

Tourism and the environmental crisis:  
Can post-millennials save the planet?

by

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## Abstract

The environmental consequences of the tourism sector have been studied for decades, but research has yet to be undertaken as to why people continue to appear to be unwilling to reduce or change their tourism consumption. Recently, however, there has been evidence of more widespread environmental concern and action, particularly amongst the Greta Thunberg-inspired post-millennial generation. Indeed, some suggest that post-millennials are at the vanguard of a move towards more sustainable consumption and lifestyles. But the question remains: is this generation willing to change its tourism consumption habits in the context of contemporary environmental concerns? Hence, there currently exists a significant gap in the academic discourse surrounding the post-millennial generation (as the tourists of the future) and if / how they might change their tourism-consumption habits in light of the climate emergency. The purpose of this thesis is to address this gap in the literature and explore the extent to which the potential does exist for this generation to contribute to a change in tourism consumption.

More specifically, the critical question underpinning this thesis is: can we continue to indulge our travel desires while reducing (or even reversing) the negative impacts that arise from the very practice of doing so? In addressing this question, this thesis explores the wider literature on consumer behaviour in order to understand what it is about tourism that is so difficult to adapt or change. In addition, it considers the phenomenon of the value-action gap in environmental tourism studies as a conceptual framework for exploring the social-psychological theories of cognitive dissonance and conspicuous consumption.

Adopting an overall inductive, mixed methods approach, the research employs a two-phase sequential qualitative data collection method utilising, first, a scoping survey-based questionnaire (distributed amongst post-millennial-aged respondents) which seeks to identify and explore emerging themes surrounding post-millennials' environmental awareness and corresponding tourism consumption attitudes and behaviours. This is followed by in-depth, semi-structured interviews in order to elicit a deeper understanding of the respondents' motivations and consumption habits.

Findings from the research indicate that whilst most post-millennials are indeed environmentally aware, they are, however, unlikely to change their tourism consumption habits for the benefit of the environment. Moreover, amongst this generation, tourism is seen as a consumption practice that is integral to their very being, shaping their identity and superseding other consumption habits. In short, the intrinsic nature of tourism is deeply ingrained in their lives to a point where they cannot even articulate what motivates them to consume it in the first place.

*“We are living on this planet as if we had another one to go to”.*

*Terri Swearingen*

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Finally, to my beloved Daughter; Belle-Kiz. I dedicate this research to you; you are the very future I speak about throughout my thesis. The world is your oyster and I know you will grow up to do great things and inspire others to do the same. I love you to infinity.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.0 Stop the world, we are (involuntarily) getting off: The unforeseen pandemic.

*Right now it may just be the faintest whisper of a possibility. But whispers can build into winds and take the world by storm. (Hickel, 2020: 36)*

In March 2020, the world of tourism, as we knew it, stopped.

Following the rapid emergence and spread of Covid-19, national leaders around the world announced plans for lockdowns; immediate restrictions were introduced, prohibiting the people from going outside except for daily exercise and fulfilling essential needs. In many countries, international travel was to a greater or lesser extent banned and, as a consequence, the travel sector effectively ceased operations. In the UK, accommodation and travel agency businesses suffered a dramatic decline in turnover, falling to just 9.3% of their February 2020 levels, and international passenger traffic at UK airports fell to just under 2% in comparison to February (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2021). A similar pattern emerged in many other countries, with dire consequences for the global tourism industry; at the outset of the pandemic, it was forecast that some 50 million jobs – or 14% of global travel and tourism employment – was at risk (WTTC, 2020). In the event, the impact of the pandemic was even more severe. According to one report, more than 100 million jobs in the sector were lost globally in 2020 alone (Statista, 2022a), whilst UNCTAD (2021) calculated that, in the same year, tourism's contribution to the global economy fell by US\$4 trillion.

However, in contrast to the chaos and fear of what was unravelling, and as a number of authors have recently discussed (see, for example, Hickel, 2020; MacKinnon, 2021; Niblett and Beuret, 2021), some viewed the pandemic as an opportunity to witness the positive impacts of significantly reduced global mobility (albeit involuntarily and

unintended) on the environment. As nature appeared to ‘hit the reset button’, a glimmer of hope was provided, particularly to environmentalists and others who had become increasingly concerned with regards to the potentially catastrophic consequences of the emerging environmental crisis. During the widespread lockdown, the world began to unveil the true beauty of nature that had previously been concealed by its inseparability from humanity’s footprint.

MacKinnon (2021: 11) neatly summarises not only the devastating impacts of the pandemic on the global economy but also, as some may argue, the more important positive consequences for the environment as anthropogenic activities slowed down (also Kumar, Mala and Dubey, 2020).

*It played out before our eyes: shuttered shopping districts, empty airports, boarded-up restaurants, millions of people out of work or facing bankruptcy. Equally undeniable during the Covid-19 lockdowns, though, were the shockingly blue skies over Los Angeles and London, the fresh air in Beijing and Delhi, and the steepest drop in greenhouse gas pollution ever recorded. When sea turtles and crocodiles took over tropical beaches normally invaded by mass tourism, when the vibration of the planet measurably stilled in the absence of our usual rumpus, it raised pointed questions about the costs of business as usual.*

The juxtaposition of socio-economic disruption on a global scale with the albeit temporary greater harmony between humanity and the environment was witnessed in many places and revealed a multitude of opportunities to ‘save the planet’. Many countries which had previously been lagging years behind on their emission goals suddenly found themselves ahead of target (MacKinnon, 2021: 9), manifested for example in unprecedented levels of enhanced air-quality across the globe (Sannigrahi et al., 2021).

However, lockdowns and restrictions on mobility were relatively short-lived. As the pandemic became manageable through the effective roll-out of vaccine programmes and as the number of those suffering from Covid-19 began to fall, the world began to return to business as usual. Therefore, it remains questionable whether this glimpse, afforded

by the pandemic, of humanity living in greater balance with the natural world, combined with evidence of increasing environmental awareness and concern around the world, will be sufficient to encourage individuals (and society as a whole) to adapt their behaviour and to take the necessary actions to address the challenge of the impending environmental crisis in general and the so-called climate emergency in particular. In other words, whilst research revealed greater levels of public concern for environmental issues during the pandemic (Rousseau and Deschacht, 2020), will the hopes of those who viewed it as a platform for encouraging more sustainable lifestyles into the future be realised (Jackson, 2021)?

Certainly, the pandemic provided a temporary insight into a world in which humanity lived in greater harmony with the natural environment. Yet, on the one hand, some might argue that not only are many people unwilling to adapt their behaviour and lifestyles – encouraging people to adopt more eco-conscious behaviour has long been considered a principal challenge to sustainability (Porritt, 2007) – but also pessimistically that it is in any case too late to take any meaningful action to reverse the negative impacts of anthropogenic activity on the environment. On the other hand, others suggest that hope remains, not least because many amongst the younger, post-millennial generation (the generation that refers to the demographic cohort succeeding the millennials generation, born between 1995 and the early 2010s and sometimes referred to as ‘Gen Z’) in particular, with their alleged environmental credentials, display the potential to make a fundamental shift towards a more sustainable future (Sharpley, 2021a). For example, in their recent book *‘Gen Z: Between Climate Crisis and the Coronavirus Pandemic’*, Hurrelmann and Albrecht (2021) give voice to the younger generation by addressing their environmental concerns. Their research, described in the book, reveals how post-millennials are considerably less happy with the state of global society (in comparison with the generations before them), are losing confidence in political parties to address the Paris climate change agreement, and are more likely than previous generations to take positive action for change.

More specifically, and unsurprisingly given the almost complete shut-down of the sector from the early days of the pandemic, the post-pandemic future of travel and tourism in particular became a popular focus of debate in the literature and continues to be so.



Amongst some contributors there was optimism that the pandemic and its impact on the sector could herald the beginning of a new era of travel. For them, not only did the pandemic open up a brief window on what a 'post-growth' (Jackson, 2021) world might look like, fuelling arguments that, in the future, tourism should be planned and developed according to the principles of de-growth (Andriotis, 2018; Hickel, 2020; Kallis et al., 2020). It was also argued that the pandemic provided evidence of the need to challenge the contemporary ideology of destructive consumerism of which international tourism is a particularly visible and widespread manifestation; a more sustainable future is to be found in less travel and more meaningful lifestyles (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Others, however, rejected this notion. Notably, Butcher (2020, 2021) suggested that to promote de-growth in tourism is to both ignore the economic reality of tourism's developmental contribution (Telfer and Sharpley, 2016) and to deny the right of people to enjoy the benefits of participating in tourism, whilst others simply predicted that, post pandemic, the demand for travel would rebound to levels higher than prior to the pandemic, reflecting the universal hunger for freedom of mobility (Gössling, Scott and Hall, 2020).

Certainly, the evidence at the time of writing suggests that the latter will be the case. Following the widespread removal of travel restrictions during 2022, participation in travel and tourism rebounded, fuelled by both apparently insatiable demand amongst potential tourists and a travel sector seeking to rebuild its business. Most recent figures indicate that, in 2023, international arrivals had reached 88% of pre-pandemic levels (UNWTO, 2024) whilst, during the summer of 2024, numerous stories in the media focused on the problem of so-called 'over-tourism' in popular tourism destinations. At the same time, however, there exists within the context of the contemporary global environmental crisis the inarguable need to reduce the demands that humanity places on the Earth's natural resources, including through tourism. Certainly, there is consensus over the extent to which the exploitation of global ecosystem's source and sink functions in general is unsustainable and that significant change is required for humanity to live at one with nature (Hill, 2021: 291). More specifically, research by the Global Footprint Network (see [www.footprintnetwork.org](http://www.footprintnetwork.org)) reveals that, as a result of excessive levels of consumption, 'we are using up the planet at a rate 1.7 times faster than it can regenerate' (Mackinnon, 2021: 6). Wealthier nations in particular – which are also the main generators of international tourism (Becken, 2019) – account for much of this excessive

(relative to the capacity of the ecosystem to sustain such demands) consumption. For example, the average American enjoys a 'five-planet' lifestyle (the number of Earths required if the world's population as a whole enjoyed lifestyles similar to the average American); the UK, on average, enjoys a 2.6 planet lifestyle (EOD, 2021). The point is, as powerfully summarised by David Attenborough (2020: 7), we are living 'our comfortable lives in the shadow of a disaster of our own making. That disaster is being brought about by the very things that allow us to live our comfortable lives'. For him the solution lies in seeking to live in greater balance with the natural environment; to do so, we must reduce our demands on it.

As discussed in more detail below, the environmental consequences of tourism, as an increasingly evident form of consumption, have long been recognised. Moreover, recent research has revealed the relatively high contribution of international tourism to climate change (Gössling and Humpe, 2020; Lenzen et al., 2018). In other words, participation in international tourism (particularly based on flying) remains a privileged activity enjoyed by a relatively small proportion of the global population, pointing to the argument that there is a need to reduce the consumption of (particularly, fossil fuel-based) tourism in order to respond to the climate crisis.

How this transformation or reduction in the consumption of tourism might be achieved, however, remains the subject of debate. The environmental benefits resulting from the enforced reduction in consumption in general (and of tourism in particular) during the pandemic revealed one way forward yet as noted above, it is likely that the demand for tourism will, subject to the global political-economic environment, eventually return to pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, as also observed above, there is evidence that the younger generation, the post-millennials, are more likely to adopt pro-environmental behaviours. Hence, the overall question that this thesis will address is whether post-millennials are willing or able to adapt their behaviour as consumers of tourism, a question which, in turn, demands an understanding of the significance and meaning of tourism as an increasingly pervasive form of contemporary consumption.

The specific aims and objectives of this thesis are discussed in more detail shortly. However, in order to consider the significance of the research, it is first important to

contextualise its purpose. Therefore, this chapter will now present a brief introduction to the consequences of tourism (particularly air transport) on the environment, followed by an overview of consumption in general, the psychological processes associated with consumption and, specifically, tourism as a form of consumption. Finally, the post-millennial generation and their relevance to the thesis will be touched upon. All of these issues are then considered in more detail in subsequent chapters.

### **1.1 Business as usual: Tourism and the environment**

With its continuing growth, tourism has become one of the most significant contemporary economic sectors of the world – the growth in international tourist arrivals and receipts since the 1950s are presented in Table 1.1. As a consequence, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, travel and tourism was contributing more than 10% of global GDP and had long been a key driver for the creation of employment, supporting 334 million jobs globally in 2019 (WTTC, 2020).

In many countries, tourism is now the most important export industry and source of foreign exchange (Wall and Mathieson, 2006: 1), and the significance of tourism has been recognised in both developed and developing countries as it creates opportunities through the diversification of local economies. However, despite the sector's potential positive contribution to economic growth and wider development, the negative environmental consequences of tourism must also be taken into account. Indeed, as Telfer and Sharpley (2016) observe, there exists a tourism-development dilemma: how to balance the benefits of tourism with its inevitable environmental costs.

Academic attention has long been paid to the environmental consequences of the tourism sector; indeed, some of the earlier texts in tourism studies focused primarily on the impacts of tourism (for example, de Kadt, 1979; Rosenow and Pulsipher, 1980; Turner and Ash, 1975; Young, 1973). In more recent times, the over-consumption of tourism has contributed significantly to the well-documented global environmental crisis, specifically to global warming and the decline in natural resources. These impacts have been widely discussed in the literature (for example, Becken, 2007; Goodwin, 2016; Gössling, 2002; Gössling and Hall, 2006; Sharpley, 2000; Wall and Mathieson, 2006), though more

recently the principal focus of the research has been on tourism and climate change (for example, Gössling and Higham, 2021; Lenzen et al., 2018; Scott, Hall and Gössling, 2019). More generally, the negative impacts of tourism remain a key theme in the tourism discourse. Against this background, it is necessary to understand the current state of the tourism sector in relation to its environmental impacts. Therefore, the following discussion highlights, albeit briefly, some of the key policies that have been put in place to address the impacts of tourism on the host environment, particularly in relation to the impacts of the aviation sector.

**Table 1.1:** International Tourist Arrivals and Receipts, 1950-2001

<u>Year</u>	<u>Arrivals</u> <u>(million)</u>	<u>Receipts</u> <u>(US\$bn)</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Arrivals</u> <u>(million)</u>	<u>Receipts</u> <u>(US\$bn)</u>
1950	25.3	2.1	2002	707.0	488.2
1960	69.3	6.9	2003	694.6	534.6
1965	112.9	11.6	2004	765.1	634.7
1970	165.8	17.9	2005	806.1	682.7
1975	222.3	40.7	2006	847.0	742.0
1980	278.1	104.4	2007	903.0	856.0
1985	320.1	119.1	2008	917.0	939.0
1990	439.5	270.2	2009	882.0	851.0
1991	442.5	283.4	2010	940.0	927.0
1992	479.8	326.6	2011	995.0	1,042.0
1993	495.7	332.6	2012	1,035.0	1,075.0
1994	519.8	362.1	2013	1,087.0	1,159.0
1995	540.6	410.7	2014	1,130.0	1,252.0
1996	575.0	446.0	2015	1,184.0	1,196.0
1997	598.6	450.4	2016	1,2350.0	1,220.0
1998	616.7	451.4	2017	1,329.0	1,346.0
1999	639.6	465.5	2018	1,408.0	1,460.0
2000	687.0	481.6	2019	1,460.0	1,481.0
2001	686.7	469.9	2020	410.0	536.0

**Source:** Compiled from UNWTO data

In an effort to acknowledge and address the environmental crisis at an international level over the past three decades, the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development have increasingly informed development policies. Most recently, this was manifested in the UN's intergovernmental Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2015, these ambitious goals were outlined at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in an 'agenda of unprecedented scope and significance' (UN, 2015). The convention, otherwise known as the 'Paris Agreement', brought together almost every nation (195 countries) to reach a landmark consensus; to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and to reach 'net zero' by the year 2030 (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC], 2021). Moreover, the more recent United Nations global climate change conference in Glasgow, more commonly known as Cop26 (Conference of the Parties), was claimed to have been a pivotal moment in the fight against climate change (see Cop26, 2021), not least since climate change has become a global priority. As an outcome of the conference, countries were asked to reach ambitious targets, such as the complete phasing out of coal, a quicker switch to electric vehicles and curtailing deforestation. Since then, however, the optimism arising from Cop26 has been tempered. In late 2022, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) announced that 'no credible pathway' existed to achieving the 1.5C limit to the rise in global temperatures (UN, 2022a) whilst, at the time of writing, Cop27 in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt is seen by some as the 'last chance' to achieve a healthy future for humanity (WHO, 2022a).

Attempts have long been made to align the tourism sector with the sustainability agenda. Indeed, as early as the mid-1990s, sustainable tourism development has become the dominant industry paradigm (Godfrey, 1996), since when innumerable policies and initiatives have been put in place to seek the more sustainable production and consumption of tourism, the UNWTO's One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme being a more recent example (see One Planet Network, 2021). However, the past half-century in general is littered with milestones of [climate] inaction (Hickel, 2020: 18) whilst reductions in the tourism sector's environmental impacts in particular are still not occurring at an acceptable rate – despite the emphasis placed on it in tourism policy over

the last 30 years, there remains little evidence of sustainable tourism development in practice (Sharpley, 2021a). Indeed, it is evident that most national tourism policies are still concerned with, and focused on, promoting the growth of the tourism sector (Torkington, Stanford and Guiver, 2020), revealing arguably misplaced faith in the oxymoronic (Daly, 1990) concept of sustainable growth. Such policies have certainly resulted in the (pre-pandemic) exponential growth of the tourism sector and, specifically, the emergence of so-called 'over tourism' in many popular destinations (Milano, Cheer and Novelli, 2019). Against this background, and as noted above, it is unsurprising that commentators are beginning to focus their attention on 'degrowth', particularly as we are entering a decisive climate decade (Scott, 2021). Specifically, it has been argued that the concept of sustainable tourism is in fact a myth and that alternative paths, such as degrowth, need to be adopted (Sharpley, 2021b).

Prior to the pandemic, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (see NASA, 2019) declared that the transport sector alone accounted for approximately 15% of greenhouse gas emissions, with the aviation industry responsible for around 3% of that (IATA, 2021a). However, it is not only flying itself that impacts the environment; often overlooked are the carbon emissions related to flying, such as the building and running airports, local transport services to airports and so on. In fact, a recent study suggested that in 2013, the tourism sector as a whole contributed 8% of global carbon emissions and that this contribution would increase by up to 50% by 2025 (Lenzen et al., 2018). As the demand for air travel rises, so too will the demand for the supporting infrastructure and services. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, air travel is often portrayed as a socially desirable activity (Gössling et al., 2019) which is further encouraged by budget airlines advertising cheap flights and by frequent-flyer programmes rewarding customers for their air miles. Furthermore, air travel is often seen as a positive contributor to economic value in the sense that it supports international tourism and develops significant employment opportunities worldwide.

Although air travel is often justified on the basis that it is unavoidable (Gössling et al., 2019), the aviation sector attracts much negative attention owing to its contribution toward anthropogenic climate change. Indeed, the aviation sector is increasingly in conflict with the climate goals referred to above. Although there are a number of ways in

which air travel contributes to the warming of the globe (such as through effective radiative forcing – see Lee et al., 2021), most attention is paid to its carbon dioxide emissions. Some claim that its 3% contribution to global carbon emissions is relatively low although, as Gössling and Humpe (2020) point out, the per capita emissions of airline passengers are very high – according to them, the 1% of the global population who are frequent fliers accounts for 50% of aviation’s carbon emissions. Moreover, given the projected increase in air travel, the contribution of air travel to carbon emissions will increase significantly. For example, the aircraft manufacturer Airbus forecast that demand for passenger traffic will increase annually by 3.6% over the next 20 years (Airbus, 2022); similarly, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) forecast an annual 3.3% rise in global air passenger numbers which, they suggest, will rise to 7.8 billion by the year 2040 (see Table 1.2, below) with Asia/Pacific anticipated to be the fastest growing region over the next two decades (IATA, 2022a). Further evidence of this projected growth is provided by Eurocontrol (see Eurocontrol, 2022).

**Table 1.2:** Global air passenger forecast in billions.

Year	Forecasted global air passengers (billions)
2022	3
2025	4.6
2028	5
2031	5.7
2034	6.3
2037	7
2040	7.8

**Source:** compiled from IATA data (IATA, 2022a)

In response to the negative attention and as a commitment to the ‘net-zero by 2050’ target, many airlines have pledged further action to achieve net-zero emissions by, for example, purchasing sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), by retiring older aircraft such as the Boeing 757 and investing in the latest generation of fuel-efficient planes, and expanding offsetting schemes (IATA, 2021b: 26). Further, a collaboration of experts from the aviation sector have produced a comprehensive global air transport response (Waypoint 2050 report) to the climate emergency detailing scenarios in which the aviation industry

can achieve net-zero at a global level (see Aviation Benefits, 2021). However, not only are technology-based policies for achieving a carbon neutral aviation sector seen as unrealistic (Peeters et al., 2016) but also, more generally, the aviation industry cannot reach these ambitious targets to reduce its impacts on the environment without the support of government-implemented, environmentally effective policies, or without stakeholders such as energy companies supporting cleaner, carbon-free power (IATA, 2021b). Ultimately, then, despite the commitment of the aviation sector to work towards net-zero, its achievement remains unlikely (see Scott and Gössling, 2022), particularly given the projected growth in air travel in the coming years. Indeed, despite 2020 being coined the ‘worst year in tourism history’, with one billion fewer international arrivals recorded than in the previous year (UNWTO, 2021a), as noted above, most predictions point to an eventual return to pre-pandemic passenger numbers and continuing growth, supporting the argument that the industry is resilient and ultimately ‘people want to travel and when restrictions are lifted, they will return to the skies’ (IATA, 2022b).

The introduction of technologically efficient aircraft along with the wide availability of low-cost airlines which now account for more than a third of the global air travel market (Statista, 2022b) has meant that it is becoming increasingly easier (and cheaper) for individuals to maximise their carbon-footprint through air travel. Nevertheless, with an emerging public understanding of the impacts of air travel, not least through the recent protests of climate activist Greta Thunberg, as well as social trends such as the Swedish ‘flygskam’, (meaning ‘flight shaming’) whereby the morality of air travel is questioned, there is evidence of increasing calls for climate action related to tourism and air travel (Jourdan and Wertin, 2020). However, air travel is still a non-essential lifestyle choice which is widely considered a social norm (Gössling et al., 2019) but, significantly, one that is only enjoyed by a privileged minority of the global population – although air travel is often presented as an activity that many people participate in, the data such claims are based on are often skewed (IATA, 2018). For example, passenger numbers are counted on individual flights, not as a return trip, and nor do the data take into consideration transit flights with multiple changes. In fact, only about 10% of the global population travel by air each year whilst, as noted above, most flights are taken by a relatively small and privileged proportion of frequent flyers who are individually responsible for contributing greatly to the climate emergency (Gössling and Humpe, 2020; Higham et al.,



2016). Consequently, it is now acknowledged that the need exists to explore alternative solutions to the environmental consequences of air travel in particular, but also of tourism more generally, to align its development with environmental limitations. Yet, this remains a challenge; as discussed in the literature, despite peoples declared awareness of and concern for climate change, they continue to consume tourism in increasing numbers (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014a).

Broadly speaking, then, achieving a balance between tourism and the environment seems unlikely; as one grows, the other deteriorates. Moreover, as briefly discussed above, addressing the environmental consequences of tourism remains a challenge. These consequences are explored in more detail later in this chapter but, by way of introduction and for context, the above section has provided an overall view of the impact of tourism on the environment, particularly in relation to air travel. Essentially, then, the question is: if tourism is a consumptive activity that is recognised as degrading the very thing upon which people depend – that is, the natural environment – then why consume tourism in the first place? This much-debated, important question that forms the basis for this thesis is introduced briefly in the following section.

## **1.2 It's our right to travel!**

Tourism has long been an accepted and, indeed, an expected form of consumption in Western societies; to some, participation in tourism is considered a human right (Breakey and Breakey, 2013), although concern is more generally focused on the human rights of those working in (and potentially exploited by) the tourism industry (Hashimoto, Härkönen and Nkyi, 2021). More generally, it appears that tourism is often seen as something that people simply 'need' (McCabe and Diekmann, 2015) or perhaps deserve due to the challenge of their everyday, mundane lifestyles – this is certainly a dominant theme within the long-established literature on tourist motivation (Dann, 1977). More generally, in the past, most consumption was focused only on the satisfaction of basic survival needs such as food, shelter and clothing (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). However, in modern times, these basic survival needs are often overlooked as 'consumptive needs' and are simply catered for, unquestioned. Rather, the emphasis of consumption has shifted from satisfying basic needs to buying 'stuff' for a multitude of reasons beyond the

utilitarian value of goods and services, such as to satisfy our emotional needs, to portray a desirable lifestyle through social media and to create identity. Moreover, much contemporary consumption is often non-essential, including tourism and leisure experiences and services. In short, we are living in a contemporary consumer-culture (see Lury, 2011; Miles, 2018). The phenomenon of consumer-culture will be discussed in more detail, later in the thesis.

In his recent book, *'The Day the Word Stops Shopping'* MacKinnon (2021) explores the idea of ending consumerism (in general) for a better life and a greener world. He portrays scenarios in which this might be achievable, emphasising that, collectively, societies must work towards adopting a 'one planet lifestyle'. He also claims that the average person in a rich country consumes thirteen times more than one in a poor one, thereby emphasising the enormous contribution that wealthier countries make to consumption-based environmental destruction relative to poorer countries – hence the American five-planet lifestyle referred to earlier.

Tourism is undoubtedly a significant part of the problem of the excessive consumption in Western societies (and those in some emerging economies) which, some may argue, are living multi-planet lifestyles through excessive, non-essential consumption. Moreover, this has long been acknowledged; over thirty years ago, a policy report on sustainable living highlighted the excessive and wasteful consumption in wealthier countries (IUCN/UNEP/WWF, 1991). Consequently, there is an evident need to reduce the consumption of travel as much as anything else, at least among those lucky enough to participate in it – as observed earlier, most flights are taken by the most affluent members of society (Gössling et al., 2019: 2).

It has already been established that the positive environmental consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak encouraged many commentators to assume, perhaps optimistically, that it would spark a new era (Goffman, 2020) in which people would reject their consumerist lifestyles and adopt a more sustainable way of living, not least because the pandemic revealed the opportunity for a simpler lifestyle (Camberfort, 2020). However, this was not to be the case; the industry was soon 'back to business as usual as people

across the world have developed a fresh appreciation of the importance of travel to our existence' (Niblett and Beuret, 2021: 1).

Mackinnon (2021: 11) continues:

*It turned out that our older anxieties about consumption have never really gone away. Do we buy and consume as a paltry substitute for something missing in our lives? Does our immersion in stuff distract us from ideas, feelings and relationships that matter more? These thoughts took on new salience as, for a time, people filled the void left behind by the absence of shopping with creative expression, social connection and self-reflection. Millions felt for themselves what a decade's worth of happiness research has been saying: that in the richer nations, and increasingly around the world, the earning and spending we do is no longer adding much- if any- joy to our lives.*

This raises the question of why people consume stuff in general (a question widely addressed in the consumer culture literature and explored in more detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis). More specifically in the context of this thesis, it raises the question – as a necessary precursor to engaging in the debate, 'could or should people travel less?' (Gössling et al., 2019) – or why people consume travel in particular. In other words, the recent post-pandemic rebound in international travel bookings suggests that the tourism industry is proving how agile it can be whilst, as the President of the World Travel and Tourism Council has stated, '*things are beginning to bounce back, as ultimately, people really, really want to travel*' (Hancock and Georgiadis, 2021). Consequently, there is a need to understand why, despite a global pandemic (and more recent global economic challenges), people still want to travel. If the contemporary-consumerist society in which we live has proved that it can survive (albeit temporarily) without excessive consumption, then the question remains: why resurrect old habits?

This is not to say, of course, that academic attention has not been paid to understanding the motivation for tourism. Some of the earliest work in tourism studies was concerned with the issue of why people engage in tourism (for example, Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Dann, 1977; Iso-Ahola, 1982) and, as discussed in the next chapter, there is now an extensive literature that considers tourist motivation from a variety of perspectives

(Huang, 2022). Broadly, this proposes that tourism is typically motivated by the combined needs for escape / avoidance and so-called ego-enhancement, or personal benefit. Alternatively stated, people mostly travelling for reasons such as relaxation and escape from day-to-day life, thereby emphasising the non-essential aspect of the notion of leisure travel, although an additional argument is that within a contemporary consumer culture, tourism fulfils the need for authenticity (MacCannell, 1989). These issues are explored in more detail in Chapter 2 but the point that must be emphasised here is that most, if not all, of the work on tourist motivation and consumer culture is conceptual; few, if any, studies explore tourist motivation empirically. In other words, by and large there remains a lack of empirical evidence with regards to what motivates people to be tourists and, indeed, of the significance of tourism as a form of consumption. This perhaps reflects both the inherent challenges of identifying people's motives and also the fact that, as Krippendorf (1986) acutely observed, in all likelihood tourists themselves do not know what motivates them to travel. Either way, this thesis has two related purposes. First, it seeks to bridge this gap in knowledge through seeking to identify empirically not only why a particular group of people – post-millennials – participate in tourism, but also the meaning of tourism to them as a form of consumption. And second, given the recent focus on the post-millennial generation and their alleged support for a more sustainable planet, it subsequently seeks to explore the extent to which this generation are willing to align their consumption behaviours in general, and their tourism behaviours more specifically, with their alleged environmental concerns.

### **1.3 The Post-Millennials: It's our time now!**

*We need to change the way we see the world, and our place within it.*

(Hickel, 2020: 34).

The critical question underpinning this thesis is: are we able to continue to indulge our travel desires while reducing (or even reversing) the negative impacts that arise from the very practice of doing so (Niblett and Beuret, 2021: 6)? Many younger people, most notably Greta Thunberg, argue that it is the actions of the older generations that have resulted in the contemporary environmental crisis, bestowing it as a legacy on the

younger generations who may, on the one hand, have no choice but to live with and adapt to the repercussions of climate change and other environmental challenges (Skeirytė, Krikštolaitis and Liobikiene, 2022) but, on the other hand, may have the drive to make positive changes in response to the crisis. In other words, it is argued that younger people, who have so much of their lives ahead of them, are considerably more sensitive to future developments than older generations (Hurrelmann and Albrecht, 2021: 6); in a sense, the future is now in the hands of the post-millennial generation as the future, primary caretakers of the planet (Reyes et al., 2021) who, as a result of their inheritance, bear a disproportionate burden of the consequences of past environmental behaviours (Ross and Rouse, 2020).

Certainly, there exists a growing body of research suggesting the younger generations appear to be more environmentally concerned in comparison to older generations (Deliana and Rum, 2019; Poortinga et al., 2019). In part, this may reflect the argument that older people may have more limited perceptions of climate change (Skeirytė et al., 2022) or do not always understand (or perhaps accept) how they have contributed to the crisis. At the same time, however the younger generation; the post-millennials, have arguably been more exposed to the issue of climate change, enhancing their environmental awareness and concerns which, in turn, is leading to a change in their consumptive behaviours (Bulut et al., 2021). Against this background, it appears that younger people are ready to think differently (Hickel, 2020: 25), to challenge the beliefs of the older generations and take action by adopting more pro-environmental behaviours although it must be acknowledged that, if only anecdotally, younger people also question why they should be denied the pleasures and opportunities, such as tourism, that their parents enjoyed.

In recent times, the environmental impacts of tourism (and of flying in particular) have gained greater public prominence, not least as a result of the Greta Thunberg-inspired post-millennial generation's involvement in environmental activism. The publicity surrounding Thunberg's initial protests when, every Friday instead of going to school she sat outside the Swedish parliament demanding that the government take more action to fight climate change, inspired the large youth-led movement named 'Fridays for Future'. This was manifested in young adults and children around the world taking to the streets

each Friday to protest against their government's lack of action on the climate crisis (Fridays for Future, 2021). Never before had such a large-scale youth movement taken to the streets to express their concerns and, as a result, the Fridays for Future strikes were instrumental in establishing climate change on the agenda of governments across the globe (Hurrelmann and Albrecht, 2021). Even in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, when public demonstrations were curtailed, these politically active adolescents ensured they were still heard through digital platforms such as Facebook (Sorice and Dumitrica, 2021).

