behaviours.

We just have to change the way we live. Less greed and more compassion to each other and the environment.

007 Male 48

Such changes in practices and behaviours need to be effective on a global scale. Other nations, especially ones with high carbon emissions, need to take responsibility and introduce changes within their countries.

And if India, China and USA don’t, then it is still symbolic!

001 Male 48

A few Research Lounge Undecideds also criticised businesses and governments in general as being not committed enough or driven by economic interests rather than environmental concerns, especially when it comes to carbon offsets or trading schemes.

Buying or swapping carbon credits sux [sic] it panders to big business and commercial greed. Industry and government are conning the public on this farcical system.

007 Male 48

Paying for carbon offsets therefore was perceived by a few Research Lounge Undecideds as a marketing tool or just being silly.
I think it’s silly that we're asked to offset our emissions on each flight by planting a tree.
105 Female 26

A reoccurring theme was the call for greener or more **efficient technology**. For some Research Lounge Undecideds technology was a real driver for carbon reductions.

At present I think the carbon footprint debate is being popularised. There needs to be a stronger direction toward renewable energy, led by government incentives for people to take up alternative energies and technologies. But there is still a massive government investment in coal-fired power stations etc, so their direction is lacking.
110 Male 58

And even if humans do not contribute to climate change, people should **change for themselves**. As one Research Lounge Undecided reflects, this consequently will help humanity and the environment.

I think that society should help themselves more than helping the environment. For example, people should walk or ride their bikes as much as possible rather than using the car. Yes, it’s good for the environment but it’s good for their health as well.
105 Female 26

Subsequently, Research Lounge Undecideds’ narratives on carbon footprints, again, reflected some Research Lounge Believers’ and a few Research Lounge Non-believers’ statements. The main difference between Research Lounge Undecideds and the two other groups was that Research Lounge Undecideds did not reject the carbon concept and footprints in general, like the Research Lounge Non-believers; however, they were far more critical on carbon footprints than the Research Lounge Believers. What does this mean for their travel decisions? Research Lounge Undecideds have not agreed that humans contribute to climate change, but they voiced the need to care for the environment and reduce carbon emissions. As a
consequence, do some of the Research Lounge Undecideds then change their travel behaviours?

6.6 Climate change could be real: To travel or not to travel?

Comparing the Research Lounge Undecideds to the Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers revealed that the majority of the Undecideds ‘talked’ like Believers and a few like Non-believers. Most Research Lounge Undecideds fitted into the four Research Lounge Believer behaviour groups of ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’, and a few matched the Research Lounge Non-believers’ ‘no need’ group. Although the total number of Research Lounge Undecideds within my study was relatively small, with only 15 Research Lounge Undecideds, small differences to the Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers were still ‘visible’. Research Lounge Undecideds that were in line with the ‘stay the same’ behaviour group had a similar understanding of the carbon concept and tourism’s contribution to climate change as Research Lounge Believers in this behaviour group. Some did not see any contribution to climate change, whereas others saw some contribution, but they did not change their travel behaviour, mainly due to constraints like finance.

Has not influenced my thoughts at all. My main reason for not travelling overseas as frequently as I would like is financial not carbon footprinting [sic].

094 Male 46

Within these Research Lounge Undecideds, a few admitted that they did not understand carbon footprints.

Not sure what all that means.

043 Female 61

All Research Lounge Undecideds that fitted the ‘more aware’ behaviour group reflected that travelling or tourism has some contribution to climate change or the environment in general. However, they admitted that they did not consider contributions to climate change while travelling or planning to travel.
I really don’t consider climate change when travelling.

071 Female 61

And, as a few addressed sceptically, it was not clear that changes in one’s practices and behaviours would make a difference.

Very little. As said in other answers, I feel that the individual (despite common opinion) can really achieve very little by themselves, and not travelling to decrease the number of planes in the air or whatever isn't really going to change that much.

006 Female 22

Some Research Lounge Undecideds reflected on their personal environmental practices and could be placed into the ‘do my bit’ behaviour group.

I value the environment as much as possible - recycling, saving water/electricity, taking the best route to places that's better for the air, and taking regular trips outdoors - running/hiking/exploring.

076 Female 25

One of these Research Lounge Undecideds admitted that she was doing certain environmental practices not based on environmental considerations but to save money. She also could not see that tourism contributes to climate change, which together with cost saving practices placed her together with some of the Research Lounge Non-believers with similar comments.

I recycle and always make sure that there aren't any lights on that shouldn't be. I turn the power off at the point when not using electrical items. I guess I do this more for my own benefit to save power costs but it's good to know that it assists the environment. I never litter.

105 Female 26
Research Lounge Undecideds that reflected on changes in their travel behaviour were similar to Research Lounge Believers in the ‘changed’ behaviour group. A few Research Lounge Undecideds reflected on offsetting carbon emissions, even if an understanding of carbon footprints was limited or effects questioned.

I generally pay extra when flying!! But I am not convinced this actually does anything??!!
005 Male 69

One Research Lounge Undecided within this ‘changed’ group reflected on limiting air flights as well as a focus on public transportation while at home and on holiday.

Limiting my airtime and my motor vehicle usage. I use public transport at home and do so also when travelling.
007 Male 48

The most interesting thing about above perspectives was that although Undecideds were still undecided if humans contribute to climate change or not, some of them had already changed their travel behaviour. The reasons for this were not stated in the narratives, but looking at how they described their care for nature, precautionary principles and actions were adopted.

6.7 Conclusion

Research Lounge Undecideds’ narratives showed that Undecideds did have a general understanding of carbon emissions and carbon footprints. They were also aware of possible impacts on travelling and destinations. Most Research Lounge Undecideds expressed an understanding that travelling, especially air travel, contributes to carbon pollution, and resultantly climate change. However, Research Lounge Undecideds did not take a clear position on human-induced climate change, and such impacts and contributions were perceived by them as being only true if the climate scientists are right and carbon emissions contribute to climate change (Figure 6.1). Compared to the Research Lounge Non-believers who rejected the carbon science, Research Lounge Undecideds seemed to engage with climate change discussions and sought
information that would help them in their meaning- and sense-making processes. However, the negativity of climate change reports led some to disengage, especially with media reports. On the other hand, comparing the Research Lounge Undecideds to the Research Lounge Believers, Undecideds seemed to be far more critical of scientific discussions as well as of the roles governments, corporations, and the media play within such climate change discussions. With regards to their personal travel or lifestyle practices, Research Lounge Undecideds could be placed into the four Research Lounge Believer behaviour groups of ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’,

**Figure 6.1.** Research Lounge participants’ climate change frames – focus on Undecideds

...
‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’, as well as into the Research Lounge Non-believers’ ‘no need’ group. Their personal actions and responsibilities were reflected through environmental awareness and practices. For some Research Lounge Undecideds such practices even included changes in their travel behaviours, mainly through offsetting travel emissions.

Reflecting on the interpretation of Research Lounge Undecideds’ narratives, this was certainly supported through the previous interpretations of Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers. While interpreting the Research Lounge Undecideds narratives, it became clear that besides an unclear position on climate change, Research Lounge Undecideds reflected both Research Lounge Believers’ and Non-believers’ perceptions and (in)actions. What then hinders Undecideds to take either a Research Lounge Believer or Non-believer position? Although they seem to talk and act like Research Lounge Believers and Non-believers, their scepticism of scientifically proven human-induced climate change seemed to hold them back from taking a clear position. There was no certainty with regards to possible impacts or needed actions and, therefore, any position could be wrong. Engaging with and acting on climate change issues, then, could just reflect Research Lounge Undecideds’ general environmental concerns. Reasons for a lack of commitment on a clear climate change position were not ‘visible’ within their narratives; however, other research might provide further insights to this and will be considered within the discussion chapter.

Having presented all the voices of the Research Lounge participants, it shows that across all three groups, aspects of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy influenced how the Research Lounge participants demonstrated their climate change agency. Based on these influences, Research Lounge participants were grouped into five behaviour groups with regards to influences on their travel behaviour. These groups were identified as ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’. The following chapter now presents the further steps of the interpretation and theorising processes.
PART III:

GROUNDED THEORY & DISCUSSION
CHAPTER SEVEN

THEORISING AND GROUNDED THEORY

In the sky, there is no distinction of east and west; people create distinctions out of their own minds and then believe them to be true.

(Buddhist saying)

People’s perceptions and beliefs were at the centre of this research. Do they believe climate change is human-induced or just a natural cycle? What are their perceptions of climate change with regards to travelling and how were these perceptions constructed? And lastly, do their perceptions of climate change influence their travel behaviours? The previous chapters presented participants’ voices derived from the preliminary Lonely Planet study and the Research Lounge study, both of which were Internet-based. Within this chapter, both studies are compared and the five steps of the theorising process based on the Research Lounge study are presented. The online discussions on the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum were un-facilitated, whereas participants’ reflections on the Research Lounge website were focussed using open-ended questions. Both studies revealed participants’ positionality on human-induced climate change and they were categorised as Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. Based on their positions, Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds reflected on the role of information and institutions as well as their personal and social agency. Following on from the Lonely Planet study, the aim of the Research Lounge study was to facilitate and guide further reflections by individual travellers. The emerging themes from the interpretations of the Research Lounge narratives revealed further similarities and differences between the groups of Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. The comparison of the three groups is presented in step 1 of the theorising process. Similarities in the narratives applied to distrust of information and associated institutions, frames of participants’ relationship with nature, and perceptions of general environmental impacts through tourism operations and activities. Main differences included participants’ positions on human-induced climate change, associated scientific knowledge and understandings, as well as
needed resulting actions. With regards to tourism and travelling, differences included participants’ perceptions of possible climate change impacts on destinations, tourism’s contribution to climate change, as well as the different levels of influences on participants’ travel behaviours.

In step 2 of the theorising process, the grounded theory concepts that emerged from the narratives and the identified themes are introduced. These grounded theory concepts are ‘Perceptions’, ‘Information’, ‘(Re)action’, ‘Responsibilities’, ‘Environmental practices’, ‘Carbon footprints’, ‘Impacts on tourism’, ‘Tourism’s contribution’, and ‘Influences on travel behaviour’. In step 3 of the theorising process, the underlying reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making revealed four embedded theoretical constructs. These constructs of knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and agency were discerned as constituents of the meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, with knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy mediating agency. These constructs were embedded in personal and social contexts and, in step 4, were linked to the associated theoretical concepts based on participants’ narratives. The following text expands on the two studies, the grounded theory themes and concepts, as well as the underlying theoretical constructs and embedded associated theoretical concepts. Leading from the grounded theory concepts and embedded theoretical constructs, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency is introduced in step 5 and provides a frame for the following discussion chapter.

7.1 Comparing the studies: Lonely Planet Thorn Tree, Climate Change Research Lounge

The Lonely Planet study provided initial insights into travellers’ discussions on climate change within an online travel community context. The selected climate change discussions within the Thorn Tree forum were un-facilitated and participation within these discussions was transient and anonymous. Although the selected online discussions did not allow for an interpretation of an individuals’ decision-making process with regards to travelling, it demonstrated the role the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum played for travellers’ meaning- and sense-making processes on climate change. Sharing information and perceptions with other community members
supported discussion participants in their meaning- and sense-making processes through critically discussing their different positions on climate change that were based on information delivered by a wide range of social institutions. The main category of travellers’ position on human-induced climate change emerged, grouping participants into Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. All three groups perceived the role of social institutions and information as critical, influencing participants’ meaning- and sense-making processes. Within their narratives, discussion participants demonstrated reflexivity towards their personal and social agency by ‘talking’ about their perceptions of climate change and practices, as well as through the act of sharing these with other community members. Such reflections furthermore showed a connectivity to travel decision-making.

The Research Lounge study, on the other hand, intended to enable a deeper understanding of individual travellers’ perceptions on climate change and connectivity to travel decision-making. The interpretation of the collected 146 Research Lounge narratives mirrored the interpretation of the selected Thorn Tree forum discussions. Critiques of the role of information and social institutions, as well as reflexivity on personal and social agency were similarly evident within the Research Lounge reflections. Differing from the Lonely Planet study, participants’ narratives within the Research Lounge website were facilitated and focussed using open-ended questions. Additionally, participants’ reflections occurred in isolation from the embedded meaning- and sense-making processes enabled and/or supported by discussions and information sharing within an online community environment in the Lonely Planet study. That being said, this structured and focussed way of collecting participants’ perceptions in the Research Lounge allowed linking an individual traveller’s position to his or her personal perceptions of climate change, impacts on travelling, tourism’s contribution, carbon footprints, as well as his or her personal and social agency. Based on the cross-interpretation of participants’ reflections, the four Believer behaviour groups ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’ emerged, indicating different levels of influences on personal and social agency with regards to travel decision-making. Within Non-believers’ reflections a fifth group of ‘no need’ emerged, representing Non-believers’ perception that no actions were needed with regards to lifestyle or travel decision-making. These five groups similarly emerged within the Undecideds, indicating that,
besides not having a clear position on human-induced climate change, Undecideds’ reflections corresponded with Believers’ and Non-believers’ reflections with regards to practices and behaviours.

Whereas the Lonely Planet study allowed a preliminary exploration of travellers’ perceptions of climate change within online discussions, the Research Lounge study enabled a deeper investigation of individual travellers’ perceptions as well as influences on travel decision-making. These perceptions and influences are presented in the next section by expanding on the similarities and differences between the three groups of Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds.

7.2 Step 1 - Comparing the groups: Believers, Non-believers, Undecideds

Through grounded theory interpretive processes, the main similarities between Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds clustered around the distrust of information and associated institutions, frames of participants’ relationship with nature, and perceptions of general environmental impacts associated with tourism operations and activities. The main differences referred to participants’ position on human-induced climate change, associated scientific knowledge and understandings, as well as needing actions to combat climate change. Differences also emerged in participants’ perceptions of possible climate change impacts on destinations, tourism’s contributions to climate change, and the different levels of influences on participants’ travel behaviours. These similarities and differences were identified in step 1 through comparing the emerged themes of all the three groups based on eight interpretation foci. These interpretation foci referred to ‘Position and stance’, ‘Role of Information’, ‘Call for action’, ‘Human-nature relationship’, ‘Climate change impacts on travelling’, ‘Tourism’s contribution’, ‘Carbon footprints’, and ‘Influences on travel behaviour’. The interpretation foci are presented in the eight tables within this section. For each focus, the emerged themes based on the interpretations in Chapter 4 to Chapter 6 are listed for each of the three groups. These themes are presented in their essence, as I have interpreted them, and which can differ from the direct wording in the storying of the previous chapters.
The first interpretation focus **Position or stance** (Table 7.1) presents themes around participants’ frames and position of climate change. As already highlighted in the previous voices chapters, within their narratives, Believers agreed on human-induced climate change, Non-believers insisted on climate change as a natural cycle, whereas Undecideds reflected on their fence-sitting position. Although Believers agreed that humans contribute to climate change, the degree of contributions and resulting effects were questioned. For Non-believers, human-induced climate change was based on incorrect facts and discussions initiated based on doubtful motives. Both groups, Believers and Non-believers, were critical of scientific information, which might explain Undecideds suspicion that research does not provide the answers yet.

Table 7.1

*Interpretation focus ‘Position or stance’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
<th>Believers</th>
<th>Non-believers</th>
<th>Undecideds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position or stance</strong></td>
<td>Natural cycle to which humans contribute, accelerate, minor or major contribution, natural processes considered?, or causes irrelevant</td>
<td>Just a natural process</td>
<td>Human-induced or natural process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence: noticing, heard about, deal with</td>
<td>What does ‘climate change’ mean?</td>
<td>Not enough research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Severity questioned</td>
<td>Motivated by political and commercial interests</td>
<td>Natural causes to be considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerned of impacts on lifestyles</td>
<td>Limited historical data, historical evidence</td>
<td>Credibility of scientists and media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflicting assumptions or information</td>
<td>Credibility of scientists</td>
<td>Limited historical data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questioning (in)action to solve the problem</td>
<td>Correcting misconceptions</td>
<td>Possible benefits?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The credibility of climate change information in general and associated sources was questioned by all three groups. The interpretation focus **Role of information** (Table 7.2) shows that, besides differing positions, the three groups agreed that information was conflicting, biased, unbalanced, and therefore trust in information and institutions was at the centre of critique. However, for Believers, engaging with information as part of their meaning- and sense-making process was important,
whereas Undecideds tended to disengage with information because of the dominance of too much doom and gloom.

Table 7.2

*Interpretation focus ‘Role of information’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
<th>Believers</th>
<th>Non-believers</th>
<th>Undecideds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of information</td>
<td>Different information sources, media sole source</td>
<td>Trust: opposing scientists, biased, unbalanced, contradicting information</td>
<td>Trust: biased, unbalanced, confusion, doom and gloom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media raises awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Disengaging with information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning and gaining knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Could lead to changes in behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sources not yet sufficient for educating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing own research, follow up, discussion with peers or participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust: conflicting information, biased, unbalanced, media-hypes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resulting from their position on climate change, supported by available information, Believers called for action on climate change. This was expressed within the interpretation focus *Call for action* (Table 7.3). Believers’ narratives, however, indicated ambiguity on actions, outcomes, and, more importantly, responsibilities. Undecideds, on the other hand, were looking for answers based on technological advances, and for Non-believers, the answer was adaptation to ever changing climatic conditions.
Table 7.3

*Interpretation focus ‘Call for action’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
<th>Believers</th>
<th>Non-believers</th>
<th>Undecideds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Call for action**  | Need to act: slow down or reverse effects, timing is crucial, too late?  
Inaction leads to consequences  
Changes in everyday lives  
Other countries do better  
Responsibilities: governments and private organisations, other countries, reflection on personal actions (do my bit), can’t make a difference | Adapting  
Reduce pollution | Technological advances needed  
Fusion nuclear power  
Nothing we can do? |

Although the three groups differed in their beliefs and resulting (re)action, the way they perceived their relationship with nature, or **Human-nature relationship**, (Table 7.4) demonstrated similarities with stewardship, respect, and interdependency emerging as the main categories. All three groups expressed a need for care, respect for, and interdependency with nature. Non-believers’ narratives, however, reflected a more distant position to nature, which was valued more for its resources rather than its own worth.
Table 7.4

*Interpretation focus ‘Human-nature relationship’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
<th>Believers</th>
<th>Non-believers</th>
<th>Undecideds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human-nature relationship</strong></td>
<td>Stewardship: part of the environment, personal environmental practices, do my bit, rubbish and pollution, difficult to change, constraints</td>
<td>Stewardship: avoid pollution and exploitation of resource, environmental practices (costs), everyone’s responsibility</td>
<td>Stewardship: need for preservation, live by law of nature, nature part of society and economy, pollution and waste, environmental practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect: values, power of nature, enjoyment, quality of life</td>
<td>Respect: balance with nature, enjoyment</td>
<td>Respect: Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interdependency: personal influences, survival, loss or destruction, future generations</td>
<td>Interdependency: place we live in, sustain humanity, future generations</td>
<td>Interdependency: sustaining, survival, future generations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on their general position on climate change, Believers and Non-believers expressed quite different thoughts on **Climate change impacts on travelling** (Table 7.5). Undecideds’ narratives corresponded to Believers and Non-believers perceptions, which underlined their fence-sitting position. Believers expressed an awareness of possible impacts on travelling that could make destinations disappear, lose their appeal, or, to the contrary, become more attractive. Such changes were also related to social, economic, and general environmental issues, which needed to be considered when looking at climate change impacts on destinations. Non-believers, on the other hand, questioned predicted changes, as for them, climate change was still just a natural cycle that might cause changes in the weather.
Table 7.5

*Interpretation focus ‘Climate change impacts on travelling’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
<th>Believers</th>
<th>Non-believers</th>
<th>Undecideds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate change impacts on travelling</td>
<td>Weather: changes, effects Destinations: impacts, fewer or less attractive, more appealing, go before gone, small issue, not aware Loss: famous landmarks, natural attractions, biodiversity Sea level rise: low lying area, too affected Experienced impacts Not affecting my life (time) Tourism will change Economic, social, environmental issues: monetary concerns, affected areas cheaper, consequences for developing industries, big trouble or danger, differentiate natural and human causes</td>
<td>Weather: get’s cooler, consider when travelling Destinations: no impacts, no thoughts Sea level rise: contradicting science</td>
<td>Weather: changes Destinations: impacts, no thoughts, if happening at all Loss: natural attractions, habitats Sea level rise: low lying areas, questioning science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Represented in the interpretation focus **Tourism’s contribution** (Table 7.6) and matching their general position on human-induced climate change, Non-believers also did not see tourism or travelling activities as a contributing factor to climate change. However, Non-believers were critical of general socio-economic and environmental impacts that tourism can have on destinations. Such concerns were also raised by Believers, though for them, tourism-related carbon emissions contributed to climate change. Believers’ narratives, however, reflected an ambiguity on the level of such contributions. Undecideds’ perceptions, again, corresponded with Believers’ and Non-believers’ reflections. Believers and Undecideds additionally raised the question of responsibilities, which were associated with a variety of different actors and institutions. Both groups, furthermore, reflected on benefits that could be gained through tourism activities at a personal and destination level.
Table 7.6
Interpretation focus ‘Tourism’s contribution’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
<th>Believers</th>
<th>Non-believers</th>
<th>Undecideds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tourism’s contribution</strong></td>
<td>Levels: contributes, unaware, minor, major, others more</td>
<td>No contribution</td>
<td>Some sort of impact, minor if at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transportation: technological advances, unnecessary travel</td>
<td>If contributes: contradiction, becomes unaffordable</td>
<td>Transportation: air travel, alternative or less polluting solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environment: resource use and destruction, competition for resources, waste and pollution</td>
<td>Transportation: putting the facts right (on emissions), fuel used for something else if not for travelling (no increase in emissions)</td>
<td>Environment: ocean acidification, damage through tourists, pollution and waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflecting on impact of a small holiday</td>
<td>Socio-economic aspects: impacts on cultures</td>
<td>Responsibilities: tourists not aware enough, industry could increase awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsibilities: governments, tourists, tourism industry and operators</td>
<td>Environment: increased impacts, helps to protect environments</td>
<td>Travelling for business purpose (unnecessary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable tourism practices</td>
<td>Benefits: personal benefits from travelling, balance between impacts and benefits needed</td>
<td>Economic aspects: Important world economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits: increase awareness (incl. climate change), influence destinations</td>
<td>Environmental aspects: benefits, profit interests</td>
<td>Benefits: personal benefits from travelling, balance between impacts and benefits needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic aspects: benefits, profit interests</td>
<td>Reducing travel not an option</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inaction not an option</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carbon emissions and especially the grounded theory concept of **Carbon footprints** (Table 7.7) were for all groups very ambiguous concepts. Although Believers agreed that humans contribute to climate change through lifestyle behaviours and consumption, not every Believer demonstrated an understanding of carbon emissions or footprints. For Non-believers, carbon emissions were not a contributor to climate change and carbon footprints were just a myth. Undecideds, again, aligned with both Believers’ and Non-believers’ voices. Undecideds, however, further reflected on actions related to reductions of carbon footprints as well as associated responsibilities for causes and actions.
Table 7.7

*Interpretation focus ‘Carbon footprints’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
<th>Believers</th>
<th>Non-believers</th>
<th>Undecideds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carbon footprints</td>
<td>Method for measurement, tool for learning</td>
<td>Fairy-tale, myth</td>
<td>Tool or measurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of understanding: no idea, just creations</td>
<td>No understanding</td>
<td>Lack of understanding, no clear information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflecting on personal carbon footprint</td>
<td>Based on misconceptions</td>
<td><strong>Actions:</strong> doing what we can, would not make a difference?, paying for offsets silly, change for yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Green energy can secure future energy needs</td>
<td><strong>Responsibilities:</strong> everyone’s, other nations, businesses and governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greener technologies needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resulting from Believers’, Non-believers’, and Undecideds’ perceptions and reflections on climate change, the interpretation focus ‘**Influences on travel behaviour**’ (Table 7.8) draws together the underlying meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. Believing in human-induced climate change did not automatically influence travel behaviours or other lifestyle practices. The Believers’ behaviour groups that emerged through the cross-interpretation represented four different levels of engagement with climate change issues and influences on lifestyles or travel behaviours. The ‘*stay the same*’ Believers did not change any practices or behaviours, which was linked to a lack of understanding of the carbon concept as well a lack of responsibility. The ‘more aware’ Believers reflected on an increased awareness but not on any changes in their behaviour. Although, the prospect of disappearing destinations seemed to motivate them to visit places before they are gone. The ‘more aware’ Believers had a better understanding of the carbon concept than the ‘*stay the same*’, but obviously still did not feel responsible for or able to change. An increased sense of responsibility and efficacy empowered the ‘*do my bit*’ Believers to engage with environmental practices in their daily lives; however, this behaviour change did not carry on to influence travelling. For them, ‘doing their bit’ was ‘doing enough’. This was certainly not the case for the ‘*changed*’ Believers, who reflected on offsetting their travel emissions, reduced travel activities, or purchase of more responsible travel products. Their sense of
responsibility and efficacy, together with their knowledge of climate change issues influenced their personal and social agency with regards to travelling. Non-believers, on the other hand, did not believe in human-induced climate change and therefore were not influenced in their travel behaviours, although, a few reflected on checking the weather as climates were changing naturally. In fact, based on their position, Non-believers did not see a need for changing lifestyle or travel behaviours and therefore represent a fifth ‘no need’ behaviour group. As before, Undecideds, based on their fence-sitting position, corresponded with Believers and Non-believers. Their narratives reflected the five groups and therefore represented engagements with climate change issues and lifestyle and travel behaviours similar to Believers and Non-believers.