These tangible actions amongst the younger generations are supported by the outcomes of emerging studies into the psychological impacts of the effects of climate change on the youth of today. Specifically, one recent study revealed that out of 10,000 children and young adults surveyed, 68% explained that climate change makes them feel sad and afraid (Nature, 2021). This heightening concern for the climate, which has been coined 'climate-anxiety' or 'eco-anxiety', is emerging as a relevant contemporary topic in the environmental psychology discourse (see Clayton, 2020; Crandon et al., 2022; Wu, Snell and Samji, 2020), not least because of the mortality rates of humans and other species resulting from climate-induced natural disasters (Hayes et al., 2018) but also because of ecological losses (Cunsolo et al., 2020). It is also recognised that concerns about the future are impacting on younger people's mental health.

However, a gap in the tourism discourse remains: is this (allegedly environmentally aware) generation willing to change its tourism consumption habits in the context of contemporary environmental concerns? As discussed above, there is some evidence (for example, climate strikes or the 'flight shaming' phenomenon) that some people are rethinking their travel behaviour. Nevertheless, scepticism has been expressed as to whether these behavioural changes are simply, as Mkono (2020) implies, a result of a social desirability response (a socially accepted response an individual gives that they believe will make them look good to others); moreover, the younger generations are also criticised on the basis that they talk a great deal about climate change but do not behave accordingly (Skeiryte et al., 2022). At the same time, although there are undoubtedly many environmentally active adolescents and young adults (of whom a significant proportion come from affluent homes with well-grounded educations), there also exists

a different type of post-millennial on the other side of the social spectrum (Hurrelmann and Albrecht, 2021). That is, there are also those who are unable to prioritise environmental concerns over their personal circumstances and the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives.

Either way, tourism appears to be the last form of consumption that people are willing to adapt or give up; certainly, surveys typically reveal that, even in times of recession, most are unwilling to forego their holidays (eg: Taylor, 2022). Nevertheless, there is growing consensus that, to address the global environmental crisis, there is a need for people to change their consumption habits, including the consumption of tourism. The next section, therefore, will briefly review the relevant social psychological processes in relation to consumer behaviour.

#### **1.4 We know we shouldn't, but we are going to anyway: the value-action gap**

There exists a key, critical discussion surrounding ethical consumption, not least because of the increased awareness of the effects of consumption on the environment and its link to global warming. An 'ethical' consumer is defined as an individual who, due to their concern for the environment, sacrifices the hedonistic values associated with non-essential consumption by subordinating them to the moral implications of what they consume (Starr, 2009). In other words, their consumption habits are based on purchasing products/ experiences that are related to a good cause, that are 'ethically' produced with no harm to the environment or that give back to the community in which they were produced.

Prior research, however, has challenged the notion of ethical consumption (see Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Carrington, Neville and Whitwell, 2014; Devinney, Auger and Eckhardt, 2010), claiming that consuming 'ethically' is a myth; so-called ethical consumption is just another product of capitalism. Moreover, the discourse on the myth of consumerism elucidates that 'ethical consumption promises a solution to a systematic contradiction without challenging the (capitalist) system itself' (Carrington, Zwick and Neville, 2016: 23). In other words, ethical products and experiences are just another marketing ploy to allure people into consumerism by making them feel less guilty, not least because

consumers are generally aware that they need to consider the planet by purchasing more 'ethically'. This phenomenon is considered in the literature to be a manifestation of 'greenwashing' and is discussed later in the thesis, as it is an important consideration when debating 'ethical' consumption practice (see Littler, 2011).

Furthermore, Carrigan and Attalla (2001) offer evidence of dissonant, or inconsistent behaviour amongst ethically concerned consumers. In other words, there exists a gap between the intention to be more ethical and environmentally friendly, and behavioural change in response to the awareness. A collective body of research has attempted to understand the reasons behind this discrepancy between consumers' desires to be more ethical and their actual behaviour, often referred to as the value-action gap. The value-action gap is a well-researched phenomenon in tourism studies (see Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014b; Sadiq, Adil and Paul, 2022), and describes how an awareness of the impacts of non-essential lifestyle choices and purchasing decisions amongst consumers (tourists) does not necessarily lead to behavioural changes (McDonald et al., 2015). There are a number of reasons for this, usually linked to psychology, particularly emotions.

The study of emotions has been widely addressed in the consumer behaviour literature, particularly the role of emotions in the decision-making process, which has enhanced understanding of the psychological decisions leading to ethical consumption choices. One key theory in the psychology literature is that of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance, underpinned by the human desire to be consistent (Thøgersen, 2004), is an elusive state whereby an individual has inconsistent thoughts and feelings relating to behavioural decisions and attitude changes which result in feelings of unease. In order to alleviate the feelings of unease and guilt, the individual aims to reduce the dissonance through a psychological process of increasing the perceived attractiveness of their chosen decision and devaluing the alternative (Tanford and Montgomery, 2015). In other words, people respond to cognitive dissonance by adjusting either their beliefs or their behaviours (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014b). Dissonance can arise in many consumptive circumstances. However, in the context of the environmental concerns of tourists there is an indication that tourists try to resolve the dissonance between their self-reported 'green' values and their tourism consumption choices, particularly in the context of air



travel (see McDonald et al., 2015), meaning dissonant behaviour is a manifestation of the value-action gap (Gregory-Smith, Smith and Winklhofer, 2013).

Despite some indicators in the literature of a 'shift' towards environmental concern on the part of contemporary tourists, it is noted that, in general, they will still consume tourism for selfish reasons, therefore putting their personal pleasure above collective culpability. In fact, even those who claim to be environmentally aware continue to consume tourism, albeit providing a variety of excuses as to why they do so (see Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014b; Mkono and Hughes, 2020). Nevertheless, given that the post-millennial generation appears to adhere to stronger environmental values than previous generations and, hence, may have a heightened awareness of the negative impacts of tourism on the environment, the opportunity clearly exists to explore empirically whether the value-action gap will be less in evidence in the consumer behaviour of this generation. More specifically, the opportunity exists to consider critically the extent to which post-millennials are willing or able to adopt more sustainable, less consumptive lifestyles in general and to transform (that is, limit) their consumption of tourism in particular. As established in the next section, it is with this question that this thesis is primarily concerned.

### **1.5 Research aims and objectives**

This study seeks to explore critically the nexus between the three themes highlighted above, namely: (i) environmental concerns and the global environmental crisis; (ii) tourism as a form of consumption; and (iii) the environmental values and consumer behaviour of the post-millennial generation. More specifically, in the context of the alleged increasing environmental awareness and concern amongst post-millennials, it seeks to identify if and how they might reconcile their potentially competing desires to, on the one hand, fulfil their travel and tourism ambitions and, on the other hand, 'save the planet'.

In order to underpin and inform the research, a further purpose of this thesis is to understand the significance of tourism as a form of consumption through a critical review of the literatures on travel motivations and consumerism more generally. Not only will this address a notable gap in the literature with regards to the meaning of tourism within

contemporary consumer culture but also, despite assumptions regarding the environmental values and consumer behaviour of post-millennials, there is to date no reliable evidence to suggest that this generational cohort will adapt their tourism behaviours in light of their alleged environmental concerns. Therefore, the purpose of the research is to unpick the consumer behaviour of the post-millennial generation, in particular their tourism consumption, in order to identify the extent of their environmental concerns when competing with their desire to consume tourism. As such, the thesis will point to the likelihood of achieving broader voluntary transformations in the consumption of tourism within the context of the acknowledged need to reduce levels of consumption more generally.

The overall aim of this research, then, is to explore critically the significance of tourism as a form of consumption amongst post-millennials in relation to their environmental values and, hence, the extent to which they might consider changing their tourism behaviour in the context of contemporary environmental concerns.

To achieve this aim, the thesis has the following objectives:

1. To explore the consumption of tourism within the broader consumer culture literature.
2. To identify the extent to which the post-millennial generation consider themselves to hold environmental values and how this is reflected in their day-to-day behaviours.
3. To appraise critically the extent to which the value-action gap exists with regards to post-millennial tourism consumption.
4. To identify the post-millennial generation's understanding of the significance of tourism.
5. To conclude the extent to which post-millennials are likely to adapt their tourism behaviours in line with environmental concerns.

One of the key drivers of this research is recognition of the contemporary environmental crisis manifested in both climate change in particular and the over-exploitation of the

Earth's natural resources more generally that are the result of excessive consumption on the global scale (Attenborough, 2020). Tourism contributes to this excessive consumption and there is, therefore, a need to consider ways in which tourism can be consumed differently or, more precisely, how the consumption of tourism can become environmentally sustainable. Hence, it is important, as part of this introduction and for background purposes, to consider and contextualise the issue of the environmental impacts of tourism. This is the focus of the next section.

## **1.6 The environmental consequences of tourism activity: An overview**

*Travel is at a tipping point. Tourists are unintentionally destroying the very things they have come to see. Overtourism has magnified its impact on the environment, wildlife and vulnerable communities around the globe. (The Last Tourist, 2021)*

Despite it being promoted as a key driver of socio-economic progress (UNWTO, 2021b) through its contribution to generating wealth, employment and investments and encouraging cultural exchange, the rapid growth and spread of tourism has also resulted in destructive consequences for the global environment (Sharpley, 2009). The environment is crucial to the attractiveness of most if not all tourism destinations (Wall and Mathieson, 2006: 158), in other words, it is one of the most vital resources upon which tourism depends. Unsurprisingly, therefore, academic attention has long been paid to the environmental (as well as social and economic) impacts of tourism and on the ways in which they might be mitigated (see Briassoulis and van der Straaten, 1992; Holden and Fennell, 2012; Mieczkowski, 1995; Wall and Mathieson, 2006).

However, any contemporary discussion of the negative impacts of tourism and potential means of mitigating them should, ideally, be contextualised within an understanding of not only global population levels – currently around eight billion people (UN, n.d.) – but also, more importantly, the increasing level of per capita consumption or, more simply put, how much each individual consumes (Sharpley and Telfer, 2023). As established earlier in this chapter, tourism and, in particular, international tourism, is in essence a non-essential consumptive lifestyle choice that is currently enjoyed by only a small (but

growing) proportion of the global population. For example, pre-pandemic international tourist arrival numbers reached 1.5 billion in 2019, which was a 4% increase on the previous year (UNWTO, 2020). This represents about 18% of the global population but, allowing for multiple individual trips (roughly speaking, around 10% of people account for about 70% of flights – see Otley, 2021), the actual number of people travelling internationally is likely to be much lower. In other words, only a small proportion of the global population accounts for the significant impacts of tourism, including its contribution to climate change, on the global scale.

Certainly, the Covid-19 pandemic provided an insight into how, when the world stops consuming (or consuming tourism), these impacts can be noticeably reduced. Not only has this realisation heightened the need to achieve a balance between tourist demand and consumption and the global environmental capacity to support it; it has highlighted that, as tourism activity is forecast to return to pre-pandemic levels within a few years, now is a critical time to address the fact that the growth of the tourism industry needs to be managed responsibly. The ways in which this might be achieved remains the focus of intense debate amongst contributors, however, criticism has long been directed at the phenomenon of the global evolution of mass tourism, as highlighted by many including Poon (1993) and Croall (1995). As Goodwin (2017) stresses, managing tourism sustainably has been a challenge for several decades, but now a tipping point has been reached with mass tourism and its consequences becoming an issue for an increasing number of destinations. In other words, a lack of action in managing the growth of tourism is manifested in some destinations, such as Amsterdam, Barcelona, Santorini and Venice, experiencing (pre-pandemic) excessive visitation by tourists, otherwise referred to as ‘overtourism’. Most recently (the summer of 2024), such overtourism has elicited widespread protests against tourism amongst local people in destinations such as Mallorca and Tenerife (for example, Keeley, 2024).

Overtourism is a contemporary phenomenon that can be defined as the presence of too many tourists in a particular space at a particular time, thus diminishing quality of life of local residents and the quality of experience for the tourists themselves, to say nothing of the inevitable environmental consequences of excessive tourist numbers. Overtourism is said to occur in popular destinations as a result of the uncontrolled, unplanned and

unregulated occurrence of tourism (Milano et al., 2019). Many years ago, academic contributors such as Kotler and Levy (1971) recognised similar issues of excessive demand and put forward the concept of 'de-marketing' in order to discourage the customer when demand for a product or service is too high. More recently, de-marketing has been posited as a potential tool for the degrowth of tourism, to challenge overtourism and to enhance the sector's sustainability (Hall and Wood, 2021). As discussed in an earlier section, other actions and policies have been proposed aimed at minimising the effects of tourism on the environment. Some of these policies have been heavily scrutinised. For example, the air transport sector has claimed that it is possible to maintain the growth of air-passenger numbers whilst moving towards net zero carbon emissions (Gascon, 2019). However, this has been criticised by Gössling and Peeters (2007) who reveal substantial gaps between the claims and the reality of the aviation industry's environmental performance.

Furthermore, the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has, for decades, promoted tourism as a universal right (see Gascon, 2019: 1827). Therefore, an obvious contradiction emerges; not only is the desire to travel ever-increasing, but it is encouraged by the UNWTO, an organisation committed to the continuing growth of tourism, despite their proposed strategies to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As Gascon (2019: 1826) argues, despite its stated commitment to sustainability, the UNWTO continues to promote the growth of tourism; at no time have its strategies supported a limitation or reduction in tourism. Furthermore, the UNWTO has acknowledged in its 'Sustainable Tourism for Development Guide' that tourism can indeed be a source of environmental damage and pollution (UNWTO, 2013: 11), yet the negative impacts of tourism are, in a sense, brushed off as circumstantial consequences that are not inherent to the sector. The solution offered by the UNWTO is to improve tourism management rather than limit or halt the development of tourism activity (Gascon, 2019: 1831). In other words, the focus of the UNWTO is on growing the sector rather than on limiting or reducing tourism activity, even in the context of the increasing negative consequences of tourism on the environment.

It must be noted, of course, that the priorities of the UNWTO as well as the activities of the tourism sector as a whole are reflective of the dominant growth imperative that

defines capitalism and political-economic policy worldwide. A discussion of this is well beyond the scope of this thesis (but see Hall (2022) for a discussion of the 'capitalocene' and 'ecocide'). The point is, however, the impacts of tourism are well known and widely discussed in the literature, which include impacts on the natural eco systems as well as the built environment; degrading vegetation and soil, water quality, air quality, coastlines and wildlife to name a few. An extensive breakdown of these environmental consequences of tourism is beyond the scope of this research, however they can be found in Wall and Mathieson (2006: 168), in which they discuss how tourism exists in conflict with the environment, and provide in detail examples, such as the trampling of vegetation, the pollution of resort beaches and the irresponsible behaviour of tourists disrupting the feeding and breeding habits of wildlife.

The important point, however, is that these impacts noted above are the visible, direct impacts of tourism, but the environmental consequences of tourism go well beyond the destination, the causes of which are often related to or indistinguishable from other activities and forms of production and consumption (Sharpley and Telfer, 2023), particularly when considering tourism in the broader context of consumption. An example of this, often excluded from the discussions within the tourism literature of environmental impacts, is the value chain of food provision in hotels. It is unlikely that, when tourists arrive at their hotel buffet, they consider or are even aware of the wider impacts (the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, water usage and so forth) involved in the production and transportation of the food displayed in front of them. Consequently, the wastage of the food is a major environmental and economic challenge facing hotels, not least for those operating on an all-inclusive basis (Sharpley and Telfer, 2023). There are innumerable other, unrecognised consequences (particularly in relation to deforestation; see Gazoni and Brasileiro, 2022), as tourism is a 'voracious consumer of resources' (McKercher, 1993: 8).

The point is then, that simply trying to manage tourism at the destination, as proposed by the UNWTO (see, UNWTO, 2019) is not enough and in a sense, it is missing the point. These broader issues suggest that to think of ways to start mitigating impacts goes well beyond simply managing tourism at the destination. Hence, commentators, such as Sharpley (2010) claim that sustainable tourism development has been a failure indeed,

and is therefore considered a myth. Based on this, clearly what is needed within the broader context of consumption, is an overall transformation or reduction in the consumption of tourism, hence, the purpose of this thesis; to explore from the perception of the post-millennial generation, whether that is a viable objective.

Nevertheless, the increased global awareness of environmental issues has only fuelled the ongoing debates over the complex relationships between tourism and the environment and much of the challenges relating to the degradation of the environment is linked to excessive consumption, that is, including tourism consumption. However, to achieve the harmony between tourism and the environment, it is important to address that management and policies, as discussed above, are not working, and going forward, it appears that these impacts can only be addressed by changing behaviour. Overtourism is a clear example of how just trying to manage the problem is not working and, essentially, there needs to be a reduction in tourism altogether.

Consequently then, the impacts of tourism, discussed above, are indicative of the wider impacts of excessive consumption more generally. Putting it another way, tourism is one example of how we need to moderate or change consumer behaviour to address the contemporary environmental issues. And indeed, as many say, we need to consume less. In light of this, in Sharpley and Telfer (2023), an extremely significant point is highlighted; that tourism is not a stand-alone form of consumption, but one that should be considered to hold a significant position in worldwide consumption and a ubiquitous factor in the global growth of consumerism. In turn, this suggests that tourism's contribution to the negative impacts on the environment are much more significant in numbers than originally assumed.

### **1.7 Overview of the research paradigm and methodology**

The study of tourism, as a social science, is a multidisciplinary phenomenon observed and analysed from a variety of different backgrounds (Sharpley, 2018), including sociological, psychological, economic and geographical stances. Social science differs from the physical and natural sciences in that it is concerned with the behaviours of human beings who are less predictable than non-human phenomena (Veal, 2018). This means that

researching tourism is a complex process, as large-scale movements of people cannot always be predicted, and it is often difficult to replicate research as people across the world all act and behave differently. Therefore, it is critical to indicate that this research draws on the alternative research paradigm of pragmatism. Pragmatism allows the researcher to put aside conflicting philosophical views by offering an alternative worldview to those of the positivism/ post-positivism and constructivism, focusing rather on practical problems in the 'real world' and the consequences of the research (Creswell and Clark, 2017: 26). Furthermore, using a mixed-method research approach hails a response to the unproductive debates, commonly referred to in the literature as the 'paradigm wars', concerning the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative versus qualitative research (Feilzer, 2010).

In order to meet the objectives of this research, a mixed-method approach is employed in two phases to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data for subsequent analysis. The first stage, a national online survey, targets 200 post-millennial aged respondents from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and was administered via social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. The primary purpose of this initial stage of quantitative data collection was to identify and explore key themes and correlations in relation to travel motivation and tourism consumption habits, as well as environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviours amongst the post-millennial generation. The representable data that were received was then used as a framework to plan in-depth interview questions for phase two of the methodology. All data was generated and analysed utilising Qualtrics software and the statistical analysis package SPSS.

Once the data was analysed and key themes were identified at the first phase, the research moved forward to the second stage of data collection in which 20 respondents were selected to participate in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The participants for the second stage of the data collection were recruited via stage one (an option to leave a contact email address to participate further was provided in the survey). The interviews set out to validate existing findings and elaborate on them, investigating and exploring the relationship between the post-millennials' travel behaviours, consumption habits and environmental awareness at a deeper level. As such, they established connections between the consumption of tourism and environmental awareness in order to



understand if tourism is something that can be adapted or 'given up', for the sake of the future of the environment. All data collection was conducted in line with the ethics and regulations set out at the beginning of the research, and the interviews were all carried out utilising the Microsoft Teams online platform.

### **1.8 Introduction to the chapters**

This thesis comprises seven chapters, as follows;

**Chapter One:** introduces the significance of tourism as a form of consumption. It explores the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on the tourism sector and the hope that individuals may change their consumptive habits in light of the climate emergency. Particular focus is paid on the post-millennial generation and their alleged environmental credentials. An overview of the environmental impacts of tourism are then discussed. The aims and objectives of the research are laid out along with the research methods utilised in this thesis.

**Chapter Two:** reviews the relevant literature on what can be broadly termed 'the tourist experience' and seeks to understand why people engage in the consumption of tourism in particular. The focus of this chapter lies within the tourist experience and the motivations of tourism consumption.

**Chapter Three:** pays particular attention to consumer behaviour in general and how a consumer culture has emerged over time. The chapter discusses the distinctive shift from a culturally modern to a post-modern world. The link between consumer culture in contemporary societies and the infinite choice that individuals are facing is considered, and as a result, the link between hedonic consumption and happiness. The chapter explores the 'green' consumer and green marketing as a concept appealing to the more ethically minded consumer. The notion of greenwashing is touched upon, as well as anti or voluntary consumption. A theoretical framework is then proposed for exploring the inconsistency between a consumer's (tourist's) values and their actions.

**Chapter Four:** outlines the researchers ontological and epistemological positions and provides rationale for using the paradigm of pragmatism. Both the quantitative and

qualitative stages of the research are explained, and the explanatory sequential mixed method research approach is to be employed. The data collection and analysis processes are explained in detail. The research consists of two stages:

1. An online, quantitative survey designed using Qualtrics is distributed to 200 post-millennial aged respondents.
2. Qualitative semi-structured, in-depth interviews are held with 20 post-millennial aged interviewees.

Furthermore, the chapter provides a detailed explanation of thematic analysis, which was used in analysing the second stage of the data.

**Chapter Five:** discusses the results of the scoping survey, providing statistical correlations and descriptive themes derived from the data with the aim to highlight key themes to be explored further within the second stage of the research.

**Chapter Six:** discusses the research findings from the second stage of the data collection (the interviews) and seeks to explore emerging themes using thematic analysis in order to answer the research aims and objectives.

**Chapter Seven:** draws the conclusions of the research in relation to each of the objectives and the overarching aim of the thesis. Further, evaluating the research in relation to the literature and thus, highlighting its contribution to knowledge. The chapter also proposed the limitations and recommendations of the research. A note from the researcher is provided to conclude this chapter and thus, the thesis as a whole.

### **1.9 Chapter summary**

The purpose of this chapter has been to establish the aims and objectives of this thesis. More specifically, within the context of tourism and the environmental crisis, it has highlighted the potential for the younger generation (the post-millennials) to be pathfinders in the adoption of a new form of tourism. The broad aim of the thesis is to explore the significance of tourism as a form of consumption amongst post-millennials in

relation to their environmental values. Hence, the overall objectives are to explore the consumption of tourism within the broader context of consumer culture and identify the environmental values of the post-millennial generation. Furthermore, to explore their understanding of their tourism behaviours and the extent to which they are likely to adapt those tourism behaviours in line with environmental concerns.

In order to identify the meaning and significance of tourism as a form of consumption as a basis for exploring whether people can change, it is essential, then, to review the literature on the tourist experience and tourism motivations, which is the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter Two

### The Tourist Experience

I am a part of all that I have met;  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades  
For ever and ever when I move.

*(Cited in: Pearce, 2022: 170)*

#### 2.0 Introduction

As set out in the preceding introductory chapter, the overall purpose of this thesis is to consider critically tourism as a form of consumption. More specifically, and against the backdrop of the global environmental crisis and the consequential need for more sustainable levels of tourism consumption, it seeks to understand the meaning of tourism amongst the latest generation of tourists – the post millennials – to determine the extent to which, if at all, they are willing or able to modify their tourism consumption in response to global warming and other environmental challenges. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to establish the theoretical background to the research by reviewing the relevant literature on what can be broadly termed the tourist experience in general and why people engage in the consumption of tourism in particular.

In effect, the concept of the tourist experience embraces everything about what it means to be a tourist; as Sharpley and Stone (2012: 3) explain, it can be thought of as ‘the experience of being a tourist, which results not only from a particular combination of provided experiences but also from his or her normal socio-cultural existence’. The latter point gets to the heart of this thesis; understanding how and why people travel is inevitably related to the social significance or role of tourism in contemporary societies. In essence, tourism has become an essential part of the contemporary society life cycle and, in order to endure the pressures associated with modern society, there is a need to occasionally, in a sense, escape from it. Hence, this chapter is primarily concerned with issues surrounding tourist motivation. By way of introduction, however, it commences with a discussion of the phenomenon of tourism in general before going on to consider

in particular the complex concept of the tourist experience of which tourist motivation is but one element.

## **2.1 What is Tourism?**

In order to understand the tourist experience, it is first necessary to address the question: 'what is tourism?'. To many, the answer is self-evident. Such has been the growth in tourism, particularly international tourism, since the mid-twentieth century that, as Cohen (1974: 527) observed more than 40 years ago, tourism is 'so widespread and ubiquitous ... that there are scarcely people left in the world who would not recognise a tourist immediately'. It is likely, however, that 'lay' recognition of the tourist would be limited to holiday / vacation tourism whereas many other forms of tourism or categories of tourist exist. Therefore, the need exists to define tourism in order to identify all those who might be included (or indeed excluded) under the banner of tourism.

There are many technical definitions provided by organisations in an attempt to identify different categories of tourist and tourism activities, and collectively these are normally for statistical or legislative purposes (Sharpley, 2015). In simple terms, if the scale and value of tourism is to be measured, as most destinations do, then it is of course essential to know what is to be measured. The first technical definition of a tourist was adopted by the League of Nations Statistical Committee in 1937 (Leiper, 1979). Essentially, this defined a tourist as someone who travels for 24 hours or more away from their normal country of residence, thereby establishing two definitional principles – to be categorised as a tourist involved, first, staying away for at least one night and, second, international travel.

This early definition has since been subject to various amendments, primarily to distinguish between stays of more or less than 24 hours. For instance, at the International Union of Official Tourism Organisations (IUOTO) Conference of Travel and Tourism held in 1963, the overarching category of 'visitor' embraced both 'tourist' and 'excursionist' to differentiate between overnight stays (tourists) and day trips (excursionists) (Cohen, 1974) although, again, only in the context of international travel. Subsequently the UK's

Tourism Society rectified this and implicitly included domestic travel by defining tourism as:

the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, and their activities during the stay at these destinations; it includes movement for all purposes as well as day visits or excursions. (cited in Sharpley, 2018: 25)

Similarly, the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2008) later adopted a broader definition of tourism as ‘the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes’. However, statistics published annually by the UNWTO are based on international tourism only and the distinction between tourists and excursionists continues to be made. Domestic tourism is often similarly sub-categorised in statistics: as Leiper (1979: 395) highlights, the overnight stay criterion demarcates the tourist from the day-tripper. In other words, although various parameters have been established to define a tourist, such as the length of stay or a minimum distance travelled from the home (Sharpley, 2015), it is generally accepted that to be a ‘tourist’ at least one overnight stay is required. Table 2.1 below offers examples of technical definitions of tourism.

**Table 2.1:** Technical definitions of tourism

<b>Author/Organisation</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Definition of tourism / tourist</b>
League of Nations	1937	<i>An international tourist is one who visits a country other than that in which he habitually lives, for a period of at least twenty-four hours.</i>
United Nations Conference of Travel and Tourism	1963	<i>A visitor is ‘any person visiting a country other than that in which he [sic] has his usual place of residence, for any reason other than following an occupation remunerated from within the country visited.</i>
The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)	2008	<i>Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure.</i>
Oxford Dictionary (online)	2022	<i>The business activity connected with providing accommodation, services and entertainment for people who are visiting a place for pleasure.</i>

As Ghanem (2017: 15) emphasises, technical definitions of tourism are important from an economic perspective; given the scale and value of tourism, it is important for destinations to monitor and measure tourist flows and spending – or what is often referred to as the ‘visitor economy’, whether international (incoming and outgoing) or domestic. However, technical definitions do not get to the essence of what tourism is as a social phenomenon, of what it means to be a tourist. In other words, they cannot embrace the psychological and sociological dimensions of being a tourist. Hence, and of particular relevance in the context of this thesis, a number of conceptual definitions of tourism have been proposed from an anthropological perspective. Typically, these emphasise the nature of tourism in opposition or contrast to everyday life which, as Sharpley (2015) notes, provides a basis for assessing tourist behaviours and attitudes. Hence, implicit in conceptual definitions, examples of which are provided in Table 2.2 below, is the motivation for tourism.

**Table 2.2:** Conceptual definitions of tourism

Author	Date	Definition
Cohen	1974	Voluntary, temporary traveller, travelling in the expectation of pleasure from the novelty and change experienced on a relatively long and non-recurrent round trip
Nash	1981	A person at leisure who also travels
Graburn	1983	Tourism involves for the participants a separation from normal instrumental life and the business of making a living, and offers entry into another kind of moral state in which mental, expressive and cultural needs come to the fore
Kelly	1985	Individuals that are in quest of satisfaction and fulfilment
Smith	1989	Temporarily leasured person who voluntarily visits a place for the purpose of experiencing a change
Wang	2000	a person who voluntarily travels away from home for non-instrumental purposes such as recreation or pleasure

Conceptual definitions, such as those highlighted in Table 2.2 above, tend to emphasise specifically the leisure and recreational role of tourism. It must be acknowledged, of course, that technical definitions of tourism include non-leisure or recreational forms of tourism, such as business or educational travel. Arguably, however, tourism is most widely perceived by tourists themselves as a leisure activity in which the tourist is in the

state of mind of seeking a satisfactory experience and is searching for temporary fulfilment in a new experience, thus creating meaning (Ghanem, 2017: 30). It is also notable that much tourism research focuses on the leisure tourist, though attention is also paid to other forms of tourism, such as business (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2001) or religious tourism (Olsen and Timothy, 2021)

It is also again worth noting here that conceptual definitions of tourism emphasise difference, that tourism comprises a set of activities that are spatially and temporally distinct from the tourist's day-to-day life. Undoubtedly, this remains the attraction of tourism for the great majority of tourists – as discussed below, 'escape' is a dominant motivating factor in tourism. Nevertheless, as tourism has increasingly become an accepted and expected social institution and an integral part of the fabric of modern, contemporary societies, that distinction is arguably diminishing as a variety of factors, not least the pervasive use of information technology, serve to blur the boundaries between tourism and day-to-day life or what Graburn (1989) refers to as sacred and profane time. This point is of direct relevance to this thesis and is returned to later in this chapter (Section 2.5) and in Chapter 3.

For now, the essential point remains that, as Sharpley (2018: 27) concisely summarises, to attempt a single, all-encompassing definition of tourism is a difficult, if not impossible task, particularly from the conceptual perspective. Indeed, the definitional debate can be neatly sidestepped if, building on the argument introduced above that it is no longer a separate sphere of social activity, tourism is 'interpreted as but one, albeit highly significant dimension of temporary mobility' (Hall, 2005: 21). In other words, mobility (of people, technology, capital and so on) has come to be seen as a defining characteristic of contemporary society, and tourism can be seen as one manifestation of that mobility. Yet, tourism undoubtedly remains an identifiable social activity recognised as such by tourists themselves. Hence, given its definitional challenges, tourism is best considered from the perspective of the tourist *experience* – which is in effect a conceptual definition of what it is to be a tourist. The concept embraces a range of issues relating to the various dimensions of the tourist experience but essentially, as recent contributions have highlighted, the tourist experience is concerned with a fundamental issue, namely,



understanding why people are tourists in the first place. Hence, the next section will discuss, in detail, the tourist experience.

## **2.2 What is the tourist experience?**

As observed earlier, the term 'tourist experience' broadly refers to what it is to be a tourist. It is a multi-dimensional, complicated process which many contributors have attempted to define. Irrespective of definitions, however, the important point is that it does not refer simply to the experience of goods and services provided by the tourism sector. Rather, the tourist experience comprises a myriad of complexities, and as explained by Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987: 317):

true tourist experiences have also been seen to be some special quality, that is, to be more than simply an experience accompanying travel or tourist behaviour.

Perhaps inevitably, then, a succinct definition of tourist experience has proven to be elusive, not least because experiences are subjective, intangible, continuous and highly personal phenomena (O'Dell, 2007). Certainly, some of the earlier philosophical definitions offer what are argued by some to be extreme views and, although valuable contributions to the literature, not always universally valid (Cohen, 1979). For example, in the early work by Boorstin (1964) for whom, Cohen (1979:197) notes; 'tourism is essentially an aberration, a symptom of the malaise of age...and despises the modern mass tourist in search of 'pseudo-events'. In other words, claiming the modern-day tourist to be superficial and disinterested in a quest for an authentic experience.

Part of the problem in attempting to define the tourist experience lies in the fact that tourism is generally considered to stand in opposition to everyday experiences (Cohen, 1979). Moreover, the tourist experience is considered to be intrinsic and personal, thus presenting researchers with the difficulty of studying that particular experience, not least because personal experiences are not given direct access to by others, meaning they can only be gauged indirectly by subjects' reports (Cohen, 2021: 236), which provides justification for the obscurity and complexity of tourism amongst other consumptive experiences. Tourism, as a particular form of consumption, possesses symbolic meaning

which not only provides memories and emotions but also, arguably, facilitates identity creation; as Bond and Falk (2013: 430) suggest:

Within tourism research circles, identity related questions such as ‘who am I?’ and ‘where do I fit in?’ are becoming increasingly accepted as representing key underlying motivations of individuals seeking out specific tourism or leisure experiences.

That being said, earlier tourist experience literature often adopted a more practical management or marketing perspective focused on the ‘destination’ (see for example Moutinho, 1987) as opposed to a sociological approach concerned with the ‘individual’ and their experience within the destination. However, if the destination is the focal point of the experience, then arguably all tourists’ experiences would be consistent within each particular destination, not least because each given destination provides the circumstances and the environment in which a tourist can have an experience. Therefore, the experience is internal, and the outcome depends upon how an individual in a specific state of mind reacts to the setting (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to delve into the tourist experience ‘definition wars’ evident in the past literature; indeed, given the definitional difficulties and the context of this research, there is little point in proposing a definition of the tourist experience. Suffice to say, however, the tourist experience is, in a sense, about what the tourist *is*. In other words, the tourist experience embraces what it is to be a tourist, which may be thought of as a continuous cycle, a never-ending process (see Figure 2.1, below). However, by way of illustration, a number of key contributors and their definitions are provided in Table 2.3 below, compiled from Cutler and Carmichael’s (2010) phenomenological exploration into the dimensions of the tourist experience. Although these definitions tend to be highly subjective, reflecting the perspective adopted by particular researchers, a common denominator is that the tourist experience is significant for the individual concerned (Li, 2000). In other words, the tourist experience is an

intrinsic experience which is personal to each individual engaged in the (tourism) event, either on an emotional, spiritual, physical or intellectual level (Pine and Gilmore, 2011).

**Table 2.3:** Definitions of the tourist experience

Author(s)	Definition
Boorstin (1964)	A popular act of consumption, a 'pseudo-event'
MacCannell (1973)	A pilgrimage of modern man. An active response to the difficulties of modern life, tourists are in search of 'authentic' experiences
Cohen (1979)	The relationship between a person and a variety of 'centres'. Derived from an individual's worldview (different people need different experiences)
Ryan and Glendon (1998)	A multi-functioning leisure activity, either involving entertainment or learning, or both for an individual
Stamboulis and Skayannis (2003)	An interaction between tourists and destinations, with destinations being the site of the experience and tourists being the actors of the experience
Larsen (2007)	A past personal travel-related event strong enough to have entered long-term memory
Selstad (2007)	A novelty / familiarity combination involving he individual pursuit of identity and self-realisation

**Source:** Adapted from Cutler and Carmichael (2010)

As already noted, the tourist experience is recognised as a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon that extends beyond the actual consumption of tourism-related goods and services. Hence, attempts have been made to construct frameworks that embrace the various phases, influences and outcomes that make up the tourist experience (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010: 6). An early and widely cited model is Clawson and Knetsch's (1966) five-phase model of recreational experiences; they proposed that such experiences commence with anticipation, followed by travel to the destination, the onsite experience, travel home and recollection (see also Hammitt, 1980). Significantly, this model not only extended the temporal dimension of tourism / recreational experiences beyond the actual travel and stay in the destination but also introduced the psychological dimensions of looking forward and looking back, perhaps reflecting the American novelist Edward

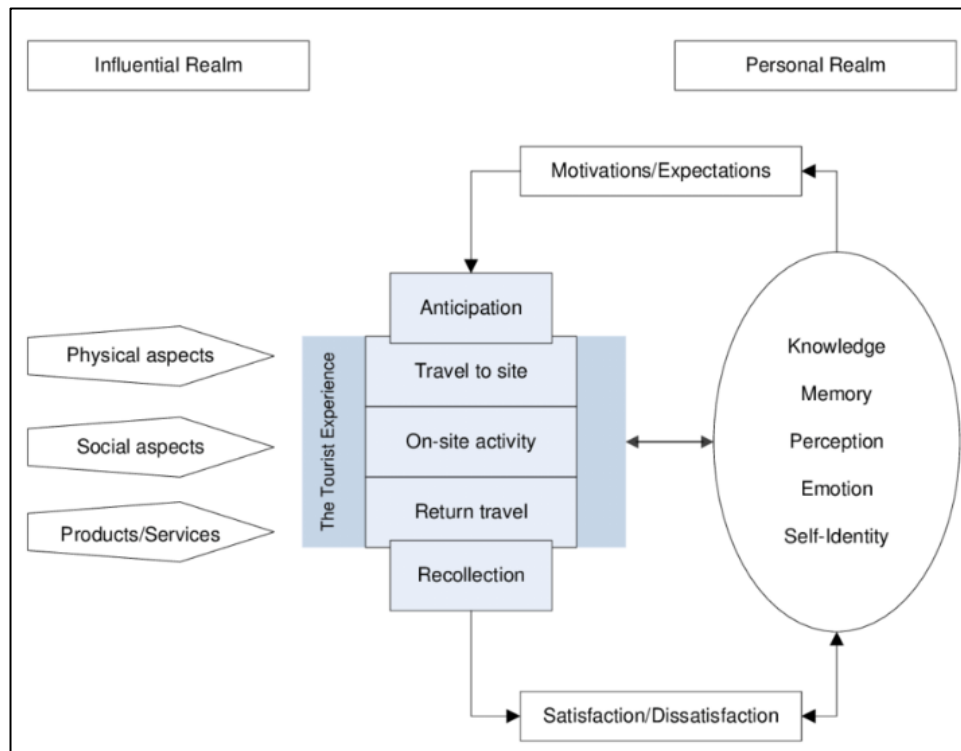
Streeter's famous observation that 'travel is ninety percent anticipation and ten percent recollection'.

The Clawson and Knetsch model has since been drawn upon, adapted and applied to tourism by other commentators (see Cohen, 1979; Graburn, 2011). Of particular note are Cutler and Carmichael (2010: 8) who provide a more organised conceptual model demonstrating the multi-phased, multi-influential and multi-outcome nature of the tourist experience (see Figure 2.1 below). Their conceptual model incorporates Clawson and Knetsch's original ideas as well as the additional realms of influential and personal outcomes based on findings from the tourist experience literature. As such, the model includes not only the overall tourist event from travelling out to returning home, but also the anticipatory and recollection phases that demonstrate how the experience is planned and anticipated before the travel takes place and remembers long after the tourist returns (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). Importantly, the influential realm comprises external factors that may influence the travel process whilst the personal realm involves factors relevant to the individual, such as previous experiences, perceptions and self-identity that may influence or determine the motivations and expectations for future experiences. Both the influential and personal realms are of relevance to this research. However, in order to explore the reasons why people travel, it is necessary to understand the experiences which are personal to the individual. These may include external, influential factors that are 'internalised' within the motivation process. Indeed, as Cutler and Carmichael (2010: 11) explain, much of the literature surrounding the tourist experience highlights the importance of tourist motivation. This is discussed in the following section of this chapter.

In the earlier literature, the intangible tourist experience is referred to variously as a quest for authenticity (MacCannell, 1976), a quest for meaning (Meyersohn, 1981) and a quest for centre (Cohen, 1979). As previously mentioned, however, the tourist experience is not merely a unitary concept and, reflecting the alleged cultural shift in recent decades from the condition of modernity to postmodernity (Harvey, 1990), it has been acknowledged that there is no 'absolute truth' about the tourist experience. Rather, there exist many 'relative truths'. In this context, Uriely (2005) attempts to identify and evaluate developments in the conceptualisation of the tourist experience, concluding

that, as a general consensus within the literature reviewed, there is a need to focus on the existential dimensions of the tourist's evaluations of their personal experiences in order to define the tourist experience. Alternatively stated, there is a need to focus on tourist motivations and the meanings that tourists assign to their experiences in the context of their everyday lives.

**Figure 2.1:** The tourist experience – A conceptual model of influences and outcomes



**Source:** Cutler and Carmichael (2010: 8)

From this perspective, Sharpley and Stone (2012: 3) pose the question: ‘What influence, if any, has the increasing social institutionalisation and, in particular, what might be described as the ‘consumerisation’ of tourism had on the nature of that tourist experience?’ In so doing, they imply that the ‘consumerisation’ of tourism has arguably moulded the tourist experience in contemporary society, reflecting a transformation in tourism and leisure over time from being associated with an individual’s intelligence, imagination and wit (Sharpley and Stone, 2012: 4) to becoming what Ramsay (2005) describes as fun and pampering. In essence, tourism has become commodified, an expected feature of contemporary social life in which people believe they are ‘purchasing

a ticket to authentic encounters with people and places, to freedom from responsibility, from the consumerist realities of the everyday' (Ramsay, 2005: 102).

Such commodification of tourism is an example of the importance and dominance of societal and cultural influences on the tourist experience whilst, more generally, it is essential to acknowledge the relationship between tourism and contemporary society when considering the tourist experience, for two principal reasons. First, tourism is a phenomenon that is ingrained in modern society and is accepted as a social norm. This issue is discussed in detail by Jost Krippendorf (1987) in his book, *The Holidaymakers*, in which he argues that the phrase 'we are going on holiday' has become such a part of contemporary life and has become so rooted in our thinking that it is 'normal' behaviour. Hence, he goes on to suggest that, fascinatingly, whereas no particular reason is required to justify going on holiday, there must be a reason if one is *not* going on holiday. And second, the pressures and challenges of modern society itself motivate people to participate in tourism; it is increasingly believed that the only way to survive modern society is to regularly remove oneself from it, albeit on a temporary basis (Sharpley, 2018:57). As Krippendorf (1986: 523) explains: 'they (tourists) no longer feel happy where they are – where they work and where they live...they feel the monotony of the daily routine'.

It is undeniable that, in more recent years, tourism has come to be seen as a social norm; indeed, many might consider participation in tourism a right (see Gascón, 2019). Nevertheless, the question remains, what is its purpose? According to Sharpley and Stone (2012: 4), for example, tourism does not provide an escape from the routine of modern consumerism, as widely claimed. In fact:

tourists are simply purchasing the opportunity to continue that routine elsewhere and, as a consequence, achieve instantaneous, short-lived consumption-based rewards, but are unlikely to benefit from reflective, developmental or meaningful experiences that are often claimed to be the purpose or outcomes of participating in tourism.

In other words, tourists can be thought of as passive participants in the tourism system chasing a dream that is sold to them by the tourism industry and idolised by society. And if this is the case, then what is the real significance of tourism? How and why has it become a socially sanctioned necessity? These and other questions will be addressed throughout the thesis, particularly in relation to tourism as a contemporary form of consumption. For now, however, in order to explore 'what lies beneath' the tourist experience, the key issue is the 'why?'; why do people consume or participate in tourism? Therefore, of fundamental importance to this thesis is an understanding of tourist motivation, of why people choose to travel.

## **2.3 Tourist motivation**

*'Why venture forth when we are right where we belong?'* (Hiss, 2021: 35)

### **2.3.1 Travel as an inherent biological need**

The origins of the contemporary phenomenon of tourism arguably lie within people themselves. In other words, a strong impulse to travel (or what is often referred to as 'wanderlust') may well be attributable to a deep-rooted, instinctive human need. As Pasternak (2021: 13) observes, it is no secret that, as a species, 'humans are the world's greatest travellers'; we live in highly mobile societies, and a need to travel is, in some way, biologically hard-wired into all of us. That is, travel as a ubiquitous behaviour, is in our DNA. In an attempt to explain the biological basis for travel, Pasternak (2021: 14) goes on to suggest we need to look further back into our evolutionary past, from the initial migration of *Homo Erectus* out of Africa some 1.8 million years ago to the arguably more significant travels of the *Homo Sapiens* from around 60,000 years ago, the latter leading the dispersion of humanity around the world. The prehistoric migration of our ancestors who travelled far and relatively quickly displayed a propensity to travel not exhibited by any other primates (Pasternak, 2021) yet, other than general curiosity, their motivation for travel is still unknown. During the nomadic times, the more obvious biological motivation for travel reflected the need to 'wander' to satisfy utilitarian needs such as food, water, shelter and mating partners (Pasternak, 2022: 13). Some 10,000 years ago, sedentism took over yet, as humans began to settle and develop agriculture, they did not

stop travelling, for reasons such as escape from natural disasters, poverty or persecution (Fisher, 2014). Pasternak (2021: 29) elaborates:

the evolutionary links between bipedalism – our original mode of travel – and other key human characteristics, such as the hand, large brain and speech, suggest that how we travel is linked to other very fundamental parts of human life. Appreciating this core place of travel within our pre-history, our very origins, helps place human travel within a deeper and more profound context than we might usually consider it. Travel is not just a walk to the shops or even a round-the-world tour; it has played a fundamental part in creating us and in helping us to create the world we see today. From the first steps of our bipedal ancestors and the earliest migration of *Homo sapiens* out of Africa, to the invention of trains, planes and automobiles, travel has and continues to shape our lives. It is now time we placed travel back at the heart of our understanding of humanity.

Importantly, then, the need or desire to travel continues to be psychologically driven as travel, according to Pasternak (2021) not only satisfies our inherent curiosity or thirst for knowledge; it may also increase our capacity to be creative. Consequently, travel has moved beyond a purpose for accessing utilitarian needs and has become an important expression of identity for individuals and societies (Niblett and Beuret, 2021: 7).

### **2.3.2 Why do we travel? The motivation literature**

Tourist motivation is essentially concerned with the question, why do people travel? In his critical overview of the literature, Huang (2022) emphasises the important point that tourist motivation is the ultimate driving force for tourist behaviour; without motivation, there would be no demand for tourism or, as Parrinello (1993: 233) puts it, motivation ‘acts as a trigger that sets off all the events in travel’. It is not surprising, therefore, that not only have researchers long been concerned with tourist motivation but also that, as was observed almost half a century ago, motivation is ‘one of the most basic and indispensable subjects in tourism studies’ (Wahab, 1975: 44). Furthermore, Sharpley (2018: 123) describes it as one of the most complex areas of tourism research, not least because of conflicting interpretations and a lack of universally agreed models or ideas



that encompass the motives for travel (Pearce, 1993). Certainly, there exists a considerable literature that is concerned with the demand for tourism experiences, particularly when discussing the 'who', 'when' and 'where' and 'how' of travel. However, as Pearce (1993: 113) has noted, 'the term tourism demand should not be equated with tourism motivation. Tourism demand is the outcome of tourists' motivation, the 'why' of tourism which, according to Fodness (1994: 556), is the most interesting question of all tourist behaviour. Yet, difficulties emerge in exploring this question. Broadly speaking, 'the motivations or underlying reasons for travel are covert in that they reflect an individual's private needs and wants' (Pearce, 2005: 51); not only may tourists be unwilling to divulge their motivations; they might also not even be aware of them (Krippendorf, 1987). Similar points are made by Dann (1981) in his essay that reviews the tourism motivation literature and commences with an investigation of the methodological problem associated with addressing the question: 'what constitutes motivation to travel?'. In addressing the challenges that arise when researching tourists' motivation, he outlines four inferences which, according to him, had not (at the time of his work) been comprehensively addressed (Dann, 1981: 209):

- i. Tourists may not wish to reflect on real travel motives
- ii. Tourists may be unable to reflect on real travel motives
- iii. Tourists may not wish to express real travel motives
- iv. Tourists may not be able to express real travel motives

In addition to these challenges suggested by Dann (1981), the limited success in pinpointing exactly why people travel – or perhaps the lack of empirical evidence to that effect – reflects the fact that, quite evidently, not all tourists are alike. Rather, they are 'staggeringly diverse in age, motivation, level of affluence and preferred activities' (Pearce, 2005: 2). Hence, Pearce (2005) warns tourist behaviour analysts to avoid the 'sin' of homogenisation when characterising tourists – quite simply, generalisations cannot be made. In a similar vein, Giddens (1991: 64) argues more broadly that motives do not exist in discrete psychological units and that we should regard motivation as an underlying 'feeling state' of the individual.

A further issue is that, arguably, the concept of motivation itself can be misinterpreted. In other words, motivating factors may sometimes be confused with the outcome of motivations, as illustrated by the distinction between so-called 'push' and 'pull' factors. Both are commonly thought of as motivating factors (for example, Giddy, 2018; Kassean and Gassita, 2013) but, in essence, pull factors are 'destination-specific attributes' (Goodall, 1991: 59), or the features or attractions of a particular destination that are influential in a tourist's decision-making process. In contrast, push factors are 'person-specific motivations' (Goodall, 1991: 59) that push an individual into wanting a holiday in the first place or, more precisely, the identified personal needs that can be satisfied through the consumption of tourism. Those needs might direct an individual's choice towards a particular type of holiday – hence the role of pull factors – but fundamentally, motivation translates needs into goal-orientated behaviour. Push and pull factors are discussed in more detail below but, as has long been acknowledged, 'the key to understanding tourist motivation is to see vacation travel as a satisfier of needs and wants' (Mill and Morrison, 1985: 4).

More simply put, tourist motivation relates to the needs of the individual and what it is they want from their holiday (Pearce, 2005). The study of tourist motivation, therefore, is primarily concerned with understanding the nature and source of these needs and how the consumption of tourism might satisfy them. Doing so, however, remains a challenge, as reiterated by Krippendorf (1987: 47):

these motives, and the phenomenon of travel in general can be interpreted in many ways, little of which, however, can be conclusively proved. The literature on tourist motivation is full of different explanations and interpretations. The truth will probably not lie in one or the other of these theories, but in a mixture of various interpretations. Which does not make things any simpler.

### **2.3.3 Intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation**

Despite the complexities and lack of a firm sense of direction in understanding tourist motivation (Pearce, 1993: 1), many earlier studies were concerned with motivational theories in general and explored tourism through the psychological theory of need

satisfaction in particular. Thus, researchers have long addressed the ongoing debate of whether an individual's needs are primarily psychological or if they are determined by their social environment:

to talk of the 'tourist experience' seems to imply a homogeneity which, in reality, is not always present. Rather, it can be argued that tourists experience competing motives and thus tensions exist between needs that might be, to a greater or lesser extent, mutually incompatible. (Ryan, 2010: 35).

One means of explaining why holidays may be described as 'special periods of personality development may lie in the distinction that is made between extrinsic and intrinsic orientation' (Ryan, 2010: 33). The extrinsic represents motivations that result from influences external to the tourist, whereas the intrinsic includes motivations stemming from the personal needs of the tourists themselves (Sharpley, 2018: 5). A longstanding discussion exists as to whether extrinsic or intrinsic motivations have the strongest impact on travel related decisions, perhaps best reflected in the debate between two leading scholars in the field of tourism, namely, Graham Dann and Seppo Iso-Ahola (Mehmetoglu, 2012: 94). On the one hand, Dann (1981) postulates that tourists are motivated by the society to which they belong whereas, on the other hand, Iso-Ahola (1982) claims that tourism motivation is essentially a psychological phenomenon. Accordingly, there have been many studies within the field of social psychology (for example, Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Neulinger, 1974) which emphasise the sense of self-actualisation and feelings of completeness; translated to the tourism context, these imply that holiday settings are dynamically different places to the home of the tourist and provide an opportunity for individuals to develop their senses of competence, to assert themselves and therefore develop healthy personalities (Ryan, 2010: 34), thereby aiding personal development through the satisfaction of intrinsic needs.

To some extent resolving the Dann-Iso-Ahola debate, Mannell and Iso-Ahola's (1987) study on the experiential nature of leisure and tourism phenomena discusses the tourist experience from three dominant perspectives. This revealed that two motivational forces simultaneously influence the individual's behaviour; that is, some needs were found to be psychological (intrinsic) in origin, whereas others extrinsic, or socially determined.

Formally, extrinsic motivation is motivation for external reward, for example, earning wages through work. However, in the context of this chapter the word extrinsic is used to identify 'external motivational factors', in other words those factors which emanate from an individual's social and cultural environment that might influence the individual's needs and motivation for tourism. Such forces or pressures may, for example, arise from the nature of the individual's work environment, their family and friends or social group and so on. Although Iso-Ahola (1982: 257) argued in the aforementioned debate that 'motivation is a purely psychological concept, not a sociological one', there is little doubt that, in the case of tourism, motivation often results from these external forces which can be internalised and, therefore, categorised as psychological needs. For example, for many people, the motivation to go on holiday is derived from the need to get away from their mundane everyday routines. Therefore, these needs can be categorised as escape or 'avoidance', as discussed by Iso-Ahola (1982), which are undoubtedly rooted in society and underpin tourist motivation (Sharpley, 2018: 129). Nevertheless, tourist motivation continues to be considered from a variety of perspectives and no single theory or theoretical framework is dominant over the other (Huang, 2022).

#### **2.4 Tourist Motivation: An overview of motivational theories**

In his early but seminal paper on tourist motivation, Dann (1977: 185) addresses the question 'what makes tourists travel?', in so doing seeking to 'remedy [the then] lacuna' in the tourist motivation literature. Asserting that tourist motivation is largely a sociological phenomenon, as well as introducing the push-pull dichotomy by stating that 'the question "what makes tourists travel" can only relate to the "push" factors as it is devoid of destination or value content' (Dann, 1977: 186), he challenged the prevailing focus on 'escape' as a motivating factor by arguing that, in theory, tourists are motivated by the socially determined factors of 'anomie' and 'ego-enhancement'. This was then tested and verified by empirical research amongst tourists in Barbados.

Subsequently, Dann (1981) built on this initial work in a widely-cited review of the tourist motivation literature, attempting to generate conceptual clarification from the extant 'amalgam of ideas and approaches' (Dann, 1981: 189). In this, he identifies seven

approaches to understanding the 'definitional fuzziness' surrounding why people travel. These are summarised in Table 2.4 below.

**Table 2.4:** Approaches to the study of tourist motivation

Approach	Summary of approach
1. Travel as a Response to What is Lacking Yet Desired	Peer pressure associated with 'keeping up with the Joneses', more relaxed atmosphere of prestigious resorts, desire for something different, a desire for variety and novelty. Travel can fulfil these desires as they are sought elsewhere than the home setting (Dann, 1981: 190)
2. Destinalional 'Pull' in Response to Motivational 'Push'	Logical explanation, 'push' factors include anomie, ego-enhancement, exploration and evaluation of self. Holidays offer temporary alleviation from anomie and provide an opportunity to boost ego-enhancement. 'Pull' factors of the resort such as sunshine, reinforce the 'push' factor motivation (Dann, 1981: 191)
3. Motivation as Fantasy	Concerning the perceived absence of the home environments' normative controls, and egalitarian norms, tourists aim to free themselves. Often associated with escapism. Tourism can liberate tourists from the shackles of their everyday existence (Dann, 1981: 192).
4. Motivation as Classified Purpose	Linked with the definition of the tourist. Purpose and motivation are often used interchangeably. Sometimes confuses 'pull' factors for 'push' factors and are both treated as motives.
5. Motivational Typologies	General typologies can be behavioural and cause tourists to seek out the unfamiliar. Alternatively, the focus is on the dimensions of the tourist role. Typologies are useful in that they provide a simple classification but are criticised for an inability to associate with 'Verstehen' (Dann, 1981: 195), in other words, to connect empathetically and understanding the meanings behind actions.
6. Motivation and Tourist Experiences	Focus moves from the tourist role to the tourist experiences. Relating to the polemic debates of Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1973; 1976) concerning the (in)authenticity of the tourist experience in whether the tourist is motivated by a quest for an authentic experience.
7. Motivation as Auto-Definition and Meaning	Concerned with symbolic interactionism and how tourists define situations, which provides a greater understanding than a mere explanation of their behaviour (Dann, 1981: 196). Various 'actors' are involved (tourist-host interaction), each define the situation differently. Involves 'role negotiation' and 'role expectations' in which an individual can express an image of who they are, who they want to be perceived as or what society expects them to be.

Source: Adapted from Dann (1981)

As is evident from Table 2.4, there are numerous conceptual approaches to understanding the motivation for tourism, some of which are more explicitly related to motivation than others. For example, as Dann (1981) and others note (see Lowyck et al., 1992), so-called ‘motivational’ typologies are typically classifications based behavioural characteristics; they do not reveal the motives for such behaviours.

**Table: 2.5:** Theoretical Frameworks of Tourist Motivation

Author	Motivational theory	Outline of theory
Maslow (1970)	Hierarchy of needs	A theory which posits that human behaviour is motivated by the outcome of satisfying needs
Dann (1977)	Push and Pull theory of tourist motivation	An empirical study which builds a theoretical framework relating to anomie and ego-enhancement
Crompton (1979)	Socio-psychological motivations to travel	A theory which identifies seven socio-psychological motivations to travel.
Iso-Ahola (1982) and Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987)	Social psychology model of tourism	Associated with push and pull factors, seeking and escaping.
Pearce (1988)	Travel Career Ladder (TCL)	A theoretical model which describes travel motivation through five hierarchical levels of needs and motives in relation to travel career levels.
Pearce and Lee (2005)	Travel Career Pattern (TCP)	A modification of the TCL, emphasising a pattern of motivations and their structure.

Others draw various motivational theories; these are summarised in Table 2.5 above and are discussed in more detail in subsequent sections.

#### 2.4.1 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

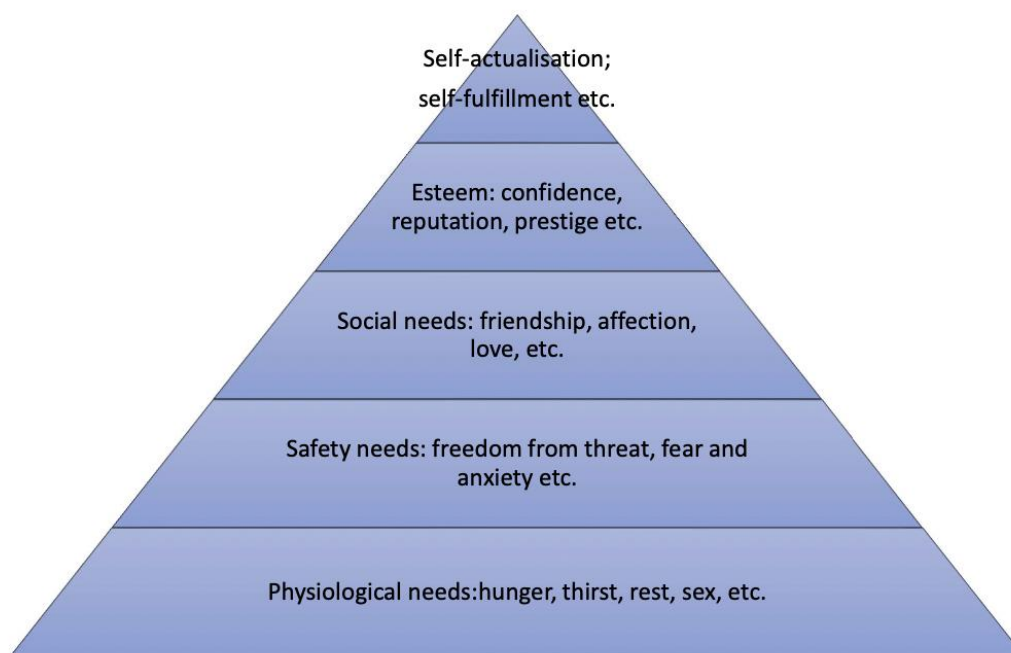
One of the most influential and key motivational theories which originated in clinical psychology, but which has been widely adopted in the social sciences (Huang and Hsu, 2009; Sharpley, 2018) is Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs model (Maslow 1943; 1954; 1970). The concept of need is central to most motivational theories; as established above, needs are considered to be the force that motivates goal-oriented behaviour (Hudson, 1999). Hence, it is unsurprising that Maslow’s theory is popular amongst tourism researchers; given its broad scope, it is regarded a sound basis for explaining the motivations underpinning tourists’ travel behaviours (Yousaf, Amin and Santos, 2018). Moreover, it has been considered as the influential motivational theoretical framework

from which important tourist motivation theories have evolved (Yousaf, Amin and Santos, 2018: 198).

Maslow created the well-known five-tier model of human needs (see Figure.2.2 below), often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid (McLeod, 2018). It is worth noting here that the hierarchy was inclusive but was often misinterpreted as a ladder in which once a lower level is satisfied it is no longer of importance (Pearce, 2022: 175).

The basis of Maslow's model is his assertion that people are motivated by five levels or categories of needs which, he initially proposed, must be satisfied one after the other in order to progress up the hierarchy. At the base of pyramid lie the individual's most basic physiological needs (water, food, clothing, shelter, etc.) – if these are not satisfied then the human body cannot function optimally and all other needs become secondary until they are met (McLeod, 2018). In the context of tourism, these needs are considered so basic that they are regarded as fundamental motivations for all travellers. The second 'level' of the hierarchy is associated with safety. In the context of tourism, the traveller expects or requires the destination to provide a safe and secure environment; if they are confident the destination will provide this, they may be attracted to that destination (see discussion on pull factors below). A need for a sense of social belonging is widely considered a key motivation in tourism, as tourists tend to travel to specific places to develop strong bonds with family, friends or locals in the community (Yousaf, Amin and Santos, 2018) – this relates to Maslow's third level of the pyramid.

**Figure 2.2:** Maslow's hierarchy of needs model



**Source:** Adapted from Maslow (1943) and McLeod (2018)

Once satisfied, the next stage or level in the hierarchy is the need for self-esteem which Maslow (1943) associated with impressing others, such as family and friends, in order to gain a higher social status. Interestingly, tourism has long been seen as a powerful marker of social status, both as a particular form of consumption and in the distinctions between different forms of tourism / tourist: as Culler (1981: 130) observed, tourists 'can always find someone more touristy than themselves to sneer at'. The final, top tier of the hierarchy is self-actualisation, relating to seeking personal growth and realising personal potential (Šimková and Holzner, 2014: 662) in which an individual can partake in a 'peak experience'. Maslow (1962) describes the peak experience to be moments of highest happiness and fulfilment, surpassing usual psychological levels in intensity, meaning and richness. Interestingly, Maslow concluded that, based on his research, only 2% of individuals could obtain the 'growth motivation' that is self-actualisation, and such individuals often displayed personal characteristics such as a strong ethical sense, empathy, an acceptance for self and others, creativeness, a preference for simplicity and a freshness for appreciation (Ryan, 2010). Arguably, it is the concept of self-actualisation that excites motivational researchers, particularly in the context of tourism, as leisure holidays possess the potential for liberating experiences and, perhaps, finding the authentic self. Ryan (2010:30) elaborates:



free from stress, tourists are located in environments that aid spontaneity, encourage social interaction or provide privacy as required, and are in locations that provide differences and challenges to the required level – in short, all the requisites for achieving personal self-actualisation might be said to be present.

As Maslow continued to develop his hierarchy of needs, he subsequently suggested that the structure was not as rigid as he originally proposed (Maslow, 1987). Moreover, over time he expanded it to include cognitive, aesthetic and transcendence needs (McLeod, 2018) as he was interested in how humans fulfil their potential and change through personal growth. Such additional needs are rarely considered in the tourism discourse whilst, more generally, criticism has surrounded the overuse of Maslow's hierarchy of needs model in tourism (Ryan, 2010) with its applicability as an overarching theory of motivation to the specific social activity of tourism being questioned. Nevertheless, it has been effective in informing understanding of travel motivation, most notably through the development of two conceptual frameworks, namely, the travel career ladder (TCL) and travel career pattern (TCP), both of which will be discussed later in this chapter.