Comparing the three groups based on the emerged grounded theory themes revealed similarities and differences. All three groups’ narratives showed similarities in the distrust of information and institutions, frames of participants’ relationship with nature, as well as general environmental impacts that were associated with tourism and travel activities. On the other hand, the groups differed in their position of human-induced climate change, perceptions of the underlying scientific knowledge and understandings, and needed actions on climate change. Differences continued with regards to tourism and travelling as the groups showed differences in their perceptions of possible impacts on destinations, tourism’s contribution, and with the continuum of influences on their travel behaviour. Based on the group comparison, the overall grounded theory concepts and grounded theory themes emerged.
Table 7.8

*Interpretation focus ‘Influences on travel behaviour’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation focus</th>
<th>Believers</th>
<th>Non-believers</th>
<th>Undecideds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influences on travel</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stay the same</strong>: no connection to tourism, did not understand footprints, no changes in behaviour, no personal responsibility</td>
<td>No influences on travel behaviour</td>
<td><strong>Stay the same</strong>: no or limited contribution, did not understand footprints, no changes in behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>More aware</strong>: tourism contributes, some understanding of footprints, limited personal responsibility, no changes in behaviour, weather might influence, go before gone</td>
<td>Carbon offsets take advantage of Believers</td>
<td><strong>More aware</strong>: some contribution, no changes in behaviour, wouldn’t make a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Do my bit</strong>: tourism contributes, understand footprints, environmental practices (excuse?), no changes in travel behaviour, go before gone</td>
<td>Environmental practices only because it’s cheaper</td>
<td><strong>Do my bit</strong>: environmental practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Changed</strong>: tourism contributes, reflect on personal footprints, environmental practices, offsetting, greener travel choices, visited before gone</td>
<td>Might check the weather</td>
<td><strong>Changed</strong>: offsetting, limiting flying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Like Non-believer: environmental practices (costs), no contribution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3 Step 2 - Overall grounded theory concepts and grounded theory themes

Based on the comparison of the Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds within the previous section, common themes were identified and grouped into the grounded theory concepts as part of step 2 of the theorising process. These concepts include ‘Perceptions’ and ‘Information’, both focussing on **Knowledge and Understandings** of climate change issues; ‘(Re)action’, ‘Responsibilities’, ‘Environmental practices’, and ‘Carbon footprints’ containing a focus on **Lifestyles and Practices**; ‘Impacts on tourism’, ‘Tourism’s contributions’, and ‘Influences on travel behaviour’, focussing on **Tourism and Travelling** related aspects. Organising the grounded theory concepts into the three focal groups of **Knowledge and Understandings**, **Lifestyle**
and Practices, and Tourism and Travelling, reflects the emphases of participants’ narratives with regards to climate change and associated issues. Knowledge and Understandings reveals participants’ perceptions of climate change and information associated with (co)constructing these perceptions. Lifestyle and Practices provides evidence of participants’ general perceptions with regards to climate change actions, personal contributions and practices, as well as associated responsibilities. Lastly, Tourism and Travelling represents participants’ understandings of the connectivity between climate change and travelling, as well as reflections of influences on their personal travel behaviour. The following text introduces the three foci and the aligned grounded theory concepts and themes.

Within the grounded theory concept of ‘Perceptions’ (Table 7.9), five themes were collated. The position theme reflects the main category of Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. Participants’ narratives on humans’ roles in the context of climate change contributions were drawn together under the theme of beliefs. The facts and evidence that were used by participants to support their beliefs were summarised under the theme facts, evidence. Perceptions further contained expressions of doubts with regards to science, information, or humanity’s ability to deal with climate change problems. Besides expressing their doubts, participants also talked about uncertainties, risks that referred to understandings of causes, effects, and required actions. The grounded theory concept of ‘Information’ encompasses the three themes of (dis)engagement, trust, and role of the media. (Dis)engagement referred to participants comments on engagement or disengagement with information through learning, researching, participating, or switching off. Independent of engaging or disengaging with information, participants reflected on institutions that were associated with information and questioned the trustworthiness of such information. The role of the media was seen especially as obtaining a significant, but rather ambiguous position in the dissemination of climate change information.
Table 7.9

Grounded theory concepts and themes focussing on ‘Knowledge and Understandings’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Grounded theory concepts</th>
<th>Summarised themes from the Research Lounge narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Perceptions’</td>
<td>Positions: Believers, Non-believers, Undecideds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beliefs: Human-induced or natural cycle?; Different levels of humans’ contribution: none, maybe, a bit, some, a lot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facts, evidence: scientific facts, ‘experiencing’ climate change effects, historical records</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doubts: credibility of scientists, conflicting information, that we will be able to solve it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uncertainties, risks: causes, facts, effects, severity, action needed, impacts on lifestyles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Information’</td>
<td>(Dis)engagement: learning, doing own research, participation, changing, switching off, rebut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust: distrust, biased, unbalanced, contradicting, confusing, conflicting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role of the media: raising awareness?, media-hypes, self-interests, doom and gloom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under the **Lifestyles and Practices** focus (Table 7.10), the concept of ‘(Re)actions’ contained two themes. Firstly, participants’ *call for action* that expressed diverse understandings of what kind of actions might be needed to combat climate change; and secondly, their *reflections on effects* regarding actions that might not make a difference or have an uncertain effect within an uncertain timeframe. ‘Responsibilities’ for such actions were expressed on a *general* level as well as *tourism* specific. Furthermore, participants’ *reflections on nature* embraced diverse responsibilities embedded in their reflections on stewardship, respect, and interdependency. Such thoughts also contained *reflections* on ‘Environmental practices’, which included reasoning, insufficiencies, and justifications. *Practices* that were conducted by a number of participants were related to resource uses or responsible lifestyle changes. As environmental practices were related to reducing carbon emissions, carbon footprints were also commented on. Participants’ *reflections* on ‘Carbon footprints’ referred to the role or importance that is embedded within the carbon footprint concept, whereas *knowledge* referred to participants’ general understanding of carbon footprints. Especially carbon *offsets*, the last theme
under this concept, obtained ambiguous understandings and perceptions that varied in embracing, refusing, or questioning them.

Table 7.10

*Grounded theory concepts and themes focussing on ‘Lifestyles and Practices’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Grounded theory concepts</th>
<th>Summarised themes from the Research Lounge narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘(Re)action’</td>
<td>Call for action: Adaptation, act sooner than later, technological solutions, waste and pollution, other countries do better, changes in everyday lives&lt;br&gt;Reflections on effects: Can’t make a different, not in my lifetime, nothing we can do?, inaction leads to consequences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Responsibilities’</td>
<td>General: governments, business and private enterprises, other nations or countries, everyone’s&lt;br&gt;Tourism: tourism industry and operators, tourists&lt;br&gt;Reflections on nature: Caring for nature, enjoying nature, depending on nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Environmental practices’</td>
<td>Reflections: Doing my bit, have to do more, need more information, no reflection, save costs&lt;br&gt;Practices: recycling, saving energy, saving water, green technology, walk more, public transport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Carbon footprints’</td>
<td>Reflections: Tool, measurement, learning; Creation, myth, fairy-tale&lt;br&gt;Knowledge: understand, don’t understand, no idea, based on misconceptions, no clear information&lt;br&gt;Offsets: silly, always pay, profit-driven, do they work?, Greener technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The grounded theory concepts that were grouped under the focus of *Tourism and Travelling* (Table 7.11) referred to the interconnection between climate change and tourism as well as influences on participants’ travel behaviours. Under ‘Impacts on tourism’ participants reflected on weather conditions, which were changing and could influence travelling. *Destinations* had to face changing climatic conditions or extreme weather events that could change landscapes. Such changing conditions changed the appeal of a destination, making it less or more appealing, or inaccessible. Furthermore, destinations could face effects that impact on socio-economic and environmental aspects. Such effects were also associated with the loss of attractions or habitats. As a cause of changing landscapes or losses, participants referred to sea level rises. However, *sea level rises* were a very debatable issue that was strongly linked to participants’ position on climate change. Under the concept of
‘Tourism’s contribution’, the level of contribution was perceived at diverse levels. Regardless of such levels, transportation was associated with the question of contributions. Besides climate change related contributions, participants reflected on general impacts on the environment through tourism developments and operations. Such developments and operations were also linked to socio-economic aspects as tourism activities provide economic contributions but also have impacts on local cultures. Furthermore, travelling was perceived as providing benefits to environmental discussions or to the traveller him or her self. Based on such varied perspectives regarding tourism’s contributions, participants questioned if reducing travel activities would be a viable (re)action. From a travellers’ perspective, the last grounded theory concept contains participants’ reflection on the ‘Influences on travel behaviour’. Such influences could be grouped into five groups that are reflected in the following themes. ‘No need’ for change was predominantly based on the disbelief in human-induced climate change. With regards to travel behaviours, ‘no need’ was similar to ‘stay the same’, although, this behaviour was mainly based on a belief in humans’ contribution to climate change. In both cases, travel behaviours did not change. Although the ‘more aware’ theme did not lead to changes in travel behaviours either, here travel choices were made with an increased consciousness of climate change discussions. Containing reflections on general lifestyle changes and environmental practices, ‘do my bit’ represents no changes in travel behaviours but on an everyday life level. A ‘changed’ behaviour, however, embraced influences on travel decisions that referred to offsetting emissions or environmentally friendly travel choices.
### Table 7.11

**Grounded theory concepts and themes focusing on ‘Tourism and Travelling’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Grounded theory concepts</th>
<th>Summarised themes from the Research Lounge narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Impacts on tourism’</td>
<td><em>Weather:</em> Getting warmer, cooler, wetter, dryer, extreme weather events, consider when planning&lt;br&gt;<em>Destinations:</em> Climatic changes, extreme events or effects, changing landscapes&lt;br&gt;<em>Appeal:</em> Less attractive, more appealing, disappearing, can’t go, change plans, adapt, go before gone&lt;br&gt;<em>Effects:</em> Impacts on economies, cultures, environments&lt;br&gt;<em>Loss:</em> Natural attractions, landmarks, build attractions, natural habitats, biodiversity&lt;br&gt;<em>Sea level rise:</em> Low-lying areas, islands; conflicting science: sea level rise vs. land rise?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Tourism’s contribution’</td>
<td><em>Level of contribution:</em> Some, minor, major, others more, unaware, none&lt;br&gt;<em>Transportation:</em> air travel, greener technology, unnecessary travel, putting the facts right&lt;br&gt;<em>Environment:</em> resource use and competition, destruction, pollution, tourist behaviours, reflecting on impact of small holiday, contradiction if contributes&lt;br&gt;<em>Socio-economic aspects:</em> benefits, profit interests, world economy, impacts on cultures&lt;br&gt;<em>Benefits:</em> increase awareness, influence destinations, personal benefits&lt;br&gt;<em>Re</em>action: reducing travel or inaction are no option; balance needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Influences on travel behaviour’</td>
<td><em>No need:</em> No need to change, might check weather&lt;br&gt;<em>Stay the same:</em> No influences, travel as usual&lt;br&gt;<em>More aware:</em> More aware, more conscious, weather, go before gone&lt;br&gt;<em>Do my bit:</em> No need to change travelling? Already doing my bit&lt;br&gt;<em>Changed:</em> Offseting, greener travel products, reduce travel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in the above text, participants’ narratives focussed on the three foci of **Knowledge and Understandings**, **Lifestyles and Practices**, and **Tourism and Travelling**. Within the three foci, the overall emerged grounded theory concepts and themes were collated. Based on these grounded theory concepts and themes, and embedded within the narratives, participants demonstrated reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making.
7.4  Step 3 - Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making

As stated previously, participants’ narratives revealed that knowledge and an understanding of climate change issues, feeling of responsibility, and judgement of efficacy tended to mediate participants’ personal and social agency. Such reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making were visible within responses of all three participant groups, Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. The four theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and agency were constituents of these processes, with knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy mediating agency. Furthermore, these four theoretical constructs were conveyed within personal as well as social contexts. Participants’ narratives reflect the four theoretical constructs in different facets, which were associated with theoretical concepts. In the following step 3, it is demonstrated how these associated theoretical concepts and the theoretical constructs were embedded in participants’ narratives.

For the knowledge construct (Table 7.12), the associated theoretical concepts of attitudes, understandings, scientific knowledge, common knowledge, and trust were identified. Participants reflected on their general attitudes of climate change and associated issues with regards to lifestyles and travelling. Besides such attitudes, participants revealed their level of understandings of knowledge associated with climate change issues or science. Such understandings and perceptions were linked to scientific knowledge supporting or opposing climate change claims, as well as common knowledge based on commonly understood climate change issues. Participants received climate change information through their engagement with different information sources and institutions, and evaluated the quality of both information and institutions based on the perceived trust.
Table 7.12

**Theoretical construct of knowledge: Narrative examples and associated theoretical concepts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical construct</th>
<th>Associated theoretical concepts</th>
<th>Examples from the Research Lounge narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>“I don't feel too concerned as much of the damage will occur after my lifetime”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understandings</td>
<td>“Don’t really understand what that means”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scientific knowledge</td>
<td>“We haven't seen concise data or science prove that all environmental issues really exist”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common knowledge</td>
<td>“I know that some destinations like the Maldives are in jeopardy due to rising sea levels”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>“Getting reliable information is difficult”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under the *responsibility* construct (Table 7.13), the associated theoretical concepts of *values,* *ethics,* *morals,* *social norms,* and *actors* were collated. Participants’ reflected on their personal *values* as a basis for their responsible actions. Such *values* were linked to how participants perceived the importance of nature on personal social influences. A general responsibility for the environment, especially for future generations, was linked to questions of *ethics.* With regards to responsible choices and practices, participants also reflected on *morals* issues, feeling guilty about their lifestyle consumptions and travel decisions. Furthermore, *social norms* that referred to standards or rules were perceived as possible guides for future responsible practices. Responsibilities overall were not just linked to participants’ perceptions on their personal *responsibility* but also to different *actors* that were perceived as being responsible for certain climate change issues or being responsible for dealing with them.
Table 7.13

*Theoretical construct of responsibility: Narrative examples and associated theoretical concepts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical construct</th>
<th>Associated theoretical concepts</th>
<th>Examples from the Research Lounge narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Values</td>
<td>“I was always brought up to respect nature and the environment”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>“It needs to be preserved to the best of our ability so that generations to come can enjoy the planet earth”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morals</td>
<td>“The impact your travel has on the environment seems to make me feel guilty about leisure”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social norms</td>
<td>“We should be building buildings according to our climate”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>“It is frustrating that no government has the guts to tackle it head on”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a further mediator for *agency*, the construct of *efficacy* (Table 7.14) entails the associated theoretical concepts of *ability, constraints, impacts,* and *uncertainties.* Participants reflected on their *ability* to act or change with regards to climate change or environmental issues. Furthermore, such acts or changes were influenced by economical, social, or personal *constraints,* and resultantly affecting participants’ perceived *efficacy.* Participants also reflected that resulting or desired *impacts* of possible acts with regards to the environment or climate change were often unknown and questioned. These unknowns were also associated with perceptions of

Table 7.14

*Theoretical construct of efficacy: Narrative examples and associated theoretical concepts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical construct</th>
<th>Associated theoretical concepts</th>
<th>Examples from the Research Lounge narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy</td>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>“I find it difficult to change the way I do things in order to protect it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constraints</td>
<td>“Sometimes I just don't have the money to travel in an environmentally friendly way”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impacts</td>
<td>“I don’t think it really makes a difference”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uncertainties</td>
<td>“I think it is such a cumulative effect that we won't really know what we've done until it's too late”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
uncertainties, not knowing what needs to be done and how climate change might influence people’s personal lives.

As mentioned above, the theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy tended to mediate participants’ agency. The theoretical construct of agency (Table 7.15) was represented by the associated theoretical concepts of engaging, practicing, and changing. The associated theoretical concept of engaging reflects participants’ comments on their engagement or disengagement with climate change and associate issues. Such engagements also involved researching for information and facts, learning, as well as influencing others in their knowledge and behaviours. Another associated theoretical concept was practicing, which refers to participants’ reflections on environmental lifestyle practices. Although the first two agency concepts seem to reflect more on general environmental or climate change acts, they also referred to some travel related agency. The last concept associated with agency, however, demonstrated changes in participants’ travel behaviours, with participants changing to more environmentally friendlier travel products or behaviours.

Table 7.15

*Theoretical construct of agency: Narrative examples and associated theoretical concepts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical construct</th>
<th>Associated theoretical concepts</th>
<th>Examples from the Research Lounge narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td>“I try and educate myself as broadly as possible about environmental issues”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practicing</td>
<td>“My household actively supports recycling, water saving strategies, natural heating and cooling techniques, solar energy, organic food products etc”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changing</td>
<td>“I reluctantly have decided to travel less”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The theoretical constructs and associated theoretical concepts were embedded in participants’ narratives and demonstrated their reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. Within this processes the theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy tended to mediate participants’ agency. Overall, these theoretical constructs and associated concepts guided the reflexive
meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes on personal levels as well as within wider social contexts.

7.5 Step 4 and 5 - A grounded theory of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and influences on travel behaviours: Mediating Climate Change Agency

In the previous sections of this chapter, the grounded theory concepts and themes as well as the theoretical constructs and associated theoretical concepts were introduced. Grouped under the three foci of Knowledge and Understandings, Lifestyles and Practices, and Tourism and Travelling, the grounded theory concepts were identified as ‘Perceptions’, ‘Information’, ‘(Re)action’, ‘Responsibilities’, ‘Environmental practices’, ‘Carbon footprints’, ‘Impacts on tourism’, ‘Tourism’s contribution’, and ‘Influences on travel behaviour’. The emerged grounded theory concepts and themes represent participants’ reflections on climate change issues with regards to what they knew and how this relates to their lifestyles and travelling. The theoretical constructs and associated theoretical concepts, on the other hand, represent the underlying reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making. The theoretical constructs included knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy, which were identified as mediators of the fourth theoretical construct of agency. Such meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes were linked with personal and social contexts. Though the theoretical constructs and the grounded theory concepts emerged as discrete concepts from participants’ narratives, they were strongly interconnected. These interconnections were grounded in participants’ narratives and illustrated, as part of step 4, in Figure 7.1.

The representation of the interconnections between grounded theory concepts and theoretical constructs were symbolised through reverse arrows, as it is important to note that the underlying theoretical constructs are not only linked to certain grounded theory concepts, but also influenced by these. Furthermore, through the dynamic interconnections between all grounded theory concepts and the theoretical constructs, influences were also identified between the constructs themselves. For example, a traveller’s understanding of climate change is represented by the theoretical construct of knowledge. The construct of knowledge is interlinked with the grounded
theory concept of ‘Perceptions’ as the traveller’s understanding of climate change issues affected his or her perceptions of climate change. These ‘Perceptions’ were also interconnected to the construct of responsibility and the traveller’s perceptions of climate change influenced his or her sense of morals, feeling even guiltier about personal contributions to climate change based on an advanced understanding. In this example, knowledge influenced responsibility; however, such influences were bi-directional. Knowledge and the evaluation of climate change information, for example, were influenced by the traveller’s set of values. Possessing strong environmental values influenced his or her ‘Perceptions’ of climate change and resultantly the underlying knowledge, for example, perceiving pro-environmental research findings as more reliable for his or her meaning- and sense-making processes. In this example, the construct of responsibility influenced the construct of knowledge.

Illustrated through the interconnections and exemplified in Figure 7.1, the four constructs influence each other. Such interconnectivity further influences the grounded theory concepts and themes in a similar way. For example, a traveller’s reflections on ‘Carbon footprints’ were linked bi-directionally to his or her ‘Environmental practices’. Such links were established via the theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy, and further linked to other grounded theory concepts as well. The grounded theory concepts as well as the theoretical constructs, therefore, cannot be seen as distinctive but rather as overlapping or fluent, influencing each other and also being influenced by themes or discussions outside of this research. The emerged themes clustered around the three foci of Knowledge and Understandings, Lifestyles and Practices, and Tourism and Travelling. These clusters and their permeability are shown in the grounded theory model in Figure 7.2. The grounded theory model portrays further the underlying reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making. This process is also not an exclusive process but open to other influences as well. For this research, the theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and agency, each linked to personal and social contexts, were identified as the main constituents for the reflexive processes. These constructs influence each other, with knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy identified as mediators of agency.
Figure 7.1. Interconnections between grounded theory concepts and theoretical constructs.

Knowledge and Understandings
- Position
- Reflections
- Facts, evidence
- Doubts
- Uncertainties
- (Dis)engagement
- Trust
- Role of media
- Call for action
- Reflections on effects

Lifestyles and Practices
- General
- Tourism
- Reflections on nature
- Reflections
- Practices
- Reflections
- Knowledge
- Offsets
- Weather
- Appeal
- Destinations
- Loss
- Sea level rise

Tourism and Travelling
- Level of contribution
- Transportation
- Environment
- Socio-economic
- (Re)action
- No need
- Stay the same
- More aware
- Do my bit
- Changed

Grounded Theory Themes
- Perceptions
- Information
- (Re)action
- Responsibilities
- Environmental practices
- Carbon footprints
- Impacts on tourism
- Tourism’s contribution
- Influences on travel behaviour

Grounded Theory Concepts
- Knowledge
- Responsibility
- Efficacy
- Agency

Theoretical Constructs
- Attitudes
- Understandings
- Values
- Ethics
- Morals
- Social norms
- Actors
- Ability
- Constraints
- Impacts
- Uncertainties
- Engaging
- Practicing
- Changing
Figure 7.2. Grounded theory model construction: Mediating Climate Change Agency
This research set out to gain a deeper understanding of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and influences on travel behaviours, and the previous chapters provided travellers’ voices and reflections. Within step 5 of the theorising process, the grounded theory was framed. Grounded in participants’ narratives, and based on the emerged grounded theory concepts and the underlying reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency is introduced:

Travellers’ perceptions of climate change are influenced by information generated by a broad range of social institutions. This information is filtered through reflexive processes of meaning-, sense- and decision-making, which revealed that knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy are the main mediators for agency within personal and social contexts. Based on travellers’ engagement with and evaluation of climate change information, sense of responsibility, and judgment of efficacy, agency is reflected in inaction, or led to lifestyle practices and changes of travel behaviours.

These reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making were used by Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds as they engaged with and constructed climate change knowledge, evaluated their responsibility, and judged their efficacy with regards to climate change agency. Based on these processes, and shown in Figure 7.3, participants were grouped into the five behaviour groups of ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’.
Figure 7.3. Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making with regards to participants’ climate change stance and behaviour groups
7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, a comparison of the two studies, Lonely Planet Thorn Tree and Climate Change Research Lounge, as well as of the interpretations of the three groups, Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds, was provided. The Lonely Planet study allowed initial insights into travellers’ discussions of climate change, revealing that participants were critical of the role of information and social institutions. The online environment of the discussion forum supported participants’ meaning- and sense-making processes and participants’ demonstrated reflexivity with regards to personal and social agency. Such agency was linked to travel decision-making. From the Lonely Planet study the three groups of Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds emerged. The Research Lounge study corresponded with the interpretations of the Lonely Planet study and allowed a further investigation of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and connectivity to travel decision-making. The Research Lounge study collected individual travellers’ reflections that were guided by open-ended questions. A cross-interpretation of the individual reflections enabled a deeper understanding of travellers’ perceptions. Based on step 1 and step 2 of the theorising process, the main grounded theory concepts of ‘Perceptions’, ‘Information’, ‘(Re)action’, ‘Responsibilities’, ‘Environmental practices’, ‘Carbon footprints’, ‘Impacts on tourism’, ‘Tourism’s contribution’, and ‘Influences on travel behaviour’ emerged. With regards to ‘Influences on travel behaviour’, the five grounded theory themes of ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’ represented a categorisation of participants’ continua of engagements with climate change and resultant personal and social agency.

Following a grounded theory interpretive approach, in step 3, the interpretation of the Research Lounge narratives furthermore revealed the underlying reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making. The theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and agency were identified as constituents of these processes, with knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy mediating agency. All four theoretical constructs were linked to personal and social contexts and showed influences on each other. Such influences were illustrated in step 4 through the interconnections between grounded theory concepts and theoretical constructs. The interconnections
also reflected the links between grounded theory concepts and themes, which clustered around the foci of **Knowledge and Understandings, Lifestyles and Practices**, and **Tourism and Travelling**. These clusters tended to be permeable, reflecting influences of themes or discussions outside of this research. A similar permeability exists for the reflexive processes of **meaning-**, **sense-**, and **decision-making**, although in this research **knowledge, responsibility, efficacy**, and **agency** were identified as the main constituents of such processes. Based on the grounded theory interpretation in step 5, the theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency was introduced.

In the following discussion chapter, the theoretical constructs of **knowledge, responsibility, efficacy**, and **agency** are discussed in relation to their role within the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency. This discussion is guided by the constructs and their associated theoretical concepts, and contextualises them within related extant literature.
CHAPTER EIGHT

MEDIATING CLIMATE CHANGE AGENCY

Effective execution of Agenda 21 will require a profound reorientation of all human society, unlike anything the world has ever experienced, a major shift in the priorities of both governments and individuals, and an unprecedented redeployment of human and financial resources. This shift will demand that a concern for the environmental consequences of every human action be integrated into individual and collective decision-making at every level.