#### **2.4.2 Dann's Push and Pull motives for tourism**

According to Huang (2022), the earlier tourist motivation literature embraced the theory of push and pull factors, described by Gnoth (1997: 140) as 'a predominate paradigm for formulating and testing motivational theories in the tourism context'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it still remains one of the more popular approaches to understanding the motivations underpinning leisure travel (for example, Bogari, Crowther and Marr, 2003; Jang and Cai, 2002; Sangpikul, 2008; Whyte, 2017) not least because of its evident simplicity. Indeed, Huang (2022: 221) suggests that the push-pull model 'seems to be derived from common sense reasoning rather than systemic theorizing'. Nevertheless, Snepenger et al. (2006) succinctly describe the distinction between push and pull factors:

The premise is that a person is pushed to participate from internal imbalances and the need to seek an optimal level of arousal, as well as pulled by the offerings of a specific destination. The pull motivations that a tourism destination offers are thought to be specific to that destination, whereas the push motivations are

viewed more generally and have the possibility of being fulfilled by a variety of different activities.

Putting it more simply, push factors, by definition, push people away from the normal home environment; they are features of day-to-day life that create the need to go away, to travel elsewhere, albeit temporarily. In contrast, pull factors are those features of destinations that are attractive to tourists. As these are specific to particular destinations, some suggest that they cannot be considered as motivating (need creating) influences (Pizam et al., 1979). This issue is returned to shortly, but it was a point that Dann (1977) sought to explore in his sociological perspective on tourist motivation. Specifically, he argued that, in seeking to understand why people travel, an 'examination of "push" factors is thus logically, and often temporally, antecedent to that of "pull" factors' (Dann, 1977: 186). In his paper, he goes on to propose two socially derived push factors that motivate tourists: anomie and ego-enhancement.

Anomie is a term used to describe an individual's psychological state of being (Huang, 2022), particularly a sense of social meaninglessness, disconnection or isolation similar to the notion of alienation that, according to MacCannell (1989), inspires people to seek meaning, fulfilment and authenticity in other places and cultures. Perhaps more simply put in the context of motivation, it refers to the escape from people's routines within their day to day lives (or 'getting away from it all'). For Dann (1977: 187), the anomic state of loneliness / disconnection translates into a need for 'love and affection and the desire to communicate'.

Conversely, ego-enhancement reflects the need that individuals have to be recognised or, as Dann (1977: 187) puts it, 'to have one's ego enhanced or boosted from time to time' (Dann, 1977), perhaps to feel superior in relation to others. Tourism provides an ideal opportunity for such ego-enhancement:

A tourist can go to a place where his social position is unknown and where he can feel superior by dint of this lack of knowledge. Additionally, on his return a further boost can be given to his ego in the recounting of his holiday experience – trip dropping. Dann (1977: 187)

In the context of the current research, 'trip dropping' is a phenomenon which refers to creating envy and engaging in status battles (Dann, 1977: 190), one example of which is naming the prestigious resort destination of one's holiday at the 'pre-trip' stage to family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. Thus, although the 'pull' of a destination might be instrumental in seeking ego-enhancement, the need emanates from the tourist's social position and is, like anomie, a push factor.

The empirical results derived from Dann's (1977) study were divided into two 'push factor scales', tourists who were anomically inclined and those who were ego-enhancement oriented. As a result of monotonous work patterns which produced feelings of loneliness and a lack of genuine social interaction, unfulfilled needs remained which could only be met outside the work situation; that is, when on holiday (Dann, 1977: 189). The tourist is aware of the feeling that life can be tolerated once they have a place to go where they can escape their day-to-day life. It was also identified that the anamonic amongst Dann's research subjects primarily viewed their holiday as a time for relaxation and, therefore, the good weather was a 'pull' factor considered of secondary importance. Furthermore, the research revealed a strong need for social interaction, in particular the opportunity for discussions about local life and culture, emphasising the need to escape discussions in relation to their own home environments. Anomic tourists also preferred the simplicity of the holiday setting, as it brought back feelings of nostalgia, of the 'good old days', juxtaposed with the bustling 'concrete and polluted metropolis' (Dann, 1977: 190) from which most of the tourists came. In summary, anamonic tourists were able to fulfil their needs and desires which were denied to them in their day to day lives. Huang (2022:200) highlights the importance of not dismissing the idea of anomie as a push motivation for tourism, as many societies are becoming more urbanised and therefore living conditions may lead to the emergence of anomie as a modern life 'symptom'.

In contrast to the 'anomically inclined' tourist, the ego-enhancement tourist reflected the need for social recognition, which relates very closely to the needs of personal achievement and self-actualisation. In his study Dann (1977) found that the majority amongst this category were female and elderly, for which he offered the following explanation:

That this was the case can be explained in terms of socio-economic status, where both categories of potential tourist could be seen in a state of relative deprivation in contrast to their young male counterparts. As far as the elderly are concerned, it is also worth mentioning in the above connection that the aging process itself is one of the increasing losses of status culminating in retirement. In this instance, the alternative strategy to reminiscence would be that of status achievement through travel. (Dann, 1977: 192)

Furthermore, Dann found those visiting Barbados for the first time to be predominantly amongst this ego-enhancement scale as 'it is the nature of the good story that it be not subject to repetition' (Dann, 1977: 193).

Some four decades ago, Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) similarly explained that the cultural background of the individual can be an important influencing variable, as travel can be seen as a consumptive practice by which one can fulfil a status need (or fulfil a role of conformity) imposed by one's social environment, as escaping from normal routine is considered desirable. This 'desirability' still rings true today and so, returning to the narrative of the thesis, many contemporary studies (for example, Hu, Luo and Wu, 2022; Taylor, 2020) relate the act of sharing travel experiences via social media posts to ego-enhancement or achieving status, as it is suggested that travel is a leisure product that is usually expensive, time consuming, and worthwhile to display (Hu, Luo and Wu, 2022).

The conspicuous display of travel products and experiences will be discussed further in the following chapter, in particular in order to explore the reasons why those who are allegedly concerned for the environment are unwilling to adapt their tourism behaviours. However, to return to the push-pull model of tourist motivation, Dann (1977) is notable for challenging the notion of push motivational factors. Others, such as Pizam et al. (1979), do likewise, questioning whether the tangible characteristics of a destination can be conceptually understood as motivating (need fulfilling) factors. In contrast, from a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, Uysal, Li and Sirakaya-Turk (2008) conclude that a dynamic relationship does exist between push and pull factors. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to engage in this debate although the point remains

that push factors (whether social or psychological) are a powerful motivating force in tourism, and these may be complemented by destination-related factors.

### 2.4.3 Crompton's Socio-psychological motivations for travel

Crompton's (1979) study was concerned with identifying the motives of pleasure vacationers (tourists) with a view to develop a conceptual framework that would integrate said motives. His study was among the first to conjecture non-destination-specific 'push' motives are often major driving forces in a person's decision to where and when they travel (Snepenger et al., 2006: 140). Within his research, Crompton encountered the problem that tourists themselves do not always understand their motives for travel or find them difficult to articulate, which is not an uncommon finding in empirical travel motivation studies. Nevertheless, he was able to identify nine motives for travel, located along a cultural socio-psychological disequilibrium continuum (Crompton, 1979: 415). Seven of these were identified as socio-psychological push motives, namely: escape from perceived mundane environment; exploration and evaluation of self; relaxation; prestige; regression; enhancement of kinship relationships; and facilitation of social interaction. Table 2.6 below provides a summary description of each of these seven motives. The two remaining motives, specifically, novelty and education, were conceptualised as being located at the cultural end of the continuum, which are linked to the desire to see new places or do things in a different environment (Crompton, 1979: 422).

**Table 2.6:** Crompton's seven socio-psychological motivations for travel

Motive	Outline of motive
Escape from Perceived Mundane Environment	Respondents frequently expressed the motive 'a temporary change of environment', regardless of their living environments. Escape was sought from home, job and general residential locale. No optimum environment was found to facilitate 'escape', the only key ingredient was that the holiday setting should be physically and socially different from the environment in which they live their day to day lives.

Exploration and Evaluation of Self	Self-discovery emerged from being in a new situation in which the physical and social context was an essential element of the process. The insights into a person's 'self' could not be captured in the home environment or when visiting friends or relatives. Exposure to the dissimilar environment resulted in a re-evaluation of current perceptions of self-worth and an enhanced feeling of self-worth. Common responses included 'I learned a lot about myself'.
Relaxation	Relaxation was a common respondent theme. However, it was apparent that the relaxation referred to the mental state rather than being physically relaxed. Most respondents admitted to feeling physically exhausted but mentally relaxed and refreshed upon returning home from their holiday. Relaxation was associated with taking the time to pursue activities of interest.
Prestige	Although few respondents accepted there were prestige motives involved in their own travel decisions, few suggested it was a primary motive in the decisions of others. Possibly as a result of frequent exposure to travel, it is perceived to be less prestigious.
Regression	Some respondents admitted that holiday settings allowed them the opportunity to engage in irrational behaviours, reminiscent of adolescence as opposed to adulthood. The opportunity to engage in this behaviour was afforded by withdrawal of day to day, usual role obligations.
Enhancement of Kinship Relationships	Many respondents viewed their holiday as a time to bring the family close together, hence, enhancing or enriching family relationships as they had the time in the holiday setting, unlike in their normal routines.
Facilitation of Social Interaction	Importantly, for some respondents, meeting new people in different locations was a key motive, therefore, their holidays were people oriented rather than place oriented. Similar to some of the other listed motives, respondents were unaware of the motive until after the holiday had ended.

**Source:** Adapted from Crompton (1979)

Crompton (1979: 421) concludes that preference is likely to be given to the holiday destination which best fits the dominant motive. However, he reiterates that although

the motives (outlined in Table 2.6 above) were discussed as separate entities, they should not be considered as mutually exclusive, nor should any single tension state be selected as the determinant of behaviour. Although Crompton's work may be considered a simple dichotomous approach (Huang, 2022), his theory provides a good basis for exploring tourist motivation and the motives outlined provide a good reference point for the discussions in the findings chapter of the thesis.

#### **2.4.4 Iso Ahola's seeking and escaping framework**

Similar to the two forces of tourism motivation as proposed by Dann (1977) and discussed above – anomie and ego-enhancement – Iso Ahola (1982) developed a theory based on the notion that 'an awareness of the potential satisfaction from travelling as a tourist provides a person with the energy for selecting goals for travel' (Iso-Ahola, 1982: 259), not least because the notion of travel experience carries a great deal of 'ideological baggage' (Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987: 317). Accordingly, Iso-Ahola asserted that leisure motivation comprises of two forces, namely, approach (seeking) and avoidance (escape):

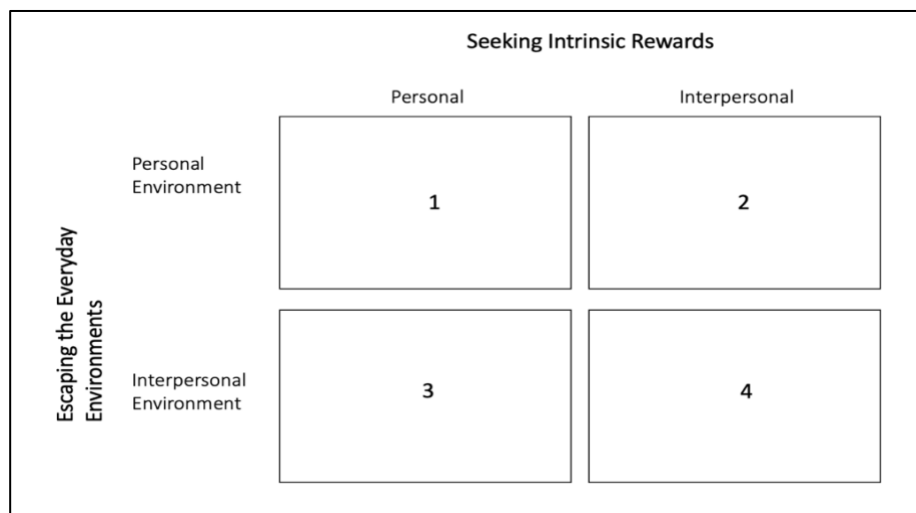
- Seeking: the desire to obtain psychological (intrinsic) rewards through travel in a contrasting (new or old) environment (Iso-Ahola, 1982: 259) and:
- Escaping: the desire to leave the everyday, routine environment behind oneself (Iso-Ahola, 1982: 259).

In common with most of the key motivational theories discussed thus far, the seeking and escaping framework comprises both personal (psychological) and interpersonal (social) elements. In contrast, Dann (1977) argued that that seeking and escaping (the 'push' and the 'pull') were both socially determined. For Iso-Ahola, seeking can be both personal, as in seeking to feel better about oneself or self-actualisation, or interpersonal, as in looking to engage with others. Similarly, escaping can be from either one's personal environment, such as home, or from one's interpersonal / social environment. The relationship between the personal and interpersonal dimensions are depicted in Figure 2.3 (below), for which Huang (2022:201) provides the following explanation:

An individual's motivation in leisure and tourism can vary from escaping personal environments to seeking personal rewards on one axis and, on another

intersecting axis, range from escaping interpersonal environments to seeking interpersonal rewards.

**Figure 2.3:** A socio-psychological model of tourism motivation (Iso-Ahola, 1982)



**Source:** Adapted from Iso-Ahola (1982)

Importantly, the dichotomy between the seeking and escaping motives is not mutually exclusive; it is often possible for an individual to be responding to both motives simultaneously (Snepenger et al., 2006: 141). In essence, what determines whether an individual tends to seek or escape through participating in tourism seems to be the stimulating or arousal state of the individual's daily life (Huang, 2022: 201) and, therefore, optimal arousal appears to be a key factor in understanding an individual's motivation for travel (Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987). For example, if an individual lives an overwhelming and stressful life with, perhaps, a demanding work pattern, they may escape from these pressures by going on holiday to relax. Contrastingly, an individual may wish to escape their underwhelming and under stimulating home and work (routine) environment by seek excitement on holiday. Interestingly, such a proposition conforms with Zuzanek and Mannell's (1983) compensation / opposition model of the work-leisure relationship which Ryan (1991) applies to the tourism context. For him, tourists are motivated to seek out experiences that are the opposite of or compensate for what they perceive to be deficiencies in their normal, day-to-day lives, whether the demands of their obligated / work time or their lifestyles more generally. For instance, they might feel the need to escape to a fantasy life, temporally indulging in a lifestyle beyond their normal financial



means – described by Gottlieb (1982) as living like a king or queen for a day. Equally, tourism offers people the opportunity to escape from the restrictions of social ‘rules’ and to engage in behaviours not normally accepted in their home society.

Iso-Ahola’s framework has, according to Huang (2022), been criticised for being disappointingly under-developed. However, what is interesting in the context of this thesis is that Iso-Ahola (1983) recognised that people have a desire to talk about their travel experiences. In fact, he posits a rhetorical question which will be addressed in the results chapter of this thesis, that is, ‘How many recreational travellers would continue to travel if there were no opportunity to share their experiences?’ (Iso-Ahola, 1983: 48). His reasoning is that many individuals not only like to compare their tourism experiences with those of others but also, and perhaps more importantly, because they have the opportunity to enhance their social status and self-esteem. According to Iso-Ahola (1983: 48), a person who travels abroad can be considered successful and, therefore, is seen positively in the eyes of others. This notion is not dissimilar to Dann’s ‘ego-enhancement’ motive, discussed above, but is also of direct relevance to the role of consumption more generally in creating personal identity and status as discussed in Chapter 3. Again, therefore, Iso-Ahola’s framework will go some way informing the identification of travel motivations within the context of the current research.

#### **2.4.5 The Travel Career Ladder (TCL)**

The travel career ladder (TCL), developed by Pearce and colleagues (see Pearce, 1988; Pearce and Calabiano, 1983; Pearce and Lee, 2005; Pearce and Moscardo, 1986), was largely influenced by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and the psychological goal of self-actualisation. It was designed with the aim of providing a blueprint for assessing the variety of tourists’ motivational travel needs and benefits (Pearce, 1996: 13). Essentially, as people acquire touristic experiences throughout their lives (their ‘travel career’), their motivations change and evolve inasmuch as they increasingly seek the satisfaction of higher needs (Pearce, 1991). Ryan (1998: 938) offers context by explaining that first time tourists may feel that a package holiday provides them with security but in time, as they advance through their travel career, they may opt for independent travel. Pearce (1982;

2013) commenced his inquiries of tourist motivation based on the travel narratives of positive and negative travel experiences of around 200 tourists from various countries. The general pattern emerged from his research was that higher-end needs (such as self-actualisation) appeared more often in the positive experience narratives than in the negative experience narratives (Huang, 2022). Pearce (1982; 2013) concluded from his research that people have a career goal in their motivation for tourist behaviour, and people who have more travel experiences throughout their life tend to demonstrate more motivations relating to the higher 'peak' of Maslow's hierarchy of needs pyramid (such as love and self-actualisation). He thus developed the five-point hierarchical 'ladder' reflecting patterns in an individual's travel life. He posited that as an individual moves through their life, they become a more experienced traveller and ascend the TCL. Nevertheless, travellers were not considered to have only one level of travel motivation but, rather, that one set of needs in the ladder levels may be dominant (Pearce and Lee, 2005: 227). Although the TCL is an attempt to theorise travel motivations, the model has been criticised as it was perceived to be difficult to validate empirically (Ryan, 1998). It was on this basis, as Pearce himself acknowledges (Pearce, 2022), that the subsequent Travel Career Pattern (TCP) model was developed.

#### **2.4.6 The Travel Career Pattern (TCP) model**

The Travel Career Pattern (TCP) is a conceptual adjustment and enhancement to the Pearce's original theoretical contribution to tourist motivation – his TCL approach (Pearce and Lee, 2005). Unlike the TCL, the TCP does not follow the hierarchical structure but does nevertheless continue to link tourists' motivations to their travel experiences. Pearce and Lee's (2005) research comprised a two-stage empirical investigation into travel motivations and their findings demonstrated that travel motivation could be identified as patterns and combinations of multiple motives that are influenced by previous travel experience and age (Pearce and Lee, 2005: 235). Furthermore, the results indicated that the most important motivational factors in establishing reason for travel were those relating to:

- escape/relax
- novelty
- relationship, and

- self-development.

However, contradicting the preceding TCL theory, higher levels of motivation, such as self-actualisation and self-development, were emphasised more by the lower-travel-experience subjects (Pearce and Lee, 2005: 236). Furthermore, it was recognised that individuals may possess dominant, consistent motivations that act as a core driver for travel, regardless of their travel experience level. These, Pearce and Lee (2005) concluded are the ‘backbone’ of travel career patterns. However, Huang (2022: 203) suggests that while levels of travel experiences do appear to be of relevance to tourism motivations, there continues to exist a large theoretical gap in the literature. Moreover, he argues that, despite Pearce and his colleagues’ continuous persistence, the TCP would be more suited as a theoretical framework as opposed to a theory in its own right, owing to its lack of theoretical clarity. The limitations of the approach are further highlighted by the fact that the four key motivations established in the TCP study listed above are not dissimilar to those endorsed by other theorists. For example, the novelty seeking motive has received considerable attention in the discourse since its introduction to the tourism literature by Cohen (1972) in which he describes a continuum of possible combinations of novelty and familiarity which he claims is ‘the basic underlying variable for the sociological analysis of the phenomenon of modern tourism’ (Cohen, 1972: 167). Furthermore, and as previously mentioned, the escape motive was introduced and explained as part of the escape seeking framework by Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987). Nevertheless, the TCP approach has proved popular amongst tourist motivation researchers (for example, Getz and Anderson, 2010; Morgan and Xu, 2013; O’Reily, 2006; Paris and Teye, 2010; Xu, Morgan and Song, 2009) and, as Pearce (2022: 178) observes in his own recent critique of his models, has appeared in over 1000 citations on Google Scholar. More recently, the TCP has also been linked to other emerging research such as positive psychology, facilitating understanding of how travel motives not only drive corrective behaviours (such as a desire to escape), but also reflect human aspirations (Pearce, 2022: 177). Interestingly, in his recent critique, Pearce goes on to provide a revised version of the TCP model – see Pearce (2022: 176).

## **2.5 A note on the contemporary tourist experience**

Not only has tourism expanded remarkably in scale and scope but also the significance of tourism as a form of consumption has also changed (Sharpley and Telfer, 2023). According to Urry (1994), over time tourism has evolved to reflect wider cultural transformations, most particularly since the emergence of mass tourism in the mid-twentieth century as a reflection of the culture of mass production and consumption (Sharpley and Telfer, 2023). Urry (1994: 234) claims that, whilst tourism once represented a distinctive social practice that was differentiated from dominant (high) culture, it has gone through a process from reflecting (mass) culture to becoming simply cultural: 'tourism is no longer a differentiated set of social practices with its distinct rules, times and spaces' (Urry, 1994: 234). Rather, in the contemporary world, tourism has arguably merged into and become an accepted part everyday life; as discussed further in the next chapter, it is a form of consumption that is accepted and expected within contemporary society. Moreover, as mentioned previously, most of the time people are probably unaware of what actually motivates them to participate in tourism and perhaps do so as a habit or even a kind of addiction (Henning, 2012). This, in turn, suggests that tourism may not actually be rational, motivated behaviour and, consequently, as Sharpley and Telfer (2023) conclude, attempting to understand the motivation for tourism becomes less important than considering its role in contemporary consumer culture – hence the focus of the next chapter.

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

Overall, then, it is evident from the above discussion that although the issue of tourist motivation has long been a popular focus of academic attention, there remains a lack of consensus over what motivation 'is'. To echo the words of Dann (1981: 211), the sheer complexity of the field makes firm conclusions extremely difficult both from a disciplinary perspective and with regards to its position / role in the tourist's decision-making process – and how it might be conceptualised. Nevertheless, across the literature two key motivational factors are consistent, namely, escape / avoidance and seeking / ego-enhancement. In other words, tourism is motivated by, on the one hand, going away from and, on the other hand, achieving some personal benefit. Both may be seen as psychological; social (or factors extrinsic to the individual) must be internalised as

psychological needs demanding satisfaction. Equally, it can be argued that both are intuitive inasmuch as if there is any rationality underpinning the consumption of tourism, the very act of investing in travelling (away) and presumably pleasurable experiences can be assumed to be driven by the belief that these will satisfy particular needs.

At the same time, however, it can be argued that tourism has evolved into a fundamental element of contemporary life (for those able to engage in it); it has come to be perceived as a necessary part of social existence (or, as Urry (1994) suggests, cultural), to the extent that, in all likelihood, people do not question why they consume tourism – they simply do it. And they do so even in times of economic hardship. For example, at the time of writing (January 2023), even though high levels of inflation have resulted in a cost-of-living crisis in the UK, reports suggest that holiday bookings were higher than the same month in 2019, prior to the Covid-related collapse in tourism (see Race, 2023). This might be explained in part by ‘traditional’ motives that have translated into so-called revenge travel (Wang and Xia, 2022) but it also suggests other forces are at play, forces that endow tourism as a form of consumption with a particular significance or meaning. Those forces also mean that people continue to consume tourism in ever greater numbers despite the increasing publicity accorded to its damaging environmental impacts, not least its contribution to climate change. Hence, it is necessary to explore the demand for tourism within this wider context of consumer culture – this is the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter Three

# Consumer Behaviour, Consumer Culture and the Consumption of Tourism

### 3.0 Introduction

As emphasised in the summary of the previous chapter, for the purposes of this thesis it is critical to explore in detail the demand for tourism within the wider context of consumer culture. In other words, although it has long been recognised that motivation is considered to be the primary energising factor in the tourism consumption process (Sharpley, 2018: 148; Parrinello, 1993), other factors which influence the behaviour of tourists in the subsequent stages of the demand process also require consideration. Specifically, then, the purpose of this chapter is to pay particular attention to factors that influence the behaviour of tourists beyond the motivational variables discussed in the preceding chapter.

This is not to say that research has not been concerned with analysis and understanding of the consumption of tourism beyond motivational factors in order to develop a broader understanding of the tourism demand process. Indeed, much of the tourist experience literature has long had such a focus (for example, Horner and Swarbrooke, 2021; Pearce, 2005; Ryan, 2002). However, much of the work concerned with this process has arguably adopted an overly tourism-centric perspective. That is, most researchers have to a great extent studied the consumption of tourism in isolation from the broader social and cultural influences that shape consumer behaviour as a whole and, as a consequence, little or no reference is made to the influence that consumer culture has on tourism as a form of consumption. Therefore, this chapter commences by exploring consumer culture in general as a contemporary and highly influential cultural phenomenon. It then goes on to explore critically the influence of consumer culture on tourism and, in particular, on the consumption of tourism amongst the post-millennial generation.

### 3.1 The emergence of a consumer society

Although this chapter is concerned with contemporary consumer culture within which tourism is an increasingly significant activity, it is important to establish the basis from which consumer culture evolved, namely, the consumer society. Consumerism, or the idea that buying goods and services is a desirable goal, emerged as a mass phenomenon in capitalist societies during the latter half of the twentieth century. In particular, following the end of the Second World War the expansion of numerous industries selling consumer goods such as automobiles, domestic appliances and electrical items fuelled and fed a culture of consumerism (Gabriel and Lang, 2015: 19). Building on the efficient production processes established in the automobile industry in the early 1900s – what came to be referred to as Fordism (Jessop, 1992) – mass production created an endlessness of needs by offering ever-increasing opportunities for people to spend money on goods and services (including tourism), although initially choice remained quite limited.

However, a phenomenon of this significance could not occur without long periods of preparation, development and growth (McKendrick, 2018: 13). In their detailed account of the birth of the consumer society, McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb (2018) argue that the modern consumer revolution is deeply rooted in the past; specifically, they suggest that population growth just before the end of the seventeenth century sparked the development of English manufacturing which, in turn, triggered the elusive concept of expandable spending (McKendrick, 2018: 14). However, due to the prevailing social disapproval of self-indulgence at that time, it was not until the 1770s that the idea of increased propensity to consume earned its rightful place in models of economic growth (McKendrick et al., 2018: 15). Appleby (1976: 501) asserts that:

The rich were expected to buy their luxuries, the poor to have enough to subsist. The possibility that at all levels of society consumers might acquire new wants and find new means to enhance their purchasing power which could generate new spending and produce habits capable of destroying all traditional limits to the wealth of the nations was unthought of, if not unthinkable.

During this period, members of society did not in a sense interact with each other; rather, they merely 'participated' in society and individual agency was almost unheard of. Society was concerned with mobilising a labour force and exploiting new resources (Appleby, 1976: 501) and, hence, the emphasis was placed on putting people to work. In other words, consumption was thought of as nothing more than the logical end to production. In the closing decades of the seventeenth century, however, every index of economic growth advanced and a commensurate rise in domestic consumption and a higher standard of living was in evidence (Appleby, 1976). On the one hand, this might be explained as the result of a demonstrated, more 'sympathetic' attitude towards the labourer (Coats, 1958: 36) and the consequential decision to increase wages. On the other hand, increased wages were not only a reward for skill or an incentive to work harder but also brought wider benefits; increased spending by the lower classes was welcomed as a contribution towards a more stable social order (Coats, 1958: 36) whilst, at the same time, increasing consumption would undoubtedly further boost demand, resulting in what is more contemporarily known as the economic growth cycle (Rostow, 1959).

Eventually, then, as the consumption of hedonic goods came to be seen as socially acceptable, the doctrine of beneficial luxury came to be embraced, as was the view that 'luxury produces much good' as the availability of comforts and conveniences could operate as a powerful stimulus to industry driven by all ranks of society (Coats, 1958: 49). As a consequence, English society experienced the emergence of a growing variety of new wants and new fashions. Importantly, it also witnessed an increase in class competition:

Where there was a constant restless striving to clamber from one rank to the next, and where possessions, especially clothes, both symbolized and signalled each step in the social promotion, the economic potentialities of such social needs could, if properly harnessed, be immense. (McKendrick, 2018: 20)

The remarkable growth in the British population, particularly in the capital city of London (as the largest European city in the eighteenth century), along with the industrialisation of mass enterprises, provided a strong foundation for the creation of a consumer society



(McKendrick, 2018: 21). At the same time, the rise of a political-economic system primarily concerned with the accumulation of capital for the purposes of generating profit was a further powerful stimulus. Within the social realm, the lifestyle of the population and prevailing fashions also influenced consumer behaviour; more specifically, it sparked the emergence of conspicuous consumption (a phenomenon that is considered in more detail later in this chapter). McKendrick (2018:21) notes that without the existence of London, it would have been much more difficult for commercial manipulation to achieve the ephemeral conformity of taste. The factories of varied textile production were obliged to keep up with and satisfy the market as well as to profit fully from the fashion life cycles that fed the habits of conspicuous consumption. This inevitably created the mass consumer market of the industrial revolution in which, through both desire and the ability amongst the population to spend, the seeds of a consumer culture were sewn.

### **3.2 A note on modernity and postmodernity**

Although subjective debates surrounding the alleged rise of the modern and postmodern cultural conditions – or what is referred to as high/late modern by contributors such as Giddens (1990) and Habermas (1981) – are beyond the scope of this chapter, an appreciation of the concepts of modernity and postmodernity is fundamental to an understanding of the evolution of the consumer society and culture. By way of introduction, it is first essential to offer a brief overview of how what was known as a ‘traditional social community’ ruptured, giving way to what we now refer to as modern society. From a temporal perspective, the term 'modern' is embedded in history. In the late fifth century, the term was originally used to distinguish the then Christian present from the Roman and pagan past (Habermas, 1981: 3) and it is more generally viewed as the result of a transition from the old (or traditional) to the new. Through the progressive economic and administrative rationalisation of the social world (Sarup, 1993: 131), a 'modern' period was born, generally considered to be at around the beginning of the sixteenth century. However, although the notion of the 'modern' society has been in evidence for centuries, it is widely suggested that the cultural condition of modernity was prevalent from around the late nineteenth century through to the mid twentieth century (for example, Giddens, 1990; Venn and Featherstone, 2006).

Much of the earlier literature tends to treat modernity and postmodernity as pejorative concepts (Meštrović, 2011). Although the sociological debates introduced by key thinkers such as Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx are beyond the scope of this chapter, their contributions and philosophies lay the foundations for modernist social thought, driven by a belief in the power of human reason to understand, change or even master the social world. Although their views on the social world and society – specifically on how society is constructed and functions – differed, they made considerable efforts to highlight and explain the changes that were remaking Europe and America, and to address the consequences of industrialisation and urbanisation as part of a broader debate about the meaning of social change (Lechner, 1998) or what Giddens (1990: 163) refers to as ‘a movement beyond modernity’.

During this period there emerged a variety of socio-economic structures and processes, including industrialisation, capitalism, bureaucracy and urbanisation, which were key to the subsequent development of what many refer to as the postmodern world. Indeed, the Industrial Revolution in particular paved new ways for sociologists to examine the social world. According to commentators such as Featherstone (1988), Harvey (1990), Kellner (1988) and Lyotard (1988), a body of contradictory phenomena comprise what they claim to be postmodern society. These diverse phenomena include, but are not limited to, cynicism, pastiche, fantasy, a preference for visuals over words, promiscuity, a rejection of narrative structures and, in the specific context of tourism, a ‘post-tourist’ search for spectacle and a penchant for hyper-reality (Meštrović, 2011: 20). In other words, postmodern society is institutionally and culturally complex and differs fundamentally from the preceding period of modernity, perhaps best explained as ‘the replacement of modernist scientific rationality or certainty underpinning a universal belief in progress with a multiplicity of ideas and realities and an emphasis on image, choice, the ephemeral and, most significantly, the borrowing and merging of previously distinctive cultural forms and practices’ (Sharpley, 2015: 388). Whereas modernity was associated with the emergence of rational, organised, secular, political and capitalist systems that brought about the structural differentiation of various aspects of society and culture, postmodernity refers to the breaking down of these distinctions, of cultural ‘dedifferentiation’ (Lash 1990: 1). Indeed, some contributors go as far as defining

postmodernism as an attack on, an extension of, or a rebellion against modernism (Meštrović, 2011: 21).

Whilst such a socio-cultural transformation is widely acknowledged, some are critical of its outcomes. Baudrillard (2017), for example, argues that postmodern society values style over substance and people display a 'ludic curiosity' as they exist in a state of 'hyper reality' in which people struggle with their identity. Indeed, technological advance, playing a crucial role in the industrialisation of the planet, has created what is contemporarily known as the 'mass media' which, Baudrillard (2017: 29) argues, has subjected people to 'simulated objects'. In other words, instead of reality people are treated to simulations, detaching them from the real world. Conversely, Rustin (1994) places the blame for this cultural transformation on capitalism, not technology. Other influential sociologists share similar views to those of Baudrillard and Rustin. For example, Giddens (1991) asserts that we are living in a stage of 'high modernity' in which people no longer require face-to-face interaction with other members of society; rather, they have become what he refers to as 'reflexive' as they move away from traditions, from their roots, and are forced to reflect on who and what they are. In a similar vein, Beck (1996: 28) proposes the concept of reflexive modernisation, although this, he suggests, refers to 'self-confrontation' rather than unambiguous 'reflection' implied by Giddens. Beck elaborates as follows:

The transition from the industrial to the risk epoch of modernity occurs *unintentionally, unseen, compulsively*, in the course of a dynamic of modernisation which has made itself autonomous, on the pattern of *latent side-effects*. One can almost say that the constellations of risk society are created because the self-evident truths of industrial society (the consensus on progress, the abstraction from ecological consequences and hazards) dominate the thinking and behaviour of human beings and institutions. Risk society is not an option which could be chosen or rejected in the course of political debate. It arises through the automatic operation of autonomous modernisation processes which are blind and deaf to consequences and dangers. In total, and latently, these produce hazards which call into question – indeed abolish – the basis of industrial society....If we call the autonomous, unintentional and unseen, *reflex-like*

transition from industrial to risk society *reflexivity* – in distinction and opposition to *reflection* – then ‘reflexive modernisation’ means self-confrontation with the consequences of risk society which cannot (adequately) be addressed and overcome in the system of industrial society. (Beck, 1996: 28).

What Beck (1992, 1996) is suggesting then, in contrast to those who claim there has been a distinctive shift from a culturally modern to a postmodern world, is that, rather, there has been a transition from an industrial society to what he calls a ‘risk society’ in which we are witnessing the new and unintended side effects of industrial society. These side effects, as the outcome of human activities, pose a significant risk for the future of society and include, for example, the potential for nuclear disasters and the contemporary challenge of global warming. However, various aspects of Beck’s (1992) theory of risk society have been challenged. For example, Adam (1998) questioned the degree to which risk society represents a fundamental break from previous forms of society, arguing that risk has always been an inherent feature of human existence. Nevertheless, Beck views the transition as taking place within the framework of his theory of second modernity (Sørensen and Christiansen, 2013: 26) which was his attempt to resolve the debate between the ‘modernists’ and the ‘post-modernists’ or rather, as Sørensen and Christiansen (2013: 27) assert, ‘between the advocates of the post-modern diagnosis and the advocates of the diagnosis that we still, to this day, are living in modernity’.

In support of this, Beck, Bonss and Lau (2003) point to five specific phenomena which have influenced the agenda of recent decades and are evidence of second modernity:

- i. Multidimensional globalisation
- ii. Radicalised/intensified individualisation
- iii. Global environmental crisis
- iv. Gender revolution
- v. The third industrial revolution.

Sørensen and Christiansen (2013: 33) address these phenomena in their detailed account of Beck’s ‘Theory of Second Modernity’, asserting that:

First modernity, for example, denied women and children certain fundamental rights, and women were excluded, almost entirely from the labour market. However, while the five processes have effectively led us beyond all of this, they have also led us into a second modernity which is characterized by a new, generalized kind of insecurity, having to do with the new, global environmental risks, the release of individuals from the communities of industrial modernity, the lack of full-time gainful employment and the multidimensional process of globalization which has undermined the authority of the nation states.

It is relevant to add here that the concept of modernity itself remains contested and there are those who challenge the idea or critique it for reasons such as its heavy reliance upon power and disciplinary institutions (Foucault, 1977).

Irrespective of these varying concepts, perspectives and terminologies, however, there is little doubt that, since the mid-twentieth century, transformations have occurred within modern (particularly Western) societies. Specifically, institutions and social structures have become more fragmented, and the identity that was once accorded to individuals by their position in society (for example, their age, gender and social class) in the modern period has become dissolved. In other words, as a consequence of the collapse of the social structures and certainties afforded by modernity, nowadays individuals are no longer obliged to conform to the ways of social order. Contemporary society is more individualistic, in the sense that people enjoy the freedom of infinite choice that allows them to be who or what they wish. Hence, the (post)modern alienated individual is obliged to establish their identity through other means. Correspondingly, Featherstone (1990) asserts that modern-day individuals attach symbolic meaning to consumptive goods in an effort to create and maintain identity. In other words, individuals increasingly seek identity through consumption, hence the emergence of a consumer culture. In conclusion, then, as a result of this shift from modernity to postmodernity (or arguably the 'second modernity') and more recent economic, socio-cultural and psychological transformations, the foundations of the consumer society was created and cultivated.

### 3.3 Consumer culture in contemporary societies

For more than three decades, the concept of consumer culture has been explored widely from a number of disciplinary perspectives. Indeed, as Edwards (2000) suggests, given the extensive academic attention paid to it, consumer society and culture as a concept and practice has even become a matter for some consumption in itself. Common to all studies, however, is the premise that the consumption of commodities, services and experiences is of cultural significance within (post)modern societies (see, for example, Baudrillard, 2017; Dittmar, 2008; Lury, 2011). Putting it another way, things are no longer bought or consumed simply for utilitarian purposes; rather, consumption plays a cultural role as commodities and experiences have, as Appadurai (1988) puts it, acquired a 'social life'. Culture itself can be thought of as a way of characterising differences between human groups and changes within them (Spillman, 2020); a specific culture comprises a set of shared beliefs, values, attitudes and norms, but can also be defined as a set of control mechanisms, such as plans, rules and instructions, for the governing of behaviour (Geertz, 1973: 44). Importantly, without such social control mechanisms, people would have difficulty living together (De Mooij, 2019: 38). In essence, then, a consumer culture is a culture in which people buy things not only for practical, utilitarian reasons but also for the socio-cultural meanings they associate with their purchase. Typically, such consumption is undertaken as a means of establishing and displaying status within (post)modern societies in which, as discussed in the preceding section, the identity markers associated with modernity have dissolved. Table 3.1 below illustrates a range of the definitions and meanings associated with the phenomenon of consumer culture.

Putting it another way, the act of consuming has long been regarded as a type of social action with consumption practices usually being defined from either an economic perspective, in that products are conceived as bundles of attributes that yield particular benefits, or from the symbolic perspective in which products are considered as vessels of meaning that signify similarly across all consumers (Holt, 1995: 1). During the sociological modern era, consumption was viewed as the logical outcome of production with people's identity established by their role in production.

**Table 3.1:** Consumer Culture: Definitions

Author	Definition//Meaning
Arnould (2010)	The Social arrangement in which the relations between the [lived cultural experience of everyday life] and social resources, between meaningful [valued] ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, is mediated through markets
AQR (2022)	Consumer culture suggests that consumption - the act of buying goods or services - is a cultural activity, one imbued with meaning and driven not just by practical or economic factors.
Featherstone (1990)	Consumer culture is premised upon the expansion of capitalist commodity production which has given rise to a vast accumulation of material culture in the form of consumer goods and sites for purpose and consumption.
Dittmar (2008)	The socio-cultural, experiential, symbolic, and ideological aspects of consumption.
Lury (2011)	Consumer culture is a type of material culture, that is, a culture of the use or appropriation of objects or things.
Sharpley (2018)	The character, significance, and role of the consumption of commodities, services and experiences within modern societies.

**Source:** Created by author (2023)

However, a fundamental feature of post-modern consumption is that consumption has become dominant over production (Pretes, 1995: 2). Sharpley (2018: 156) elaborates on the production-consumption relationship:

This has come about, in part, from a variety of factors and transformations within the wider social and economic system in post-industrial societies that have enabled the practice of consumption to assume a leading role in people’s lives. Such factors include the large, widely available and ever-increasing range of consumer goods and services, the popularity of ‘leisure shopping’, the emergence

of consumer groups and consumer legislation, pervasive advertising and widely available credit facilities.

As a consequence, then, in contemporary societies (generally those belonging to the wealthier, developed nations but also increasingly within emerging economies as the global middle class continues to expand – see Jacobsen, 2023), individuals are faced every day with consumption choices. Indeed, as Lury (2011) notes, it is almost impossible for people not to have to make choices about consumer goods and services. Furthermore, to remain immune to continuous exposure to the socio-cultural norms of consumer culture is virtually impossible (Dittmar, 2008: 2). An ever growing and ever more widely available variety of goods and services are on display, whether in stores or through pervasive advertising on TV and radio, on billboards and, increasingly, online, creating opportunities for individuals to spend their money. This includes, but is not limited to, clothing, household goods, cars, beauty products and services, food items (including take-away services), holidays and taxi services. Moreover, access to these goods and services is available 24/7, facilitated by the Internet and online payment facilities, with almost instantaneous deliveries to home or the workplace (Lury, 2011).

It is, of course, important to highlight here that not all members of society are driven by consumerism or fall under the influence of consumer culture. Certainly, they will participate in consumptive practices in the sense that they will on a regular basis purchase particular goods and services to fulfil particular needs, such as fuel for their car or a 'weekly household grocery shop' to ensure they have food to consume as a means to staying nourished. However, these will be purchased for their utilitarian value. In other words, not everything that is produced to be consumed possesses meaning beyond a primary, utilitarian purpose. This distinction between consumerism and consumption is addressed by Lodziak (2002: 2), who attempts to distinguish between the practice of consumption (referring to everything that is bought / consumed) and the meaning of consumerism (unnecessary consumption or consumption that is not intended to address basic needs).

It is, perhaps, self-evident that some goods and services potentially possess only utilitarian value (for example, a bottle of milk, a box of eggs or loaf of bread), yet arguably



not even these can escape the clutches of consumer culture. For instance, choices between battery and free-range eggs, regular and organic bread or cow's and soya milk may be influenced by non-utilitarian objectives, as indeed may be the choice of shop or supermarket. This issue is returned to shortly but, as a consequence, contributors such as Baudrillard (1988) argue that the use-value of goods and services is irrelevant to understanding consumption as it results only from the inherent meaning or significance of those goods and services.

Indeed, contemporary society can be considered to be a consumer culture in which social life operates in the sphere of consumption (Giddens, 1991). That is, the 'social arrangement in which the relation between lived culture and social resources, between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend is mediated through markets' (Slater, 1997: 8) which, in turn, reflect the dominance of mass production and capitalism. Capitalism is commonly seen as the most important factor in the rise of mass consumption and consumer culture (Lury, 2011) and as discussed in the previous section of the chapter, this has inevitably, over time, moulded individuals into consumers. Of course, not everyone has access to the resources necessary to engage in consumerism; poverty, both relative and absolute (Notten and De Neubourg, 2011), places severe limits on an individual's ability to participate in a consumer society and, as a consequence, the target market for producers remains the affluent and employed (Edwards, 2000). This claim is rather evident in the fact that, according to Lury (2011: 12), some 20% of the world's population (those residing in the rich nations) account for over 80% of total consumer spending. Furthermore, the significance of consumption is evidenced through the percentage of GDP it accounts for within those nations. For example, in the UK, household consumption is the largest expenditure across the economy, accounting for 61% of the total in 2022 (Booth, 2023). Nevertheless, this balance is changing. According to Wallach (2022), the global middle class that underpins the consumption of goods and services will account for more than half the world's population by 2030, with significant implications for both the global economy and the global environment.

The verb 'to consume' has, in the past, been associated with negative connotations, meaning 'to destroy', 'to use up', 'to waste' or 'to exhaust' (Gabriel and Lang, 2015: 7).

More recently, however, 'to consume' has become associated with not only fulfilling needs but also resonates with pleasure, enjoyment and freedom (Lasch, 1991; Özbölük, 2020). In essence, social lives are now patterned and created by the acquisition and use of things and therefore, consumption is often associated with living 'the good life'. Gabriel and Lang (2015: 7) describe the consumer as a totem pole 'around which a multitude of actions and ideologies are dancing'. Furthermore, whether individually or collectively, the consumer is no longer a person who merely desires, buys and uses up a commodity; rather, there is much more attached to the meaning of being a consumer. Certainly, consumption evidently allows for utilitarian needs to be met, such as the need to eat, to wear clothes, to wash one's body or travel to work. However, in a consumer society, consumption is more than simply fulfilling utilitarian needs, for even the basic need to eat may extend beyond the primary purpose of fuelling the body and avoiding starvation. For example, the fridge of the consumer may be filled with simple, nutritious foods, such as fruit, vegetables and meats, which, when consumed, serve their purpose of satiety. However, in a moment of hunger and facilitated by almost instantaneous access to an extensive menu of 'fast food', the consumer 'wants' to eat a takeaway. They will therefore call for a delivery to fulfil the 'want' rather than eat the food they have already purchased in order to fulfil the 'need'. Campbell (2000: 68) elaborates:

Obviously some wants relate to products which service recurrent needs like those for food and clothing and hence their cyclical reappearance is understandable. The form taken by the want is, however, independent of the need which gives rise to it. Thus, whilst the need for food will be experienced at regular intervals, this may lead, at different times, to a want for a hamburger, a Chinese meal or merely a bar of chocolate. A specific want thus reflects the expression of a preference within the context of a need and the recurrent nature of needs does not explain the ever-changing nature of wants.

Of course, this applies to more than just food. Contemporary societies are characterised by mass-consumption and a fixation with the idea of 'to have is to be' (Dittmar, 2008: 10). As a consequence, the life cycle of products has become shorter and so commodities are used up more frequently, whilst the time available for consumption has increased with

ease of access to instant purchasing and simplified payment methods afforded by technological advancements. Baudrillard (2017: 94) offers a concise and coherent argument on the phenomenon of the consumption of objects in his book titled 'The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures' in which he analyses contemporary western society. He writes:

The washing machine serves as an appliance and acts as an element of prestige, comfort, etc. It is strictly this latter field which is the field of consumption. All kinds of other objects may be substituted here for the washing machine as signifying element. In the logic of signs, as in that of symbols, objects are no longer linked in any sense to a definite function or need. Precisely because they are responding here to something quite different, which is either the social logic or the logic of desire, for which they function as a shifting and unconscious field of signification.

What this tells us, then, is that modern consumption is characterised as an activity which involves an apparently endless pursuit of wants (Campbell, 2000: 49), an insatiability almost, fed by the ever-expanding choice that lies at the epicentre of modern consumer culture. The distinction between needs and wants is of direct relevance to the focus of this thesis; that is, people may say they 'need' a holiday when, arguably they actually 'want' a holiday to satisfy a variety of needs which may not be described as utilitarian.

Furthermore, advertising and mass media play a significant role in promoting the wide availability of products readily available to the consumer. The link between material goods, identity and well-being forms the basis of persuasive advertising (Dittmar, 2008), which further influences consumer purchasing decisions by creating clever patterns of associations to trigger emotional responses or connections to their intended audiences. The consumer is constantly presented with opportunities to consume through exposure to television advertisements and other cleverly selected and placed advertisements across all social media sites, billboards, mail, e-mail and so on. Such advertising promises social reward through the purchase of the products being promoted, and people will buy products that are compatible with their self-concept and that enhance their 'ideal self' image (De Mooij, 2019), giving credence to the notion that material possessions are equated with success and happiness. Of course, advertising messages are not taken at

face-value by all consumers (Dittmar, 2008); nevertheless, their existence in the consumption process plays such a significant role in modern life that, as noted earlier, avoiding their influence is almost impossible. Moreover, Dittmar (2008: 2) suggests that, at a deeper level, consumer goods in contemporary society play a stronger psychological role; they are bought and valued as a means of regulating emotions as well as gaining social status and a way of acquiring or expressing self-identity. In other words, consumerism more broadly offers a route to achieving what Dittmar (2008) defines as an ideal self. Holt (1995) expands on this through research exploring how people consume a particular experience (a game of baseball). Essentially, he argues that consumption is not structured by the properties of the consumption object but, rather, that the consumption object (the game of baseball) is typically consumed in a variety of ways by different groups of consumers (Holt, 1995: 1). Moreover, he identifies and describes in detail the ways in which different groups of people consume, through four categories of consumption:

- a) consumption as experience;
- b) consumption as integration
- c) consumption as classification; and
- d) consumption as play.

First, based on Holt's research, the consuming as experience metaphor examines consumers subjective emotional reactions to consumption objects. In addition to the primary framework that enables understanding and action in individuals' everyday lives, there also exists numerous social worlds consisting of secondary frameworks that provide particular understandings of more specialised domains of our existence (Holt, 1995: 3). Within these social worlds, a myriad of consumption objects exists which divulge a shared definition of reality to the consumers by structuring perceptions of 'the way things are' in that particular world. In the social world of baseball then, participants are provided with an intersubjectively shared lens through which they can make sense of situations, roles, actions and the objects within it. Holt explains that spectators use interpretive frameworks to experience professional baseball in three different ways: (i) through *accounting*, spectators make sense of the game; (ii) through *evaluating*, spectators

construct value judgements; and (iii) through *appreciating*, spectators respond emotionally to the game (Holt, 1995: 3).

Second, the consuming as integration metaphor relates to how consumers integrate self and object, allowing them to enhance the perception that a valued consumption object is a constitutive element of their identity (Holt, 1995: 5). Spectators integrate the various elements of the professional game into their identity, such as the players, the teams, and the baseball world, which all serve as targets for integration practices which operate in two directions. One aspect of this phenomenon is the incorporation of consumption objects into an individual's sense of self, where the symbolic act of associating external objects with one's self-concept takes place. Furthermore, observers also engage in a similar process but in the opposite direction, by which they adjust their self-concept to align with an institutionally defined identity (Holt, 1995: 6).

Third, consuming as classification refers to the ways in which consumers use consumption objects to classify themselves in relation to relevant others (Holt, 1995: 10). Through their experiential and integrating practices, consumers leverage their interaction with the object, thus enabling them to communicate with other consumers. This serves to build affiliation, in that the baseball world's productive resources provide a concrete marker to represent spectators' collective identities and furthermore, to enhance distinction (Holt, 1995: 10). Finally, Holt's consuming as play metaphor proposes that consuming not only involves directly engaging consumption objects but also includes using consumption objects as resources to interact with fellow consumers (Holt, 1995: 9). Holt proposes that professional baseball provides a setting in which consumers can play with no ulterior motive other than to interact for interactions sake. Moreover, two types of play are prevalent amongst the spectators; communing in which mutually felt experiences are shared, and socialising where spectators make use of the experiential practices to take turns in entertaining each other (Holt, 1995: 10).

Important to Holt's model is the implication that consuming is never just an experience (Holt, 1995: 15). Indeed, Holt highlights the distinction between consumption as a means to an end or as an end in itself. Importantly, Holt's research provides a useful framework for looking at the ways in which tourism can be consumed. For instance, and as Sharpley (2018: 156-163) considers in some detail, the consumption of tourism is largely defined

by how tourism is understood and embedded in the tourist's social world (consumption as experience), tourists may adapt their behaviour and self-image to integrate into the culture of the destination, they may choose to consume particular tourism experiences in the expectation of sharing them with other tourists (consumption as play) and, undoubtedly, tourism is consumed as a means of identity and status creation (consumption as classification).

Certainly, Holt's model broadens understanding of how and why goods and experiences are consumed, yet the principal significance of consumption is generally considered to be its role in identity creation. Therefore, the following section of the chapter will discuss this in detail.

### **3.4 Consumer culture, the self and identity**

Identity and the self are common terms used within the social scientific discourse, yet the concepts relating to the terms are increasingly complex and are central to understanding the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals (Ashmore and Jussim, 1997). Traditional and historical forms of identity were static, inasmuch as people's identities were pre-mapped, only changing if society dictated so (Giddens, 1991). In other words, identity was based on demographics and status, such as the family an individual was born into or which job role they fulfilled and, as a consequence, identity was an unproblematic concept. Nowadays, however, people are freed from the structural societal constraints that once determined their identity and are empowered to construct their own identity, facilitated by the consumptive choices available in the marketplace (Shankar, Elliott and Fitchett, 2009). As Gabriel and Lang (2015: 91) explain:

Images of the consumer as identity-seeker are compelling and feature centrally in postmodern theory. They account for the obsession with brands, the willingness to read stories into impersonal products, the fascination with difference, the preoccupation with signs and above all, the fetishism of images.

As a result, there exists ever-increasing academic interest with regards to consumption as an autonomous social phenomenon and the ways in which it can be understood in the

wider context of life and meaningful existences (Friedman, 2005: 1). In particular, debates surrounding Western consumption are often associated with identity (Gabriel and Lang, 2015) or, more specifically, the significance of consumption within the process of identity construction (for example, Dittmar, 2008; Gabriel and Lang, 2015; Warde, 1994). It is observed by Trentmann (2006: 2) that all human societies have long engaged in some form of consumption; however, it was not until the nineteenth and twentieth century that the practice of some forms of consumption has been connected to the creation of a sense of identity.

In the (post)modern, Western world, people's identity is related to their consumption practices and 'formed, partly by what we think of ourselves, and how we relate to everyday life' (Sarup, 1996: 105). In other words, what we buy, what we experience and what we acquire significantly shapes us as individuals. People manage or manipulate their appearance in order to create and sustain a self-identity and, throughout that process, there is an ever-increasing availability of commodities to act as props to facilitate that process (Warde, 1994). It is suggested that these consumer items are 'visible symbols' which individuals acquire and display to validate themselves within society, typically in order to emulate the behaviour of higher-status groups for social gain (Smith, 2007: 412).

The notion of material possessions being regarded as a part of the self is not new; it is a concept that can be traced back to James's (1890) 'Principles of Psychology' and Veblen's (1899) 'Theory of the Leisure Class'. Moreover, the principal message portrayed throughout the literature is that symbolic behaviour is manifested in material culture or, alternatively stated, that the symbolic meanings associated with material objects can serve as imaginary points of view from which to see the self, as well as imagining how we appear from the standpoint of others (Dittmar, 2008: 18). Fuat Firat (1992: 204) argues that in postmodern culture, the self is neither consistent nor authentic because consumers in postmodern society are increasingly seeking to feel good by acquiring self-images that make them marketable, likeable and desirable.

Often, members of contemporary societies feel a need to enhance their identity to fit an ideal image they have of themselves, otherwise known as the 'ideal self'. This then raises the question: 'what is the ideal self?'. The 'ideal self' is, inevitably, created by relating the

self to other people, a process which in more recent times has been enhanced and facilitated by social media (Hogan, 2010). Hogan (2010: 378) explores this idea through the use of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach which explains how individuals present an idealised rather than an authentic version of themselves. The ideal self then, can be defined as a person's image of themselves in a desirable future life (Boyatzis and Dhar, 2022), in which components of one's purpose, personal values, personal and social identity exist (Boyatzis and Akrivou, 2006). Furthermore, the ideal self may function as a guide for future behaviour beyond its comparison to the real self (Higgins, 1987). Material possessions are often sought after as an effort to reduce the gap between the real self and the ideal self (De Mooij, 2019). Hence, material possessions can be viewed as a major part of the extended self. It is often asserted that in order to achieve happiness, or what is otherwise defined as subjective well-being (Kashdan, 2004), individuals place an emphasis on extrinsic materialistic goals through the acquisition of wealth and material possessions (Richins and Dawson, 1992). However, objects cease to serve as status symbols once they become too popular because, once they are shared too widely, they lose their exclusiveness (Dittmar, 2008: 36). Consequently, the process begins again with the pursuit of the next exclusive status symbol. Correspondingly, the idea of consuming not only as a means of creating an identity but also of displaying the acquisition of material possessions to others within society is evidenced throughout the notion of conspicuous consumption. Conspicuous consumption is a concept originally formulated by Veblen (1899) and according to him, people engage in consumption to signal wealth and gain social status. As Gabriel and Lang (2015: 8) explain:

Consumption has come to supplant religion, work, and politics as the mechanism by which social and status distinctions may be established... display of material commodities fix the social position and prestige of their owners.

More recently, the idea of 'access-based consumption' has been addressed in the literature as an indicator of conspicuous consumption (Hellwig et al., 2015). Access based consumption allows consumers to have temporary use of a product or service rather than owning them. The adoption of access-based services enables consumers to display a more luxurious or affluent lifestyle that they could not usually afford (Özbölük, 2020: 228), thus creating an identity through the display of status through luxury consumption.



Nevertheless, the consumption of luxury goods and display of prestige is often associated with negative psychological emotions such as guilt and shame (Wang et al, 2022: 240), which raises the question as to whether hedonic consumption can indeed create happiness and well-being in life.

The link between hedonic (or material) consumption and well-being is the subject of significant debate within the literature (for example, Carter and Gilovich, 2014; Guevarra and Howell, 2015; Tatzel, 2014; Zhong and Mitchell, 2012). Specific forms of consumption, such as purchasing products with the intention of learning new skills, or consuming experiences, such as holidays, are often associated with well-being and longer lasting levels of happiness (Gilovich and Kumar, 2015). In contrast, research has identified that when people acquire material products, such as clothes, jewellery, cars and so on as a means of improving their image, happiness or social status, they are often left feeling dissatisfied (Christopher et al., 2007; Dittmar and Isham, 2022; Kashdan and Breen, 2007), or with lower levels of happiness (DeLeire and Kalil, 2010).

What this points to is the distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic happiness and well-being within the context of consumption. As Nawijn and Strijbosch (2021: 26) assert, under some circumstances well-being can indeed be interpreted as happiness. In brief, hedonism reflects the view that well-being consists of more instantaneous happiness and pleasure attainment as well as pain avoidance (Ryan and Deci, 2001:141). In contrast, eudaimonism, or eudaimonic happiness, reflects a longer-term, cognitive perspective related to the idea that well-being lies in more deeper-rooted contentedness, the actualisation of human potential (Ryan and Deci, 2001: 143) and an appreciation of one's life as a whole (Veenhoven, 2000).

This issue demands consideration within the specific context of tourism because, as Nawijn and Strijbosch (2021: 24) ask, 'does experiencing tourism equal experiencing happiness'? Tourism, as a potential source of happiness, has been explored by a number of authors, (for example, Lam and So, 2013; Mitas et al., 2012; Nawijn et al., 2013) and, perhaps unsurprisingly, their research has revealed that tourists do indeed feel happier on holiday than they do in their everyday lives. However, the question remains unresolved as to whether tourism experiences contribute towards longer term well-being

or contentment (eudemonic happiness), as it appears the happiness from tourism experiences remains short lived (hedonic happiness).

Irrespective of these debates surrounding consumption and happiness, for the purposes of this chapter it is important to understand why consumers place so much significance on material goods and experiences in relation to their identity or to constructing the 'ideal self'. The principal argument is that identity is not only something that people create independently but is also defined by their interactions and relationships with others. For example, Giddens (1991) discusses 'self-identity' and proposes that modern day identity creation is not static but reflexive, in that self-identity is discovered through finding oneself in comparison to others. Furthermore, the self is found through having an awareness of what 'one is not' through observing what others are (Burke, 2003). In other words, "we" use the "other" to define ourselves: "we" understand ourselves in relation to what "we" are not' (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1996: 8). In relation to this, then, individuals engage in consumption to not only create and sustain the 'self', but also to locate themselves within society; the manner in which they consume products (such as food and clothing), experiences (such as travelling), and beliefs (such as religion) tells a story about who they are and with whom they identify (Wattanasuwan, 2005).

Correspondingly, some suggest that, nowadays, many people are creating their identity through consumption which is seen to be more environmentally friendly (Carfora et al., 2019; Peattie, 2010), although others argue that the green consumer remains elusive (White, Hardisty and Habib, 2019). Certainly, recent years have witnessed a quite extensive shift towards more 'responsible' consumption practices based upon upcycling and recycling manifested in second hand clothing platforms, such as Depop and Vinted (see Coppola, Vollero and Siano, 2021). On the one hand, this might be considered to be a form of identity construction, in the sense that that people like to be seen to be acting sustainably and not throwing clothing away. On the other hand, it may be a more genuine attempt for individuals to consume in ways that are more environmentally appropriate. Either way, such behaviour is a manifestation of an 'anti-consumption' consumer movement, a phenomenon discussed in more detail later in this chapter, whereby the consumer is in effect attempting to demonstrate that 'I am not a consumer'. However, the acquisition of clothing or other second-hand items may still be considered as

consumption relating to identity, not least because the consumer is creating an image for themselves of buying and selling used garments in order to consume 'sustainably'.

Nevertheless, as previously explained, consumption is critical in order for production to thrive; consumerism plays a key role in securing the economic and individual well-being, yet it does so in ways that can both enhance and diminish this (Mansvelt and Robbins, 2011). Consumer choices then, may similarly impact the environment. In accordance with this, the following sections of the thesis will explore and address the environmental impacts of consumerism more specifically, paying detailed attention to the notion of green consumerism, the phenomenon of greenwashing, and the ambiguous ethical consumer.

### **3.5 Green consumerism and green marketing**

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the issue of environmental sustainability has attracted increasing attention in recent decades. Since the late 1960s and, in particular, since the publication of 'Silent Spring' by the marine biologist Rachel Carson (1962), the emergence of the global environmental movement has reflected increasing concerns regarding the impacts of global development on the environment (Khondker, 2015). Specifically, it became widely acknowledged that the processes of economic growth and development had significant impacts on the environment or, in other words, that the need to sustain the natural environment cannot be separated from development policies and processes. This led to the emergence of the concept of sustainable development, popularised in the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN, 1980) and the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) and most recently manifested in the UN's (2015) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In broadest terms, sustainable development seeks to promote development whilst minimising the economic and environmental impacts of development on society (Joshi and Rahman, 2015).

The idea of sustainable development has long been, and remains, highly contested. Not only is it considered to be oxymoronic – many argue that resource-based development contradicts the objective of environmental sustainability (Redclift, 1987) – but also most sustainable development policies, from Brundtland through to the SDGs, have been

criticised for a continuing reliance on economic growth (Adelman, 2017). The arguments are extensive, complex and beyond the scope of this chapter, but the important point is that, reflecting the increasing concerns with regards to the global environmental crisis, there have been calls for a more sustainable approach to consumption; as established in Chapter 1, it is of recognition of the contribution of excessive consumption to the global environmental crisis that is the context for this thesis. For some, the only way forward is to seek an absolute reduction in global production and consumption through adopting the path of degrowth (Demaria et al., 2013), a radical concept that seeks to not only reduce consumption but also to challenge the prevailing belief in economic growth that underpins most political, economic and social structures and institutions (Hickel, 2020; Jackson, 2021; Kallis, 2018; Liegey and Nelson, 2020). Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the concept of degrowth has also been increasingly considered within the specific context of tourism (Fletcher et al., 2020; Hall, 2009; Hall, Lundmark and Zhang, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles and Everingham, 2022; Sharpley and Telfer, 2023).

For others, a more palatable approach lies in what is often referred to as green consumption. Green consumption is an alternative way of describing environmentally responsible consumption, whereby consumers consider the environmental impact of their purchase, use and disposal of various products (Moisander, 2007). It is considered by some to be an effective approach to mitigating the negative effects of human activity on the natural environment (Guo et al., 2020) and those who adopt this approach to consumption are more commonly referred to as acting 'green' or being a 'green consumer'. Green consumption can be defined as a type of consumption which is compatible with safeguarding the environment for future generations (Testa et al., 2021: 4827). In this context, Mansvelt and Robbins (2011: x) succinctly explain the notion of the green consumer:

Green consumerism encompasses a range of practices centred on lowering consumption, consuming more sustainably, or ameliorating the negative social and environmental effects of consumption (such as reducing carbon footprints, reusing, downshifting, dumpster diving, and recycling).

As such, green consumption is concerned with limiting the negative environmental consequences of consumption, sharing with the degrowth concept the ultimate objective of reducing overall levels of consumption but arguably through less radical means.