(Sitarz, 2011, p. 6)

The aim of my research was to gain a deeper understanding of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and how such perceptions influence their travel behaviours. Based on their general agreement on humans’ contributions to climate change, participants were grouped into Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. Although such categorisation did reflect participants’ general stance on climate change, it did not reflect the diversity of perceptions with regards to climate change and travelling. Participants’ reflections showed a multiplicity of perceptions and understandings with regards to climate change and travelling. For example, participants’ reflections on the degree of humans’ contributions to climate change varied from being a purely natural cause, to diverse contributions and causes based on humans’ lifestyles, to humanity being the main or even sole driver of climate change. When investigating further how participants perceived tourism’s contribution to climate change, again, a multitude of perceptions and understandings were found to have been expressed, ranging from none to major contributions. How did such diverse perceptions evolve? Participants had different understandings of climate change and associated issues like travelling. These understandings of climate change were co-constructed and re-constructed as part of participants’ social engagement with others as well as based on their own individual reasoning. This reasoning was based on their personal values, experiences, and knowledge. Constructing climate change understandings,
furthermore, was not just a ‘one-off’, but part of a constant reflexive process of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making. Grounded in participants’ narratives, the four theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and agency were identified as the main constituents of this reflexive process, with knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy mediating climate change agency. Such agency was reflected variously in participants’ everyday lives and with regards to their travel experiences.

The grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency reflects the complexity, multiplicity, interconnectedness and fluidness of the constructs and their identified associated theoretical concepts. Furthermore, it provides a framework for a deeper understanding of what travellers’ climate change perceptions are and how these influence their travel behaviours. As such, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency differs from other existing theories of behaviour or behaviour change. Three commonly accepted theories are the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and the Model of Responsible Environmental Behaviour.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) focuses on the influences of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on intentions and consequently behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Jackson (2005) argues that linear models like the TPB often fail to predict behaviour, as behaviour is not necessarily influenced by intentions or attitudes although behaviour conversely can influence attitudes. By focussing on attitudes, the TPB fails to engage in in-depth consideration of other dimensions of behaviour, specifically normative, affective and cognitive aspects (Gifford, 2011; Jackson, 2005). While other researchers (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Heath & Gifford, 2001; Kaiser, 2006) have added some dimensions to the original TPB, they still maintain a linear and limited dimensional approach. In contrast, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency engages with the multiplicity of dimensions in a fluid rather than linear manner. In the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency such multiple dimensions are embedded within the identified constructs of knowledge, responsibility and efficacy. A further significant difference between the TPB and the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency lies in their applicability with regards to behaviour.
Whereas the TPB tries to measure intention and predict behaviour based on people’s attitudes, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency provides a framework for understanding the complexity, multiplicity, interconnectedness and fluidness of travellers’ perceptions and influences on travel behaviours.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) focuses on processes of behaviour change within persuasion and communication research (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The ELM processes are linear and, similar to the TPB, do not reflect the complexity, multiplicity, interconnectedness and fluidness of people’s perceptions and behaviours within the context of environmental lifestyles and travel situations. As Webb, Sniehotta, and Michie (2010) summarise, the ELM does not provide insights into any theoretical constructs but focuses on ways of interventions that can lead to behaviour changes. Whereas the ELM elaborates on how to change people’s behaviour, it does not acknowledge individuals’ self-identity and social embeddedness that filters their sense-, meaning-, and decision-making processes. Furthermore, the ELM focuses on information and does not incorporate different types of knowledge and trust, which were identified as theoretical concepts within this research. By focussing on information or messages that are given to influence attitudes, ELM neglects the concepts of self-identity and social embeddedness that play a role with regards to their knowledge as well as responsibility and efficacy.

The third model, the Model of Responsible Environmental Behaviour (MREB) has been developed based on a meta-analysis of existing environmental behaviour research (Hines, Hungerford, & Tomera, 1987). Grounded in existing research, the MREB identified that knowledge of issues, knowledge of action strategies, locus of control, attitudes, verbal commitment, and individuals’ sense of responsibility are variables of environmental behaviour (Hines, et al., 1987; Hungerford & Volk, 1990). Similar to the TPB, the MREB also uses intention as a determent for behaviour; however, it also acknowledges situational factors (Bamberg & Möser, 2007). Although the MREB appears to align, to some extent, with the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency, MREB provides only a linear model that does not acknowledge the complexity, multiplicity, interconnectedness and fluidness of such variables. As Bamberg and Möser (2007) conclude, environmental behaviour models and theories so far do not explain environmental behaviour and
intention only predicts behaviour in a limited way. Given the constraints of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and the Model of Responsible Environmental Behaviour, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency captures the multi-dimensional and interconnectedness of travellers’ climate change perceptions and influences on travel behaviours. Further, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency encapsulates the key-role of self-identity and social embeddedness of co-constructions and re-constructions of climate change perceptions and travel behaviours. That being said, it must be noted that throughout this chapter, literature related to these commonly used theories and model have been used in the discussions of each of the various theoretical concepts where germane.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency is embedded within participants’ reflections and how it provides a framework for understanding how climate change perceptions influence travel behaviours. The discussion focuses on the theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, agency, as well as their associated theoretical concepts. The associated theoretical concepts that focus on participants’ attitudes, understandings, their reflections on scientific and common knowledge, as well as trust in information and its sources, were identified for the construct of knowledge. Participants’ reflections on values, ethics, morals, social norms, and roles of different actors represent the theoretical construct of responsibility. The construct of efficacy contains the associated theoretical concepts of perceived ability, constraints, and evaluations of impacts and uncertainties. The constructs of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy, represented by their associated theoretical concepts, were identified as mediators for participants’ climate change agency. Such agency was reflected through engaging with information on climate change and associated issues, through practicing environmentally friendlier lifestyle practices, and through changing travel behaviours. The discussion of the theoretical construct and concepts, furthermore, demonstrates their interconnections and relevance for participants’ reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes.

Before attending to the discussion itself, I want to comment on my writing style used in this chapter. As Charmaz (2006) states, “[w]riting reflects the choices authors
make” (p. 172), and I here briefly reflect on some of the choices I made. These choices refer to stylistic aspects and use of literature. Within the discussion, I am using italicised formatting for the constructs and concepts in order to make it easier for the reader to identify where I refer to them in the text. In some cases, I also italicised other forms of these terms, as the use, for example, of a verbal form was more appropriate within the sentence structure or text flow. I italicised, for example, **constrained** to refer to the associated theoretical concept of **constraints**, or used a singular form like **constraint** if I was exemplifying one of the identified **constraints**. Furthermore, within the discussion I used a narrative style to present the constructs and concepts, and discussion of their relevance for participants’ **meaning-**, **sense-**, and **decision-making** processes with regards to climate change. Although I, as the grounded theorist, am positioned in the background of the text, my voice permeates my writing and my interpretations. In discussing the theoretical constructs and concepts, I interpreted the participants’ texts and meanings. Where appropriate, I linked my interpretations to related literature in order to situate my grounded theory within the existing literature rather than providing a discussion of such literature. At the end of the discussion chapter, I revisit the previously presented grounded theories from Chapter 3 and Chapter 7. In the course of this chapter, these theories are further refined as a grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency based on my interpretations and discussions. Before discussing each theoretical construct and their associated theoretical concepts, the following section explains the meaning of the reflexive processes of **meaning-**, **sense-**, and **decision-making** within this research context.

### 8.1 **Meaning-**, **sense-**, and **decision-making**: What does it mean? How do we decide what to do?

Participants within this research reflected on their reflexive **meaning-**, **sense-**, and **decision-making** processes. But what application do these processes have? As Gee (1999) states, “words have multiple and ever changing meanings created for and adapted to specific contexts of use” (p. 40). Such meanings are determined by people’s cultural and social embeddedness (Gee, 1999), in which individuals are not just presented with a ‘ready-made situation’ but also with “situation preformed patterns of thought and of conduct” (Mannheim, 1936, p. 3). Within, and filtered by
(Lidskog, 1996), cultural and social contexts, people co-construct and constantly re-construct meanings (Schwandt, 2000). Meanings of climate change are, for example, embedded within scientific and social contexts, and these meanings can differ, overlap, or contradict each other, as they are a “product of social interpretations” (Lidskog, 1996, p. 35) and social constructions (Leiserowitz, 2005). Depending on how climate change is defined as a problem by societies and individuals, this might also define how it could be solved (Leiserowitz, 2005). This, however, is where the problem lies; meanings and definitions of climate change and associated issues are as multiple as are proposed solutions. “Our social embeddedness”, our situatedness within cultural and social contexts, therefore, also provides a “source of considerable ambivalence”, influencing perceptions and actions (Carolan, 2010, p. 311). Presented with such dilemma, how then do individuals make sense of climate change for their everyday lives?

According to Weick (1995), sense-making involves “the construction and bracketing of the textile cues that are interpreted, as well as the revision of those interpretations based on action and its consequences” (p. 8). Sense-making about climate change is a process. It is a process about how people make sense of climate change facts, events, or situations for their lives, and how they reflect on their actions and consider such reflections for future actions. As people make retrospective sense of situations, the process of sense-making becomes reflexive (Weick, 1995). It is a constant monitoring of actions, conscious and ‘non-conscious’ (Giddens, 1991). Sense-making is usually seen as a ‘precursor’ of decision-making (Craig-Lees, 2001), but can also be a retrospective justification of decisions made (Garfinkel, 1967). In the face of rising sea levels, for example, people might reflect on their desire to visit an island paradise and decide not to go because a long-haul flight would contribute to the effects of climate change. On the other hand, the desire to go might have led to the decision to fly without reflecting about climate change, and people reason their decision with their belief that their carbon emissions will not make a difference with regards to rising sea levels. In both cases, decisions individuals make are not only about deciding and justifying what action should be taken and how, but also making decisions about who they want to be, constituting their self-identity (Giddens, 1991). This self-identity is constantly shaped by the individual’s actions and resultantly contributes to social changes (Giddens, 1991). Furthermore, this self-identity or
looking-glass self is shaped by individuals’ “imagination of how one’s self” was perceived by others (Cooley, 1902). Resultantly, decision-making is based on what individuals think are relevant aspects for their everyday lives as well as their self-identity. Although decision-making can be viewed as an ‘outcome’, resulting in what people decide to do or choices they take, decision-making is a continuous process (Smallman & Moore, 2010). Such processes are situated within and influenced by individuals’ everyday lives and experiences. Furthermore, decision-making is a “process that is unobservable and for which consumers are only partially aware” (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005, p. 830); it is a conscious and ‘non-conscious’ evaluation and judgement of a given situation and relevant facts as well as mediated through tangible and intangible factors. Within this research, participants’ cultural and social embeddedness and self-identity was reflected through their positionality on human-induced climate change, as Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. Furthermore, with regards to their travel decision-making, participants were grouped into the five behaviour groups of ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’. The five behaviour groups represent participants’ self-identity as citizens and travellers with regards to climate change. Their travel decision-making was mediated by intangible factors like knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy.

Within the reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making, the constructs of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy were identified as mediators of agency. These mediators were influencing how participants constructed their meaning of climate change, how they made sense of it for their everyday lives and for travel situations, and what actions they decided on with regards to their climate change agency. Mediators in general can be human or non-human (Jennings & Weiler, 2006). With regards to climate change discussions, human mediators can be represented by the multiple direct or indirect engagements participants had with others in order to gain or exchange climate change information, or to discuss climate change issues. This could be friends, colleagues, family, other travellers, educators, media presenters, scientists, politicians, Al Gore, the IPCC, and many more. Overall, human mediators include individuals, groups, and social institutions that participants engaged with as part of their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change. Within the context of quality tourism experiences, Jennings and Weiler (2006) defined such human mediators as brokers, actively
building a bridge or link between individuals or groups and the message they want to deliver. On the other hand, non-human mediators, with regards to climate change, can be signs, symbols, images, movies, experiences, environmental movements, or mediascapes representing climate change discussions. Polar bears for example, as portrayed frequently in media reports, represent the risk of climate change (Adger, et al., 2011), mediating individuals’ perceptions of climate change’s impacts on ice caps and, potentially, on people’s lifestyles.

Having said that, mediation or brokering is part of individuals’ sense-making processes. In such sense-making processes, an individual constantly co-constructs and re-constructs meaning (Schwandt, 2000). With regards to participants’ co-constructions and re-constructions of climate change and associated issues, I see mediation not just as a bridge or link but a constant negotiation. Such negotiations of climate change meanings were ‘facilitated’ by knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy, and consequently influenced or determined participants’ climate change agency. This negotiation as part of mediation processes did not occur in isolation but was influenced by other humans as part of co-constructions, and non-human elements, such as climate change reports, movies or images. The mediation of climate change agency through knowledge, responsibility and efficacy constitutes, furthermore, a negotiation with oneself. It is a reoccurring reflexive process, constantly assessing (new) knowledge, judging responsibility, and evaluating efficacy (Giddens, 1991), as well as an ongoing monitoring and rationalising of agency (Giddens, 1984). The relevance of the theoretical constructs for the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency is discussed in the following sections.
8.2 Knowledge: What do we know? What do we need to know?

Participants’ perceptions of climate change were influenced by information they received from a wide range of social institutions such as media, governments, organisations, as well as through social interactions with peers. Their engagement with and evaluation of such information was represented by the theoretical construct of knowledge. Throughout their narratives, participants expressed what they knew or understood about, or their attitudes with regards to climate change and associated issues. Within their narratives, participants also commented on different sources of climate change information as well as the trust in these information sources or the received information in particular. Overall, the theoretical construct of knowledge contains the associated theoretical concepts of attitudes, understandings, scientific knowledge, common knowledge, and trust. The associated theoretical concepts together represent the mediating construct of knowledge, with each of them representing a specific aspect of knowledge. However, these concepts are also overlapping, fluent, and connected with each other, as meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes are multidimensional. This section attends to the associated theoretical concepts of knowledge (Figure 8.1) and demonstrates how these concepts were part of participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change agency.

Based on the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency, knowledge about climate change is derived from and constructed through information engagements. Participants referred to different types of knowledge in the form of scientific and common knowledge. This knowledge was received through different information sources and helped participants to develop and construct their understandings and attitudes of climate change, which was influenced by evaluations of trust in knowledge or information sources. But how is knowledge formally defined? Knowledge is gained through engagements with facts or information, derived from experiences, and can also refer to an awareness of knowing as a form of
Figure 8.1. Knowledge: Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making with regards to travellers’ climate change position and travel behaviour understanding (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Knowledge, furthermore, is often associated with truth, the reality of facts that are often derived through scientific investigations. Knowledge, therefore, is a ‘higher organic evolution’ and enables us to make decisions and act on our lives (Cooley, 1926). It is a ‘co-operative process of group life’ to which everyone contributes based on shared or different cultural and societal values (Mannheim, 1936). Furthermore, the knowing agent is not just able to act but
also demonstrates reflexivity on his or her actions (Giddens, 1991), creating “a situation of greater choice between alternative means, ends, conditions and legitimations of actions” (Lidskog, 1996, p. 44). Within the context of sustainability, knowledge is seen as an important influencer on environmental behaviour (Wells, Ponting, & Preattie, 2011). Such behaviour, however, is not determined by the amount of knowledge, but rather a combination of different types of knowledge (Kaiser & Fuhrer, 2003). Scientific and common knowledge concepts were identified in participants’ knowledge engagements. These associated theoretical concepts were interconnected with the concepts of attitudes, understandings, and trust, and each of them is discussed in the following text.

8.2.1 Attitudes: What is our perspective on climate change?

Participants expressed their attitudes with regards to climate change through their general positionality. This positionality referred to their belief or disbelief in human-induced climate change, or to their indecision on this theory. Based on their positions, participants in this research were grouped into Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds with regards to their belief in human-induced climate change. However, there is no clear definition on such positionalties and the terminology varies. A person who does not believe that humanity contributes to climate change is, within public discussions and scientific reports, often framed as a sceptic or denier. Such frames, however, can have different meanings (Poortinga, Spence, Whitmarsh, Capstick, & Pidgeon, 2011), depending on the proposition, hypothesis, the questions at stake, or the viewpoints of the person who uses such frames. This research sought to gain an understanding of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and influences on travel behaviours. Non-believers in this research could be compared to ‘sceptics’ in other studies (for example, Rahmstorf, 2004; Ryghaug, Sorensen, & Nass, 2011); however, scepticism has to be seen in the context of the research questions (Spence, Pidgeon, Poortinga, & Venables, 2010). To be sceptical does not necessarily imply that a certain position is rejected, but can also reflect doubts with regards to the trustworthiness or credibility of specific facts or actors. As such doubts were evident across all three groups, I decided to use the term Non-believer for participants who did not believe humans contributed to climate change.
As previously stated, Believers within this research were defined based on their agreement that humans contribute to climate change because they believed humans contributed to climate change. Some of the Believers, however, expressed scepticism regarding the extent of such contributions, consideration of natural causes, as well as the predicted effects. Undecideds were generally sceptical about the causes of climate change and did not take a clear position. Furthermore, Believers and Undecideds were, for example, sceptical of social institutions’ abilities to address climate change or general environmental issues in the correct, most successful, way. Such forms of scepticisms are important for a healthy discussion on climate change and are part of participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, not only for Believers and Undecideds but also for Non-believers. Non-believers were sceptical too. They doubted the science behind climate change as well as the underlying interests of social institutions. Non-believers believed that climate change was part of natural, reoccurring processes; they did not believe that humans contributed to climate change. So, were they deniers and rejected that climate change exists as defined in other studies (for example, Hoffman, 2011)? Within my research, Non-believers did not express the belief that climate change does not exist; for them, it was happening but was caused by natural reoccurring processes. Furthermore, across the three groups, participants expressed denial with regards to different aspects of climate change discussions. For this research, therefore, classifying participants into Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds was found to be appropriate as this best reflected their position on human-induced climate change.

Besides participants’ general position on climate change, their attitudes to climate change were also influenced by the question of relevance with regards to their everyday lives. This relevance was defined by aspects of time, space, or importance. Participants deferred possible effects of climate change to the future, other geographical spaces, or saw them as of no relevance or importance for personal situations. The majority of participants, represented by the Believers, agreed that humans contributed to climate change, although to varying degrees. This mirrors findings of larger quantititative studies in Australia and Great Britain (Reser, et al., 2011), and the United States (Krosnick, 2010; Leiserowitz, Smith, & Marlon, 2010). Besides reflecting on their agreement or disagreement of human-induced climate change, participants’ narratives also encompassed a variety of different perspectives
on a wide range of issues. Such issues included, but not exclusively, perspectives on climate change facts, causes of or contributors to climate change, and connectivity to travel and tourism, and these are discussed continuously throughout this chapter.

With regards to temporal aspects, participants across all three groups reflected on the need to take care of the environment for future generations. With the risk of climate change, most Believers were well aware that impacts are likely to increase over time and future generations would have to bear the results of Believers’ current contributions to climate change. As future impacts, however, do not ‘exist’ yet, it makes it impossible for some to act upon it now (Skinner, 1987). This was particularly evident in participants’ reflections that referred to ‘not in my life time’ and therefore distanced the threat of climate change. Such narratives on temporal or spatial distance with regards to climate change attitudes reflect findings of other perception studies (Bord, Fisher, & O’Connor, 1998; Leiserowitz, 2005; Lorenzoni, Nicholson-Cole, & Whitmarsh, 2007; Reser, et al., 2011). The less likely participants perceived that climate change would impact on their lives or within their lifetimes, the more likely these participants were represented in the ‘stay the same’ or ‘more aware’ behaviour groups. According to Gifford (2011), temporal distancing of climate change impacts does therefore decrease motivations for climate change actions within individuals’ everyday lives. As Skinner (1987) states, “the more remote the predicted consequences, the less likely we are to follow advice” (p. 5). Within participants sense-making processes such temporal aspects influenced their decisions on climate change actions, and temporal distancing demonstrated a low responsibility for such actions at a personal level.

With regards to geographical aspects of climate change, participants referred impacts to distant regions, for example Pacific Islands, or to their direct living environment. Participants who referred to their living environment reflected on climate change impacts that they could already experience. Such impacts were generally related to extreme weather events and certain impacts these had on participants’ ‘living space’, for example on beach erosions or vegetation growth. For participants, their experiences of extreme weather impacts was part of their everyday lived experiences of climate change. According to Whitmarsh (2008), such links, however, are not necessarily widely established. In her study on extreme weather events and climate
change in Britain, people did not necessarily link these together or did not trust in the science behind such claims of interconnections. Differences between her study and this research can be explained by Reser, et al. (2011) who investigated perceptions across Britain and Australia and found that perceptions are also influenced by the general climatic conditions in which people live. Both Whitmarsh’s and Reser’s findings conclude that people in Australia, a country with harsh climatic conditions and extreme weather events, are more likely to perceive climate change impacting on their immediate living space than people in Britain. As the majority of my participants lived in Australia, climatic conditions and extreme weather events reduced the ‘distance’ of climate change and influenced participants’ attitudes. Within their meaning- and sense-making processes, some participants linked their experiences of extreme weather events to climate change. Consequently, they perceived a higher urgency for climate change actions and generally a higher responsibility at a personal level. For others, who had no such personal experiences, climate change was a more distant concept happening somewhere else like the Pacific Islands that were threatened by rising sea levels. These participants demonstrated a lower responsibility at a personal level.

With regards to the importance of climate change to everyday lives, participants reflected on other environmental issues or financial aspects that were perceived as more pressing than climate change. Some participants, for example, perceived environmental problems like pollution or environmental hazards as more important or urgent than dealing with climate change now. Such competing environmental issues result in a low uptake of climate change actions (Leiserowitz, 2007), although there was no indication that participants who reflected on other environmental problems were involved in other environmental actions. Furthermore, with regards to action climate change, it was recognised that there were also competing economic issues. A few participants reflected on not being able to afford to pay more for environmental solutions that were better for the environment, which is discussed further in Section 8.4.1. Besides such economic aspects, other research has identified social and personal issues as competing with climate change issues (Bord, et al., 1998; Poortinga & Pidgeon, 2003); however, participants in this research did not expand on such aspects. Although participants generally agreed that climate change was an important issue and needs urgent attention, their meaning-, sense-, and
decision-making processes were influenced by the perceived importance compared to other environmental or economic issues. Participants that evaluated such issues as more relevant for their everyday lives demonstrated lower responsibility and/or efficacy with regards to climate change agency.

As discussed, participants’ attitudes towards climate change were influenced by the relevance of temporal and spatial aspects, as well as the importance with regards to their everyday lives. But did such relevance also play a role with regards to their travel decision-making? Most participants were aware of possible impacts of climate change on destinations, and again, these were in general perceived as mainly happening in the future. The prospect of future impacts through rising temperatures, however, influenced some participants’ travel decisions. These participants had either already visited a destination that was supposed to be ‘disappearing’, or they were thinking about ‘going before they [the destinations] were gone’. Such ‘last chance’ travel desires are, according to Lemelin, Dawson, Stewart, Maher, and Lueck (2010), evoked and supported by media reports on specific threatened destinations like the Polar Regions. Although being aware of climate change threats to the destination they are visiting, participants did not necessarily make the link between their own travels and climate change. Research on Polar tourism, for example, confirms that tourists on polar cruises often are not aware of their contributions to climate change (Dawson, Stewart, Lemelin, & Scott, 2010; Eijgelaar, Thaper, & Peeters, 2010). But why were participants not aware of their own contributions? For some, this was based on a lack of understanding, as they did not have sufficient information to make sense of it. For others, there was no link between climate change and travelling, as human activities, in their beliefs, did not contribute to a changing climate.

8.2.2 Understandings: Do we understand what climate change is?

Understandings of climate change were linked to participants’ general stance on human-induced climate change. Non-believers rejected the theory that human activities were causes for climate change, as for them, it was just a natural, reoccurring process, and because no human action on climate change could prevent that, climate change actions were not needed. Believers and Undecideds reflected on
their understandings of climate change as well as related issues, and it was evident that understandings were diverse. Although some participants reflected ‘I don’t know’, understanding was not just a simple reflection and application of knowledge, but a ‘growth in inner awareness’ based on new experiences (Gadamer, 2007). Within their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, participants engaged with, experienced, and/or reflected on climate change and associated issues. Understanding climate change, therefore, was a reflection of participants’ comprehension of and experience with climate change. Furthermore, understanding is seen as a lived experience (Schwandt, 2000), a comprehension of meaning (Schwandt, 1999), and consequently an important part of our meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. As previously stated, meanings of climate change are multiple and embedded in cultural and social contexts. The term ‘climate change’ implies, based on its meaning in the English language, that the climate is changing, and none of the participants within my research rebutted this. The meaning of ‘climate change’, however, goes further and is connected to the causes of such changes as well as a temporal and spatial perspective. Such meaning is constructed within the IPCC report that states:

“… human activities, including the burning of fossil fuels, land-use change and agriculture, are increasing the atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases (which tend to warm the atmosphere) and, in some regions, aerosols (microscopic airborne particles, which tend to cool the atmosphere). These changes in greenhouse gases and aerosols, taken together, are projected to change regional and global climate and climate-related parameters such as temperature, precipitation, soil moisture and sea level.” (IPCC, 1995, p. 3)

The IPCC clearly places the responsibility for the causes of climate change on human activities. Their argument for such causes, furthermore, is based on the two temporal perspectives within their statement. One perspective looks at the past and what we observe now with regards to the causes based on humans’ activities, and the other perspective focuses on the future with regards to possible consequences (Rahmstorf, 2008). The meaning of climate change was not the focus of participants’ discussions, but what were debated were the causes of climate change as well as its consequences.
The causes of climate change were at the heart of participants’ agreement or disagreement with climate change as part of their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes.