The increasing environmental concerns of recent years, particularly with regards to global warming and climate change, have been reflected in the consumer behaviour literature with a distinctive shift towards an emphasis on green consumption and sustainable or ethical production. Notably, the debate has focused on the ways in which consumers can be motivated to adopt more sustainable consumption habits. Within this context there have been significant attempts by many industries to market and promote products that are more sustainable. More specifically, in order to communicate their environmental efforts, these industries have adopted green marketing strategies (Szabo and Webster, 2021).

One industry in particular that has become central to this debate is the fashion or, to be more precise, the fast fashion industry, not least because it is regarded as one of the most polluting industries, producing emissions of 1.2 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year (Soyer and Dittrich, 2021). Some fashion consumers do appear to be adapting their behaviours, engaging in practices such as reusing, upcycling, buying second hand and purchasing green products in an attempt to move towards a more sustainable form of consumption (Harris, Roby and Dibb, 2016). More recently, this shift towards enhancing sustainability in the fashion industry has been labelled 'slow fashion', representing an alternative to the dominant world of fast fashion (Jung and Jin, 2016). And as a response to the heightened awareness and increased consumer demand for slow and sustainable fashion, the fashion industry has turned to green marketing strategies in order to stay relevant in the context of their customers values as well as to gain a competitive advantage over other brands.

Undoubtedly, the fashion industry sector has the potential to encourage the acceptance and desirability of products and services produced from a circular economy where resources are used in a more sustainable way (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022). In fact, there is evidence that many high-street fashion brands have indeed innovated their products and packaging to integrate themselves into the green market and place emphasis on their

'green' properties. One example is the outdoor wear company Patagonia which, in recognition of its environmental policies, including buying back and reselling its used products, has been named a UN Champion of the Earth in 2019 (UNEP, 2019). Other examples of high street fashion brand taking steps towards integrating sustainability into their everyday decision making and committing to becoming 'circular businesses' include Zara and H&M. H&M Group (2023a) offer the following pledge:

At H&M Group, we are committed to becoming a circular business. To make this transition we need to design products that last longer, are easier to recycle and made from safe, sustainably sourced, or recycled materials. It's time for a sense check. For years we've treated our clothes like disposable items – throwing them away when we no longer use them. Out of sight. Out of mind. But these garments are made from precious resources that we can't afford to let go to waste. We need to start making full use of all the energy and materials that are embedded in our clothes. The best way to do this is to use them for as long as possible then repair, resell and repurpose before eventually recycling them when they are no longer usable. However, the way we make products today doesn't take this into account. In recent years, we've aimed to use the most sustainable materials to make the most desirable pieces, but we haven't focused enough on making them last or making them recyclable. But we can change. With over 70% of a product's environmental impact determined at the design stage, it is time for a new approach.

Both Zara and H&M now use 'zero-waste' packaging, having switched their home delivery packaging to reusable, recycled cardboard boxes and their in-store bags from plastic to paper. Additionally, H&M stores offer 'Garment Collection' programmes whereby customers can take unwanted clothes and textiles in store and receive a thank you voucher to use next time they are in store. The returned clothes are then sorted by 'Re-wear, Reuse or Recycle' (H&M, 2023). Similarly, as part of their commitment to circularity, Zara offer a 'Repair, Donate or Resell' service to their customers in order to help them extend the life of their products, ultimately helping them avoid landfill (Zara, n.d., a). Both companies have provided key sustainability measures (see Table 3.2 below) which highlights the timeline to achieve each commitment goal.

As can be seen from Table 3.2, it is apparent that both of these high-street ‘fast fashion’ brands appear to adopting policies and process to enhance the sustainability of their operations, yet it can be argued that simply producing clothing from more sustainable resources is not enough.

**Table 3.2.** Sustainability measures of the H&M Group and Zara

Sustainability measures	H&M Group	Zara
<b>Circularity</b>	Design all our products for circularity by 2025	Moving towards a circular economy model (no time frame given)
<b>Electricity from renewables</b>	Source 100% renewable electricity in our own operations by 2030	100% renewable energy in our own operations by 2022
<b>Packaging</b>	All packaging designed and produced by the H&M Group will be reusable or recyclable by 2025 and 100% of their packaging from recycled or other sustainably sourced material, with a preference for post-consumer recycled materials by 2030.	100% Redesigned packaging to facilitate its reuse and recycling and 100% elimination of single use plastics for customers by 2023
<b>Achieve net zero</b>	Achieve net-zero by 2040	Zero Net emissions by 2040

**Source:** Adapted from H&M Group (2023b) and Zara (n.d., b)

Certainly, having committed to using 100% renewable energy by 2022, Zara were, according to their parent group Inditex (2020), on track in 2020 with renewable energy at around 81%. However, although the examples of Zara and H&M may be indicative of a transition towards a greener and more sustainable future for the fashion industry, true intent towards ethical practices and sustainability in the consumer context remains questionable. Indeed, youth activists are challenging fast fashion producers in an attempt to ‘call them out’ on their alleged environmental credentials, highlighting the fact that the fashion industry is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions and is the second largest consumer of the world’s water supply (World Bank, 2019). This, in turn, reflects the rapid pace of design and production in the fashion industry and the consequential numerous ‘collection launches’ to entice consumers to spend.

However, it is not just the fashion industry that is accused of substantially misleading their consumers with their green credentials. In the travel sector, for example, the German airline Lufthansa has recently been accused of providing passengers with a false sense of

security regarding their aviation emissions by labelling their more expensive air fares as 'green fares'; the higher costs allegedly contribute to offsetting passenger's emissions and contributing to climate protection initiatives, yet the immediate environmental benefit of these measures is in fact limited (Wilson-Beevers, 2023). The question must be asked, then: how are companies across industries such as fashion, food, travel and energy continually and substantially misleading their consumers? Here we must be reminded of what was set out earlier in the opening chapter of the thesis:

Ethical consumption promises a solution to a systematic contradiction without challenging the (capitalist) system itself' (Carrington et al., 2016: 23). In other words, ethical products and experiences are just another marketing ploy to allure people into consumerism by making them feel less guilty, not least because consumers are generally aware that they need to consider the planet by purchasing more 'ethically'.

The above examples of H&M, Zara and Lufthansa are, arguably, a manifestation of what is widely referred to as 'greenwashing'. The next subsection of the chapter explores concerns surrounding the phenomenon of greenwashing which, although of only tangential relevance to the focus of this thesis, is nevertheless an important consideration when debating ethical consumption practices.

### **3.5.1 Greenwashing**

Previous academic studies have explored green consumer behaviour, typically based on the fundamental premise that knowledgeable and informed consumers will behave in an ethical and responsible manner with regards to their consumption and that this, in turn, will influence the companies to produce green products (Mansvelt and Robbins, 2011). At the same time, consumer activism along with eco-friendly certification, labelling and quality assurance processes have contributed towards increasingly environmentally friendly production with the hope that consumers wanting to act more responsibly will make informed and trusted purchases. However, navigating the complex terrain of consumption is far from easy for the modern-day consumer because, along with the



greater emphasis on green marketing, the phenomenon of greenwashing has also become increasingly prevalent (Nyilasy, Gangadharbatla and Paladino, 2014: 693).

More than a decade ago, a global survey into how businesses manage sustainability (McKinsey, 2010) reported that, despite acknowledging the importance of embracing it, many companies are failing to adopt a pro-active approach to sustainability. At the same time, it has been suggested that companies who state that sustainability aligns with their company missions and goals are in fact shaping their activities within the framework of ecological marketing (Jakubczak and Gotowska, 2020) to meet industry norms or standards or to conform with regulatory requirements (McKinsey, 2010). However, whilst the alleged sustainable commitments and goals of corporations may resonate with the average mass consumer, many are becoming increasingly aware of the negative impacts of industries, such as fast fashion, and, as a consequence, there is increasing doubt over the extent to which these sectors will deliver on their ambitious targets, such as net-zero by 2040 (as exemplified in Table 3.2). In fact, it is claimed that the practice of greenwashing is significantly prevalent in many of today's industries, including gas and oil, energy, food, airlines and high street fashion brands (Delmas and Burbano, 2011).

The practice of greenwashing can be traced back to the 1980s and the American environmentalist Jay Westerveld who revealed a hotel's dishonest claim regarding the practice of asking guests to reuse their towels, claiming that it was a company water conservation strategy rather than a requirement for the sake of the environmental (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020). He termed the hidden agenda as 'greenwashing' and, since then, substantial literature has emerged on the topic (see Delmas and Burbano, 2011; Laufer, 2003; Miller, 2017; Szabo and Webster, 2021). Greenwashing can be defined as the intersection of two firm behaviours: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance (Delmas and Burbano, 2011: 65). To put it another way, greenwashing is a PR tactic that is used to make a company or product appear environmentally friendly without meaningfully reducing its environmental impact (Gelmini, 2021).

The fashion industry is an important example that is relevant to the discussion in this chapter, primarily because young consumers (the focus of the research in this thesis)

often experience conflict between their knowledge of the consequences of fast fashion and their frequent desire to purchase inexpensive garments (Bytof and Ritch, 2023). Despite pledging to reduce emissions in line with the UN's twelfth Sustainable Development Goal of responsible consumption and production (see UN, 2022b), the fashion industry's carbon footprint continues to grow, including that of both H&M and Zara. Indeed, a recent report by Stand.Earth (2022) projects that GHG emissions from the fashion industry's supply chain will grow at of over 5% annually between 2022 and 2040. Furthermore, whilst many fashion industry corporations are pledging to curb emissions and describe their products as sustainable, the sector's overall environmental footprint is expected to grow by 60% by 2030 (World Resources Institute, 2021). The pressure group Changing Markets Foundation (2022) released an in-depth report detailing the unsustainable use of synthetic fibres by 46 leading fashion brands; the production of synthetic fibres depends on fossil fuels, is highly energy intensive and clothing made from synthetic fibres shed microplastics when washed (Nizzoli, 2022) The report emphasises that many brands use their membership of voluntary initiatives and certification in textiles to brand their products with a 'green certification', knowing that the average consumer, or even policymaker, will have little time or inclination to look deeper into their alleged green credentials. It was found that Zara and H&M (amongst others) were misleading shoppers as almost 60% of their 'green' claims regarding sustainability were, according to the guidelines released by the UK's Competition and Markets Authority, unsubstantiated. For example, H&M's ethical clothing brand 'Conscious Collection' uses more synthetic materials than its main collection to the extent that one in five of the collection's garments use 100% fossil fuel-derived synthetics. Moreover, the report further reveals that:

In addition, a number of these claims were being backed up by highly flawed certification schemes, such as the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), which makes no guarantee that the fibre is more sustainable than standard cotton. Such flawed schemes are the foundation of persistent sustainability myths: that certification equals sustainability, that a certified company is a sustainable company; and that certification means continued sustainability and improvement. This illusion is generated often simply because a multi-stakeholder initiative agreed on a

standard, without any guarantee that the standard is fit for purpose or drives ambition towards true sustainability.

Essentially then, as these examples demonstrate, ambiguous sustainability claims are prevalent throughout the fashion industry, arguably because as consumers become increasingly aware of sustainability issues, companies are trying to improve their reputation and to create brand loyalty by aligning their 'values' with those of the environmentally aware consumer (Rex and Baumann, 2007). This, in turn, creates confusion for the consumers who want to practice green consumerism, as they do not know who or what to trust (Szabo and Webster, 2021). As a consequence, consumers are left feeling sceptical towards those companies which claim to make apparently genuine commitments (such as those addressed above) that reflect the company's environmental conduct and practice.

To support this, the 2022 Global Sustainability survey (Jain and Hagenbeek, 2022) highlighted a number of barriers that consumers face when seeking environmentally sound products, including the lack of both affordability and availability and, importantly, a lack of trust. The report states that many consumers do not trust claims made by companies and are concerned about greenwashing (Jain and Hagenbeek, 2022). Moreover, another recent survey conducted by Deloitte (2022) found that nearly one in every two consumers do not know which companies' commitments to trust or simply do not trust businesses on climate change and sustainability matters. Supported by an in-depth analysis of numerous fashion brands' alleged sustainability commitments, the forementioned License to Greenwashing report (Changing Markets Foundation, 2022) concludes that fashion companies engage extensively in greenwashing and, in so doing, are undermining legislation through a delay, distract and derail process by plastering their products with certification labels and scheme memberships in order to create a smokescreen in an attempt to mislead consumers and policymakers.

This is not of course to say that all companies are navigating the green market in this manner. Although consumers are increasingly demanding transparency from companies, as noted above, those businesses that do declare their sustainability efforts are subject to closer scrutiny which, in turn, may deter others from advertising their sustainability

goals and practices because the increase in green messages has not always translated favourably in the context of consumer brand attitude (Nyilasy et al., 2014). As a consequence, the phenomenon of 'perceived greenwashing' is emerging; this is when consumers demonstrate their scepticism and distrust, which can harm companies that are in fact practicing ethically and sustainably (see Ioannou, Kassinis and Papagiannakis, 2022; Szabo and Webster, 2021).

Evidence from *Our Changing Planet* (2022) highlights that greenwashing rewrites the narrative of what climate action means, and the report uses well-documented incidents of corporate environmental dishonesty to argue its case. The first case used to support the argument is that of the oil company Chevron which, having polluted waters and lands with oil, was found guilty on numerous occasions in the 1980s of violating the Clean Water and Clean Air Acts. Chevron subsequently released a series of expensive 30 second advertisements titled 'People Do', which, in an attempt to convince the public that they cared about the environment, showed their employees protecting nature and animals and opening wildlife sanctuaries. The company was widely criticised for spending a higher amount of revenue on promoting its image through the projects than it did on the projects themselves. Furthermore, Chevron only aired the advertisements in the top three oil producing states of America in which they drill for most of their oil (Karlner, 1997: 173). As a result of this, environmentalists have proclaimed Chevron the gold standard of greenwashing (Watson, 2016).

Another example provided by *Our Changing Planet* (2022) is British Petroleum (BP), the second largest oil company in the world, and their campaigns that redirects public attention from oil spills and emissions towards their consumers' carbon footprint, the aim being to make climate action much more about individual endeavours than corporate malfeasance. The report also calls out companies such as H&M for employing phrases such as 'eco-warrior' and 'climate crusader' in their advertising to lure consumers into buying more of their clothes, arguing that such elusive green marketing schemes make consumers think that they can buy their way out of social problems when, in reality, it is the very companies that consumers are buying from are causing the problems. In conclusion, the *Our Changing Planet* (2022) report alludes to the theory that if consumers believe that corporations are changing for the better, then they will ultimately sit back

and allow businesses to continue making profits at the cost of the planet's wellbeing whilst hiding behind a smokescreen of 'green marketing'.

Collectively, these examples point towards the challenge identified in the introduction of this thesis, that there is little evidence that companies will significantly adapt their production patterns for the good of the environment and, hence, that the focus must be on changing the patterns of individual consumption patterns on a large scale. This thesis is, of course, concerned with exploring the extent to which post-millennials in particular are amenable to making such changes in the context of their consumption of tourism, with implications for their consumption patterns more generally. By way of providing further conceptual underpinning to the research, the next section of this chapter explores the concept of the ethical consumer and the practice of sustainable purchasing.

### **3.5.2 The ethical consumer: True intentions or going green to be seen?**

As previously discussed, alongside the increasing levels of consumption amongst affluent members of society there is evidence of increasing concern with regards to its environmental consequences. Indeed, research has indicated that whilst satisfying personal needs remains central to consumer behaviour (Paul, Modi and Patel, 2016), consumers are nevertheless displaying increasingly positive attitudes towards the preservation of the environment (Liu et al., 2012; Trudel, 2019). More specifically, within the spectrum of consumer types can be found the 'ethical consumer' (Newholm and Shaw, 2017) who incorporates a moral dimension in their consumption patterns and habits. For the ethical consumer, the hedonic function and/or utility of products and experiences are, to some extent, subordinated to concerns about the environmental rights and wrongs and consequences of consumption acts (Starr, 2009). Accordingly, each time a consumer makes or does not make a purchase, there exists the potential for that decision to contribute towards a more or less sustainable pattern of consumption (Young et al., 2010).

Ethical issues can add significantly to the complexity of consumer decisions (Shaw, Shiu and Clarke, 2000: 880) and the significant growth in consumers' ethical concerns is reflected in the extensive qualitative research carried out in the marketplace. For

instance, Co-op (2021) reported that when businesses provide ethical choices, consumers will respond positively, with evident financial benefits – in 2020, ethical consumer spending and finance in the UK broke through the £100bn mark for the first time, reaching record levels of some £122bn at the end of 2020 in comparison to just £11.2bn in 1999 (Co-op, 2021). With regards to environmental responsibility, a 2019 survey (cited in Europa, 2020) asked a panel of over 27,000 participants where the responsibility lies when it comes to the future of the environment. In response, 70% claimed that such responsibility lies with the individual / consumer. In this context, the World Economic Forum's (2021) global survey of over 23,000 consumers revealed that the most climate conscious actions taken were those related to in-home behaviours, such as recycling (46%), using less energy (43%) and water (41%) and avoiding food waste (41%) – these contrast with less frequent consumption practices such as buying more sustainable items (22%) and flying less (14%), where the influence of climate consciousness was more limited. Interestingly, the survey also revealed that the overall adoption of green behaviours due to climate change fell significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Alternatively, a survey of 99,000 participants conducted across Europe by Kantar (2021) revealed that 49% of respondents said that sustainability had become more important or much more important to them since the pandemic. Either way, although these surveys point to varying attitudes with regards to ethical consumption, for the purposes of this chapter it is more important to understand how and why consumers choose to be ethical in the first place. In other words, although market research indicates possible trends in consumer behaviour, it is necessary to review the debates on ethical consumptive practices within the academic literature.

For more than two decades, academic attention has focused on issues surrounding both the ethical marketing practices of companies and also the ethical decision making and purchasing behaviour of consumers, in both cases presenting conflicting, controversial and challenging views (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). With regards to the latter (the consumer behaviour perspective), attempts have been made to identify and define the profile of the ethical consumer. On the one hand, for instance, Low and Davenport (2007) argue that the ethical consumer has concerns in at least one of a number of areas, such as human welfare, animal welfare and environmental welfare, whereas on the other hand, Carrigan (2017: 13) states that environmental concerns remain at the core of the

ethical consumer and their behaviour. Correspondingly, some have questioned the very existence of the ethical consumer (see Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Carrington, Neville and Whitwell, 2014 and Devinney, Auger and Eckhardt, 2010). In fact, Carrigan (2017: 13) revisits her 'myth of the ethical consumer' research paper from 16 years earlier, asserting that:

When we reflect on our knowledge and understanding of the ethical consumer in 2001, the ethical consumer in 2017 appears as mythical as ever.

To support this claim, she argues that it is now known that multiple factors influence ethical consumptive decisions; studies of the instrumental, relational and moral motives underpinning consumer behaviour highlight a multi-level, multi-agent conceptualisation of consumer responsibility and identify the various levels of social influence involved in the decision-making process (Carrigan, 2017: 16). Accordingly, researchers have sought to understand the influential factors in relation to this social change and have developed models of ethical consumer behaviour (Carrington, Neville and Whitwell, 2014: 139).

Notably, Zhang and Dong (2020) provide a detailed systematic review of the green purchasing decisions made by consumers and discuss the key variables that influence green purchase behaviour. They highlight three key drivers: (i) individual factors; (ii) product attributes and (iii) social influence – the variables of each of these three drivers are detailed in Table 3.3 below. Zhang and Dong (2020) emphasise that psychological variables have an overpowering and lasting effect on consumer behaviour and also that product practicality, price and marketing strategies also play an important role in guiding consumer behaviour intention (Zhang and Dong, 2020: 7). It must be emphasised here that price/ willingness to pay for ethical products is a particularly contentious issue (Davies, Lee and Ahonkai, 2012), not least because of the implicit assumption that ethical products always cost more than non-ethical products.

However, consumers are also heavily influenced by their social environment and, therefore, factors such as government policy, the media and social group pressures play a significant role in determining consumer behaviour. It is for this reason that, as White

et al. (2019) argue, harnessing the power of social influence is one of the most effective ways to elicit pro-environmental behaviours in consumption.

**Table 3.3:** Key factors influencing green purchase behaviour

Drivers	Variables
<b>Individual Factors</b>	
Psychological Factors: Attitude, Awareness, Beliefs, Values, Norms, Perception	Attitude toward environment/green products, Awareness of green products/environment, Confidence, Eco-literacy, Emotions, Environmental concern/consciousness/ethics/responsibility, Perceived behaviour control, Perceived consumer effectiveness, Subjective/Moral norm, Willingness to pay premium, Expectation, Health consciousness, Self-identity, Self-image
Habits, Experiences, Lifestyle	Face/Status consciousness, Green involvement, Interpersonal differentiation, Past purchase experiences, Knowledge of environment, Health status, Healthy life habits
Socio-demographics	Education Level, Age, Gender, Occupation, Family structure
<b>Product Attributes and Marketing</b>	
Product attribute: Availability, Product quality, Packaging, Origin	Availability, Energy and Material, Packaging, Product attributes, Perceived risks/trust, Product price, Origin, Impact on society
Marketing: Eco-label, Message credibility, Promotion, Sales channels	Eco-label, Message credibility, Advertisement, Green certification, Mass media, Marketing influence, Green word-to-mouth
<b>Social Influence</b>	
Social norm	Social norm, Peer Influence, Culture, Organization
Social capital	Social capital, Media, Place identity

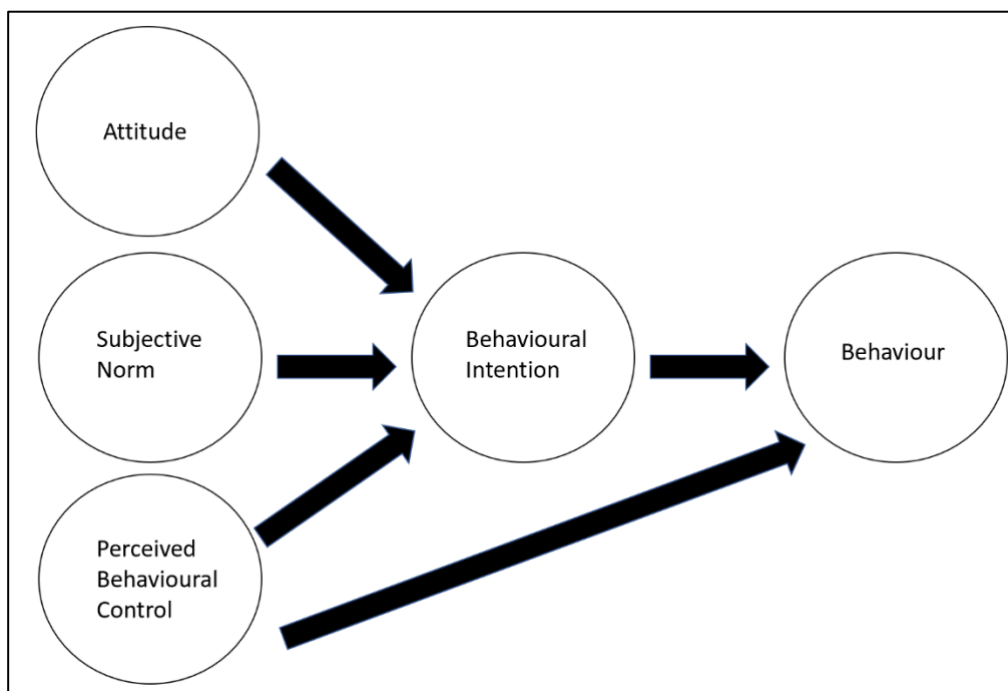
**Source:** Adapted from Zhang and Dong (2020)

In addition to the drivers summarised in Table 3.3, Groening et al. (2018) highlight the role that motivation plays in the process of green consumer behaviour. In their review of consumer-level theory, they draw upon Ajzen's (1985; 1991) well-known Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), a key underpinning theory in the green/ ethical behaviour literature that facilitates understanding of social change in consumer behaviour (for example, Chatzidakis, Hibbert and Smith, 2007; Chen and Hung, 2016; Choi and Johnson, 2019; Paul et al., 2016; Shaw et al., 2000; Wu and Chen, 2014; Yadav and Pathak, 2017). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), (see Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975, 2011); TRA, a model commonly used to predict behavioural intentions and/or behaviour, posits that



behavioural intentions are a function of relevant information or beliefs about the likelihood that behaving in a certain manner will produce a specific outcome (Madden, Ellen and Ajzen, 1992). There are two forms of belief: behavioural and normative. Behavioural beliefs are postulated to be the underlying influence on an individual's attitude towards engaging in a particular behaviour, whereas normative beliefs influence the individual's subjective norm about engaging in that behaviour (Madden, Ellen and Ajzen, 1992: 3). TPB, then, builds on TRA by incorporating a third measure of behavioural control: behaviours that are not totally under an individual's control, or 'perceived behavioural control' (see Figure 3.1). Perceived behavioural control embraces an individual's perceived control over factors such as development of information and skills, willpower, time and convenience (Xu et al., 2017). To put it another way, according to the TPB, 'a person's beliefs about a given behaviour will determine their *attitude* toward the behaviour, which in turn forms their intention to perform the behaviour' (Sun, 2020: 261).

**Figure 3.1:** Conceptual model of Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)



**Source:** Adapted from Ajzen (1991)

In the context of ethical consumption, it is this additional measure that has been of particular interest to scholars, not least because the purchasing intentions of ethical consumers are driven by personal values, moral norms, internal ethics and other similar

factors (Carrington et al., 2014: 139). Furthermore, following Ajzen's (1991: 199) assertion that the model is 'in principle, open to the inclusion of additional predictors', more recent modifications have been proposed (Shaw et al., 2000). In addition to the measures of attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control in the prediction of intention, subsequent research in a wide range of contexts and, more specifically, in explaining pro-environmental behaviour, has proposed the inclusion of additional predictor variables to the TRA/ TPB models. One such variable is the measure of ethical / moral obligation (for example, Chen and Tung, 2014; Dowd and Burke, 2013; Liu et al., 2021; Yadav and Pathak, 2017). In this case, consumers with a strong belief in looking after the planet are more likely to engage in environmentally friendly behaviour and, hence, environmental concern can be considered to be an important variable for predicting consumers' pro-environmental behaviour (Suki, 2016; Sun et al., 2017; Yadav and Pathak, 2017). For example, if a consumer's attitude towards ethical purchasing is positive (that is, they care about the environment and want to play their part by purchasing ethical products) and they think the product will meet their needs, they will therefore form an intention to purchase the product. The subjective norm, which refers to an individual's perceptions of social pressures from significant others (Ajzen, 1991), is also an important determinant of behavioural intention (Tsarenko et al., 2013), not least because social norms constitute what are acceptable behaviours – if one person does something, others may be inclined to follow. Therefore, it can be predicted that when 'significant others' support and purchase ethical products, this can positively incline the individual to follow the same behaviour (Sun et al., 2017). Finally, perceived behaviour control refers to the perceived ease of performing that particular behaviour (Ajzen, 1991); in the context of the ethical consumer, if they possess the resources, opportunities and beliefs, they are likely to participate in ethical consumer behaviour.

Research has confirmed this theory, producing positive results in as much as it has been found that subjective norms and perceived behavioural control exert positive influences on a consumer's intention to engage in pro-environmental behaviour (for example, Chen and Tung, 2014). However, limitations exist in the application of TPB to the study of green consumer behaviour. First, although the TPB model has proved to be a useful tool in aiding understanding of the purchasing intentions in ethical consumption, the empirical evidence nevertheless suggests that consumers generally continue with their previous

(non-ethical) purchase habits. In order to address this, therefore, past purchase experience, purchase habits and other non-rational factors have been considered in the adaptation process of the TPB model (Zhang and Dong, 2020). And second, while increasing numbers of consumers are concerned with the environmental consequences of consumption and are motivated by the values associated with ethical consumerism, a transformation in consumption behaviour has been much less apparent (Carrington et al., 2014: 139). As discussed later in the chapter, this is as relevant to tourism as it is to consumer behaviour more generally but this apparent gap between consumers' environmental concerns and behaviour is discussed in the next sub section.

### **3.6 The Value-Action Gap**

There exists both criticism and scepticism amongst consumer behaviour researchers as to whether attitudes (formed by the individual's values) can be considered a valid predictor of an individual's behaviour, as they do not always materialise into actions (do Paço, Shiel and Alves, 2019; Zhang et al., 2019; Zhang, Zhang and Zhou, 2021). More specifically, a dominant subject of debate within the ethical consumption literature is the gap that often exists between a consumer's stated intentions and their actual behaviour. Indeed, whilst many studies attempt to categorise and evaluate the 'ethical consumer' according to demographic factors or by their knowledge of or commitment to the environment, they also highlight the significant distinctions that often emerge between consumers' stated intentions to purchase green or ethical products and experiences and their actual purchasing behaviour (for example, Bray, Johns and Kilburn, 2011; Chen and Chai, 2010). In short, what consumers say they will do often differs from what they actually do. This widely documented discrepancy between individuals' intentions and behaviours is referred to variously as the ethical purchasing gap (Bray et al., 2011), the word-deed gap (Kossmann and Gomez-Suarez, 2019), the intention-action gap (Kilian and Mann, 2021), the attitude-action gap (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002), the intention-behaviour gap (Carrington et al., 2014), the value-attitude-behaviour gap (Homer and Kahle, 1988), the attitude-behaviour gap (Auger and Devinney, 2007; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014; Hares, Dickinson and Wilkes, 2010) and as the value-action gap (Babutsidze and Chai, 2018; Williams and Hodges, 2022). The existence of this gap is significant, not only for addressing individuals' behaviours concerning the

environment, but also for understanding the intricate mechanisms that influence the decision-making process.

For the purposes of this chapter, the term value-action gap is adopted. In doing so, it is important to note that a distinction exists between attitudes and values. According to Rokeach (1973: 18):

an attitude differs from a value in that an attitude refers to an organisation of several beliefs around a specific object or situation.

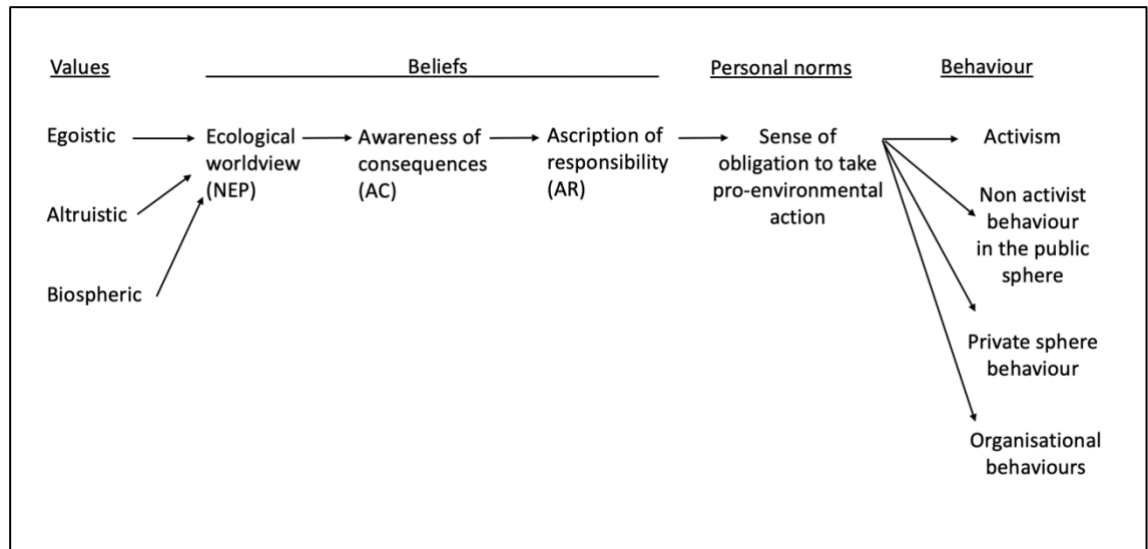
In contrast, a value refers to a stable belief that influences an individual to carry out a particular preferred action (Shin et al., 2017: 114). According to the value-attitude-behaviour model proposed and tested by Homer and Kahle (1988), values are fundamental in the formation of attitudes which, as a result, determine behaviour (Shin et al., 2017: 114). Hence, attitudes are often considered less stable than values (Sadiq et al., 2022), indicating that values are the dominant force in shaping people's ideas, attitudes and opinions (Sharpley, 2018: 149). What is important to highlight here, however, is that irrespective of the use of terminology, the phenomenon remains the same – that is, a contradiction between statement of intended and actual behaviour.