Participants’ reflections, furthermore, also provided a sense of what and how much they knew or understood about climate change and associated issues like travelling. Although climate change issues are widely discussed within the media today, not every participant had an understanding of carbon emissions and its role within the climate change (and tourism) context, or an understanding of carbon footprints. This was especially true for Believers and Undecideds, whereas Non-believers rejected the validity of carbon emissions being the cause of climate change as well as the ‘existence’ of carbon footprints. But why did participants not understand these concepts? For some, it was a lack of knowledge that was reflected through ‘don’t know’ statements, mainly within ‘stay the same’ participants’ narratives. Such statements, according to Gifford (2011), reflect a form of ignorance of the problem and a lack of willingness to change behaviours. Although a lack of understandings signifies the need for more or better information, the media is seen as a controversial information source (Whitmarsh, 2009), which will be discussed in section 8.2.5. An increase of climate change information alone, however, cannot be sufficient, as the ‘stay the same’ participants, for example, also demonstrated low responsibility. According to Jordan (Jordan, Singer, Voughan, & Berkowitz, 2009), such low responsibility was based on participants’ values, which determine information engagements in the first place. Engaging with information and gaining an understanding of climate change issues had a low significance within the ‘stay the same’ participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. More information, therefore, would not increase these participants’ understandings.

But do travellers need to understand carbon emissions and carbon footprints in order to change their behaviours? In this research, knowledge was identified as a mediator for agency. Participants that reflected on their environmental practices or changed travel behaviours generally also demonstrated an understanding of carbon emissions, carbon footprints, as well as connectivity to their personal actions. However, knowledge was not the sole mediator for agency, as in some cases an understanding of the carbon concept was limited. A few participants who reflected on more
environmentally friendly lifestyle practices or changed travel behaviours stated a limited understanding of climate change, especially of carbon emissions and carbon footprints. For these participants, the constructs of responsibility and efficacy, together with knowledge, strongly co-mediated their climate change agency. Some of them, for example, felt a responsibility to offset their carbon emissions, even though they were not sure about how offsetting works or the difference it will make with regards to carbon mitigation. On the other hand, a few participants who demonstrated an understanding of climate change issues felt constrained and not able to change lifestyle practices or travel behaviours based on low efficacy.

For Non-believers and Undecideds, first of all, there was the question of who or what really causes climate change. In their views, the existing knowledge of climate change sciences was not sufficient to explain the real causes (yet) or, in the case of Non-believers, was based on false scientific claims. Overall, participants referred to different kinds of information containing common and scientific knowledge, with the latter mainly associated with the social institutions of sciences or academics in general. But how much did participants engage with scientific knowledge and did their understanding reflect such knowledge?

8.2.3 Scientific knowledge: What do we know and think about it?

Across all three groups, participants expressed their concerns, doubts, and distrust with regards to climate change science. This sort of scepticism was, not surprisingly, the strongest amongst Non-believers. Non-believers rejected the science around human-induced climate change upfront and throughout their reflections continuously referred back to this position. For Non-believers, climate change was a natural reoccurring phenomenon and only scientific research that seemed to support this theory, or parts of it, was accepted for their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change. The rejection of climate change science that supported claims of humans’ contribution as well as uncovering ‘faulty’ scientific claims was not only the focus of Non-believers’ arguments but also part of their self-identity. Although Believers and Undecideds believed in humans’ contribution to climate change, scepticism with regard to scientific facts or processes was also evident throughout the reflections of the majority of these participants. Such
scepticism derived from participants’ perceptions of the scientific community as well as the scientific processes that are embedded within this community. This scepticism was based on media reports of contradicting scientific claims and ‘fudging’ of climate change data in order to support an aimed outcome or theory (Lorenzoni, et al., 2007; Nerlich, 2010). Although the theory of humans’ contribution to climate change is based on a large consensus within the science community, some groups or individuals within this community and the wider society challenge this consensus, the scientific facts it is based on, as well as the interpretations by the wider scientific community.

A few Believers referred to a scientific consensus on human-induced climate change, which in their views was ‘proof’ enough. These views were based on their trust in the science community, but they did not reveal ‘why’ they trusted scientists. An explanation is provided in the concepts of ‘cultural biases’ (Wildavsky & Dake, 1990) and ‘cultural cognition’ (Kahan, Jenkins-Smith, & Braman, 2011), showing that people tend to accept viewpoints or information that represent their own personal worldviews and values. Participants’ trust and believing in scientific knowledge was therefore influenced by the perceived worldviews and values of the scientists or the information sources through which scientific knowledge was disseminated. Changing views on climate change can be challenging because new information or facts are often rejected based on such worldviews (Lorenzoni & Hulme, 2009). In other words, participants based their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes on their values and their trust in the scientists who created a specific knowledge or in the information source that reported on it. This view is supported by Carolan and Bell (2003), who argue that if people do not trust scientific knowledge, then they do not engage with such knowledge. Non-believers, based on their worldviews, therefore rejected all science that supported the theory of human-induced climate change. Although scientists are generally still seen as a credible and trustworthy source of knowledge (Leiserowitz, Maibach, Roser-Renouf, Smith, & Dawson, 2010), they certainly lost their monopolistic position as a source of trustworthy information (Mol, 2006), and the concept of a universal truth has become contested. Such contested debates generally take place within academic cycles; however, the media played a crucial role in reporting on scientific claims and controversies, and transporting these discussions into the public sphere.
Besides the question of trust in scientific climate change facts and research, some participants’ narratives contained their own ‘theory’ of what contributes to climate change. Previous research confirms that scientific climate change frames differ from lay people’s concepts of climate change and associated issues (Kempton, 1991). Although people’s knowledge and understandings of climate change science has increased over the last twenty years (Reynolds, Bostrom, Read, & Morgan, 2010), my research, as well that of others (for example, Leiserowitz, 2007; Lombardi & Sinatra, 2010), shows that some Believers’ and Undecideds’ reflections support Kempton’s earlier findings. These participants continued to relate climate change to the depletion of the ozone layer, air pollution and the experience of temperature changes. Noteworthy is that participants holding these perspectives were not limited to the ‘stay the same’ or ‘more aware’ behaviour groups, who were more passive in their climate change actions, but were also represented in the ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ groups. This shows that a scientifically correct understanding of climate change was not a prerequisite for climate change agency, at least not for these participants. It further shows that participants’ understanding of climate change did not need to mirror scientific knowledge in order to change their behaviours as long as these participants perceived their understandings as scientific knowledge. Kempton (1991) argues that people base such differing climate change frames on pre-existing frames of similar concepts. Having said that, participants in my research took their understanding of, for example, air pollution as a basis for their construction of climate change meanings because it helped them to understand new scientific concepts like climate change. The concepts of waste and pollutions were reoccurring in participants’ narratives and were part of their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change. This means that although participants have not reflected on ‘real’ scientific knowledge, they still perceived that they did have a reasonable understanding of climate change facts; for some, this understanding influenced their climate change agency.

Scientific knowledge, however, was not the only type of knowledge participants engaged with, and according to Lorenzoni and Hulme (2009) is not the only condition influencing change. Besides engaging with scientific knowledge in their
meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, participants also created common knowledge within their cultural and social engagements in their everyday lives.

8.2.4 Common knowledge: Making sense of climate change?

Participants frequently referred to common or lay knowledge in forms of facts and understandings they received through a wide range of social institutions. The media plays an important role in delivering and translating scientific facts (Boykoff & Roberts, 2007), and as such, supports and enables the construction of common knowledge. Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds reflected, for example, on melting ice shields and rising sea levels, which were reported widely in the media. Participants incorporated such reports in their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to possible impacts on travelling. Such effects of climate change were acknowledged as commonly known facts that derived from scientific knowledge. Depending on participants’ positionality, however, they accepted its ‘truth’, were unsure, or rejected it because of distrust in the science it was based on. As such, common knowledge reflected a shared understanding of certain knowledge or facts, as well as a shared worldview on climate change (Carolan & Bell, 2003). As noted earlier, participants’ worldviews and values played a role in how they engaged with information and how they evaluated such information (Kahan, et al., 2011). Within these engagements with and evaluation of scientific knowledge, participants were co-constructing their own common knowledge (Eden, 1998). Although such co-constructions partly differed from scientific knowledge, as in the case of air pollution causing climate change, for participants, their constructed knowledge and understandings inherited ‘truth’, as it was part of their reality and self-identity. As Lorenzoni, et al. (2007) state, although common or lay knowledge “may denote ‘confusion’, they are valid ways of seeing the world” (p. 451).

Common or lay knowledge constructions were embedded in participants’ everyday practices and experiences. The experience of climate change effects within their local environment was for some participants part of their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change impacts. Based on these processes, the constructed common knowledge then represents ‘local knowledge’, which can differ from scientific knowledge if individuals do not perceive the later as valid for
their local environment based on their experiences (Eden, 1998; Harrison & Burgess, 1994). As discussed previously, the perceived distance with regards to climate change influenced participants’ attitudes, and, in the case of local relevance, influenced as well the construction of common knowledge.

Furthermore, for research participants, making sense of climate change knowledge was not just a private but very social engagement. Such engagements took place in everyday life situations, at work or at home, or in online engagements with others as the Thorn Tree discussions demonstrated. Within their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, participants compared their own perceptions and behaviours with others and re-constructed their knowledge and understandings. Knowledge constructions, as such, were therefore influenced by participants’ social embeddedness and shared values (Lidskog, 1996). As Festinger (1954) argues, people adjust their own perceptions or behaviours if their perceptions or behaviours do not match with those of the majority within their social groups. This became evident with participants who referred to practical knowledge and understandings as part of common knowledge. Within the research context, participants, for example, often referred to their understanding of how to reduce or save energy by switching of appliances or using energy saving products, or how to reduce or avoid waste by not littering or buying less waste producing products. Such practical knowledge contained a common understanding of how to do things in order to achieve more environmentally friendly outcomes for the environment as well as for economic reasons. Such practical knowledge was embedded within participants’ social contexts and linked to social norms, which, according to Barr (2004), highly supports the acceptance of such practices within people’s daily lives.

Within this research, participants mostly reflected on changing household practices like recycling, saving energy or water, but there was only limited evidence on more complex practices like self-sustaining lifestyles, energy-efficient houses, or changing travel behaviours. Participants’ reflections on practical knowledge represent, according to Hobson (2003), ‘discursive consciousness’. Such discursive consciousness is a result of consumers’ engagement with environmental information and practices, and makes them more aware of how sustainable their daily practices are and how to improve them. Travelling behaviours represent situations that are
more complex and only ‘changed’ participants demonstrated practical knowledge on how to reduce their impacts. In this context, engaging with environmental information can improve environmental consciousness and practices, but this might be limited to less ‘complex’ habits, situations or contexts (Hobson, 2003; Wolf, Brown, & Conway, 2009). Besides an understanding of how travelling is connected to climate change, ‘changed’ participants also demonstrated a high level of personal responsibility and efficacy. For other participants (mainly in the ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, and ‘more aware’ behaviour groups) adopting environmentally friendlier practices that referred to more complex issues or situations was questioned based on constraints, uncertainties, responsibilities, and trust in the scientific community.

Overall, participants needed both scientific knowledge to understand climate change, and they needed common knowledge constructions in order to make sense of it. Within such knowledge constructions participants connected scientific and common knowledge with everyday practices and experiences. This enabled them to evaluate their ‘old practices’ and accordingly adjust or change behaviours (Hobson, 2003). Other research further confirms that considering common knowledge in climate change debates can increase people’s sense of responsibility and efficacy (Eden, 1998; Wynne, 1996). As such, common knowledge played an important role in participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes and was part of their self-identity. Furthermore, the construction of common knowledge was embedded within participants’ social contexts, which were strongly influenced by shared values and trust.

8.2.5 Trust: Whom and what do we trust?

Throughout their reflections, participants expressed concerns regarding the trustworthiness of social institutions with regards to climate change information. In this sense, it was not relevant what participants thought to be true, human-induced climate change or natural causes, but instead more importantly, whom did they trust. Environmental debates, and climate change debates in particular, often deal with the question of ‘truth’, and truth and trust are interrelated (Carolan & Bell, 2003). Furthermore, within climate change debates the question of what knowledge entails truth is often determined by the question of who do we trust (Wildavsky & Dake,
1990). Participants’ narratives revealed a multitude of truths and realities, which reflects the postmodern constructivist perspective of this research. As Carolan and Bell (2003) argue, “[t]ruth only has meaning within the networks of trust and distrust that pattern our lives and shape our understandings and motivations” (p. 234). Non-believers’ outright rejection of the prevalent acknowledgement of human-induced climate change was rooted in distrust in the scientific community. Believers expressed trust in climate change science through their agreement with the theory of human-induced climate change; however, they were sceptical about some information they received. Such scepticism was related to the self-interests or bias of media organisations or other social institutions, which challenged the trustworthiness of information. The Undecideds, besides expressing similar scepticism like Believers, further tended to disengage with climate change information because of a too negative outlook, especially portrayed in media reports. Negative outlooks that portrayed too much doom and gloom as consequences of climate change may even represent the cause of their undecidedness. As other research (Feinberg & Willer, 2011; Lerner & Miller, 1978) confirms, negative messages directly threaten beliefs in a just world, which can result in disengagement, dismissal or defence. As Undecideds did not trust that the portrayed image of climate change was real, as part of their reality and self-identity, they therefore disengaged from such information during their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes.

All participants engaged with various information sources, social institutions, individuals and groups in order to receive information about and to discuss climate change issues. Participants were not just passive knowledge receivers, but actively engaged with searching trusted information and incorporating received information into their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. Information sources, however, are not only passive transmitters of knowledge either, but also active in knowledge co-constructions and re-constructions (Lidskog, 1996). Most participants reflected on this and expressed their concerns, especially with regards to the media. In general, participants found the Internet as a ‘place’ where they could locate more trustworthy information or information sources. Although O’Neill and Boykoff (2010) argue that online information engagements can especially increase the uncertainty of whom and what to trust because of a multitude of different actors, participants in my research were aware of such issues. As argued previously,
participants’ information engagements were influenced by their worldviews and values, supporting their evaluation of trusted information sources. As Lowe, et al. (2006) state, “‘who’ is giving the information is important to the public” (p. 450). As lay people generally do not engage directly with scientists (Lidskog, 1996), they have to attend to and trust in other information sources (Weber, 2010). If trust was not established in the first place, participants did not engage with that source or disregarded the delivered information. This was also evident in other research (Slovic, 2011; Weber, 2010) stating that only trusted information sources were considered for meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. Participants were aware that information sources are often controlled by a few monopolistic organisations. Furthermore, participants were aware that received climate change information was generally not produced by scientists but media organisations as well as other social institutions. Such organisations and institutions had an underlying interest in transporting a specific message in order to support their own causes. As Mol (2006) states, “[t]ransparency, accountability, participation, and independent verification become key issues in struggles around informational governance” (p. 506). The question of trust in information and information sources was therefore critical for participants as part of their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to knowledge construction and climate change agency.

Participants reflected in particular on the media, which they perceived as disparaging, displaying low credibility by referring to ‘driven by self-interests’ or having ‘their own political agenda’. The media plays a major role with regards to climate change information dissemination and discussions within the scientific, political, and public arena (O’Neill & Boykoff, 2010). Besides such a major role, Whitmarsh (2009) argues that although the media is an important transmitter of information, it often demonstrates a low capacity in translating scientific knowledge to the public. Such translations often focus on the amplifications of risk (Weber, 2010). Although the media was a main information source, participants were aware of the low capacity in translating scientific knowledge and referred in their narratives to the presentations of contradicting, including false, information within media reports. According to Ramsay, Kull, Lewis, and Subias (2010), people, however, are not always aware of the influences of misinformation in media reports. Their research shows that Americans who predominantly watched Fox News were more
likely to believe that most “scientists do not agree that climate change is occurring” (Ramsay, et al., 2010, p. 19). Participants in my research did not specify which media channels they attended to; however, most of them, represented by the Believers, did not question the scientific consensus on climate change.

Being aware of possible underlying agendas and the general shortcomings of main information sources like the media, participants also engaged with other information sources in order to find more trusted or (dis)confirming evidence. Such information sources included environmental organisations, peer groups, or a general search via the Internet. The multitude of different actors and groups offering climate change knowledge, information, and advice online also enabled, according to Mol (2006), a more ‘emancipatory, democratic’ way of knowledge productions and engagements, for Believers as well as for climate change ‘sceptics’ (Lockwood, 2008). The ‘Climategate’ affair is a perfect example of how climate change sceptics utilised the online medium for spreading ‘evidence’ and doubts, and influenced the creation of media representations of an unreliable and discredited science community. However, participants within this research demonstrated an ability of critically evaluating perceived information or the information source itself. Their trust in these information sources was influenced by their worldviews and values, which represented part of their self-identity.

The question of trust permeated all constructs that were identified within this research. The placement of trust under the construct of knowledge, however, was chosen as participants expressed their concerns regarding trustworthiness especially with regards to climate change information, information sources, and scientific knowledge. Trust was, furthermore, important in their own co-constructions with regards to common and practical knowledge, understandings of climate change issues, as well as climate change attitudes. Concluding this section, knowledge and the discussed associated theoretical concepts of attitudes, understandings, scientific knowledge, common knowledge, and trust represented a vital mediator for climate change agency. Participants who demonstrated higher knowledge and understandings of climate change and related issues were more likely to engage in environmental practices at home or change their travel behaviours. Knowledge, furthermore, was interconnected with responsibility and efficacy and provided participants with a
foundation for the evaluation of responsibility and judgement of efficacy. Based on participants’ attitudes and understandings with regards to climate change causes, issues, and consequences, participants evaluated their personal and social responsibility and efficacy. Such evaluations were part of participants’ reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes and, as a consequence, mediated their climate change agency. Within the following section, the construct of responsibility and its mediating role with regards to climate change agency is discussed.
8.3 Responsibility: Who is responsible to take actions?

Participants’ engagement with knowledge provided a foundation for an evaluation of their responsibility. This evaluation was a vital part of their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change. The construct of responsibility is, together with knowledge and efficacy, one of the mediators for climate change agency within the context of this research. To iterate, these constructs are interconnected and influence each other. Within the narratives, participants reflected on their values, ethics, morals, social norms, as well as on the role of different actors or groups. These associated theoretical concepts represent aspects of participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to responsibility for climate change actions. Participants reflected on how they valued nature and ethical considerations regarding future generations. Their decisions with regards to climate change actions were also influenced by morals and social norms, as well as by the question ‘who is responsible to act?’. The associated theoretical concepts related to responsibility, again, are overlapping, fluent, and connected with each other; however, each of them represents a specific contributing aspect of responsibility. This section focuses on the associated theoretical concepts of responsibility (Figure 8.2) and demonstrates how these concepts were part of participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change agency.

Based on the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency, participants’ personal and/or social responsibility for climate change causes and actions was developed and constructed through reflections on their role in society as well as their self-identity. In these reflections, several questions were evident, although not voiced explicitly: ‘what are we responsible for?’; ‘to whom do we owe this responsibility?’; ‘how do we define/see our responsibility?’; ‘what external obligations define our responsibility?’; or ‘who is responsible for certain causes or actions?’. Understandings of what these responsibilities are and to whom they are owed are diverse (Hulme, 2009). Taking responsibility and acting in a responsible way was determined by participants’ cultural and social embeddedness. Within the climate
change context, participants expressed their responsibilities with regards to the, predominantly natural, environment, as well as other humans. According to Johnson (1991), all species, individuals, and ecosystems have interests that are morally significant and from these our moral obligation derives. Such responsibility is based on us being part of a human and nonhuman world from which we cannot opt out (Johnson, 1991). Within the English language, responsibility is defined as a duty or

---

**Figure 8.2.** Responsibility: Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making with regards to travellers’ climate change position and travel behaviour.
obligation and is linked to a state of accountability (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In the context of this research, responsibility refers to participants’ judgement of being responsible to act on climate change actions, being accountable for such actions or inactions, or transferring such responsibility to other actors. Based on what they knew, combined with a consideration of values, ethics, morals, and social norms, participants evaluated and judged their personal and/or social responsibility with regards to climate change. Each of the associated theoretical concepts and their specifics to participants’ responsibility are discussed in the following sections.

8.3.1 Values: Do we value nature?

In their narratives, participants reflected on their relationship with nature, explaining why they valued nature as well as expressing their concerns and thoughts with regards to climate change and travelling. Such values were part of how participants saw themselves, part of their self-identity that was defined by their lifestyle choices but also by interactions with others (Giddens, 1991). Some participants related these values to their upbringing, to what they have learned from an early age on what was the right thing to do, and what was the ‘right’ behaviour with regards to the environment. Rokeach (1973) sees “culture, society, and personality [as] the major antecedents of values” (p. 326) and attitudes and behaviours result from these. Values can be defined as “desirable transsituational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person” (Schwartz, 1994, p. 21). Within the context of climate change and tourism, the question of how travellers value nature is relevant with regards to an understanding of their environmental behaviours.

Participants reflected on everyday engagements with nature, the ‘everyday nature’ (Hess, 2010), as well as the role nature played in their travel decisions, the ‘holiday nature’. Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds linked their relationship with nature to stewardship, respect, and interdependence; however, such relationships did not consequently lead to climate change actions. As Non-believers did not believe in humans’ contributions to climate change, they did not feel responsible in changing their lifestyle or travel behaviours in order to lessen contributions. Furthermore, Non-believers tended to perceive their, or humanity’s, interdependence with nature more
from a resource perspective. Such views represent more traditional rather than strong environmental values, which, according to Poortinga, et al. (2011), is common for climate change sceptics. Although Believers and Undecideds, based on their position on human-induced climate change, seem to possess stronger environmental values than Non-believers, these values did not necessarily influence their sense of personal responsibility and commitment to climate change actions. For participants within the ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ behaviour groups, however, strong environmental values were part of how they defined their self-identity and responsibility, and resultantly they engaged in environmental practices or more responsible travel behaviours. Participants that linked their environmental values back to their childhood, or to the importance of nature in everyday lives and on holidays, also expressed higher concerns with regards to climate change. Closeness to nature and the amount of time spent in nature are, according to Vining, Merrick, and Price (2008), bases for stronger environmental values. Such biospheric values, as de Groot and Steg (2010) argue, have an influence on people’s intention to act on environmental issues.

Besides those Believers and Undecideds who already engaged in environmental practices or changed travel behaviours, for others in the ‘stay the same’ and ‘more aware’ groups, their environmental values were not strong enough to evoke such changes. Some of these participants expressed their respect for nature, which they saw as something that cannot be controlled by humans or will recover on its own, obtaining ‘suprahuman powers’ (Gifford, 2011). For them, humans need nature, but nature does not need humans to take care of it. Aspects of stewardship were therefore less important and focussed more on avoiding pollution to increase humans’ well-being rather than for the sake of nature. Similar perspectives were also expressed by the ‘no need’ participants, who placed nature more in the focus of consumption, as a resource for human survival as well as a source for humans’ enjoyment. Although ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ participants shared perceptions of survival and enjoyment with the ‘no need’ participants, their thoughts about stewardship reflected humanity’s responsibility for causes of environmental degradation. These participants based such sense of responsibility on their experiences with and knowledge about environmental problems. According to Whitmarsh (2008), the personal experience of environmental pollution representing a threat to personal lifestyles can increase environmental values. For Barr (2004), such an increase can already be evoked through the
knowledge of waste issues and as a result increases environmental concerns and actions. An increase in environmental problems in the future, through climate change or other causes, can influence individuals’ values and relationships with nature. Wearing, et al. (2005) argues that not just the experience of environmental problems but also the enjoyable experience of a holiday can influence travellers’ values. Values are not ‘fixed’, as Rokeach (1973) states; values can be influenced or changed, as they are neither completely stable nor unstable. What influenced participants’ environmental values, however, is more complex than just focussing on aspects of nature, as values have conflicting priorities, which, according to O’Brien (2009), prevent travellers from making clear decisions and pursuing actions. For some participants with strong environmental values, other actors like businesses and governments were responsible for action on climate change. Although their environmental values were strong, their actions were influenced by other values or other aspects of responsibility as well as efficacy.

Overall, participants’ environmental values were based on their knowledge about climate change and environmental issues, as well as influenced by their self-identity and nature experiences. Only the ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ participants engaged in environmental practices or changed travel behaviours; however, strong environmental values were not always the driver of such actions. Their sense of responsibility and commitment to action was influenced by other theoretical concepts like ethics, morals, or social norms.

8.3.2 Ethics: Climate change actions with others in mind?

In their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to personal and/or social responsibility, participants also considered aspects of ethics. Following Macbeth (2005), “[e]thical distinctions inform all human actions and decisions” (p. 962). Although values are part of a general ethics framework (Dietz, Fitzgerald, & Shwom, 2005), within this research, ethics represents participants’ reflections about their or societies’ virtuous conducts and obligations. As such, ethics was linked to participants’ cultural and social embeddedness as well as their self-identity, reflecting a required or desired level of ethical responsibility. Ethical issues referred to participants’ current behaviours and consumptions that were not sustainable, as
well as thoughts about their ethical responsibility with regards to future generations. Participants expressed such responsibility, mainly with regards to their own children or grandchildren. Across all groups, participants equally expressed such concerns for future generations’ ability to sustain a living, based on current standards, as well as to enjoy nature for leisure purposes. For Non-believers, such ethical concerns referred to general concerns for the environment, regardless of climate change. For all groups, concerns for future generations referred to intergenerational aspects of their or society’s ethical responsibility. Intergenerational aspects of climate change are at the core of sustainability definitions and were reflected within participants’ narratives. Such definitions refer to humanity’s responsibility to strive for an environment that can provide for future generations, based on current generations’ decisions (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Considerations of ethical issues, for participants, implied a duty to act on what is known today in order to fulfil this sustainability obligation. For some participants, however, current knowledge was questioned and may change in the future. Oreskes (2004) argues that future generations would not judge us on what we did not know but on our inaction of what we knew. For the participants who questioned current knowledge, their sense of responsibility was reduced and, although concerned for future generations, this tended to result in inaction.

Participants across all three groups expressed their responsibility to consider future generations. As Kaiser and Shimoda (1999) state, each individual’s consumption affects others’ ability to consume. Participants, however, besides expressing their ethical responsibility, did not necessarily think about this with regards to personal lifestyle or travel consumptions. Only the ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ participants’ changed aspects of their lifestyles and reflected on environmental practices. Especially for the ‘do my bit’ participants, such practices, however, were mainly linked to simple practices like recycling or saving energy rather than a reduction of consumption and more effective lifestyle changes. Their concerns for future generations played only a small role in their everyday lives. As previously discussed, for most participants, climate change was not visible and not part of their experiences, which according to Lidskog (1996), causes a ‘delayed action’, if any. Skinner (1987) argues that such ethical considerations encompass a “conflict between immediate and remote consequences” (p. 6). Although participants’ ethical
concerns were directed to the future and others, their actions tended to reflect a now and me perspective. Participants who were concerned about future generations, however, generally demonstrated higher responsibility and were more likely to engage with sustainable behaviours. Research by Joireman, Van Lange, and Van Vugt (2004) similarly found that individuals who are concerned about others and the future are more likely to act more environmentally friendly now. Such environmental behaviour is, according to Milfont and Gouveia (2006), also influenced by past and present experiences with regards to environmental issues.

Within their narratives, participants across all groups also referred to aspects of ethics relating to tourism developments, operations, and consumptions. However, in the main, such aspects were linked to general environmental issues rather than climate change. Participants were aware, as well as self-reflexive (Jacobsen, 2007), of environmental degradation that was caused through the development and operation of tourism facilities. While recognising such negative effects of tourism, participants were also aware of possible benefits to local populations, especially in developing countries, from tourism operations. From a tourism consumption perspective, this represents an ethics dilemma for participants. Wanting to support local communities and trying to minimise their personal environmental footprint competed with the desire for a great holiday experience at a reasonable price (Chafe, 2004). Participants across all groups, however, did not necessarily see themselves as responsible for tourism developments and operations. Other actors such as tourism organisations or operators were seen as being responsible to reduce impacts in the first place or to offer more sustainable travel choices. Such environmental practices, according to some participants’ voices, also have to include carbon emission reductions and offsets. Overall, ethics considerations were influenced by participants’ self-identity, their perceived role within the tourism context, as well within their everyday lives. If such considerations included thinking about future generations, than participants’ sense of personal responsibility was higher.

8.3.3 Morals: Feeling guilty about behaviours?

For some participants, their sense of responsibility was influenced by feelings of guilt. Such guilt was mainly expressed by Believers and referred to their personal
contributions to climate change based on carbon emissions. Similar to values, moral considerations are usually part of ethics frameworks (Dietz, et al., 2005). Within this research, morals represent participants’ reflexivity with regards to their lifestyle and travel behaviours. Relatively, Rokeach (1973) suggests that morals refer to behaviours and not to the result of one’s action. Believing in human-induced climate change and being conscious about their personal carbon emissions made some participants, mainly in the ‘more aware’ and ‘do my bit’ behaviour groups, feel guilty of boarding a plane or enjoying other lifestyle consumptions. This consciousness and sense of personal responsibility influenced how they perceived the concept of a holiday. According to Becken (2007), travelling generally is perceived as a form of personal freedom, or with regards to families, as Buckley (2011) states, even as a social obligation. Participants that reflected on moral aspects, felt a conflict between travelling as part of their self-identity or to improve their personal well-being, and contributing to climate change and environmental degradation. As participants, however, were still travelling, this conflict then resulted in feelings of guilty. Cohen, Higham, and Cavaliere (2011) affirm that personal benefits from short-term travels present a ‘flying dilemma’ with regards to long-term contributions to climate change. Such ‘flying dilemma’, as well as other consumption dilemmas, were particularly evident in the ‘more aware’ and ‘do my bit’ behaviour groups.

Although firmly established within Western societies, certain travel behaviours and practices have been increasingly questioned in the face of climate change. This trend is evidenced in media reports on the impacts of carbon emissions through flying as well as on the consequences for threatened holiday destinations, for example those in low-lying island nations. Being aware of such impacts and consequences, participants felt morally responsible for their continued travel behaviour, which they expressed through statements of guilt. For these participants, enjoying a holiday or other lifestyle aspects generally only caused feelings of guilt if they had a good understanding of carbon emissions, footprints, and established a connection to their personal lifestyles and travelling. Participants that did not connect their travel emissions to climate change had no reason to feel guilty about it. Giddens (1991) comments that feelings of guilt refer to a ‘fear of transgression’ or misconduct in the face of climate change. Participants’ ‘feared’ to be seen by others as behaving in a disapproved way, which links moral aspects back to Cooley’s (1902) concept of the
looking-glass self. In my research, morals were strongly linked to perceived social norms; however, such social norms did not influence ‘guilty’ participants’ behaviour. Participants, who did feel guilty, were still flying and not necessarily offsetting their emissions. Although the latter felt responsible and guilty, their sense of personal responsibility did not translate to personal actions. An explanation of this is found in the research of Lerner and Miller (1978), who purported that people’s desire was to ‘see the world as just’. In a just world climate change effects can be reduced or dealt with on a societal level. In their research, Ferguson and Branscombe (2010) found that feelings of guilt are stronger if people perceive effects of human-induced climate change as being minor. Overall, in my research, aspects of morals influenced participants’ sense of personal responsibility but not necessarily their climate change agency. As only a small number of participants reflected on feelings of guilt, morals played a minor role in participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change. That being said, moral aspects played an important role in participants’ self-identity, how they saw themselves and their behaviour in the context of climate change and travelling. This self-identity was also liked to participants’ looking-glass self, to how they perceive others would see them. These ‘others’, or society in general, not only influenced participants’ self-perception, but also placed rules or expectations on individuals on how to behaviour.

8.3.4 Social norms: What are we expected to do?

Beside moral aspects of personal behaviours, participants also reflected on responsibility issues that derived from a societal perspective. Participants’ narratives referred to how, as they perceived, society, groups, or individuals should act on climate change, on what should be the socially accepted rule or norm. Their narratives, however, also included evaluations and judgements of how they perceived themselves as performing to such rules and norms from a societal perspective. Social norms therefore played an important part in participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change agency. Participants who reflected on social norms from a societal perspective, for example, raised issues like building houses that fit the environment or living by the law of nature. Although such social norms were not necessarily ‘officially’ defined in forms of regulations, such rules and norms were embedded in participants’ knowledge and understandings of
what was ‘better’ for the environment. According to Weber (2010), individuals look for rules or norms when confronted with environmental decisions. Participants within this research, however, also co-constructed such unwritten rules and norms within their reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. These participants reflected on what they thought other people should or should not do, based on their understanding of climate change issues.

Participants, furthermore, applied social norms to ‘inter-societal’ or international issues, advocating that other countries and societies should apply the same norms as participants’ own society. Within participants’ narratives, a focus on waste, pollution, as well as climate change actions was evident. Social norms within an inter-societal or international context addressed humanity’s collective responsibility to act on climate change. Some participants within the ‘stay the same’ and ‘more aware’ behaviour groups, however, did not include themselves in such collective responsibility. They perceived other actors as more responsible to act on climate change or perceived their own society as already acting responsibly compared to other societies. Within their narratives, they constructed social norms for other societies and based these norms on a perceived fulfilled responsibility of their own society. On a personal level, social norms were predominantly evident in participants’ reflections on environmental practices. Mainly participants who were categorised in the ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ behaviour groups, reflected on their personal environmental practices. Such practices included, for example, recycling. Although councils provide recycling bins and facilities, there is no enforcement for the practice of recycling. So why did participants engage with such practices? For some participants, their knowledge about environmental issues as well as their environmental values provided the basis for such engagements. Other participants, however, expressed weaker environmental values and understandings. These participants framed their environmental practices with statements like ‘I am doing my bit’, which implies a perceived fulfilment of a personal responsibility with regards to climate change agency. Participants in this case evaluated their personal responsibility and actions based on ‘social comparison processes’. Social comparison processes refer to comparing themselves to other individuals within society (Festinger, 1954). Based on such social comparison processes, if a participant’s social group practiced certain environmental behaviours, then this was likely to
influence the participant’s behaviour, as he or she constantly compares his or her own perceptions and practices with those of others. As stated previously, Cooley (1902) refers such processes to a reflected or looking-glass self, an “imagination of how one’s self” (p. 151) was perceived by others. Participants thus, wanted to be seen as conforming to environmental practices such as recycling, as they perceived others to be expecting such behaviour from them.

Social norms were established with regards to some form of environmental practices at home, but also regarding travelling. Although only the ‘changed’ participants considered environmentally friendly travel products, only one of them reflected on reducing travel activities. This demonstrates the role travelling played in all participants’ lifestyles and was part of their self-identity (Giddens, 1991). As stated previously, travelling is part of today’s (Western) lifestyles, and is perceived as a form of freedom (Becken, 2007). This form of freedom, however, is also influenced by group pressure and role models with regards to partaking in certain travel activities (Crompton, 1981). This kind of social influence on responsible or less responsible behaviours represents a form of peer pressure. Some participants welcomed sustainable tourism products, but they did not yet perceive buying green travel products as socially desirable or normative. On the other hand, travelling in general was still perceived as socially desirable, accepted, or even expected. Subsequently, the influence of social norms on participants’ travel behaviour, transformed travelling into a habit. Only a few participants who reflected on moral aspects and feelings of guilt seemed to question that travelling was still desirable. Jackson (2005) purports that such habits generally are not questioned and consequently become difficult to change. As part of their self-identity, participants compared themselves to other travellers and their travel activities. Such comparisons represent a perceived social norm or peer-pressure as participants felt the need to conduct similar travel activities. However, according to Festinger (1954), peer pressure is only successful if participants shared similar values. This in turn links social norms also back to whom to trust. Furthermore, climate change represents high levels of uncertainties, which made it difficult for participants to evaluate how or how much their travel activities really contributed to climate change. In their research, Cialdini and Golstein (2004) found that in situations with uncertainties, individuals are happy to look at others for answers, trusting people especially close
to them. Participants in my study tended to refer to others, to social norms, as part of their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change agency. If others did not act on climate change, why then should they?

8.3.5 Actors: Who should act - I, we, or others?

Participants reflected on responsibilities throughout their narratives, accepting or rejecting a personal responsibility of contributions to climate change, and placing responsibility on other actors or social institutions. As Hulme (2009) states, the issue of what actions to take is linked to the question ‘who is responsible?’ . Although the open-ended questions used within this research aimed to collect individuals’ reflections with a focus on their personal perceptions and actions, a large group of participants used a more distancing language in their reflections. Within their reflections, participants saw themselves as part of a larger group, of the society they live in. Expressions like ‘we all are responsible’ or ‘we have to change’ were widespread across Believers’ and Undecideds’ narratives. Although participants in the ‘stay the same’ and ‘more aware’ behaviour groups did accept a personal responsibility for contributions to climate change based on their lifestyle consumptions, this, however, did not imply that these participants accepted a personal responsibility for climate change actions. Referring to ‘we’ as the actor, furthermore, indicated that participants did not know how they personally could take responsibility for their actions or that they saw climate change as a societal problem, one they could not solve themselves. For the ‘do my bit’ participants, such responsibility for actions was only limited to environmental practices at home, and only the ‘changed’ participants extended responsible actions to their travel activities. Within the extant literature, the question of individual responsibility is inconclusive. According to Barr, Gilg, and Shaw (2011) for example, there is limited support for individual responsibility, whereas others found a majority of individuals accepted a responsibility for contributions and actions (Lorenzoni, et al., 2007; Spence, et al., 2010). Within this research, a personal responsibility was evident but only led to climate change actions if participants’ had sufficient knowledge and understanding of climate change issues, as well as perceived themselves as efficacious to take actions.
Within their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, participants, again, compared their behaviours as well as climate change contributions to others. Larger contributors were generally seen as being (more) responsible for climate change actions. Although Australia is one of the highest carbon emission contributors per capita, participants tended to refer the question of causes of climate change to polluting industries, in Australia and other countries. For some Believers and Undecideds, there was a responsibility on the side of industries or businesses to ‘do the right thing’ and reduce carbon emissions rather than taking individual responsibility. Such externalisation of responsibility, according to Lorenzoni, et al. (2007), places blame on others and was used by participants in my study as a justification of inaction. Participants also externalised responsibility on tourism organisations that they saw as being responsible for providing tourism products that do not increase climate change emissions or environmental degradation. For some participants, however, there was also the question of efficacy and whether their individual actions would make a difference. Weather referring to other actors or questioning one’s personal efficacy, most participants remained inactive with regards to climate change actions, especially actions with regards to reducing or mitigating their travel emissions. Gifford (2011) argues that such inaction is also caused by a ‘free-rider effect’ (Kerr, 1983; Olson, 1965), as individuals feel that if others are not acting on climate change why should they? Such reflections can be linked back to social norms, although the ‘free-rider effect’ presents a form of social ease instead of pressure. In my study, if participants felt that others were not acting on climate change, this eased their personal responsibility to do so. If social norms, on the other hand, increase the pressure within society to engage with climate change actions, this certainly places pressure on free-riders to conform. For some participants, a lack of social norms and regulations was associated with social institutions’ inaction on climate change. In such contexts, social institutions were seen as responsible for providing a social and economical environment in which individuals then would be able to act responsibly. Participants, however, perceived social institutions as responsible for a lack of (clear) policies, a lack of environmental commitments and actions. Such shortcomings of social institutions was also identified elsewhere (Lorenzoni, et al., 2007; Spence, et al., 2010; Wells, et al., 2011) and was often framed as a barrier for people to act on climate change. Participants linked such lack of institutional action to a prioritisation of economic interests that impede climate
change agency. Furthermore, a few participants pointed out that climate change had become a political problem as politicians were using climate change debates to polarise voters on different political questions. This then, takes away the focus from the ‘real’ environmental problems and actions needed. Such perspectives were fuelled by media discussions, creating doubts for participants with regard to scientific knowledge as well as political agendas.

Overall, the consideration of and comparison to other actors was crucial for participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes regarding a responsibility for climate change actions. The construct of responsibility included the discussed associated theoretical constructs of values, ethics, morals, social norms, and actors. Each of these concepts played a vital role within participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, influenced their evaluation of personal and social responsibility and mediated participants’ climate change agency. Within such evaluations, participants’ environmental values were interlinked with aspects of ethics, morals, and social norms. The evaluation of responsibility was also linked back to participants’ knowledge and trust in social institutions and other actors. Based on what they knew about carbon emissions and causes, responsibilities were placed on other actors or accepted at a personal level. Knowledge and responsibility alone, however, were not sufficient for participants’ reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change agency. Engaging with reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes also involved judging their efficacy with regards to climate change actions. The following section subsequently addresses efficacy’s mediating role with regards to climate change agency.
8.4  Efficacy: Are we able to change?

Participants within this research engaged with climate change knowledge and evaluated their sense of responsibility for climate change causes and actions. Participants climate change agency, however, was also mediated by their perceived efficacy with regards to their climate change actions. The construct of efficacy is the third mediator for climate change agency identified within this research. The construct of efficacy is interconnected with knowledge, responsibility, and agency, which interconnect with each other. Within their narratives, participants evaluated and judged their personal and social efficacy as part of their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change. The theoretical construct of efficacy contained the associated theoretical concepts of ability, constraints, impacts, and uncertainties, which, again, are overlapping, fluent, and connected with each other. Participants reflected on their ability to engage with climate change actions and how such ability was constrained by factors over which they felt they had no control. Furthermore, their efficacy was influenced by doubts about the impacts their actions, or that of others, would have, as well as uncertainties about climate change science and future effects. This section focuses on the associated theoretical concepts of efficacy (Figure 8.3) and discusses how these concepts represented an important part of participants’ reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making with regards to climate change agency.

Based on the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency, participants evaluated and judged their personal and social efficacy through reflections on internal and external aspects controlling, determining, and influencing their perceived self-identity as Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds with regards to climate change actions. Such ability was evaluated based on their personal life situations that were constrained by infrastructural and financial aspects. Furthermore, based on what participants knew about climate change and related issues, climate change actions were evaluated with regards to the aspired outcome of stopping or reducing climate change. As climate change outcomes were linked to the future that is not known, such uncertainties influenced participants’ judgement of their personal but also
societies’ *ability* to combat climate change. Within the English language, efficacy refers to the ‘power of producing an effect’ (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), and following on from this definition, one could say humanity was efficacious in producing climate change. Within the context of this research, *efficacy* is used with regards to participants’ perceived *ability* to produce a positive effect with regards to reduction of carbon emissions and resultantly reducing effects of climate change. Efficacy is a term widely used within psychology, mainly focussing on one’s perceived *ability*.
(Bandura, 1977); however, as a theoretical construct, its meaning within this research includes further aspects associated with such ability. These aspects refer to perceived constraints, perceived positive impacts, as well as perceived uncertainties. Such perceptions were linked to participants’ self-identity as well as cultural and social embeddedness. Efficacy is recognised as a salient constituent within the context of pro-environmental behaviour (Eden, 1993) and climate change agency (Reser, et al., 2011). The way participants’ saw and thought about themselves influenced how they perceived their ability to engage with environmental actions (Whitmarsh & O’Neill, 2010). Participants had a certain understanding of what climate change meant to societies and their personal everyday lives; they also accepted a certain personal responsibility of contributions and actions. However, in the end, some of them still did not engage with climate change actions because of interpretations of low efficacy. Each of the associated theoretical concepts that influenced participants’ evaluation of efficacy is discussed in the following sections.

8.4.1 Ability: Not sure if we can?

Participants’ reflections referred to a perceived personal and societal ability to act with regards to climate change. Some Believers and Undecideds were quite reflexive and just did not see themselves as able to change, doubting their personal ability. Such self-doubts, for some participants, were linked to their lack of knowledge and understandings with regards to climate change. A lack of knowing what to do was especially evident in their narratives, which shows that practical knowledge with regards to climate change was limited or not evident at all. However, as Skinner (1987) states, sufficient knowledge does not necessarily lead to action. What was holding participants who demonstrated climate change knowledge back? Participants referred in their reflections to lifestyle consumptions, to how they lived their lives, practices and habits. Such practices and habits were often concerned with driving habits. Breaking such habits, according to Jackson (2005), constitutes a major challenge for individuals. For some Believers and Undecideds, the problem of climate change was just too big or the situation was too far gone, which influenced their perceived ability to engage in actions. Any action, especially at an individual level, could not stop or reverse climate change. For these participants, personal efficacy was expressed as feelings of powerlessness. Participants, who perceived
climate change as too challenging, too complex, or too fearful, therefore did not perceive themselves as being able to change their lifestyle or travel habits. According to Skinner (1987), ignoring the problems or finding easier ways to deal with them is often perceived as easier than attending to them. Participants activated what Giddens (1991) has referred to as a sense of ‘invulnerability’. This enabled them to block out negativity or anxiety grounded in a structured, organised way of living. Ignoring the problem of climate change and ‘sticking’ to their daily routines and travel habits was easier than acting on climate change. This also links back to the previously stated position advocated by Lerner and Miller (1978) that individuals want to believe that the world is just, that society can solve climate change problems. Participants therefore took the world, as they wanted to see it, for granted, because, as Carolan and Bell (2003) state, “life is too complex otherwise” (p. 452). However, not all participants felt like that. The ‘do my bit’ participants felt able to change some environmental practices, and demonstrated understandings of climate change, practical knowledge, as well as personal responsibility. The ‘changed’ participants felt the least powerless and demonstrated their ability to change as well as their personal responsibility with regards to climate change actions. These participants, besides adopting environmental practices at home, changed some of their travel behaviours as well. For all Believers and Undecideds, their perceived ability constantly affected their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change agency. This perceived ability, on the other hand, was influenced by perceived constraints that were out of their control.

8.4.2 Constraints: We would if we could?

For some participants, efficacy was a question of accessibility, having the choices and being able to access them. Within their narratives, participants commented on infrastructural issues they were facing as part of their lifestyle situations, especially in remote or regional areas. Within such lifestyle situations, access to more environmentally friendly solutions or options was perceived as limited or not available. For these participants, living in remote or regional Australia meant limited or no access to public transport as well as the need to fly because of distances between cities and places. Not having infrastructure support that enabled participants to make better choices, therefore, was perceived as a main constraint. Similar
reflections on a lack of infrastructure and the need to drive were also evident in other climate change perception research (for example, Lorenzoni, et al., 2007; Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010). In this sense, participants’ efficacy was perceived as being strongly linked to the responsibilities of national or regional governments to provide sufficient public transport or to provide infrastructure that reduce driving needs. As such, according to Randles and Mander (2009), everyday practices and behaviours are embedded not just in social but also ‘technical’ worlds. Although shortcomings of such technical worlds influenced participants’ efficacy, within their narratives, there was also an element of convenience or ‘better’ choices. If available solutions like public transport did not ‘match’ individuals’ expectations or lifestyles then they felt constrained in having sufficient choices in order to act responsibly.

Besides structural constraints that were caused by social institutions, personal constraints, especially a lack of sufficient finances, were mentioned in participants’ narratives. In such cases, as discussed previously, economic aspects were competing with environmental issues. Participants’ efficacy was constrained by their disposable incomes as part of their personal lifestyle situations. Environmentally friendly products and solutions were generally perceived as more expensive than conventional products. But is this generally the case? A few ‘no need’ participants reflected on environmental practices they adopted because of their cost saving effects. Naming financial constraints as a reason for not taking up such environmental practices is also linked to a lack of knowledge. According to Carolan (2010), an individual’s efficacy is influenced by what he or she thinks the possible solutions or choices are. Amongst some participants, mainly in the ‘stay the same’ and ‘more aware’ behaviour groups, there was the perception that environmentally friendly solutions generally cost more than existing unsustainable solutions. For a few Non-believers and Undecideds, engaging with environmentally friendly products and solutions was based on their cost-saving aspects. Such products and solutions, for example, included solar hot water systems or energy saving appliances. These types of solutions are widely promoted and partially financially supported by governments, as well as accepted within communities as a way to save costs. A number of participants, however, did not engage with such knowledge and argued their inaction with financial constraints.
Infrastructural and financial *constraints* were also reflected in participants’ comments with regards to travelling. Participants generally welcomed environmentally friendly travel products and services, which also implied a demand for higher availability. If such travel products and solutions, for example ecotourism products, however, were associated with higher costs, then again, participants reflected on financial *constraints*. Elsewhere, Randles and Mander (2009) argue that unchanged travel behaviour is grounded in habitual behaviour rather than the search for and evaluation of alternative products or transport options. ‘Sticking with flying’ is still the widely accepted choice, besides an increased interest in more environmentally friendlier options (Randles & Mander, 2009). Although still flying, participants in the ‘changed’ behaviour group had already changed some travel behaviours, mainly through paying for carbon offsets. Paying extra demonstrated higher *efficacy*, and, according to Spence, et al. (2010), signifies less perceived barriers with regards to climate change actions. Does this mean ‘changed’ participants just had more disposable income? Not necessarily. Such *agency* was also influenced by their *understandings* of climate change issues as well as taking *responsibility* for their own contributions. For the ‘do my bit’ group such *responsibility* was perceived more at an everyday life level and influenced by *social norms* that ‘requested’ individuals as social beings to pursue certain environmental practices like recycling or saving energy. Overall, within their *meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes*, participants evaluated what they (thought they) *knew* about environmentally friendlier products and solutions regarding their accessibility and costs. If participants felt *constrained* with regards to access and costs, then their perceived *efficacy* was low and engaging in climate change *agency* was less likely.

**8.4.3 Impacts: Would it make a difference?**

Although some participants perceived themselves as *able* to change, had access to environmentally friendly options, and did not see higher costs as a deterrent, their *efficacy*, however, was still low. One reason for this was their questioning of the *impact* their personal actions would have with regards to reducing the risk of climate change: ‘does it really make a difference?’ Not being able to influence or control the outcome, therefore, resulted in feelings of low *efficacy*, an effect also evident in other research (Barr, 2004; Eden, 1993), which found that people are less likely to engage
with environmental action if they perceive such action had no beneficial impact. Questioning their personal efficacy linked participants’ reflections to aspects of knowledge and responsibility. Some participants did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understandings of climate change issues and ways of mitigation at a personal level. Making a difference does imply knowing what one’s personal carbon emission is and how certain environmental practices can reduce this emission. Only a few participants reflected on calculating their carbon footprint; others had an idea of what the concept meant, and some did not have an understanding or did not ‘believe’ in footprints. This shows that, at an individual level, participants generally were not aware of what their personal carbon footprint was and what environmental practices could sufficiently reduce their contributions to climate change. As climate change theories contain a high level of uncertainties, a personal impact on emission reductions, therefore, is also linked to uncertainties. This is affirmed by Krahmann (2010) who comments that “[t]he impact of private carbon offsetting on reducing greenhouse gas emissions is difficult to assess” (p. 20). Do such impact uncertainties influence engagements with carbon footprint considerations? Most participants demonstrated a low level of engagement with carbon footprint calculators and carbon offsetting programs. Besides questioning if ‘it makes a difference’, for a few of the ‘changed’ participants who engaged in offsetting, however, their sense of personal responsibility as well as trust in provided offsetting knowledge and solutions was influencing their efficacy.