Corresponding to the idea that values directly influence behaviour, a popular theoretical framework for evaluating the relationship between consumers' pro-environmental values and their actions is Stern's (2000) value-belief-norm (VBN) theory of environmentalism (see Figure 3.2). Whilst their theory embraces elements of other environmental theories, such as Dunlap and Van Liere's (1978) new environmental paradigm (NEP) and the Schwartz (1973) norm-activation theory of altruism, the key point to be made here is that, according to the VBN theory, values play a crucial role in shaping individuals' beliefs which in turn, influence norms and directly motivate individuals to engage in pro-environmental behaviour (Liu, Zou and Wu, 2018).

As shown in Figure 3.2 below, the key variables which determine an individual's pro-environmental behaviour comprise three types of value orientations, namely, egoistic, altruistic and biospheric value orientations (Hiratsuka, Perlaviciute and Steg, 2018). The

combination of these plays a critical role in shaping an individual's ecological worldview (NEP). The theory postulates that personal norms regarding pro-environmental actions are triggered when individuals hold beliefs that environmental conditions pose a threat to things they value (AC) and when they believe that they have the ability to take action to mitigate that threat (AR) (Stern, 2000: 413).

**Figure 3.2:** The value-belief-norm (VBN) theory



**Source:** Adapted from Stern (2000)

The consequences that matter in activating personal norms are those that contradict whatever the individual values (AC) (Stern, 2000: 413). Thus, individuals who hold strong egoistic values prioritise and consider the implications for their personal resources. Conversely, those with strong altruistic values concentrate more on the repercussions for others whilst, lastly, individuals with strong biospheric values focus their attention on the consequences for nature and the environment.

The VBN theory is valuable because it may help explain the value-action gap in as much as not only may people not realise the negative impacts of their actions on the environment but also may not feel responsible for the problem and hence, may not feel responsible for contributing to the solution (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014: 79).

The relationship between values, attitudes and behaviour is one the most researched phenomena in social psychology (Milfont, Duckitt and Wagner, 2010) and, to re-

emphasise the point made above, for the purpose of this thesis what must be acknowledged is that irrespective of the terminology employed, a discrepancy often exists between what people say they do and what they actually do. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in tourism; as considered later in this chapter, people's stated intentions with regards to responsible tourism consumption are rarely manifested in practice. When questioned about travel intentions, tourists express their attitudes which, as noted above, are influenced by values. Even if an individual holds strong environmental values, however, these may not be reflected in their actual behaviour; a value-action gap is in evidence arguably because, in the context of tourism, other values or influences that supersede the environmental values may come into play.

The examination of values has always been a crucial aspect of studying consumer behaviour in general and much of the existing literature draws on the pioneering work of Rokeach (1973), who defines values as enduring beliefs that consider a particular mode of conduct or desired state of existence as personally or socially preferable (Rokeach, 1973: 5). As set out in the VBN theory, values serve as prescriptive beliefs that guide individuals in their choices and evaluations of potential behaviour (Sharpley, 2018: 149). It is also evident that some values are socially constructed, rendering them inherently preferable within society. Individuals then internalise these values through the process of socialisation. Conversely, it is likely that some personal values develop as a result of social interaction. Individuals not only possess these beliefs and values that shape their behaviour, but they also organise them into a value system that represents the varying importance of these values. This value system forms a continuous spectrum within which individuals establish a hierarchy of values. Rokeach (1973: 11) explains that this value system, unique to each individual, remains stable, reflecting the consistency and continuance of a unique personality shaped by culture and society. At the same time, however, it is also flexible enough to allow for changes in the priority of values resulting from changes in culture, society and personal experiences. Hence, the environmental values possessed by an individual may be superseded by other values which, in the context of this thesis, may be related to the social significance and meaning of tourism as a form of consumption.

### 3.6.1 A consideration of socially desirability responses (SDR)

The often-significant inconsistency between consumers' stated intentions and say and actions in the marketplace is one of the most puzzling challenges for academics seeking to understand ethical consumption (Kilian and Mann, 2021). Whilst one explanation of the value-action gap is the cognitive decision-making process, as discussed in the previous section, a second can be found in the concept of socially desirability responses (SDR). That is, some researchers have sought to associate the value-action gap with inaccurate survey measures, arguing that they are prone to SDR (Auger and Devinney, 2007). More specifically, interview respondents often display the tendency to provide answers that they believe represent a socially acceptable response as opposed to expressing their honest views. At the same time, survey results might also be affected by sample selection bias, in as much as individuals motivated by issues of ethical consumption, are more likely to participate (Shaw, McMaster and Newholme, 2016: 251). Hence, one of the main concerns related to qualitative research into ethical consumption is the significant potential of eliciting SDRs in self-reported measures of attitudes (Govind et al., 2019). For example, Carrigan and Attalla (2001) reveal that social desirability bias played a significant role in their respondents' ethical value-action gap, inflating the consumers espoused ethical purchase intentions (Carrington et al., 2014).

Offering further evidence of SDR, White, Hardisty and Habib (2019) confirm that few consumers who, despite embracing the values of ethical consumerism in principle and reporting positive attitudes towards eco-friendly products, follow through with their purchasing behaviours; they found that of the 65% of the consumers who claim to consume responsibly, only 26% follow through with their intentions. Similar outcomes emerged from a global consumer insight research programme by Globe Scan (2022) which found that although people want to adopt more sustainable behaviours, progress is slow. Specifically, although there is evidence of a gradual increase in the frequency of a range of sustainable behaviours, a persistent gap remains between people's stated desire to make major changes to their lifestyles and any significant action taken. The survey found that although half of respondents would like to change their lifestyle 'a great deal' to be more environmentally friendly, only 26% claim to have made 'major changes' in the past year to reduce their impact. The survey did not offer any explanations why this is the case; however, this thesis seeks to do so in the context of tourism.

In order to reduce the potential for SDR (Kilian and Mann, 2021), some academics have employed indirect questioning techniques. However, these studies only serve to confirm that 'at least some portion of the attitude behaviour gap is artificially induced by SDR' (Kilian and Mann, 2021: 13). Nevertheless, other research suggests that it is possible to gain a genuine insight into impediments to ethical behaviour through a mixed methods approach (Davies et al., 2012). The implications of this are discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter of this thesis.

What this suggests, then, is that there may be other motivations at play when it comes to ethical consumptive purchasing decisions because, although in general individuals tend to claim that they are green consumers, environmental values are infrequently displayed in their purchasing behaviour. Furthermore, one possible explanation for the value-action gap is related to the 'flexible' and 'dissonant' behaviour that ethical consumers adopt (Gregory-Smith et al., 2013: 10). Therefore, what they are actually engaging in is dissonant behaviour or what, for the purpose of this thesis, can be termed dissonant consumption.

### **3.7 Dissonant consumption**

To summarise the preceding discussions, much extant consumer behaviour research acknowledges that 'genuine' ethical consumerism is something of a myth (Carrigan, 2017; Carrigan and Attala, 2001) and offers evidence of inconsistent or, rather, dissonant behaviour amongst ethically concerned consumers (Gregory-Smith et al., 2013: 1202).

Dissonance, as originally conceptualised by Festinger (1957, 1962), arises when an individual holds two opposing or contradictory values, the outcome of which is a negative and uncomfortable state of mind that the individual then attempts to reduce or eliminate. It is suggested that one of the most often assessed ways of reducing dissonance is through a change in values (Harmon-Jones and Harmon-Jones, 2007: 8), as it is easier for people to change their values to align them with their behaviours than to change a behaviour that has already happened. In so doing, value change would be more consistent with the recent behaviour (Harmon-Jones and Harmon-Jones, 2007: 8). It has also been found that people experiencing cognitive dissonance actively avoid information



that tends to increase the dissonance and seeks information to support the behavioural decision (Kah and Lee, 2016: 374).

Such dissonant behaviour can be regarded as a manifestation of the value-action/attitude-behaviour gap (Gregory-Smith et al., 2013). One potential explanation for this can be the role of emotions in the decision-making process because often, consumer choice is driven by emotions (Elliot, 1998). Therefore, as highlighted in the previous section of this chapter, consumption choices can easily override personal values and, in turn, expressed attitudes. Self-conscious emotions are regarded as being highly motivational due to the process of self-evaluation which, as previously explained, assumes a comparison, between the actual self and the 'ideal' self (Tracy and Robbins, 2004). In particular, emotions such as shame and guilt can lead to an uncomfortable state of dissonance due to the moral appraisal of what is 'good' and 'wrong' behaviour. Furthermore, a sense of pride can motivate ethical behaviour when choices are internalised and accomplished (Gregory-Smith et al., 2013).

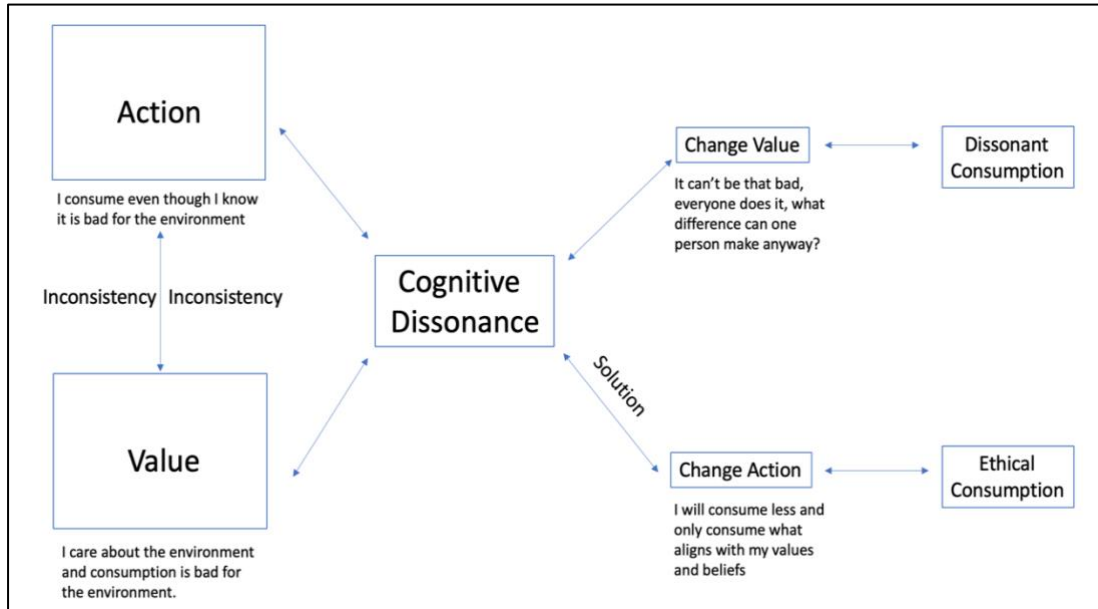
Contemporarily, research has also explored the link between cognitive dissonance and impulsive purchasing (Chetioui and Bouzidi, 2023). Consumers generally believe in their ability to make good choices when it comes to purchasing products; however, impulsive or unplanned purchases can contradict their prior belief, thus leading to a sense of post-purchase discomfort (Sameeni, Ahmad and Filieri, 2022).

Dissonant consumption, then, is a concept which is adapted from Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (1957, 1962) and is proposed in this thesis as a theoretical framework for exploring the inconsistency between a consumer's (tourist's) values and their actions (see Figure 3.3 below). The value-action gap creates a psychologically uncomfortable feeling of dissonance in the consumer (associated with negative emotions such as guilt, regret, sadness, etc.), which will then result in one of the following outcomes:

- 1) the existence of a value-action gap causes psychological dissonance and thus motivates the consumer to change their actions to align with their values, resulting in more ethical consumption choices.

- 2) the existence of a value-action gap causes psychological dissonance; however, the consumer continues to make consumptive choices to act against the feelings of unease, thus, resulting in dissonant consumption.

**Figure 3.3** Dissonant Consumption



**Source:** Adapted From: Festinger (1957, 1962)

In summary, a psychological process exists (as Festinger explains in his theory of dissonance) whereby the consumer understands that the consumption choices they make can to a lesser or greater extent contribute to environmental degradation in some way or another. Whether they consume ‘with sensitivity through selecting ethical alternatives’ (Szmigin and Carrigan, 2005: 609) in line with their environmental values or not thus indicates whether they are engaging in ethical or dissonant consumption.

Of course, it is important to reiterate here that people may not be aware of the environmental harm that is associated with their consumption choices. The concept of dissonant consumption in the context of the post-millennial’s tourism consumption is explored in the final chapter of this thesis.

### 3.8 Anti-consumption and voluntary simplicity

Despite the many complexities of consumer behaviour discussed thus far in this chapter, attention must now, albeit briefly, turn towards a less discussed yet nevertheless important phenomenon. Specifically, there is some evidence that consumers are increasingly expressing their concerns and obligations for society and the environment through their consumption decisions (Hoffman et al., 2018), in particular through the practice of anti-consumption or reduced consumption as they follow the path of what some refer to as voluntary simplicity (Rebouças and Soares, 2021). Carrington et al. (2021) note:

Drawing on criticisms of ethical consumption as an illusionary practice driven by growth-oriented business models, and disillusionment at the notion that the solution to the negative consequences of over-consumption and inequitable consumption is more consumption (just relatively more ethical), a second mode of consuming ethically is explored in the literature—anti-consumption or reduced consumption.

Putting it another way, whilst consumers may believe they are ‘playing their part’ in looking after the environment by participating in ethical practices, they are still contributing to the consequences of over consumption. Excessive consumption patterns that are prevalent in affluent nations pose a significant threat to the quality of life of both present and future generations. Currently, global resource use exceeds the planet’s natural regenerative capacity by some 70% (Global Footprint Network, 2022) and private consumption plays a major role in contributing to this ecological overshoot (Balderjahn and Appenfeller, 2023). In response, the UN’s SDG number 12 emphasises the importance of promoting responsible consumption and production patterns. However, achieving this goal is challenging as consumption holds both economic and social significance, particularly in wealthier countries where individuals are socialised from an early age to be avid consumers. Within their homes, social circles and, increasingly, on social media, narratives promoting fulfilling consumption experiences are pervasive (Balderjahn and Appenfeller, 2023). As previously discussed in this chapter, consumption is not only considered a potential source of enjoyment and happiness, but also serves as a means of creating identity and social status. Hence, attaining material wealth and social

recognition is often seen as the ultimate purpose of life, with extravagant consumption being viewed as the path to achieving these goals. Consequently, then, many individuals consume well beyond their actual needs.

However, due to the increasing awareness of the damage that this conspicuous consumption has on the environment, various forms of 'anti-consumption' are emerging. As highlighted in the introduction and emphasised throughout this thesis, an overall reduction in consumption is necessary as opposed to a simple shift towards the adoption of new forms of consumption (Moore, 2008). Carrington et al. (2021) highlight two forms of non- or anti-consumptive movements: (i) collective anti-consumption, for example boycotts, and (ii) individualised anti-consumption such as voluntary simplicity. Both of these movements are situated in the realms of political consumption in that they can either 'disrupt business directly by boycotting their products, or indirectly by raising their voice and affecting company reputation' (Carrington et al., 2021: 232). In her paper 'Boycott or buycott? Understanding political consumerism', Neilson (2010) addresses the link between boycotts and consumer trust in corporations as a consequence of corporate social irresponsibility (CSI), examples of which were discussed earlier in the chapter section relating to greenwashing. Against this background, consumers reactions to CSI have received growing attention in the academic discourse (for example, Antonetti et al., 2020; Valor, Antonetti and Zasuwa, 2022). For instance, CSI has triggered powerful, negative emotions in some consumers such as disgust and hate, resulting in avoidance of or attack on the company (Hoffman et al., 2018). In short, consumers are boycotting these companies.

An alternative and increasingly widespread reaction to the negative ecological consequences of over-consumption, is the concept of voluntary simplicity. As referred to in the introduction of this thesis, MacKinnon (2021) in his book 'The Day the World Stops Shopping' highlights the positive implications for the environment if people were to reduce their level of consumption. Developing his ideas as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in an attempt to urge people to rethink their consumptive habits and to become more self-sufficient, his arguments point to the adoption of so-called voluntary simplicity whereby people, freely choose to limit their expenditure on material consumption and to remove clutter from their lives (Ballantine and Creery, 2010: 45).

This concept of limiting possessions to a minimum and consuming only what is absolutely necessary emerged in the 1970s; the term 'voluntary simplicity' was coined by Elgin and Mitchell (1977) and is also referred to as minimalism (Martin-Woodhead and Waight, 2023). More recently, however, and in particular since the Covid-19 pandemic, evidence has emerged that the voluntary simplicity movement is becoming prevalent in many areas of consumption, including tourism (Miao et al., 2021). Indeed, it has been argued that voluntary simplicity represents a path to more sustainable (and meaningful) tourism consumption (Hall, 2011).

However, what is most relevant to this discussion and to this thesis as a whole are the recent claims that it is the younger generations that are the more environmentally aware consumers. In other words, although the evidence suggests that, generally, consumers are slow to adopt more responsible consumption practices, often displaying a value-action gap or engaging in dissonant consumption, it is suggested that younger people, particularly the post-millennial generation, are most active in supporting and adopting environmentally appropriate consumption behaviours. Therefore, this chapter now turns to the post-millennial in general to explore the (limited) evidence of their environmental awareness, attitudes, and consumption habits.

## **3.9 The Post-Millennial**

### **3.9.1 Introduction**

The term post-millennial generation refers to the demographic cohort succeeding the millennials generation; it embraces those who were born between 1995 and the early 2010s, a period of around 15 years spanning the very late 20<sup>th</sup> and very early 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries (Corbisiero, Monaco and Ruspini, 2022). This generation is also widely referred to as 'Generation Z' (Fromm and Read, 2018; Madden, 2019), sometime shortened to 'Gen Z', and colloquially known as the 'Zoomers' (Zeng and Abidin, 2021). As with previous generations, the exact boundaries of the post-millennial generation are not firmly defined in the literature; however, Table 3.4 below summarises the generally acknowledged temporal boundaries and defining characteristics of 20<sup>th</sup> Century demographic cohorts.

**Table 3.4.** Defining characteristics of the generational cohorts

Generation	Birth Years	Defining Characteristics
Silent Generation (or Veterans)	Pre-1945	Conformists, loyal, respectful, hard-work ethic.
Baby Boomers	1945-1960	Work-centric, self-focused, competitive.
Generation X	1961-1980	Independent, self-reliant, practical.
Millennials (or Gen Y)	1981-1995	Tech-savvy, optimistic, diverse, adaptable, authentic.
Post-Millennials (or Gen Z)	Post-1995 to early 2010's	Digital natives, entrepreneurial, self-aware, socially conscious.

**Source:** Compiled from web sources

According to Beldona, Nusair and Demicco (2009: 407), generations that share their time of birth and life experience tend to acquire similar and unique common characteristics around these experiences. For instance, the post-millennial generation is the first to have grown up completely in the digital age with easy access to technology such as smart phones, social media and instant messaging. As a result, they have been referred to as a generation of 'digital natives' (Cilliers, 2017); they are comfortable with technology and are adept at using it for communication, education and entertainment purposes. Furthermore, just as each generation allegedly brings its own set of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, post-millennials are considered to be smart, pragmatic, hardworking and entrepreneurial, characteristics that, according to Fromm and Read (2018: xviii), are the result of growing up in an environment shaped by economic instability and social change. Raised against the backdrop of the Great Recession of 2008 and with their path to adulthood disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, this generation has experienced a unique set of hurdles (Carnegie, 2022). Hence, bearing witness to the key contemporary crises of global inequality, climate change and world economic instability, it is perhaps unsurprising that this generation feel an urgency for action as a result of their frustration and anger about the uncertainty of the future of the planet which they inhabit and depend upon.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting here that in contradiction to the above suggested characteristics, the post-millennial generation has acquired a new label – 'generation snowflake' (Murray, 2018). Though initially applied to Millennials, the 'snowflake' label is

now more generally attached to the younger, post-millennial generation who are arguably less resilient and more prone to taking offense than previous generations (Heldal and Stiklestad, 2022). Nevertheless, Jose et al. (2022) argue that the term 'snowflake' reflects the characteristic of post-millennials as gentle and unique young people and, hence it is perhaps no surprise that they are anxious about the environment, lacking as they do the toughness of their forebears (Clark, 2021).

### **3.9.2 Consumption and post-millennials**

The potential of the post-millennial generation to bring about change in global consumption in general can be ascertained through current statistics. The post-millennials are, for example, now the largest generational cohort, comprising 32% of the global population (Spitznagel, 2020) and accounting for 40% of all consumers. Moreover, they have US\$3 trillion indirect annual spending power (UNiDAYS, 2021). As a generation of well-educated consumers, they are perceived to have more knowledge of environmentally friendly products (Bulut et al., 2021) and are thus most likely of all generations to boycott companies whose values do not align with their own (Arnold, 2019). As a consequence, there is now a focus on how the consumer behaviour of post-millennials will affect global markets as they are allegedly a part of a new wave of inclusive, sustainable consumers (McKinsey, 2023).

Unsurprisingly, research has increasingly focused on developing understanding of the post-millennial generation in the context of protecting the environment through green consumer behaviour, with particular attention paid to industries such as fashion (Liang, Li and Lei, 2022; Sun et al., 2022) and food (Su et al., 2019). Most recently, some contributors have attempted to understand the generation in relation to their tourism behaviours (D'Arco, Marino and Resciniti, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022). What is evident in general is that technology has given younger people a louder voice than ever before and they are apparently unafraid to speak up when it comes to their concern for the environment (Carnegie, 2022). According to a report by First Insight (2020), 73% of post-millennial consumers surveyed were willing to pay more for sustainable products, more so than other generation. Another report suggests that 62% of post-millennials prefer to buy from sustainable brands (PCIAW, 2019). However, although these and many other

surveys paint a positive picture, what they usually allude to is, of course, dissonant consumption, as most respondents are likely to provide a socially desirable response. Nevertheless, as established in the introduction to this thesis, researchers have yet to understand or explain why the post-millennial generation continue to travel at all, particularly given that they are often portrayed as socially and environmentally conscious tourists (Robinson and Schänzel, 2019; Seyfi et al., 2022; Walters, 2021). What is required, then, and is indeed one of the main concerns of this thesis, is knowledge and understanding of the post-millennial generation as the consumers of the future and, in particular, how they will navigate their future as tourists in a world where environmental concern is prevalent.

When people think of this generation, they may picture them through the lens of climate concern, as the 'Greta Thunberg' generation (UNESCO, n.d), and the youth-led movement of Fridays for Future climate strikes (Fridays for Future, 2023); in short, the generation committed to being *the generation of change* (UN, 2019). This perception of the post-millennial generation may, perhaps, reflect their alleged widespread concern for the environment which has been highlighted in a study conducted by the Pew Research Centre (2021). This found that 89% of post-millennials believe that humans are responsible for protecting the quality of the planet and 83% believe urgent action is needed to address environmental issues. Other recent research has linked this generation with distress related to worry and concern about the future of the planet, commonly referred to as 'climate anxiety' or 'eco-anxiety' (for example, Ágoston et al., 2022; Clayton, 2020; Hickman et al., 2021; Panu, 2020). However, other studies have concluded that despite their declared concern, this generation can be described as 'observers' rather than 'players' in that they do not see their behaviours and contributions to be active in the fight for climate change (Petrescu-Mag et al., 2023). At the same time, many continue with their environmentally destructive behaviours anyway, not least in the consumption of tourism, resulting in the manifestation of 'eco-guilt' or 'eco-shame' (Mkono and Hughes, 2020). What this points to then, and as previously addressed in this chapter, is that the declared intentions of the post-millennial generation may not align with their actual behaviour.



However, there exists another, perhaps more plausible perspective on the post-millennial generation that is prevalent amongst contemporary societies. That is, many are tech-savvy, social media-obsessed trendsetters who are renowned for their adherence to fast-fashion and other compulsive consumptive habits. According to a recent survey by The Influencer Marketing Factory (2021), 97% of post-millennials use social media as their top source for shopping inspiration. Moreover, post-millennials spend more time on TikTok compared to any other social media app (Measure Protocol, 2022) and, as a result, trust the platform and rely on its authentic nature to interact. Furthermore, TikTok's shopping feature enables users to tag certain product which leads them to relevant landing pages showcasing all the available products on synced websites, meaning users have unlimited access to shops without leaving the TikTok app (Cortés, 2022). As evidence, the hashtag #tiktokmademebuyit has more than 2.3 billion views on the social media platform TikTok (Kastenholz, 2021), highlighting the notion that an infinite number of products 'that viewers didn't know they needed until they popped up on their social media feeds' (The Influencer Marketing Factory, 2021) are available at users' instant disposal. Given the fact that almost 60% of TikTok users belong to the post-millennial cohort (Wallaroo, 2023), this emphasises the point that the post-millennial generation are constantly exposed on a daily basis to an infinite number of products, creating brand awareness and a sense of urgency to fulfil their need for instant gratification.

In turn, this is known to invoke a sense of FOMO. FOMO is the psychological construct described as fear of missing out on meaningful experiences shared by others and is characterised by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing (Przyblski et al., 2013). More recently, this phenomenon has been applied to research concerning the post-millennial generation and the online environment (Herawati, Rizal and Amita, 2022). Moreover, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), both positive and negative, can influence a consumer's purchase decisions (Shen, 2021). Many consumers, particularly the younger demographics, have a strong desire to mimic the people they look up to, usually celebrities and social media influencers (Lajnef, 2023) and, therefore, are more likely to purchase products that are advertised by those whom they idolise.

The link between compulsive buying and the online environment is explored in relation to post-millennials exposure to 'influencers' through their social media feeds (Dinh and

Lee, 2022). Social Media Influencers (SMIs) are viewed as the new 'celebrities' who have established credibility through their engagement with large social media audiences because of their knowledge and expertise on particular topics, and thereby exert a significant influence on their followers' and peer consumers' decisions (Ki and Kim, 2019). In support of this, and as Dittmar (2008: 2) posits, goods are marketed toward achieving the material 'good life' and as symbols of the 'ideal self', in that individuals hope to transform themselves to be more like the models and celebrities who promote the products. SMIs have developed sizable 'followings' on their social media accounts through publicly sharing various details of their lives, typically sharing information regarding their home interiors, latest fashion and beauty trends and travel experiences. The marketing and promotion strategies of many brands now included partnering with SMIs, as consumers tend to find them more trustworthy and relatable than mainstream celebrities (De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders, 2017; Dinh and Lee, 2022). Indeed, the powerful impact of SMIs on their followers' decision-making renders them desirable propagators of behavioural change for the good (Hudders and Lou, 2023: 153). In other words, the growing trend of sustainable influencer marketing means SMIs can exploit their position of power to drive more sustainable consumer behaviour. Accordingly, a study by Hynes and Wilson (2016) revealed that social media marketing had a significant impact on consumers intentions to engage in pro-environmental behaviour. However, as Walters (2021: 303) highlights, there is concern that sales trends of ethical products and services do not currently demonstrate significant growth as a proportion of total consumption whilst, in particular, there exists an evident missing link between the post-millennial generation's recognition of the need for sustainability and their willingness to respond appropriately in relation to their travel habits.

### **3.9.3 Post-millennials and travel**

In recent years, post-millennials have emerged as a significant force in the travel industry, especially as they become older, more autonomous and more economically independent (Gibbons, 2022). According to Richards and Morrill (2023), this generational cohort is one of the fastest growing segments in international travel, with most recent calculations revealing that youths represent more than 23% of all international tourists with expectations of continued growth over the next decade (Richards and Morrill, 2023).

According to a survey conducted by Expedia (2018), post-millennials are almost taking as many trips as the Millennial generation (those born between 1981 and 1995) and, perhaps unsurprisingly, they travel for the longest duration compared to all other generations. According to the UNWTO (2016), this is because young people are time rich and, therefore, are able to travel for longer periods and to stay longer in a destination than other tourists.

Additionally, post-millennials exhibit a strong inclination towards exploring different continents, while also valuing insights from locals which they often obtain through blogs or social media (Expedia, 2018). Similarly, a recent survey by Morning Consultant (2023) reveals that just over half (52%) of adult-aged post-millennial respondents (those aged 18 and over) are frequent travellers and took at least three leisure trips in the past year. Of these, 46% plan to travel to an international destination for leisure purposes in the next 12 months. Moreover, out of these frequent travellers, 52% claimed they travel to relax, 48% travel to escape and 42% travel to spend time with friends and family. Both of these surveys also highlight that social media is playing an increasingly significant role in the travel planning process of post-millennials, with Instagram being the most popular platform (Berg, 2023).

Importantly, it is claimed that for post-millennials, travel has become more than just a brief escape from reality; it is an integral element of their life (Possamai, 2022). Unlike other generations, post-millennials are not waiting until they have high-paying jobs or savings to go travelling but, rather, are finding ways to fit travel into their budgets (Pitrelli, 2023). Moreover, according to a report by Student Beans, they are also willing to cut other spending to ensure they can afford to travel (Hall, 2023). Interestingly, the same report revealed that 49% of respondents had general concerns about how they are going to support themselves financially. In the context of this thesis, this is significant in as much as travel / tourism appears to be a major lifestyle choice for post-millennials.

It is predicted that by 2030, the post-millennial generation will be the central workforce in society and will necessarily be influential in achieving a more sustainable future (Pinho and Gomes, 2023). More specifically, given their significant participation in international travel, they represent a major force in shaping the future of tourism (Corbisiero and

Ruspini, 2018). Therefore, it is of utmost importance to consider the potential of this generation to contribute towards a sustainable future for tourism. Certainly, surveys suggest that sustainability in general is something the post-millennial generation cares about deeply (Possamai, 2022); in contrast, however, other studies have revealed that sustainable tourism is not a concept that post-millennials are concerned with (Haddouche and Salomone, 2018). Either way, although there is currently very little empirical evidence to confirm the widespread claim that this generation will make the changes or adopt lifestyles necessary to 'save the planet', a recent explorative study by Pinho and Gomes (2023) concluded that the behaviour of post-millennials does not live up to their stated concern for sustainability in general and sustainable tourism in particular. Other than Pinho and Gomes' (2023) work, at the time of writing this thesis there appears to be no other empirical research that explores the alleged environmental concerns of the post-millennial generation and their corresponding intentions (or otherwise) to adapt their tourism consumption. Hence, there exists a significant gap in the literature that this thesis seeks to address.

#### **3.9.4 Interim summary: The story so far**

The purpose of the chapter thus far has been to introduce the phenomenon of consumer culture as a basis for understanding consumer behaviour within the specific context of tourism. The chapter has reviewed the emergence of the consumer society that resulted from technological advancements and transformations in societal norms. A brief exploration of the concepts of modernity and the movement beyond modernity (or post modernity) provided a background to, and an appreciation of, the shift from a traditional, structured social community to a more fragmented and individualistic society. In what is now referred to as a modern, contemporary society, individuals increasingly seek identity through consumption, hence the emergence of consumer culture. The chapter continued with an exploration of how more recent economic, socio-cultural and psychological transformations in society paved a way for people to adopt a more consumption-focused lifestyle, in that they no longer consume products and experiences solely for practical, utilitarian purposes but also for the meanings they associate with their purchases. Typically, then, within (post)modern societies, consumption is often undertaken as a means of establishing and displaying status. As a consequence, individuals are faced with

consumptive choices; to reiterate Giddens (1991), social life operates within the sphere of consumption, and consumers are subjected to the endless pursuit of wants (Campbell, 2000: 49). Following on from this, the significance of consumption within the process of identity creation was addressed, considering how what people purchase and what they experience significantly shapes them as individuals. The notion of the 'ideal self' was then touched upon as often, members of contemporary societies feel a need to enhance their identity to fit an ideal image they hold of themselves, an image often created by relating the self to others. Consequently, individuals seek material possessions in an attempt to reduce the gap between their real self and their ideal self (De Mooij, 2019). Therefore, an emphasis is often placed on extrinsic materialistic goals through the acquisition of wealth, material possessions and, increasingly, experiences (Richins and Dawson, 1992). This link between hedonic consumption and well-being (an idea that is widely debated within the academic discourse) opened up the opportunity to discuss, albeit briefly, the distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic happiness and well-being within the context of consumption and more specifically, referring back to the overall aim of this thesis, the link between leisure tourism experiences and happiness.