Although, some participants felt able to reduce their personal footprint, for others there was still the question of what difference this made in the overall picture of climate change mitigations. Within their narratives, participants questioned if there was sufficient support for or uptake of mitigation efforts in order to make an impact. Participants questioned whether personal or other contributions to climate change mitigation was making a difference, especially if other actors, individuals or societies, did not make their contribution to mitigation. According to Lorenzoni, et al. (2007), individuals generally believe that climate change actions have to be taken in a collective effort rather than a personal one. Participants, however, were not confident that such collective effort was evident and demanded governments to take responsibility and demonstrate leadership with regards to climate change actions. In this sense, participants linked their personal efficacy back to the question of
responsibility, and a difference could only be made if ‘everyone’ takes responsibility for his or her contributions. Such demand for collective action also links back to the previously discussed ‘free-rider’ concept (Kerr, 1983; Olson, 1965), with too many ‘free-riders’ who do not participate in carbon reductions but benefit from others’ actions. Furthermore, current individual or collective actions do not lead to tangible results but to feelings of hopelessness (Quimby & Angelique, 2011). Overall, not knowing what beneficial impacts personal actions on climate change will make or if such actions will be sufficient, linked participants’ evaluation of their efficacy strongly to uncertainties of the future.

8.4.4 Uncertainties: Who knows what the future will bring?

Not knowing what impacts contributions to climate change mitigation will make was only one aspect of general uncertainties within participants’ narratives. Such uncertainties were linked to knowledge and understandings, or a lack of these, with participants generally referring to unknown facts or effects. In this sense, participants did not refer to what they, personally, did not know, but to scientific climate change knowledge that was not able to provide answers (yet) or which was still (believed to be) discussed. Such perceived uncertainties were especially expressed by Undecideds; however, they also influenced Believers’ sense of personal efficacy. As previously discussed, participants were sceptical about the ‘truth’ of climate change knowledge that was constructed by the scientific community and disseminated by the media. Mol (2006) argues that the role of climate change information or knowledge in this context is both a cause and a consequence of uncertainties. Climate change knowledge and uncertainties are co-constructed and re-constructed within scientific and media debates, and represent, according to Giddens (1999), a “manufactured uncertainty” (p. 4). Such uncertainties influenced participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. Uncertainties associated with climate change included, for example, not knowing with 100% certainty how carbon emissions produced by humans were influencing the climate, how much temperatures will rise over the next 50 or 100 years, or if societies’ will be able, or take responsibility, to reduce carbon emissions enough to stop or reverse climate change. Based on such uncertainties, participants did not know what to do. Moreover, some participants used such uncertainties to justify climate change inaction or to postpone actions until more was
certain. Similar effects of climate change uncertainties with regards to actions were also evident in other research (for example, Gifford, 2011; Stoll-Kleemann & O'Riordan, 2001). As Gifford argues, especially the use of confidence phrases in scientific and media reports with regards to causes and consequences of climate change (for example, ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’), influences people’s meaning- and sense-making with regards to how certain these really are. From some individual participants’ perspectives, as Skinner (1987) found over several decades ago, the situation is just too overwhelming and results in a lack of efficacy.

Participants, predominantly within the ‘stay the same’ and ‘more aware’ behaviour groups, were looking for certainty. Climate scientists, however, do not know or cannot predict with 100% certainty how the climate will change within the next 50 or 100 years. Resultantly, personal, social, or global effects are uncertain. Based on such fundamental certainty issues, participants needed to ‘balance’ uncertainties with their trust in climate change science and what is known today in order to engage in climate change actions. As Spence, et al. (2010) proffered, believing in uncertainties is likely to result in inaction, especially if information about uncertainties is framed in negative ways (Morton, Rabinovich, Marshall, & Bretschneider, 2011). As discussed previously, for some participants, the distance to possible or proclaimed climate change effects in the future was large enough to argue such inaction (Weber, 2010). According to Lorenzoni and Hulme (2009), the effects of uncertainties increase if events are to be more than two decades away. Participants did not perceive climate change effects as part of their lifetime and therefore did not feel the need for climate change agency. In this sense, their low efficacy was linked to responsibility, which was not seen as a personal task.

To conclude this section, efficacy and the discussed associated concepts of ability, constraints, impacts, and uncertainties represent a vital, third mediator for participants’ climate change agency. Participants that demonstrated higher efficacy were more likely to engage in environmental practices or change their travel behaviours. Efficacy was evaluated based on perceived personal abilities that were influenced by infrastructure and economic-constrained lifestyle situations. Furthermore, such evaluations were influenced by a high level of uncertainties with regards to future effects as well as impacts that could be achieved with today’s
actions. Participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regard to climate change efficacy were interlinked to the constructs of knowledge and responsibility. Together with participants’ trust in climate change science and social institutions, as well as a perceived personal responsibility, some participants demonstrated a high level of efficacy and engaged in environmental practices or changed their travel behaviours. Others did not know what to do or what impact actions would have with regards to future scenarios, and consequently remained inactive. Having discussed the three mediating constructs of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy, the following section expands on participants’ climate change agency.
8.5 Agency: What are we doing?

Participants reflected throughout this research on their knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy with regards to climate change and travelling. Within their reflections, and as part of their reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, participants also referred to their personal and social climate change agency within lifestyle and travel contexts. The previous sections on the theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy discussed the mediating influences of these constructs on participants’ climate change agency and demonstrated how they are interconnected, fluid, and influence each other. Although the construct of agency represents an ‘outcome’ of such mediating processes, agency also influences the mediators. Participants’ actions on climate change reflexively influenced their evaluation of knowledge, their sense of responsibility, and judgement of efficacy. The reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making, therefore, provided the basis for constant changes and participants’ re-construction and re-evaluation of knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and, resultantly, agency. Such climate change agency was reflected at different levels, ranging from engaging with climate change and associated issues, to practicing more environmentally friendlier lifestyles and changing travel behaviours. Climate change agency therefore reflects participants’ acts within their everyday lives as well as with regards to travelling. Each time a participant actively carried out acts with regards to climate change, be it engaging with information on climate change in the newspaper or offsetting the carbon emissions of their holiday flights, he or she was pursuing a form of climate change agency. It is important to note that climate change agency does not imply that agency refers to acting on or combating climate change, but reflects participants’ diverse (re)actions derived from their diverse positions on climate change. Based on their general position with regards to human-induced climate change, participants were grouped into Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. Although this categorisation represents their general stance on climate change, it did not reflect their diverse perceptions or behaviours with regards to travelling and climate change. Derived from participants general position on climate change, and diverse perceptions and behaviours with regards to travelling, participants were grouped into the five behaviour groups of ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’. These five groups indicate what kind of climate change agency
participants tended to demonstrate. All participants, and therefore all behaviour groups, reflected on different forms of engaging with climate change. Participants within the ‘do my bit’, ‘changed’, and a few from the ‘no need’ groups reflected on practicing environmentally friendlier lifestyles in diverse ways, and lastly, only the ‘changed’ participants reflected on changing some of their travel behaviours. Within this research, climate change agency (Figure 8.4) was represented by the associated theoretical concepts of engaging, practicing, and changing.

As previously stated, agency was an outcome of but also an influencer on the mediation within participants’ reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. The grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency provides a framework for understanding how such agency was co-constructed and re-constructed within these meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. As such, agency was embedded in participants’ cultural and social contexts as well as represented part of their self-identity. As Wilson (2005) states, agency refers to individuals not only seeing themselves as capable to act but also doing so. Such capability was mediated by participants’ knowledge about climate change, their sense of personal responsibility, and judgement of efficacy. For Giddens (1984), “[a]gency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently” (p. 9). Giddens (1984) further acknowledges that although acts have been made intentionally, such events can also produce unintentional consequences. Within the context of travelling, participants’ acts represented the intentional decision to go on a holiday and the act of doing so. The reasons and motivations of such holiday decisions were multiple, including gaining nature or cultural experiences, participating in certain activities like hiking or diving, or just relaxing. It can be said that none of the participants stated that their intention while going on a holiday was to contribute to climate change, regardless if they believed in human-induced climate change or not. Having said that, while participants did not intend to cause climate change effects or environmental impacts, their decisions to go on an overseas holiday trip may have done exactly that. This research set out to gain an understanding of what participants’ perceptions of climate change were and how such perceptions
influence their travel behaviours. Besides such focus on travelling, this research revealed that climate change agency was inextricably interlinked with participants’ everyday lives and decision-making processes. Subsequently, climate change agency with regards to travelling needs to be considered on a continuum of engaging, practicing, and changing within the holistic context of participants’ everyday lives. Based on their decisions, participants engaged with climate change to increase their,
or others’, understandings, practiced environmentally friendlier lifestyles, or changed their travel behaviours. Each of the associated theoretical concepts of engaging, practicing, and changing representing the continuum of climate change agency is discussed in the following sections.

8.5.1 Engaging: We engage with climate change

In their narratives, all participants reflected on diverse forms of engagement with climate change and associated issues represented through the associated theoretical concept of engaging. Based on their intentional focus, these engagements concentrated on participating in public and private climate change debates, learning about climate change and associated issues, as well as influencing others in their understandings and actions. Such engagements were influenced by participants’ different positions as Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. Mediated by knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy, engaging, however, did not necessarily result in participants practicing environmental lifestyles or changing travel behaviours. Participants in the ‘stay the same’ and ‘more aware’ groups demonstrated limited knowledge and/or low responsibility and efficacy, and their climate change agency resulted only in engaging rather than practicing or changing. For the ‘no need’ participants, there was, first of all, no reason for changing their travel behaviours, as climate change was not caused by human activities, and the few who reflected on practicing based such agency on financial reasoning, specifically through energy saving practices.

For most participants across all groups, participating in climate change debates represented acts of engagements with knowledge or information. Such engagements were influenced by their general position on human-induced climate change. Believers were generally interested in climate change debates to inform themselves about climate change issues and their relevance for their personal situations. Non-believers’ interest in climate change debates was grounded in a rebutting position, trying to voice their disagreement in the science of human-induced climate change. For Undecideds engaging in climate change debates reflected their interest or ‘desire’ to resolve their undecided position. As discussed previously, climate change information, knowledge, and understandings provided a basis for participants’
meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. Lorenzoni and Hulme (2009) advocate that such engagements are critical, as climate change information can evoke resistance to climate change, or can change or confirm perceptions. As a result, knowledge and information can influence climate change agency, and their mediating effect was discussed throughout this chapter. For Undecideds, however, such information or knowledge was not clear, too negative, or did not yet enable them to understand enough about climate change in order to take a clear position.

Most information engagements were facilitated by the media, which participants across all groups perceived as biased, unbalanced, and as having underlying agendas. Whereas the ‘stay the same’ participants mainly reflected on receiving news via the media, for most other participants, a search for more information and other information sources was vital. These participants, mainly within the ‘no need’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’ groups, were interested in climate change and associated issues and wanted to know more about aspects of climate change, which resulted in doing their ‘own research’. For some, a lack of knowledge and gaining further understandings was the driving factor; for others, a lack of trust in received information about climate change led to a pursuit of further research for more trusted information. The Internet generally played an important role in pursuing further research as well as locating information sources that were perceived as more trustworthy than the media. Participants who did their own research for more trusted information reflected that media reports tended to focus on climate change stories that were driven by political agendas or scientific discovery. Such stories focussed on general issues of climate change like changing climatic situations, associated general or specific risks, as well as assumed or calculated consequences for societies. But what did such stories mean for participants, for their everyday lives? For some participants in the ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ groups, such questions were not answered in media debates, and doing further research on issues that concerned or mattered to them played an important part in their reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. Information engagements in the form of researching not only increased their knowledge and understandings of climate change issues, but also enabled them to evaluate their responsibility and efficacy with regards to needed climate change agency.
The role of information has been discussed widely within the climate change literature, focussing on the influences information has on individuals’ perceptions or behaviours (for example, Jensen & Hurley, 2010; Lockwood, 2008), or on how the quality of information can be improved in order to achieve higher engagements and change behaviours (for example, Kahan, 2010; Stamm, Clark, & Reynolds Eblacas, 2000). Within such discussions, information *engagements* were not defined as acts of climate change *agency*. For participants within this research, such *engagements* played an important part in their *meaning-, sense-, and decision-making* processes and represented a form of climate change *agency*. They decided to *engage* with climate change information, either through media reports or by doing their own research.

Besides participating in climate change debates through information *engagements*, for some participants, mainly within the ‘more aware’ and ‘do my bit’ groups, learning *engagements* represented an important part of their climate change *agency*. Such learning *engagements* were situated in predominantly informal learning environments. The more these participants *engaged* with different information and information environments, the more they *engaged* in learning about climate change and associated issues. Elsewhere, *knowledge* gained through researching climate change information has been associated with the concept of free-choice learning (Falk, 2005; Falk & Dierking, 1992). In this study, participants created or chose their own informal learning environments by *engaging* with climate change issues they had limited knowledge of, and by pursuing further research on information in order to fill such knowledge gaps. The main intention or goal of their learning was to increase *knowledge* and *understandings*. A few participants from within the ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’ groups also reflected on travel experiences that played a role in learning about different environments and environmental issues that these environments faced through climate change and tourism activities. In this sense, learning was not just part of information *engagements* but of experiences in different environments at home and on holiday. Such experiences involved theoretical and practical *knowledge*, and, according to Hess (2010), are more likely to have a lasting influence than purely information-based engagements. Experience-based learning *engagements* had, for a few participants, a positive impact on *knowledge*, and provided a better platform for evaluating their personal *responsibility*.
and judging efficacy. Engaging with learning involved taking responsibility for their own knowledge gaps, as well as enabled the learner to engage with responsibility aspects like ethics-related questions concerning climate change as well as the consideration of morals or social norms. Such learning engagements were predominantly evident within the narratives of the ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ participants.

Besides learning for one self, some participants’ engagements, mainly in the ‘no need’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’ groups, went further. These participants reflected on influencing others and demonstrated climate change agency by teaching or guiding colleagues, friends, their children, or other people they met. Such teaching did not refer to formal education settings, but to informal knowledge transfers between individuals or groups. A few of the ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ participants reflected on a responsibility for teaching in situations were they passed knowledge on to their children at home. Such knowledge transfers with regards to climate change acts or environmental practices, to my knowledge, have not been addressed within the extant literature yet. The perspective that has been taken with other research is on children ‘teaching’ their parents based on what they learned in school (for example, Rickinson, 2001; Taber & Taylor, 2009). Within this research, only one participant reflected on such a teaching-learning situation.

Influencing others, however, was not just confined to household settings but also extended to other social environments. Influencing peers represents a form of activism, based on strong environmental values and ethics, with a belief that changing others will make a difference. Influencing was also part of Non-believers’ climate change agency, as for them, influencing others was based on a desire to convince others that climate change was not based on humans’ contributions and that the science did not represent the truth about climate change. Such acts of influencing were especially apparent within the online discussions on the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum discussions but also in the reflections of the Research Lounge participants within the ‘no need’ group. O’Neill and Boykoff (2010) see online discussion fora as well as online media in general as a successful tool for different forms of climate change activism. Influencing others through spreading theoretical and practical knowledge on climate change issues also transformed participants into
‘information sources’ and as such, they had to face the same issues of trust that the media or other sources had to face.

A few participants, from different behaviour groups, also reflected on their role as tourists, which enabled them to influence their hosts about environmental practices. Predominately destinations in developing countries were seen as not environmentally friendly enough, and participants reflected on demanding better practices. Such teaching encounters represent a power imbalance as the Western paying traveller perceives himself or herself to know more than their ‘developing’ hosts and demands better practices. Overall, participants who reflected on teaching and influencing others based their intentions to teach on a perceived responsibility and ability to increase knowledge and understandings about environmental and climate change issues on the side of the learner. As such teaching aimed at practical knowledge rather than theoretical or scientific knowledge, demonstrating practical knowledge increased efficacy on the side of the ‘teacher’ and resultantly influenced efficacy on the side of the learner. Duerden and Witt (2010) similarly support this perspective that practical experiences have a stronger influence on knowledge and behaviours than scientific facts. Furthermore, participants in this research, who reflected on experiencing climate change effects and having to deal with them, demonstrated not just a better understanding of climate change issues, but also a higher sense of personal responsibility. Overall, engaging with climate change and associated issues was for participants of all behaviour groups already part of their everyday lives, although in different forms of engagements. Engaging, therefore, was an important part of their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. For them, engaging was part of their climate change agency. For some of these participants, their climate change knowledge, sense of personal responsibility and efficacy enabled pursuit of further climate change actions. For the ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ participants, as well as a few ‘no need’ participants, environmental practices were already part of their everyday lives and climate change agency.

8.5.2 Practicing: We do what we can

Engaging with climate change focussed on information and knowledge engagements that also included practical knowledge. Such practical knowledge was especially
evident in the ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ participants’ who were already practicing environmentally friendlier acts. These participants reflected in their narratives on what they understood were acts to reduce their environmental or carbon footprints, or to save money. The associated theoretical concept of practicing, therefore, represented a more committed form of climate change agency based on higher knowledge levels, at least of environmental issues, a perceived personal responsibility, and/or efficacy for climate change actions. However, there were also a few ‘no need’ participants who reflected on environmental practices, specifically energy-saving practices. According to research by Whitmarsh (2009), cost-saving goals are predominately underlying widely adopted energy-saving practices. Such goals were stated by a few ‘do my bit’ as well as a few ‘no need’ participants who reflected on energy-saving practices. For a few ‘no need’ participants, such energy-saving practices mainly fulfilled the goal to simply reduce costs, and pointing this out almost seemed to be a justification in order not to be seen as a ‘greeny’. The ‘more aware’ participants did not reflect on environmental practices, however, as this research did not specifically ask about such practices, so their increased awareness or consciousness may also have included some simple practices such as recycling or saving energy.

Reflections on practicing were the main focus of the ‘do my bit’ participants, for whom environmental practices seem to be a form of duty they were fulfilling as part of social norms or based on stronger environmental values. Although they perceived a higher responsibility with regards to climate change, such responsibility was often restrained by external influences. Within their reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, participants compared their actions with those of others as well as with policy requirements. Based on such evaluations, ‘do my bit’ participants decided what personal acts were sufficient or required in fulfilling their role and responsibility with regards to climate change. Practicing was part of their self-identity as responsible citizens that was embedded within cultural and social contexts. Environmental practices, however, were often limited to simple environmental acts like recycling or reducing energy consumptions. As Weber (2010) argues, limited action is often perceived as sufficient and can even prevent further actions. The use of phrases like ‘doing what I can’ or ‘do my part’ indicated that the ‘do my bit’ participants perceived their practices as sufficient in terms of
what they could or should do as part of their obligations within society. The ‘do my bit’ participants who reflected on such limited actions were not driven by strong environmental values or ethics, but rather by a perceived obligation to fulfil social norms. Within this context, it is also important to reflect on the research context that had influences on participants’ reflections as well. The reason for ‘do my bit’ participants to mention environmental practices and energy-saving goals may simply be explained by a ‘research bias’, wanting to be seen as environmentally responsible while participating in a climate change research project. As Barr (2004) argues, people are able to identify questions addressing environmental practices and they have learnt to talk like environmentalists. However, as Thomas and Thomas (1928) state, “if men [sic] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (p. 572). What participants reflected during the research process, therefore, represents what they perceived as ‘true’. Furthermore, as Hobson (2003) argues, reflecting on environmental practices represents a discursive consciousness that can lead to changing habits. Similarly, Mainieri, Barnett, Valdero, Unipan, and Oskamp (1997 Unipan, & Oskamp, 1997) argue that taking up one environmental action can lead to other actions. In this case, although the ‘do my bit’ participants reflected on limited actions, the reflection on such actions can lead to further action on climate change.

Overall, it was evident that participants were practicing different kinds of environmental practices at different levels and within different situations. Depending on their attitudes, knowledge, values, or perceived social norms, participants engaged with simple or more complex practices, at home, at the workplace, or while on holiday. Most ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ participants who reflected on environmental practices reflected on simple actions like recycling or reducing water and energy consumption, which, according to Wolf, et al. (2009), are practices that do not threaten individual’s lifestyles and are easily adopted. Environmental practices like recycling, as stated above, are often based on social norms, which ‘force’ people to adopt them. Adopting such practices, ‘do my bit’ participants justified their inactions in other areas or situations like travelling. Such practices, therefore, become ‘token behaviours’ (Downing & Ballantyne, 2007), if environmental practices are not being extended to other situations. As Barr, et al. (2010) argue, such situations are usually limited to the home environment and are not transferred to more complex practices or situations like going on a holiday. A few ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ participants in
this research, however, reflected on more complex practices like utilising energy- or carbon-efficient technologies, living a more or less self-sustained lifestyle, or buying a hybrid car. The ‘do my bit’ participants did not reflect on environmentally friendly travel decisions or behaviours, which would support Barr, et al.’s (2010) argument, seeing travelling as a more complex situation with regards to environmental practices as well as questioning a spill-over effect between home and travel situations. For the ‘changed’ participants, however, such environmental practices were part of their self-identity regardless of the situation. Besides reflecting on changed travel behaviours, they also transferred environmental practices to travelling situations.

Practicing, furthermore, was also mediated by participants’ perceived efficacy, what they were able to do and what they thought would make an impact. Besides perceiving practicing as a personal responsibility, participants also demonstrated efficacy through their practices. Such efficacy was based on feeling that they had the ability to ‘do it’, e.g. reducing energy consumption or recycling, as well as having not felt constrained, and having access to certain environmental solutions or practices. Such access also involved practical knowledge, understanding and being able to put such knowledge into actions. As discussed previously, some participants across all groups referred to governments and organisations as being responsible for providing solutions to enable consumers to pursue environmental practices or other climate change actions. Such demands were also directed at tourism businesses. For some ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ participants, however, their sense of responsibility to participate in environmental practices was stronger than their efficacy. Environmental practices were pursued although participants were not sure about the beneficial environmental impacts such actions would have, if it would make a difference. Overall, for the ‘do my bit’ and ‘changed’ participants, practicing environmental practices was part of their everyday lives and mediated by climate change knowledge, their sense of responsibility and efficacy. For these two groups, engaging and practicing was part of their climate change agency. However, only the ‘changed’ participants’ sense of responsibility and efficacy was strong enough to transfer their climate change agency to travel situations.
8.5.3  **Changing: We changed our travel behaviour**

Participants in this research reflected on how climate change impacted on tourism and travelling as well as on how travelling contributed to climate change. Participants were also reflexive with regards to their personal contributions to climate change through lifestyle and travel behaviours, and how this influenced such behaviours. As the main focus of this research was on travellers’ perceptions of climate change and influences on travel behaviours, the associated theoretical concept of *changing* in this context reflects participants’ *agency* with regards to their travel behaviours. Only participants who reflected on changed travel practices or behaviours demonstrated climate change *agency* in the form of *changing*. These participants were grouped as ‘*changed*’, based on their reflections on offsetting flights, purchasing environmentally friendly travel products, or even reducing travel activities. Their *agency* was mediated by a high level of climate change *knowledge* and *understandings*, and a strong sense of *responsibility* and *efficacy*.

Most participants within the ‘*changed*’ behaviour group reflected on offsetting carbon emissions that were produced by their flights. These ‘*changed*’ participants were aware of the carbon emissions that flying contributes to climate change, and they felt *responsible* and *efficacious* to act. *Changing* their travel behaviours and considering more environmentally friendly solutions was part of their self-identity as a citizen and traveller. Based on their offsetting behaviours, it could be assumed that these participants had a lower carbon footprint than other tourists. However, it needs to be borne in mind that, as Whitmarsh and O’Neill (2010) found in their research, people who offset also tend to fly more than people who do not. Whether this was the case for participants in this study was evidenced in participants’ narratives. From a carbon mitigation perspective, ‘*changed*’ participants’ offsetting efforts still produced an overall smaller carbon footprint from flying, although their overall carbon footprint could be larger if mitigation is only focussed on offsetting flights. For the ‘*do my bit*’ participants, offsetting efforts were questioned, as they did not think it was their *responsibility* to offset or that it would make a difference. The ‘*stay the same*’ and ‘*more aware*’ similarly questioned offsetting, but also show a limited *understanding* of the carbon footprint concept. For the ‘*no need*’ participants, carbon footprints were just a myth and no action was needed.
Besides reflecting on carbon offsets, a few ‘changed’ participants also commented on the importance of environmental credentials when choosing tourism products, specifically accommodation. Such considerations were based on stronger environmental values as well as seeing actors like accommodation providers as being responsible for employing environmentally friendlier practices and solutions. Although Swarbrooke and Horner (2007) note that purchasing, for example, ecotourism products, is not necessarily an assurance of environmentally friendly travel behaviours, within this research it reflected such behaviour. ‘Changed’ participants who reflected on purchasing ‘green’ accommodation products demonstrated a good understanding of climate change issues and perceived a high personal responsibility, as well as efficacy, to act on it. On the other hand, some participants across the other groups welcomed the rise of ecotourism operations but these did not seem to be a relevant aspect of their travel planning. Their personal responsibility and/or efficacy were lower and did not lead to such purchase considerations. For these participants, there was, besides growing numbers, a perceived lack of availability of green accommodation, or ecotourism products were seen as more expensive or not affordable. As Hjalager (2000) states, besides a growth of ecotourism and other more environmentally friendly tourism products, ‘green consumerism’ within the tourism context is still constrained because of a lack of widespread availability and affordability of such products. Although this statement was made over a decade ago, these kinds of constraints were still visible in participants’ reflections. These participants felt greener products were not available or too expensive; however, according to Wearing, Cynn, Ponting, and McDonald (2002), they just might not have been aware of such greener products. Some of the ‘changed’ participants, however, did not feel constrained and they were aware of, as well as considered, greener options in their travel decision-making. Within their meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, participants across all groups reflected on greener travel products and evaluated them based on financial or structural constraints, responsibilities on the side of tourism organisations, as well as their personal values. Based on such evaluations, only the ‘changed’ participants demonstrated a high level of responsibility and efficacy with regard to changing their travel behaviour. Such changed behaviour included purchasing greener travel products as well as paying extra for offsets.
Paying extra for carbon offsets for holiday flights was part of some ‘changed’ participants’ climate change agency. These participants generally did not reflect on a moral responsibility and feelings of guilt when boarding a flight. In this sense, for these ‘changed’ participants offsetting was an ‘excuse’ for their flight activities. As such, offsetting reflections for the ‘changed’ participants were similar to ‘doing my part’ reflections for the ‘do my bit’ participants. An alternative to paying extra for offsets would be reducing or limiting flying. For almost all ‘changed’ participants, however, reducing travelling was not an option, although they knew that flying contributed to carbon emissions. For them, as for participants of the other behaviour groups, travelling and flying was part of their lifestyles, their self-identity. According to other researchers (Barr, et al., 2010; Becken, 2007; Hares, Dickinson, & Wilkes, 2010), travelling is perceived as a salient part of individuals’ lifestyles, and thus something they are not willing to sacrifice based on their general environmental concerns. Flying, in most cases, is part of the tourism experience and ‘changed’ participants decided to offset their emissions rather than to refrain from such unsustainable travel behaviours. A few other participants, mainly Undecideds in other behaviour groups, expressed their hope for new environmentally friendly modes of transportations and greener technologies. These participants placed climate change responsibility on scientists and industries to come up with better solutions. Barr, et al. (2010) similarly found that environmentally conscious travellers demand more environmentally friendly travel technologies or mitigation schemes rather than reducing flying. Within this research, however, there was one ‘changed’ participant who reflected on his decision not to go on a trip to Africa. He argued his decision with the fact that, besides contributing to carbon emissions, his presence as a tourist would take away valuable resources like water from local people and would place pressure on people in need of such resources. This participant fits the definition of a ‘true’ dark green tourist. Swarbrooke and Horner (2007) define a ‘true’ dark green tourist as one who stays at home and does not travel at all, which would make this ‘changed’ participant the darkest green traveller within this research.

Besides reflecting on their or other actors’ responsibility to develop greener, better solutions, participants across all groups also justified their travelling and flying behaviour with the importance of tourism for destinations. According to these
participants, tourism was an important industry, especially for developing countries. Reducing travelling to such countries, which generally involved flying, would harm the destinations’ economical and resultantly social situations. In this case, reducing travelling was not perceived as threatening participants’ lifestyles but those of others at the destination. This way of thinking implied a responsibility to travel rather than reducing travel activities because travelling would contribute to economies and lifestyles of host communities. Although one ‘changed’ participant reflected on cancelling a trip to Africa because of his environmental concerns and perceived personal responsibility for such climate change agency, he did not state that he would stop travelling altogether. As travelling was perceived as part of participants’ lifestyles and self-identity, for ‘changed’ participants changing their travel behaviours, therefore, focused on mitigation, buying offsets or greener products. Instead of becoming ‘true’ dark green travellers, they were aiming to become carbon-neutral travellers.

With regards to travelling and climate change, ‘changed’ participants demonstrated a good understanding of climate change issues and the contributions their personal travel activities made to climate change. Such understanding placed a high trust in the scientific knowledge around climate change and reports on how climate change is, or may in the future, impacting on travelling and destinations. It also demonstrated an understanding of how a traveller could change his or her behaviour in order to lessen their contributions to carbon emissions. By changing some of their behaviour, it further reflects that ‘changed’ participants perceived a high level of personal efficacy, despite a few participants reflecting on not knowing what difference their actions would make. Although other participants were similarly concerned about climate change and their personal carbon footprints, they showed a lack of efficacy and did not feel able to break unsustainable habits or felt constrained in not having access to greener products. Demonstrating their personal understanding and efficacy with regards to travel behaviour, a few ‘changed’ participants also provide a peer-influence that could have a positive effect on other travellers. They engaged in influencing others by talking about climate change issues as well as practiced how people can reduce or mitigate their carbon emissions at home and on holiday. Overall, ‘changed’ participants demonstrated a high level of climate change knowledge, personal responsibility, and efficacy. Based on their reflexive meaning-,
sense-, and decision-making processes, ‘changed’ participants saw themselves as being responsible for their personal carbon emissions, as well as for taking climate change actions in the form of conscious consumer decisions. For them, such climate change agency was part of their lifestyles and self-identity as a citizen and traveller.

8.5.4 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to gain an understanding of travellers’ perceptions of climate change and influences on travel behaviours. Participants within the research reflected not just on their diverse perceptions but also demonstrated how such perceptions were constructed based on their reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. Such meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes were part of participants’ cultural and social embeddedness as well as part of their self-identity as citizens and travellers. Their cultural and social embeddedness and self-identity, as identified within this research, were associated with their positionality as Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. With regards to climate change influences on their travel behaviours, their cultural and social embeddedness and self-identity were associated with the five behaviour groups of ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’.

Within participants’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, their perceptions of climate change were constantly co-constructed and re-constructed within cultural and social contexts. Consequently, the reflections that participants across all groups shared within this research have to be seen as representing their perceptions at that point in time. Based on continued co-constructions and reconstructions, in the time since empirical material collection, participants may have changed some of their perceptions or even their general stance on climate change. For example, a Believer identified in this research, meanwhile, may have become an Undecided based on new knowledge or experiences. On the other hand, an Undecided may have become a Non-believer based on his or her re-evaluation of climate change information or facts in the face of new knowledge or experiences. Regardless of the position participants take today, or in the future, of interest is how they arrived at such positions. Within this research, knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and agency were identified as the main constituents of participants’
meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to climate change. Furthermore, knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy, represented by their associated theoretical concepts, were identified as mediators for climate change agency. Such climate change agency was demonstrated by participants engaging with climate change information and associated issues, practicing more environmentally friendly lifestyles, and changing their travel behaviours.

Based on the preceding discussion of the identified theoretical constructs and concepts, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency is refined as follows:

Travellers’ perceptions of climate change are constantly co-constructed and re-constructed using reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making within cultural and social contexts and through traveller self-identity filters. Travellers’ engagements with and evaluation of climate change knowledge, sense of responsibility, and judgment of efficacy mediates their climate change agency. Such agency is performed by engaging with climate change discourses, practising environmentally friendly lifestyles and changing travel behaviours.
CHAPTER NINE

FINAL REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Well! First thank you for conducting this research project and I personally think this particular research focus is very important to the impact mass migration (tourism, social or political) currently has on our environment.

(147 Male 32)

Without the support of my participants, this research would not have been possible; their voices and perceptions were presented throughout this thesis and are the foundation of my grounded theory. In my research, I set out to gain a deeper understanding of travellers’ climate change perceptions and how these influence their travel behaviours. Grounded in participants’ reflections, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency provides a framework for such understanding. Within this chapter, I reflect on methodological aspects of the research, the grounded theory, and its applicability. Within these reflections, I refer back to the stated research significance in Chapter 1, and provide some recommendations for researchers, as well as for tourism policy makers and industry. Furthermore, I reflect back on the research process and possible research approaches for future research projects. I end this chapter, and the thesis, by giving participants the last word. Throughout their reflections, they made suggestions and recommendations regarding tourism’s role in the development towards a more environmentally form of travelling. Such recommendations are embedded within my interpretations; however, I want to present their original voices for the reader.

9.1 Research process

I began Chapter 2 - Paradigm, Methodology, and Methods - with a poem by Robert Frost and stated that taking a different, less travelled, road made all the difference for my research. It was not an easy road; however, in the end, it was a rewarding one
that enabled me to generate new experiences and to construct the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency. By reflecting on the research process, I refer back to some of the significance points as stated in Chapter 1. For the research process, these significance points include: the application of a holistic-inductive research framework; theory construction that was led by my participants’ voices; provision of insights into the construction of a grounded theory; and demonstration of researcher reflexivity and use of critical reflexive research.

Within the application of a holistic-inductive research framework, I explored different online environments by using a grounded theory approach and an interdisciplinary perspective. I started my empirical material collection by collecting existing discussions within the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum. These discussions were un-facilitated and provided initial insights into travellers’ climate change perceptions. While existing online discussions have been explored for qualitative analysis before, my Lonely Planet study contributes further to such research within the tourism contexts. The development and employment of an online research community for qualitative inquiry, however, is still new and my explorations provide valuable methodological insights for other researchers. The challenges that I faced during my research mainly refer to the development and use of my community website, the Climate Change Research Lounge. These challenges required me to constantly engage with critical reflections of the research design and to modify the website and research process, which demonstrates a critically reflexive research framework. One of the main challenges that I faced was recruiting participants online and engaging them in initial in-depth email interviews. Based on these difficulties, I decided to open the website up for a wider Internet audience in order to collect sufficient empirical material. Initially, I focussed my empirical material collection on engaging participants in online discussions about climate change on my Research Lounge website. As such engagements were limited due to an insufficient number of active participants, I decided to employ a webform for guided open-ended questions and invited travellers to provide their reflections. I recruited these participants via an email mailing based on addresses from the Australian Lifestyle Survey (ALS) database. Whereas the initial email interviews and the community features of the Research Lounge website (blog and forum) did not provide sufficient empirical material, the open-ended questions via the webform did. I received 146 reflections
from individuals who were active travellers and used the Internet for travel information search and exchanges. The more structured approach via the webform allowed me to explore these in-depth reflections in a cross-interpretation based on emerging themes and participants’ stance on climate change, and enabled me to gain rich insights into travellers’ climate change perceptions and how these influenced their travel behaviours.

For my research, I chose a postmodern constructivist paradigm, as climate change meanings are constantly co-constructed and re-constructed within everyday lives and travel situations. In my research, I focussed on travellers’ co-constructions and re-constructions of climate change meanings, and their voices led the grounded theory construction. Using a holistic-inductive research framework and a grounded theory approach in particular, I was able to interpret participants’ rich narratives and to construct the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency. The grounded theory approach based on its qualitative nature, provided participants a space to voice their perceptions, which tend to be unheard in tourism policy, industry, and research discourses. Within my grounded theory interpretations and theory construction I then de-constructed and re-constructed their voices. During my engagements with participants and my interpretations of their voices, I was reflective of my personal social situatedness and was constantly guided by Charmaz’s evaluation criteria (see page 32). Demonstrating researcher reflexivity, I documented my reflections with regards to my engagements with participants and interpretations of their voices within memos during the research process. The Lonely Planet voices, which represented existing online discussions, were presented in Chapter 3 and provided valuable insights for the Research Lounge study and development of the research website. The Research Lounge interpretations were presented in Chapter 4 to Chapter 6, providing each group, Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds, space for their voices. In Chapter 7, I demonstrated the theorising process and introduced the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency. Based on the voices chapters, the theorising chapter, and my reflections of the interpretation process in Chapter 2, the reader can follow how I interpreted my empirical material and how I constructed the grounded theory. As such, this thesis provides one demonstration of the construction of a grounded theory.
As stated above, the road less travelled provided me with valuable experiences and insights, especially with regards to empirical material collection via an online community website. Throughout the research process, I reflected on my experiences in memos and autobiographic writing as part of the critically reflexive research process. Although I experienced challenges that required major modifications of the research website, as some online tools did not allow collection of sufficient materials, this does not imply that such online tools are not effective as methods for qualitative inquiry. Online tools like email, blog, and forum have been previously employed successfully in other research; however, this has not been within an online community approach. More research is needed to explore how an online community can be utilised for qualitative research inquiries and what the determinants of a successful implementation are. Such determinants can relate to the type of online tools utilised, the research topic or focus, the type of research population, the recruitment strategy, or the duration of the research process. Furthermore, the researchers’ role within such research can vary, placing the researcher into the role of a facilitator, moderator, or participant. The possibility of research designs seems to be endless, especially if one considers that new ways of online communications are constantly being developed and change how we engage and communicate online.

9.2 Grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency

My reflections within this section provide a summary of the grounded theory, its significance and the demonstration of typicalities. The grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency provides a framework for understanding travellers’ climate change perceptions and influences on travel behaviours. Grounded in participants’ narratives, the four theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and agency were identified (Figure 9.1). These theoretical constructs are interconnected, fluid, and influence each other, and are the main constituents of participants’ reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes. Within these processes, travellers’ climate change perceptions are constantly co-constructed and re-constructed. Furthermore, these processes are filtered by travellers’ cultural and social embeddedness as well as their self-identity as citizens and travellers. The grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency provides a holistic view on how travellers’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes with regards to
climate change agency are embedded within their everyday lives and travel situations. As such, the grounded theory is significant and adds to knowledge construction within the tourism discipline. It provides fresh insights into travellers’ climate change perceptions, which are valuable for tourism researchers, as well as policy makers and the tourism industry. Such insights specifically refer to travellers’ engagement with climate change knowledge and information as well as evaluations of trustworthiness. Furthermore, travellers’ sense of responsibility and judgement of efficacy, together with knowledge evaluations, mediate their climate change agency.

Within my research, I categorised participants into Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds. This categorisation reflected participants’ general stances on human-induced climate change. The Believers believed that humans contributed to climate change, the Non-believers believed that climate change was just a natural reoccurring process, and the Undecideds were still undecided if climate change could be attributed to human activities or natural causes. Although these categories represent participants’ stances on climate change, they did not reflect participants’ diverse perceptions with regards to climate change and travelling. These diverse perceptions were co-constructed and re-constructed within their reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes, and filtered by their cultural and social embeddedness as well as self-identity. Participants evaluated their climate change knowledge, which was determined by their attitudes, understandings, scientific knowledge, common knowledge, and trust in information and social institutions. Furthermore, participants reflected on their sense of responsibility, which was influenced by evaluations of values, ethics, morals, social norms, and the role of other actors. Besides evaluation of knowledge and sense of responsibility, participants also judged their personal and social efficacy with regards to climate change agency. This efficacy was affected by their perceived ability, constraints and impacts their actions would make, as well as climate change uncertainties. Overall, participants’ evaluation of knowledge, sense of responsibility, and judgement of efficacy, mediated their climate change agency. Such agency was demonstrated through engaging with climate change issues, practicing environmentally friendlier lifestyles, as well as changing travel behaviours. Based on the continua of knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and resultant agency, participants were grouped into five behaviour groups. The behaviour groups of ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and
‘changed’ reflect participants’ levels of knowledge, responsibility, efficacy, and climate change agency. These behaviour groups are overlapping and fluid as participants constantly engaged in reflexive meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes.

Figure 9.1. Reflexive processes of meaning-, sense-, and decision-making with regards to participants’ climate change stance and behaviour groups
As outlined above, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency provides a framework for understanding travellers’ climate change perceptions and influences on travel behaviours. This framework acknowledges the multiplicity of co-constructions and re-constructions of travellers’ diverse meanings and experiences. Based on the two studies, Lonely Planet and Research Lounge, the grounded theory shows typicalities. Such typicalities particularly referred to travellers’ categorisation into Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds, their perceptions on climate change knowledge, information, distrust in social institutions, and roles of different actors. A comparison of the two studies was provided in Chapter 7. The two studies represent two substantive cases of travellers’ climate change perceptions and influences on travel behaviours. Both studies were conducted in online environments employing a qualitative methodology. Further research in different settings, online and offline, is needed to investigate further transferability to other settings. In addition, such settings should consider different traveller populations, as the Research Lounge reflections reflect predominantly Australians’ climate change views. Through research in other settings, the in my research identified theoretical constructs and associated theoretical concepts can be further evaluated and refined. Furthermore, as this research, especially the Research Lounge study, reflects travellers’ perceptions at a certain point in time, further studies that allow longitudinal investigations are needed to see how travellers’ climate change perceptions and agency change over time. This would provide insights into how the theoretical constructs of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy, together with their associated theoretical concepts, change or could be changed. Overall, the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency provides a framework for further qualitative and quantitative research into travellers’ climate change perceptions.

9.3 Applicability

This research allowed me to construct the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency, which provides a framework for understanding travellers’ climate change perceptions and influences on travel behaviours. Furthermore, this research provides a thick description of participants’ climate change perceptions that allow the reader to re-construct and de-construct my interpretations. Within the discussion of Chapter 8, through my interpretations and theorising, I demonstrated the meditating
role of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy with regards to participants’ climate change agency. These thick descriptions and my discussion of the grounded theory provide valuable insights for policy makers and the tourism industry, which further demonstrates the significance of my research. Such insights refer to the evidence that travellers are not a homogenous group with regard to climate change agency. Based on the continua of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy, climate change agency was demonstrated through engaging, practicing, and changing. Travellers were grouped into the five behaviour groups of ‘no need’, ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’. In summary, and to reiterate, these groups are overlapping and fluid as well as influenced by travellers’ cultural and social embeddedness, and self-identity as citizens and travellers. Based on the characteristics of each behaviour group, policy makers and the tourism industry are provided with insights that allow them to consider such characteristics within their policy and product developments. Such considerations are crucial in order to reduce tourism’s contributions to climate change and to reach set sustainability goals, and, in brief, I therefore reiterate the groups’ characteristics below.

The ‘no need’ group represents travellers who tend to reject the theory of human-induced climate change. Although the ‘no need’ travellers were engaging with climate change issues, such engagements aimed to confirm their positionality on climate change or to convince others of a natural-causes theory. These travellers did not see a need to change their travel behaviours as it does not contribute to climate change, and practicing more environmentally friendlier lifestyles was based on cost-saving benefits. Their positionality on climate change was a strong influence on their evaluation of knowledge, responsibility, and efficacy, resultantly determining their inaction with regards to changing their travel behaviour. The other four behaviour groups of ‘stay the same’, ‘more aware’, ‘do my bit’, and ‘changed’, representing Believers’ and Undecideds’ voices, were also influenced by their positionality. Although believing that human activities contribute to climate change, such positionality did not necessarily result in climate change actions. Travellers, mainly within the ‘stay the same’ and ‘more aware’ groups, reflected a limited knowledge and understanding of climate change issues and tended to demonstrate a low personal responsibility and efficacy. The ‘stay the same’ travellers did not consider climate change when making travel plans, and the ‘more aware’ travellers tended to
adapt to changing destinations, or felt the urge to see them before they ‘disappeared’. The ‘do my bit’ travellers demonstrated a better understanding of climate change issues and their own contributions based on their lifestyles. However, their sense of responsibility and perceived efficacy with regards to changing travel behaviours were prone to be influenced by their environmental practices. Such practices tended to fulfil a perceived responsibility with regards to climate change actions. Furthermore, constraints and uncertainties tended to influence their perceived efficacy, preventing them extending their climate change action to travel situations. Only the ‘changed’ travellers demonstrated a good understanding of climate change issues, perceived a high sense of personal responsibility, and saw themselves as efficacious in changing their travel behaviours and resultantly feeling their actions would make a difference.

In conclusion, policy makers and the tourism industry have to play their part to decrease tourism’s contributions to climate change and to increase its sustainability. This can be achieved through understanding and consideration of travellers’ voices, which has to be reflected in policy and product development with regards to sustainability goals. The grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency provides a framework that enables such understanding. This research showed that travellers are represented through different behaviour groups and that the group characteristics have to be taken into account in order to change travellers’ behaviours. Furthermore, issues of trust in information and social institutions have to be addressed, as these were voiced across all behaviour groups as well as evidenced in both studies. This can be achieved through transparency and accountability within policy and product development, as well as in the communication of these. Travellers within my research generally wanted to do the right thing and welcomed more environmentally friendly travel products. Even for Non-believers, environmental considerations with regards to travelling were evident, regardless if travelling contributed to climate change or not.

If the theory of climate change is valid, that any kind of travel would have some sort of impact on it… I would love to be more informed and I would like to think that I could travel without impacting on climate change or putting as little stress on it as I can.

029 Female 42
9.4 Looking back and looking forward

The PhD journey is not just concerned with pursuing and completing a research project but is also part of the process of ‘becoming’ a researcher. As such, ‘doing’ a PhD is a lived experience that involves successes and failures. As stated previously, I reflected on my research process, on the challenges I faced and decisions I made, within memos during the research. Furthermore, within this document, I reflected on some of the challenges and decisions I made. Looking back on the research process and my reflections, I must admit, I underestimated the effort and time it would take to develop my research website and to recruit and engage participants. I constantly had to reassess the amount of time available for website development and actually collecting empirical material and my interpretations. This combined with the given time frame for the completion of a PhD placed pressure on the process and required decisions that focussed on generating sufficient empirical material rather than ‘experimenting’ further with online engagements. Such time frame was also influenced by financial constraints.

I still believe that an online community with features like forum and blogs can be utilised for qualitative online inquiry. For my project, however, I was only able to establish online engagements in a limited way using forum and blog as methods for empirical material collection. Reflecting back on the challenges, I identified three possible reasons for this: time, trust, and focus. Firstly, the already mentioned time frame that limited the available time to establish online discussions. Establishing an online research community with people from different backgrounds, recruited from different websites, is a process that involves constant monitoring, facilitation, and participation, as well as a huge amount of time and persistence on the side of the researcher. As stated above, time was constantly divided between website development and actually doing the research. At the end, I had to decide what the focus of my research should be, the online explorations or travellers’ climate change perceptions. If I had decided to focus on the online explorations, this document would have had a different focus, structure, and would tell a different story. Secondly, as a novice researcher, I needed to learn how to approach potential participants in an online environment and how to establish email and forum discussions. This was a challenging process for me at a personal level and I still do
not feel that I mastered this. I was concerned that my participants may get the impression that I was ‘using’ them for my research purpose and tried to build a personal rapport with them. However, there always seemed to be a ‘distance’ and a lack of trust. Based on what emerged from my research with regards to trust, I now understand that the issue of climate change research and information is contested by the question of ‘whom to trust?’ Although on my research website I provided information about myself and my interest in climate change, (potential) participants may not have trusted me enough, which resulted in ‘silence’. Furthermore, research participants also needed to establish trust with the other community members in order to feel comfortable to participate. A common interest in climate change alone did not seem to be sufficient in order to establish such trust. And lastly, with regards to focus, the success of the open-ended question webform as a tool for empirical material collection demonstrated that participants felt much more comfortable with reflecting on specific issues once rather than discussing climate change unstructured over an undefined period of time. Although I wanted my participants to direct the discussions, there were no community members who wanted to take on such lead. The majority of participants who created an account to participate in the discussions did not post anything online and often did not visit the website again despite automated emails that were sent when something new was posted. Furthermore, the few established discussions tended to focus on general climate change or environmental issues and were not related to travelling. I therefore decided to provide the more focussed and structured open-ended questions in order to gain insights into how climate change perceptions influence travel behaviours. This allowed me to collect reflections from 146 participants, however, it did not allow the initially intended in-depth engagements and further discussion of the online reflections. I constructed the grounded theory based on my interpretations that I demonstrated throughout this document rather than on an initial planned co-construction process with my participants.

As a qualitative researcher, I was reflexive about the decisions I made with regards to the Research Lounge website and the research process. I often asked myself, what would have happened if I had made different decisions. In the end, I realised that I would have told just a different story. The interpretations of this research, therefore, have to be read in the context of the research and the evolved research process. Both
context and process ‘bound’ the story that I am telling. Furthermore, as researchers, qualitative and quantitative, we always have to question how we approach our research, how we phrase our questions, or how the ‘types’ of participants influence the story we are able to tell. In the end, I was not able to successfully reflect on the online engagements, however, the reflections of my participants provided sufficient insights to tell their story based on my interpretations as well as to construct the grounded theory of Mediating Climate Change Agency. For future research, I want to explore travellers’ climate change perceptions further and want to enable co-construction processes that allow a re-evaluation and refinement of the grounded theory and the identified theoretical constructs and concepts. In addition, I want to explore the application of the Research Lounge further. Future research explorations could be based on a longitudinal time frame and a more focussed approach with regards to the research focus and the use of online tools. A focus on past and future travel experiences, for example, could provide further insights into travellers’ decision-making processes and how such processes influence travellers’ experiences. A focus on the media may be of interest, as the media’s continued representations of climate change issues and discussions influences travellers’ experiences and decision making over time. Furthermore, as climate change discussions are influenced by governmental policy processes and political debates, the consideration of the political climate change ‘climate’ with regards to travellers’ meaning-, sense-, and decision-making processes could provide further insights for policy makers. And last but not least, the Research Lounge could be utilised for a more industry-focussed approach. By focussing on a specific destination, for example Australia, travellers’ reflections can provide insights into how they perceive climate change as relevant for their travel decisions, or what information needs they have in order to make their destination choice. Climate change is an important issue for long-distance destinations like Australia; however, climate change is not yet highly visible in Australian tourism communication and marketing. Participants within this research reflected on the tourism industry’s need to reduce their contributions to climate change, which suggests a need for accountability, transparency, and communication of industry specific actions with regards to climate change.
In conclusion, besides the challenges that I faced during the research process, the Research Lounge provides an established platform for further research into climate change and travel behaviours and I cannot wait to start new explorations.

9.5 **Research Lounge participants’ recommendations**

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, I want to end my thesis by giving voice to some of the Research Lounge participants’ recommendations. I randomly selected these voices from the online reflections and they may represent participants across Believers, Non-believers, and Undecideds, as well as across the five behaviour groups.

The tourist industry particularly here in WA needs to look at attracting local clients and have green policies that focus on energy efficient transport options for tourism.

091 Female 43

Tourism, as it exists today, is dependent upon air travel and is therefore a major contributor to global climate change. The tourism industry should begin to promote environmentally responsible travel. I would like to see fuel-efficient ocean travel become available. I fear that it won’t as long as cheap air travel is available. To be responsible we all need to do what we can to make the passenger airlines go away.

149 Male 58

I’ve been heartened by the growth in eco-tourism, though I’m not sure how much of an impact it has in the big scheme of things. But it’s good to see that it’s a growing trend. I would like to see more mainstream tourism providers being more environmentally minded.

052 Male 59
I would like to see destinations have some rating like a household appliance does regarding its power usages and sources; a greener accommodation would be preferable.

078 Male 52

I think there is a growing trend with tourism to encourage travellers to consider climate change but it often feels like a marketing gimmick rather than genuine intention to make a change.

126 Female 30

… the impact of tourism on any destination (in terms of how it affects the local environment) should be thoroughly evaluated before promoting it to tourists.

133 Female 54

Tourism needs to contribute more [to] the awareness of the effects of global warming.

134 Male 29

I think tourism can positively affect climate change by encouraging countries to keep their forests and other natural resources.

145 Female 30
REFERENCES


Phillimore, J., & Goodson, L. (2004). The inquiry paradigm in qualitative tourism research. In J. Phillimore & L. Goodson (Eds.), *Qualitative research in tourism: Ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies* (pp. 30-44). London; New York: Routledge.


APPENDICES
Appendix 1: Paper on autoethnographic account of the research process, presented at CAUTHE 2011 conference

It's Not A Survey!? Experiences With The Development Of A Community Website For Qualitative Tourism Research

Ulrike Kachel
Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and Sport Management
Griffith Business School
Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus QLD Australia
Email: u.kachel@griffith.edu.au

Abstract
This auto-ethnographic research working paper provides an insight into the researcher’s experiences and challenges in exploring the use of a community website for qualitative empirical material collection of tourists’ perceptions. Main challenges experienced refer to a) recruiting participants and promoting the project online, b) developing a community website and exploring it’s use for qualitative material collection, c) the tension of being the researcher and a community member, and d) finding the right balance between research and website tasks.

Key words: Internet research, online methods, community website, auto-ethnography
Introduction

The use of the Internet for travel planning, booking and sharing of experiences has become an important part for the overall travel experience (Gretzel, Fesenmaier, & O'Leary, 2006). Tourism researchers therefore engage with Internet research in varied fields and foci, although methodologies reflect more quantitative than qualitative approaches. Literature on eTourism focuses on consumers, technology innovation, and industry advances (Bhullas & Law, 2008), however, methodological reflections on how researchers engage with and use the Internet for their research purposes is limited.

This paper provides an auto-ethnographic insight into the development, evolution and use of a community website for engaging with travellers online as part of my PhD project. With the use of an auto-ethnographic voice I reflect on the different roles I took, my project decisions and the overall experience of my methodological exploration (Cioke, Goodwin, & Crag, 1999).

The aim of my project is to gain a deeper understanding of traveller's online discussions on climate change and implications on future travel experiences. I intended not just to employ the Internet as a research setting, but also explore how web 2.0 technologies could be used as a tool for qualitative empirical material collection. The research design was influence by a postmodern constructivist paradigm and following Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory approach.

I planned to recruit participants online and engage them in discussions around climate change and travelling with me and other participants on my own community website. The rationale behind developing my own website was firstly, access to travel community members is controlled by community managers. Secondly, on my own platform I would be able to engage with participants from different existing communities. And lastly, I would be able to provide additional content and change functionalities if necessary.

In my auto-ethnographic narrative I reflect on the different project phases and provide an insight into my experiences, challenges I faced and lessons learnt.

How did I approach my research and the website?

I would need at least a few participants before starting my online discussions, and therefore decided to begin with email interviews and later invite my interviewees to join discussions on my website. Besides email for the one-to-one communication, forum and blogs would be used for group discussions. Content sharing options to share photos, videos, or links to material on other websites were needed because such material usually is an important part of online discussions.

As my potential participants were already using different web 2.0 technologies to engage with others online, I investigated their functionalities on some travel community sites. But how could I develop my own community website? After some consideration, I excluded customised programming (too expensive) and utilisation of existing online systems like Ning (not flexible enough), and decided to develop my website with an open-source system. Such systems are free to use, and are developed and constantly improved by a global community of web developer. I thought this co-constructive peer-reviewed process would fit not just my website requirements but also my research approach.

The challenge was to choose a system that would not come with high cost, offers a range of functionalities, is flexible and reliable. After some research via Google and trusting a 'Top ten community systems' list I found, I chose the first on the list, called Joomla.

Getting started & first attempt

Although I do have a background in the Internet industry, I had no experience with Joomla. Installation and understanding not just how the system works but also how to modify it to my needs, was a time consuming
process that involved a lot of trial and error. I had to choose and test suitable web 2.0 modules (too many to choose from), as well as think about design, functionalities and more important usability.

To start my research I created profiles on different travel community sites for later recruitment of participants. I explored existing climate change discussions in these communities in order to use them as a further source of empirical material and to inform my later discussions. Based on people’s engagement in existing discussions, I began to identify some potential participants.

With all these different tasks and working on the development of my research website, it was a challenge to find a balance between time for research relevant and website tasks. This ‘do it yourself’ attempt made me realise that the website development was not the main focus, and therefore, I needed support.

**Pilot test and second attempt**

I discussed my project requirements with the Research Computing Service (RCS) on campus and they agreed to set up my website on their systems, based on my design and functionality requirements. I have worked in such project constellations in the past and felt quite happy with this solution. RCS used the Drupal open-source system (number two on the top ten list) and this meant I had to familiarise myself with a new system and its possibilities. Creating a web design involves not just thinking about the look and feel, but also the exact design of each page needed, each content position, and every button and function needed on these pages. Once completed, I had to supervise the implementation of layout and functionalities, and get ready for a pilot test.

Utilising a community website for my research meant, I was not just the researcher but also the content manager. For the pilot test I had to publish content I needed, which at the start was based on my ethics documents, research information, and a profile about me. Some fellow PhD students and my supervisors agreed to test my website for a week. The feedback I received referred mainly to the content and stated that my content was too ‘academic’, too ‘distant’, and too ‘leading’. All important feedback, and I was happy to work on changes.

The challenging part of this phase was to engage my pilot participants in online discussions and to find the right “language” to interest people in the first place. I learnt that I could not really pilot testing the discussions, but the general functionality and content.

On the technical side, challenges were time consuming and frustrating, as RCS used my design more as a guideline rather than a request, and after the pilot test they were not able to respond to further changes that I needed to start my website. I realised that university services can be under-resourced and are driven by large-budget projects.

**Starting out and third attempt**

I found a freelancer with Drupal skills and we transferred my website to a new server, which I could access as. Still supervising the last changes on my list, I meanwhile also introduced further changes I made. This phase was driven by working on content and site structure, dealing with spammers, and testing, testing, testing in order to get the website ready.

Besides the more technical tasks, I really had to start recruiting participants and begin my email interviews. I participated in travel community discussions, so people get to know me, and emailed potential candidates, but responses were low. Finally starting a first interview, I found the conversational style of interviewing in grounded theory really difficult to do.

As recruitment was not as successful as hoped, I decided to open up my website for an easy self-registration, and added a prize-draw of five travel guides as an incentive. I also tried to make the website a bit more interesting by adding general content and links on climate change and tourism. What else could I do? I began tweeting, and even started thinking about online polls and questionnaires.
The challenges of this phase were several. The freelancer was overcommitted with other jobs and I realised, I needed to get involved more than I wanted. I guess, I was just unlucky finding someone who really wanted to do the project and could allocate enough time.

Finding my role as a researcher and member of community websites was another challenge, as was to find people that were not passive but active participators. Recruiting specific individuals for qualitative research online was a quite frustrating process. Although people seem to participate in climate change discussions, they obviously were reluctant to join research discussions.

**Promoting and optimising**

My research community website was finally up and running. To get more participants, I started to promote my website to a wider audience. I utilised Facebook and created profiles within diverse online communities. I left comments and a link to my project in discussions on other websites, if the context was right.

I ended up developing an open-ended questionnaire for open access, providing nine questions on climate change, travelling and environmental issues, in an open ‘grounded theory style’. I bought some addresses, introduced another prize-draw incentive, and achieved great responses through an email mailing.

To implement the questionnaire and optimise content, I had to learn how to change templates and explored Drupal’s full potential. I restructured, deleted, changed and added content and reconfigured modules. I managed to connect my Facebook updates with Twitter, which then also automatically updated tweets on my websites. This provided some more questionnaire submissions.

Working on templates and integrating modules was challenging, but more challenging was finding the right balance between working on the website and actually doing my research. Getting ‘heard’ out there on the Internet, and keeping my participants engaged on the website was a difficult task. Promoting a research project online can be a quite frustrating and timely process.

My roles were that of a researcher, community member, web developer, content and community manager, and each provided their own specific challenges. At times the biggest challenge was not to give up. I slowly learnt that making a lot of changes to my initial research design was not a failure but part of the process and a valuable experience.

**Concluding thoughts**

As a researcher we bring past knowledge and experiences to a project, and the decision I made for my project were certainly influenced by that. The experiences I made through this project reflect my story and a different researcher would tell a different story. Although the story might be a different one, some of the challenges could be the same, and therefore reporting on our research experiences could provide other researchers with valuable insights.

My main challenges referred to a) recruiting participants and promoting my project online, b) developing a community website and exploring it’s use for qualitative material collection, c) the tension of being the researcher and a community member, and lastly d) finding the right balance between research and website tasks. Would I do it again? Yes, definitely.
References


Let’s Talk About Climate Change!
Exploring climate change perceptions and influences on travel experiences.

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Who is conducting the research?
Ms Ulrike Kachel          Associate Professor Gayle Jennings
Email: u.kachel@griffith.edu.au  Email: g.jennings@griffith.edu.au

Why is the research being conducted?
The aim of my research is to gain a deeper understanding on how discussions about climate change influence travel experiences, and the future growth of sustainable tourism.

Climate change is seen as one of the biggest threats that the world's societies have to face, and tourism is seen as both a contributor to climate change and a ‘sufferer’ of climate change. Little is known about how climate change may influence consumers’ attitudes and their decisions towards more environmentally friendly tourism experiences.

What you will be asked to do
You will have different options to participate in my research project and you are not confined to one or the other (see overview below).

You can participate in the online questionnaire and/or register on the website (www.researchlounge.net) and access the online forum, participate in polls, and/or publish interesting content snippets like news, links, videos or your own thoughts and opinions. You can also or solely participate in a conversational style of interviews with me, which may allow us to explore things in more detail and are not visible to other participants.

The duration of your participation is only governed by your interest and time. And I want to thank you for this in advance. The project will approximately end late 2010 or later if I need to collect further perceptions. (Note: an earlier stated project end of mid 2010 has been amended in June 2010, as further collection of perceptions was needed)
Participate in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One-to-one conversations with me (Ulrike) (email me)</th>
<th>Conversations with other participants on the project website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We can have our conversation via:</td>
<td>The website offers the following tools:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⇒ Email</td>
<td>⇒ Online forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⇒ Skype / Messenger</td>
<td>⇒ Polls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⇒ Face-to-face meeting</td>
<td>⇒ Questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(or other modes of communication if needed)</td>
<td>⇒ Publishing snippets like news, links, videos etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AND / OR

Who can participate in my project?
If you are already engaging or interested in discussions about climate change related to your travel experiences (future, past, or current), then I would like to invite you to participate in this research. Whether you believe in climate change or not, I am interested in your knowledge, opinions, thoughts and experiences regarding climate change and travelling. Everything important to you will be important for my research.

Expected benefits of the research
As a person interested in climate change issues related to your travel experiences, my research project may provide you an interesting and engaging platform to discuss these issues with other interested travellers. At the end of the project you will also receive an executive summary of my findings. Furthermore, recommendations to the tourism industry with regard to climate change and sustainable tourism products may be an outcome of this research.

Prize draw
As a participant you will automatically enter a prize draw. If you don’t wish to enter, just send a short email to u.kachel@griffith.edu.au. You can enter the following prize draws: For participation in the online or one-to-one discussions there will be five prizes in form of a Lonely Planet or Rough Guides travel guide in English language. Each winner can choose the country or city of interest, as well as the preferred publisher. For participation in the online questionnaire, you can win one of three AU$100 VISA gift cards. Make sure you register before entering or add your email address. You can find further information about the prize draw at www.researchlounge.net.
Risks to you
The risk of your potential identification has been mitigated in this research. Your email address and real name (if disclosed) will be stored securely, and is only known to the researchers and trusted staff members providing IT services. The research website has a closed area, which is only accessible to registered participants of this research. Please keep your login details safe to ensure no unauthorised person can access the website.

Your confidentiality
Identifiable data will be collected, as I will record your name and email address for the one-to-one conversations, and your email address is needed for your registration on the project website. For your access to the research website, you may want to choose a pseudonym or code name, which will be visible to other participants. This will allow me to contact you for our email conversations or to send you vital information through the website. According to the standard University position, all research data will be securely stored for 5 years, and then destroyed at the end of this period.

Your participation is voluntary
Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty. You do not need to answer every question unless you wish to do so.

Mechanism for participation
As a potential participant you can access this research information and a consent form on the research website [www.researchlounge.net]. Through the registration on the website you can express your consent (see below) and will be able to login. You then have access to your profile information, the discussion forums, polls, and you can publish information snippets like news, links, videos etc. Without registration you can fill out the online questionnaire and express your consent through sending your answers. You can share your perceptions on climate change with other participants or just complete polls and questionnaires.

Some potential participant may have received an invite to participate via email. If you decide to participate via one-to-one conversations, I will communicate with you via email and/or instant messaging systems or will arrange a face-to-face contact.

Questions / further information
Please contact me (u.kachel@griffith.edu.au) if you have any further questions or concerns in relation to the research, your participation or the interaction with other participants.

The ethical conduct of this research
This Griffith University research is conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, please contact the Manager Research Ethics, Office of Research, Griffith University on +61 7 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you
During the research, I may send you preliminary findings and will ask you to reflect on these, or publish these in the online forum for further discussion. Your input and reflections are important for a successful research process.

Publications
Besides in my PhD thesis I also intend to report findings on the research website and in academic journals, books, and/or conference papers. In all publications the reporting of results will be at aggregated levels.
Privacy Statement
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at www.griffith.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone +61 7 3735 5585.

Expressing consent
You can express your consent via email to me (u.kachel@griffith.edu.au), via registration on the project website, via sending your online questionnaire answers, or by signing the consent form in case of face-to-face contact. Please print/keep a copy of the consent form and this information sheet for your later reference.
Appendix 3: Consent form

Let’s Talk About Climate Change!
Exploring climate change perceptions and influences on travel experiences.

CONSENT FORM

I have read and understood the research information provided at www.researchlounge.net/ and in particular have noted that:

⇒ My involvement in this project will include taking part in one-to-one conversations with the researcher and/or participation on the project platform talking about my perceptions of climate change and travel experiences;

⇒ My participation in this research is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without providing a reason;

⇒ My privacy is protected at any time and I may use a pseudonym if I do not wish to use my real name to ensure that anonymity is protected;

⇒ I understand that findings will be reported in general terms and will not involve any identifying features;

⇒ I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction and understand that my participation does not involve any risk;

⇒ If I have any additional questions I can contact the researcher; or if I wish an independent person, I can contact the Manager Research Ethics, Office of Research, Griffith University on +61 7 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au regarding any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project;

⇒ As part of my participation in this research I will receive an executive summary at the end of the project.

I can express my consent and participate in the project by sending an email to the researcher (u.kachel@griffith.edu.au) or by participating on the project website [www.researchlounge.net].

Please print a copy of this consent form and the research information for your later reference!
Let’s Talk About Climate Change!
Exploring climate change perceptions and influences on travel experiences.

HAVE YOUR SAY! - questions

Thank you for your time and support!

What do you think about climate change with regard to travelling?
I have nine questions I’d like to ask you, and there is space for you to add other thoughts. My questions are focusing on three areas: climate change, travelling and environmental issues.

I figure it may take you between 15 to 30 minutes to answer all the questions. It will also depend on how much you want to write and if you answer all the questions or not. Short and long answers are equally welcome.

Besides answering my questions offline and email (u.kachel@griffith.edu.au) your answers to me, you can also use the online form.

By the way, each participant will enter a prize-draw of one of three AU$100 VISA gift cards!

Please note:
Your participation in this project is voluntary and your privacy is protected all the time. By sending your answers or creating an account, you are expressing your consent to participate in the project. You find more information regarding your participation and the ethical conduct of this research under ‘Your Participation’.

Please don't hesitate to contact me (u.kachel@griffith.edu.au) if you have any questions.

To the questions, see next page >>
Just a few things:

⇒ This is not a typical survey, as my questions are open-ended. This means, you can write as much as you like.

⇒ There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your thoughts, opinions, and experiences; just write what comes to mind.

⇒ Everything you think is relevant will be a great contribution to the project!

Let’s start!

Just insert your answers below each question.

1. What are your thoughts about climate change?

2. What are your thoughts about the impacts of climate change on travelling and destinations?

3. Conversely, what are your thoughts about tourism’s contribution to climate change?

4. As a traveller, what kind of travel experiences are you looking for? (Could relate to the way you travel, whom with, purpose, duration)

5. When planning your travels and informing yourself about desired travel experiences, what are your experiences with using social networking sites, media or other websites?

Thanks so far! Only four more questions, plus a last one where you can add anything you think is important.

6. How would you describe the way you value the environment and why?

7. One part of the climate change discussions focuses on environmental or carbon footprints. What are your thoughts about environmental and carbon footprints?

8. In what way, if at all, have climate change discussions (online or offline) influenced the way you think about your carbon footprint and travelling?
9. What role do the media, publications, organisations, or social groups (offline or online) play for you in order to gain knowledge about environmental issues?

10. Is there anything else you would like to comment on? Some other tourism, climate change, or environment related topics? Or some of your own personal experiences?

Thank you for answering my questions. Before you click save/send, please add some demographic information and let me know if you would like to enter the prize draw.

A few demographic questions:

What is your gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(Please indicate with x in first column.)

What is your highest level of education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 10 or less</th>
<th>High school (usually 12 or 13 years)</th>
<th>Trade qualification</th>
<th>College certificate or diploma</th>
<th>Undergraduate degree</th>
<th>Postgraduate degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(Please indicate with x in first column.)

What year were you born?

What is your nationality?

What country do you live in?

How did you hear about my research or the questionnaire?
Prize draw and/further contact:

Use of your email address:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to enter your email address into the prize draw?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to receive a summary of my findings, once the project is over?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I contact you if I have a question regarding one of your answers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Please indicate with x in first column.)

Please note that your email address will be separated from your answers. If you agreed that I can contact you, your email address will be separated after that contact.

Thank you so much for answering my questions. I really appreciate your time and support!

Cheers,

Ulrike
BELIEVE IT OR NOT: TRAVELLERS’ PERSPECTIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONNECTIVITY TO TRAVEL DECISION-MAKING - A CONSTRUCTIVIST INTERPRETATION

Ulrike Kachel
Griffith University

Gayle Jennings
Griffith University

Travellers’ perspectives on climate change and its connectivity to travellers’ decision-making were studied using a constructivist paradigm. Grounded theory traditions informed empirical material collection and interpretation. The study focussed on online discussions held between January 2006 to September 2008 on the Lonely Planet’s Thorn Tree forum. The grounded theory that emerged indicates that the forum enabled travellers to demonstrate personal and social agency with regard to information sharing and distillation regarding climate change and connectivity to travel decision-making. Additionally, the grounded theory found that travellers’ perspectives of the climate change are influenced by information generated by a broad range of social institutions.

To date, only a limited number of studies focus on tourists and their perceptions of climate change in tourism contexts (Becken, 2004, 2007; Gössling, Bredberg, Randow, Sandström, & Steverson, 2006). The purpose of this study is to contribute to this limited focus on travellers’ perspectives on climate change and travellers’ related travel decision-making. Specifically, this study aims: (1) to understand the nature and sources of travellers’ knowledge of climate change, (2) travellers’ perspectives
regarding relationships between travel/tourism and climate change and (3) associated meaning making and sense making practices in online fora. It should be noted, however, that this current study is part of a larger research agenda. The purpose of this working paper is to communicate the grounded theory, which emerged rather than to engage in an extensive critique of the literature. This will be the focus of another paper.

The current study was conducted using online publicly accessible text sources located on the *Lonely Planet’s Thorn Tree* forum during the period October 2006 to September 2008. The study used a constructivist paradigm to understand the nature of online travellers’ discussions and interactions regarding climate change and travel/tourism. Why? Because the *Thorn Tree* is an online forum, where meaning making is constantly being negotiated and (re)negotiated as well as constructed and (re)constructed. Relatedly, such processes are at the core of social constructivism. Specifically, the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum enables travellers to engage in meaning making (Dunn, 1998; Schwandt, 2000) and sense making (Weick, 1995) influenced by their everyday lived experiences of online discussions.

Grounded theory principles of constant comparison were used to collect and interpret empirical materials until theoretical saturation was achieved (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). From our grounded theory interpretation the following theory emerged:

> Travellers’ perspectives of climate change are influenced by information generated by a broad range of social institutions. This information is reflexively filtered according to its meaning and quality through the social processes of meaning making and sense making supported by and in online forums. The Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum enables travellers to demonstrate personal and social agency with regard to information sharing and distillation, climate change and connectivity to travel decision-making.
To elaborate, travellers tended to cluster as believers, undecideds, non-believers with regard to travel’s impact on climate change. This finding reflects the broader international debate wherein some people still debate whether climate change is an issue or not and still others can not make up their minds. Many travellers sought additional information such as other websites, the media and other sources to help them with their own meaning making. A number of travellers were critical of the sources, which generated information discussing climate change facts and/or texts. These travellers were acutely aware of the role of social institutions such as the media, government departments, scientific communities, environmentalists, petrol-fuel companies in manipulating information. In using the online environment, travellers were engaging in reflexive processes in order to develop their knowledge to assist them in decision-making with regard to travel and its connectivity to climate change. A number of travellers advocated that regardless of belief or non-belief, the influence of the media, manipulation of other texts, the inertia of government and authorities; travellers in and of themselves have to take action and demonstrate personal and social agency instead of waiting for social institutions, including governments and business to set the agenda. Personal agency was needed and needed now.

REFERENCES


Appendix 6: Mind map of Research Lounge Undecideds’ human – nature relationship

- **Power of Nature**
  - If the earth warms then so be it because the earth has warmed before.

- **Stewardship**
  - We live in the environment and need it to survive.
  - I walk softly upon this earth, cause it’s the only one we have.
  - We live in the environment and need it to survive.
  - The environment is what we all live in – without it we would not exist. It can have good and bad sides.
  - We have been given the Earth to steward (not ravage) it for future generations.
  - I am a guardian or caretaker for my grandchildren
  - It is extremely important more than business growth, and growing an economy or growing a population both of these all need to reduced to save what we only have left.
  - I want my grandchildren to live in as safe an environment as possible both politically and environmentally.
  - More importantly, we have been given the Earth to steward (not ravage) it for future generations. This is a divine command.
  - My attitude towards it, however, is a pragmatic one and I believe that the environment needs to be incorporated into the economic structure to ensure that it can be preserved in a way that fits in with our society without damaging the economy.

- **Interdependence**
  - To me, big cities around the world are becoming more and more similar, but the natural environment will be different everywhere you go. It’s somewhere you can just go to relax and get away from it all.
  - I value the environment for it’s natural beauty. I have travelled extensive distances in the past just to check out a pretty waterfall, or stayed out all night to gaze up at the stars far from the light pollution of the cities.
  - I travel to experience the environment natural and same man made. I always leave it as found if not in a better state always careful - believe in treating lightly and leaving nothing behind.
  - I think the environment should be treated with respect and as a finite resource.

- **Respect**
  - It is important to protect what is left of natural forests. If that means limiting population then so be it.
  - We should be building buildings according to our climate - educating our children and living on our planet according to its laws, not ours.
  - Always careful - believe in treating lightly and leaving nothing behind.
  - Recycling, saving water/electricity.
  - I hate it when people just dump/leave rubbish anywhere. It is not that hard to find a bin and big messes such as BP in the Mexican Gulf really bother me.
  - I travel to experience the environment natural and same man made. I always leave it as found if not in a better state. It is extremely important more than business growth, and growing an economy or growing a population both of these all need to reduced to save what we only have left.
  - I am told that I am a Greene.
Appendix 7: Succinct mind map of Research Lounge Undecideds' human – nature relationship

Undecideds’ Human – Nature Relationship (incl. values) succinst: mmap – 11/12/11 – Ulrike Kachel