The chapter then moved on to consider consumerism within the context of environmental sustainability, reviewing the notion of the 'green consumer' and consequently, green production and marketing. The emergence of the global environmental movement led to the creation of certain policies vis-à-vis the protection of the environment in a society driven by production and consumption and, hence, the notion of sustainable development and degrowth was considered. However, the phenomenon of greenwashing has become increasingly prevalent, causing challenges for both consumers and companies. Examples from the fast fashion industry were identified to contextualise these issues, not least because the latest generation of consumers (the post millennials) are often left caught up in a predicament of wanting to stay relevant in the world of social media and to their peers, following latest fashions and trends and wanting to behave in a more environmentally friendly manner in the context of their consumptive habits.

By way of providing further conceptual underpinning to the research, the next section of the chapter explored the concept of the ethical consumer and the practice of sustainable

purchasing. Key factors influencing green purchase behaviour were highlighted, using Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour as a tool to aid understanding of purchasing intentions in ethical consumption. However, it was noted that a gap exists between consumers declared concern for the environment and their actual behaviour. For the purpose of this thesis, this is referred to as the value action gap. The value action gap often occurs as a result of cognitive dissonance; therefore, an overview of dissonance is provided, specifically in the context of consumption and thus, for the purpose of this thesis, is addressed as dissonant consumption. A conceptual framework was then proposed in order to aid understanding of the psychological dissonance caused by the value action gap and how consumers adapt to avoid it. It was important here, to highlight that not every person consumes for hedonic purposes and that some individuals are practicing what is referred to as 'anti-consumption'. Therefore, the chapter briefly addressed the notion of anti-consumption, or what is more commonly referred to as voluntary consumption, as a possible solution to over consumption. Finally, the chapter reviewed the current research on to the post-millennial generational cohort, focusing in particular on their consumption behaviours in general and travel consumption in particular.

Overall, then, as this chapter has discussed, modern contemporary society is defined by a consumer culture; consumption has become the dominant means by which individuals seek meaning, identity and happiness in their lives. Yet a consumer society is an environmentally destructive society – it is generally acknowledged that the environmental crises that the world currently faces are the outcome of excessive consumption. As Attenborough (2020: 7) argues,

we are living our comfortable lives in the shadow of a disaster of our own making. That disaster is being brought about by the very things that allow us to live our comfortable lives.

Some believe that the post-millennial generation will be at the vanguard of a movement towards more responsible, sustainable consumption, including that of tourism. The evidence to support this claim is, however, limited, and trends in youth travel tend to

contradict it. Indeed, as the following section of this chapter now considers, a shift towards more responsible tourism consumption in general has yet to be manifested.

### **3.10 The consumption of tourism**

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to simply offer evidence that despite all the focus and emphasis on promoting and encouraging sustainable and responsible tourist behaviour, there is little evidence of this in practice. As pointed out in the introduction to this thesis, tourism has become one of the world's most significant, contemporary economic sectors, and this significance has been recognised in both the developed and the developing countries. There is no need to re-visit the evolution and growth of tourism in detail (again, see Chapter 1), but it is worth reemphasising here that not only is a large proportion of travel activity accounted for, in global terms, by a privileged minority individuals but also that such travel is discretionary leisure consumption. In other words, most people do not *have* to travel; they merely *want* to (which, again is an issue explored in Chapter 2 on the motivations for travel). Moreover, the ever-increasing consumption of tourism undoubtedly reflects the characteristics of consumer culture discussed in this chapter and the over-riding belief that happiness and well-being can be achieved through consumption. In doing so, however, tourists are making a highly disproportionate contribution to the global environmental crisis.

Since the late 1980's and particularly since Krippendorf (1986) and Poon (1993) proposed the concept of the 'new' tourist with their 'simpler and more modest needs' (Krippendorf, 1986: 134), it has been argued that tourists are now rejecting environmentally and socially damaging 'mass tourism' and are seeking out more meaningful and individualistic tourism experiences. In support of this, surveys consistently suggest that a majority of tourists are increasingly demanding sustainable tourism experiences that are eco-friendly. For example, one recent travel report suggests that 80% of respondents confirm that travelling sustainably is important to them and that 76% hope to embrace sustainable travel plans over the coming year, although 44% don't know where to find them (Booking.com, 2023). Other studies have revealed more nuanced responses, revealing the fact that despite many tourists expressing a willingness to pay more for sustainable tourism experiences, they are often held back from doing so by a number of

factors including increases in cost, scepticism around how sustainable the destination actually is and suspicions of greenwashing (Durán-Román, Cárdenas-García and Pulido-Fernández, 2021; Jurado-Rivas and Sánchez-Rivero, 2019). Moreover, other studies have discovered that there is a higher willingness to pay for carbon compensation than sustainability certification (Raffaelli et al., 2022), which may suggest that tourists are aware that they are contributing to climate change which in turn, activates a sense of guilt which they are looking to alleviate. As alluded to in the introductory chapter, it must be noted here that much of the continuing increasing demand for tourism in recent years has been driven by the expansion of the low-cost airline industry (Sharpley and Telfer, 2023). Therefore, the likelihood of people paying more for sustainable tourism experiences in practice is extremely limited; it has long been acknowledged that price is a key determinant in travel choices. More generally, research has significantly emphasised the discrepancy between an individual's values and attitudes and their actual behaviours with regards to sustainable tourism (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014b); most people, if asked, would claim to want to act sustainably, even if they do not intend to. Hence, the purpose of this final section is to argue that claims of increasing environmentally friendly behaviour in tourism is a fallacy.

Certainly, many argue that the growing demand for eco-tourism is evidence of more responsible attitudes on the part of tourists. For example, according to The Ecotourism Global Market Report (2023), participation in eco-tourism continues to increase and the global ecotourism market grew from \$189.88 billion in 2022 to \$200.8 billion in 2023, with predicted growth of 13.4% by 2027. However, these figures must be treated with caution. That is, while eco-tourism is widely assumed to provide a more environmentally benign alternative to mass tourism (Gohar and Kondolf, 2020), the prefix 'eco' is often attached to a variety of tourism products and experiences that do not always reflect the true values of sustainability. At the same time, it has long been suggested that as eco-tourism grows in popularity, it will inevitably degrade the environment in which it is consumed (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997). What this suggests then, is that despite many commentators claiming a positive link between tourists' pro-environmental behaviours and the growth of eco-tourism, there is little if not any evidence to suggest that tourists are indeed becoming environmentally friendly. Perhaps more cynically, some commentators suggest that alleged sustainable or eco-tourism experiences are the



product of good marketing, rather than good tourists; as Wheeler (1993: 128) observed, 'for eco tourist read ego tourist'. In support of this, other research addressing environmental awareness and sustainable tourism consumption has revealed that not only is there a lack of understanding on the part of tourists with regards to the impacts of their participation in tourism (Sharpley and Telfer, 2023) but also, perhaps more significantly, those that do recognise the impacts of tourism on the environment still behave in ways that are damaging to the environment (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014a). Indeed, more recent studies (for example, Mkono and Hughes, 2020), reveal that tourists tend to find excuses to alleviate the dissonance that arises from the discrepancies between their stated values and attitudes and their actual behaviour. This is now commonly referred to as 'eco guilt' (Mkono and Hughes, 2020). In other words, tourists tend to agree with the idea that being environmentally friendly is desirable yet, when it comes to their own tourism behaviours they do not follow through. Hence, they are engaging in what was referred to earlier in this chapter as dissonant (tourism) consumption.

The point being made here is that despite all the policies for sustainable tourism and the increasingly pervasive narrative surrounding the need for more responsible tourism consumption, not only is the demand for tourism still increasing significantly but also there is little, if any, evidence to suggest the widespread adoption of pro-environmental tourism behaviours, even amongst those who state they are willing to do so. Moreover, as mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, the growth in what is referred to as 'revenge tourism' (Abdullah, 2021), 'catch-up travel' (Vogler, 2022) and more recently the 'flying rebound' (Hoffman et al., 2023), a response to the travel time lost due to the travel restrictions put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic, is further evidence that tourists are not adhering to their environmental values, despite the environmental benefits of no travel witnessed during lockdowns. This is not to say that all tourists suppress their environmental values; some have stopped flying (see the reference to *flygskam* in the introductory chapter) and others are engaging in tourism experiences which focus on the preservation of nature (Chai-Arayalert, 2020). Nevertheless, their numbers are relatively limited and, as a result, the consumption of tourism continues to grow, with commensurate increasing evidence of the negative environmental and social consequences of tourism. This can be as reflecting the concept of 'Tragedy of the

Commons', a valuable framework for understanding the challenges associated with individual actions in the context of tourism consumption and environmental sustainability.

In brief, the concept of the Tragedy of the Commons, first articulated by Garrett Hardin (1968), refers to the situation whereby individuals, acting independently and rationally but according to their own self-interest rather than for the wider social and environmental good, ultimately collectively deplete or degrade a shared resource. In the context of tourism, this phenomenon is evident when tourists engage in activities that contribute to environmental degradation, such as over-visitation of natural sites or excessive carbon emissions from travel. Each individual's decision to maximise personal enjoyment or convenience may seem harmless in isolation but, collectively, these actions can result in significant harm to ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity (Hardin, 1968). For example, popular tourist destinations often suffer from overuse (overtourism), resulting in environmental stress and damage that diminishes the quality of the natural resource for all users.

Addressing the Tragedy of the Commons in tourism requires a nuanced understanding of how individual actions contribute to broader environmental impacts and necessitates collective solutions. While individual behaviour is a key component, systemic interventions such as regulations and sustainable management practices are crucial to mitigating these impacts. Solutions may include implementing visitor management strategies, promoting eco-friendly travel practices, and encouraging conservation efforts. Ostrom (1990) suggests that effective management of common-pool resources involves not only formal regulations but also community-based approaches that adopt cooperation and shared responsibility. By combining individual awareness with structural measures, it is arguably possible to address the Tragedy of the Commons and move towards more sustainable tourism practices that safeguard shared environmental resources for future generations (Ostrom, 1990). This issue is returned to in the concluding chapter.

In summary, tourism consumption is persistently increasing in an unsustainable manner, with many tourists often unaware of or disregarding the harmful environmental

effects caused by their actions. Many may also justify their behaviours to themselves or others on a variety of grounds (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014b). Hence, given widespread acknowledgement of the environmental consequences of tourism, the need exists to address *why* tourists are seemingly unable to bridge the gap between their stated intentions and their behaviour. It has been argued that tourism is not rational consumption behaviour (Ryan, 1998); perhaps people do not really know why they participate in tourism and moreover, in doing so they often contradict many of the values they possess. As such, tourism can be, for the purpose of this thesis, described as dissonant consumption. The purpose of this thesis then, is to explore the meaning or significance of tourism as a form of consumption and why people continue to seek tourism experiences despite the fact that it defies the environmental message. And in doing so, the thesis seeks to explore the potential for a shift in tourism consumption by focusing on arguably the most influential generational cohort: the post-millennials.

### **3.11 Summary of key literature themes**

The purpose of this final section of this chapter is to illustrate and summarise the key themes that have emerged from the literature review as framework for the presentation and analysis of the research in subsequent chapters. As has been discussed in this chapter, a pervasive consumer culture arguably dominates the environmental concerns of individuals and there are many contributing factors, both internal and external to the individual consumer, that influence this dominance.

The theoretical framework presented below (Figure 3.4) summarises the key themes emerging from the literature review and illustrates how these elements contribute to the phenomenon of dissonant consumption. This framework is rooted in the broader context of consumer culture, which serves as the foundation for understanding the motivations and behaviours of tourists. Within this context, consumer culture encompasses the societal norms, values and practices that have been discussed in the literature review and that shape individual and collective consumption patterns, influencing how tourists engage with their environment and make decisions regarding their travel experiences.

At the heart of this framework lie the themes of motivation and tourist experience. Motivation refers to the underlying drivers that prompt tourists to engage in particular

activities or make specific choices during their travels. These motivations may range from a desire for relaxation and adventure to a commitment to environmental sustainability. Tourist experience, on the other hand, represents the actual behaviours, activities and encounters that tourists engage in while traveling. These experiences are directly influenced by their motivations and can either align with or contradict their personal values, particularly concerning environmental responsibility.

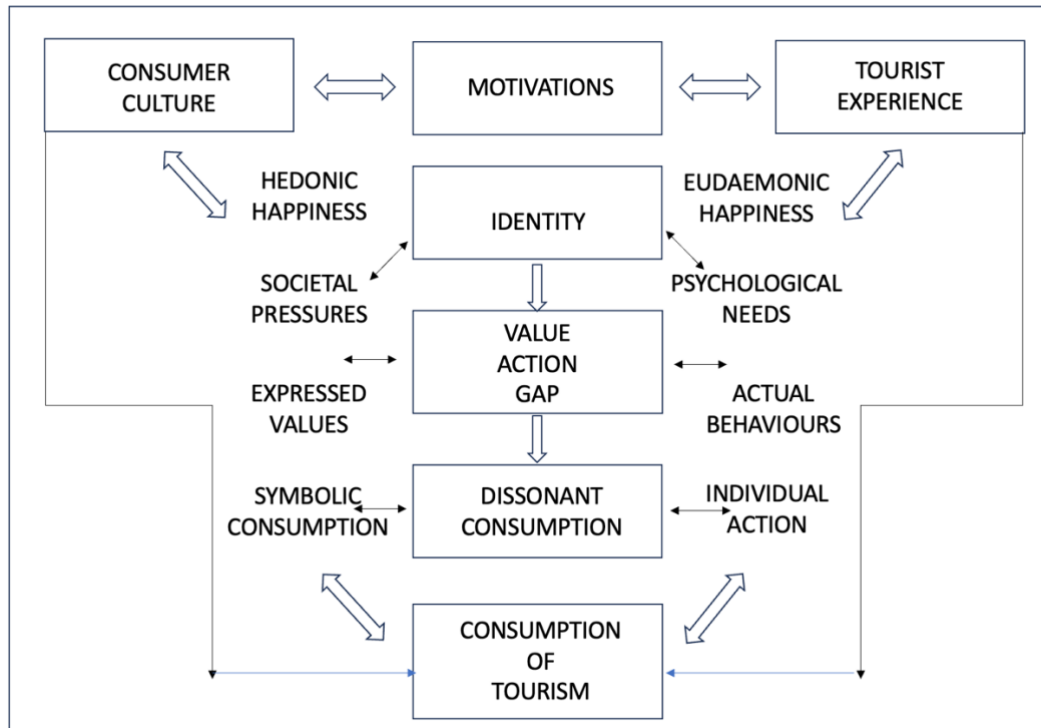
The intersection of motivation and tourist experience often reveals a value-action gap, which is the central component of the framework. This gap occurs when there a disconnect exists between a tourist's expressed values (e.g., concern for the environment) and their actual behaviours (e.g., choosing carbon-intensive travel options). As previously discussed, the value-action gap creates a psychologically uncomfortable state known as dissonance. This dissonance is characterised by negative emotions such as guilt, regret or sadness which arise from the recognition of inconsistency between one's values and actions.

The framework further delineates two possible outcomes resulting from this psychological dissonance. First, the dissonance may motivate the individual to realign their actions with their values, leading to ethical consumption. In this scenario, the tourist may choose more sustainable travel options in the future, such as reducing their carbon footprint or supporting eco-friendly accommodations. Alternatively, if the individual fails to address the dissonance, they may continue to engage in behaviours that contradict their values, leading to what is termed dissonant consumption. This ongoing inconsistency exacerbates the negative emotional state and perpetuates environmentally harmful consumption patterns.

The purpose of this framework is to provide a clear, structured representation of the theoretical underpinnings of dissonant consumption. By diagrammatically summarising the key themes from the literature, the framework not only elucidates the complex interplay between motivation, experience, and psychological dissonance but also highlights the critical pathways that can lead to either positive or negative environmental outcomes. This visual representation serves as a guide for understanding the dynamics

at play in tourist behaviour and underscores the importance of addressing the value-action gap to promote more sustainable consumption practices.

**Figure 3.4:** Theoretical Framework



As noted, the model presented in Figure 3.4 above represents the conceptual framework for the research in this thesis. The methodology for that research is now discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter Four

### Research Methodology

#### 4.0 Introduction

The preceding chapters introduced and analysed theories and debates surrounding the tourist experience and the consumption of tourism within a broader review of consumption and consumer culture generally. In doing so, they identified a gap in knowledge with regards to the post-millennial generation, specifically in the context of their consumption habits, the influences on their behaviour as consumers and the potential for them to become the 'generation of change'. The purpose of this chapter is now to present and discuss the methodology employed in the thesis to address the research aim of exploring the significance of tourism as a form of consumption amongst that post-millennial generation. The chapter focuses on the research design and the methods undertaken in the study. More specifically, it will introduce and explain the adoption of a mixed methods approach within an overview of research paradigms, specifically justifying the adoption of the alternative research paradigm of pragmatism. Before discussing the methodological approach and the specific methods employed in the research, however, the chapter commences by revisiting the research objectives.

#### 4.1 Research objectives

As established in the introductory chapter of the thesis, the overall aim of the research is to explore the significance of tourism as a form of consumption amongst the post-millennial generation and, hence, the extent to which they may consider changing their tourism behaviour in the context of contemporary environmental concerns. As such, the research seeks to address the question: what is it about tourism that makes it difficult for people to change and, in particular, reduce their consumption of it?

Therefore, the research will consider critically the following:

- The consumption of tourism within the broader consumer culture literature.
- The extent to which the post-millennial generation consider themselves to hold environmental values and how this is reflected in their day-to-day behaviours.
- The extent to which the value-action gap exists with regards to post-millennial tourism consumption.
- The post-millennial generation's understanding of the significance of tourism.
- The extent to which post-millennials are likely to adapt their tourism behaviours in line with environmental concerns.

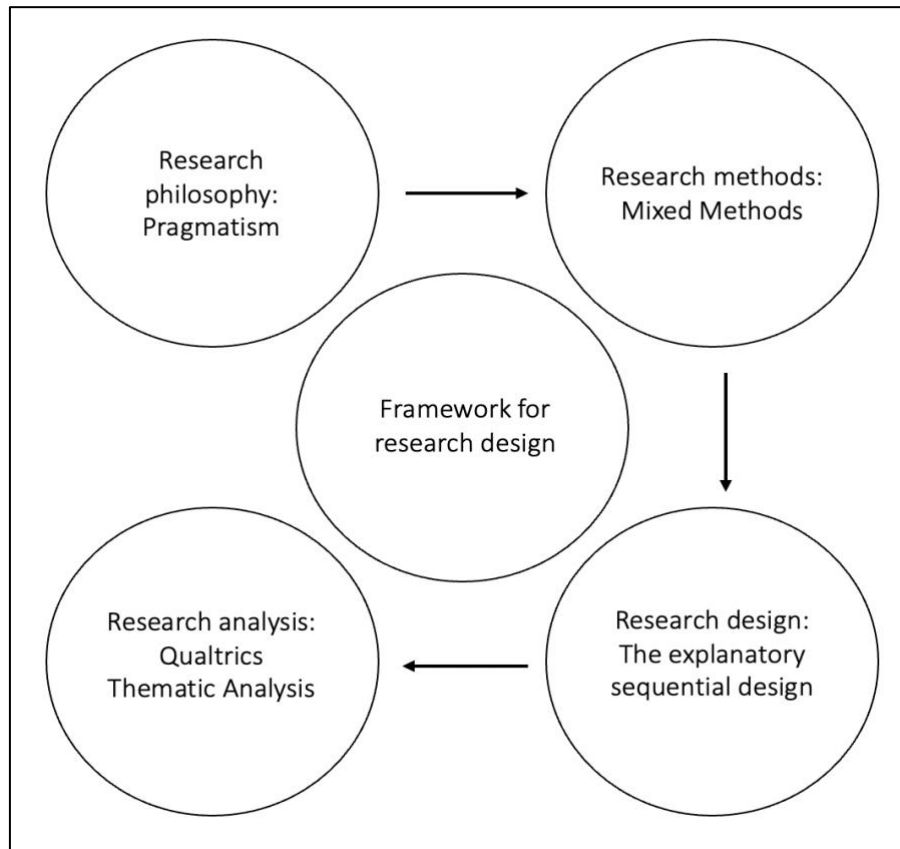
## 4.2 Research methodology

When designing research there are some preliminary considerations to take into account. Figure 4.1 summarises the key considerations of the methodology that are addressed in this chapter with regards to the overall design of the research in this thesis. The discussion commences with a consideration of the philosophical approaches to the research. A detailed account of the different 'worldviews' that can influence the practice of research is offered and, as seen in Figure 4.1 below, the philosophy of pragmatism is adopted. More details on this philosophical worldview will be offered in section 4.4.3 but, essentially, a pragmatic approach to research stresses the practical usefulness of research methods rather than their underlying philosophy (Denscombe, 2021: 45).

Figure 4.1 also outlines the research method and design, which Creswell and Creswell, (2018: 11) define as a specific direction taken within a study. The direction followed in this research is an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. This involves the initial collection and analysis of quantitative data, the findings from which are further explored through the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Clark et al., 2021: 569). In the sequential collection of both sets of data, mixed methods research is utilised. A justification for the adoption of mixed methods research is considered in section 4.4.1 of this chapter; however, it is important to reiterate here that the utilisation of this approach cuts through what Denscombe (2021: 203) refers to as 'the stand-off between two old-style narrow-visioned paradigms'. This stand-off is commonly referred to as the 'paradigm-wars', an explanation of which is detailed in section 4.4 of this chapter. In the mixed-method approach adopted here, first, a quantitative survey was designed,

distributed and analysed using Qualtrics software, the findings from which informed the subsequent qualitative, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The findings from both stages of data collection will be discussed in Chapter 5 and 6.

**Figure 4.1** Framework for the current research design



The following sections will focus on the theoretical underpinnings of the research, the ontological and epistemological perspectives, and the paradigms of research. Subsequently, the research design and methods of data analysis are introduced, including a discussion of the participant selection process.

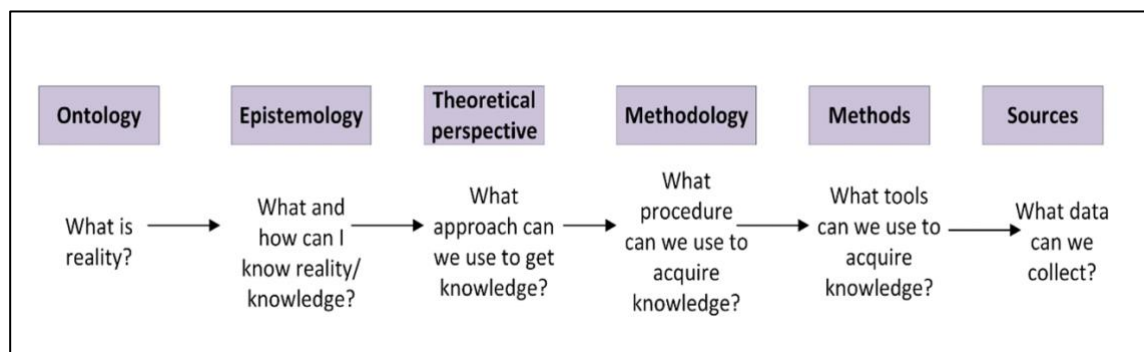
### **4.3 Research paradigm and philosophical underpinning**

Prior to considering the various potential approaches to data collection, it is first important to understand the feelings and intentions associated with the research (Guba, 1990). As such, Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest that there are some preliminary considerations to address before the research proceeds, one of which is concerned with the philosophical paradigms adopted. These philosophical paradigms can be explained as



‘a basic set of beliefs that guide action’ (Guba, 1990: 17) and relevance of the philosophical issues surrounding every research process is inextricably embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world and knowing that world (Hughes, 1990: 11). As Neuman (2013) suggests, it is most helpful to approach research techniques with an understanding of the logic and assumptions upon which they rest. In other words, the researcher must establish their own worldview in relation to the philosophical paradigms. These paradigms are often referred to as a set of universal concepts (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). And so, in order to consider the approaches to the research, the matters of ontology and epistemology must be defined and understood within the context of the current research. Figure 4.2 below explains these terms and the relationships between them.

**Figure 4.2:** What is a research paradigm?



**Source:** Adapted from Clark et al. (2021); Creswell and Plano Clark (2018); Creswell and Creswell (2018).

The question of ontology refers to the study of the nature of reality (Hudson and Ozane, 1988) or, more simply put, the types of knowledge that exist externally to those researching it (Clark et al., 2021). The ontological perspective shapes how the researcher understands what they are researching and, to some extent, can influence the outcome of the research. There are primarily two opposing perspectives on ontology known as objectivism and constructivism (Tribe, 2009). Objectivists generally favour research employing a quantitative approach and embrace realism. That is, they consider the social world to exist independently and to be external to the individual’s appreciation of it (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). In short, from the

objectivist perspective, there exists only one reality or 'truth'. In contrast, constructivists generally adopt qualitative approaches to research, viewing the social world as complex and variable depending upon the person viewing it and, hence, comprising multiple realities. However, interestingly, some commentators posit the idea of radical constructivism (see von Glasersfeld, 1984, 2013). Radical constructivists assert that knowledge is constructed from one's experiences and does not necessarily match the world's structure; rather, it simply slides between or fits in to its constraints in an effort to impose order on and, hence, make sense of those experiences (Hardy, 1997: 137). Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that, as Finn, Walton and Elliot-White (2000: 5) question, 'should the research focus on cause and effect to develop and explain human behaviour, or should research concentrate on the way people socially construct reality and seek to understand and determine human behaviour?'

In addressing this question posed by Finn, Walton and Elliot-White (2000), researchers must consider what does or does not count as reality or, in other words, what is (or should be) seen as acceptable knowledge (Clark et al., 2021: 23). This consideration is referred to as the researcher's epistemological positioning. The main business of epistemology is 'troubled by the need to find answers to persistent scepticism and is directed toward attempting to ascertain whether there are truths which can be secured against all possible doubt' (Hughes and Sharrock, 2016: 8). In other words, the answer lies in the relationship between the researcher and the research, and the inquiry into the positions of the possibility of knowledge.

Significantly, ontology and epistemology are inextricably linked because, in order to gain knowledge of the world, it is equally important to know what kind of things exist in the world (Hughes and Sharrock, 2016). Consequently, this knowledge then influences the data collection, interpretation and analysis in research and, hence, the choice of method in any research should be closely influenced by the ontological and epistemological position adopted by the researcher (Veal, 2018: 39). As Schwandt (1998) notes, there exist two broad epistemological positions that routinely appear in the lexicon of social science methodologists and philosophers, namely: positivism and interpretivism. These are both discussed in the following sections.

### 4.3.1 Positivism

Evolving from a largely nineteenth century philosophical approach, the general purpose of research from the positivist perspective is scientific explanation (Tuli, 2010: 19). It is, however, an approach critiqued as an archaeological interest in a decaying civilisation (Phillips, 2004: 77). Hughes and Sharrock (2016) explain that, traditionally, positivism recognised only two forms of knowledge: the empirical and the logical. In other words, the positivist paradigm asserts that real events can be observed empirically and explained through logical analysis (Kaboub, 2008: 343). Furthermore, any idea that was not derived from one's sensory experience of the world was to be disregarded as speculation. Certainly, these assertions seem to be reasonably sound in the world of the natural sciences. However, critics of positivism questioned how it could be possible for this same logic of inquiry to be applied to human life or, as Hughes and Sharrock (2016: 30) assert, to reach 'an understanding of beliefs, emotions, public opinion...in the same way that one could of the moon, the stars...chemical gases and so on'. In other words, difficulties arise within the paradigm of positivism when attempting to comprehend the human phenomenon because individuals possess distinctive qualities and behave in unpredictable ways (Clark et al., 2021: 23).

In explaining positivism in more detail, Clark et al. (2021: 23) identify its five key principles:

1. Only phenomena, and therefore knowledge confirmed by the senses, can genuinely be considered as knowledge.
2. The purpose of theory is to generate hypotheses that can be tested so that they enable explanations of laws – patterns and regularities – to be assessed.
3. Knowledge is reached by gathering together facts that provide the basis for laws.
4. Science must (and presumably can) be conducted in a way that is 'value free': in other words, that is objective.
5. There is a clear distinction between scientific statements and normative statements – judgements about what is 'good' or 'bad' –and a true scientist should only make the former. This last principle is implied by the first one because we cannot establish the truth or otherwise of normative statements by using the senses.

This is not to say that positivism should be treated as another word for science and the scientific, as since the 1960's there has been a movement away from viewing science in purely positivistic terms (Clark et al., 2021: 24). However, on the one hand, it is suggested that positivism's hold is weakening and that there has been an evident decline in its pre-eminence in some areas of the social sciences. This is not to say that positivist methods are unsuccessful in the social sciences; however, at times, difficulties can arise when applying the general method of positivism to the unpredictability surrounding the social world (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). Nevertheless, positivism continues to be seen by many as the philosophical epistemology which holds 'intellectual sway' within the social sciences (Hughes and Sharrock, 2016: 24). Moreover, it has been contended that positivism is still a common and convincing paradigm employed in many areas of tourism research (Decrop, 1999) although, not least as a result of its fledgling post-modern field of research with more innovative and radical lines of enquiry (Tribe, 2005: 5), tourism research draws upon a wide range of disciplines and is just as likely to take an interpretivist stance as it is to take a positivist one (Airey, 2013: 15).

At the same time, there still exists criticism in the wider social sciences when applying positivist methods to research. Contributors such as Hammersley (1995) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that there is no such place for positivism in the social sciences, as humans are depicted as 'actors' in a world which is socially constructed. In so doing, they resurrect the well documented 'paradigm wars'. The alternative and contrasting paradigm, which does not present itself with any fewer challenges, is that of interpretivism. The following section will now discuss this alternative paradigm.

#### **4.3.2 Interpretivism**

Interpretivism developed as a result of the perceived inadequacy of positivism in meeting the needs of social scientists (Collis and Hussey, 2013: 44), particularly its fundamental tenet that researchers should be separated from the social contexts in which they exist. In contrast, interpretivism emphasises that humans create meaning and social phenomena which are, therefore, distinct from physical phenomena (Saunders et al., 2016; Clark et al., 2021). Researchers adopting interpretivist enquiry consider that the complex social world can be only understood from the point of view of those who operate

within it (Goodson and Phillimore, 2004: 36). To the interpretivist, reality is a social, multiple-faceted construct derived from 'human interactions aimed at meaning making' (Guba, 1990: 234) and is, therefore, everchanging. An interpretivist attempts to give meaning to social phenomena, as human beings and their social world cannot be studied in the same way as physical phenomena (Saunders et al., 2016: 140).

Therefore, an interpretivist researcher is unlikely to speculate on and hold preconceptions of certainty or probability, as the purpose is to create 'new' knowledge. Although this enables the interpretivist researcher to draw meaningful conclusions from findings that are not derived from the statistical analysis of quantitative data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), critics argue that this approach can be 'problematic' and 'conflictual' due to the lack of objectivity (Schwandt, 1998). Nevertheless, an interpretivist approach is commonly adopted by social-science researchers, including in the field of tourism.

Collis and Hussey (2013) note that it is helpful to think of the paradigms of positivism and interpretivism as extreme opposites on a continuum along which alternative paradigms exist. However, given the methods employed in the current study, a discussion of these alternative paradigms is beyond the scope of this chapter (for a concise summary of the main assumptions of positivist and interpretivist paradigms, see Table 4.3 further on in this chapter). Nevertheless, it is important to review briefly what are referred to as the 'paradigm wars' as these led to the emergence of the so-called compatibility thesis and the paradigm of pragmatism that underpins the research in this thesis.

#### **4.4 The paradigm wars**

The differences between the proponents of quantitative and qualitative research have been very much intractable (Bryman, 2008), resulting in what is commonly referred to within the literature as the paradigm wars. This conflict, which came to the fore in the late 1980's, reflects the debates within the research community afforded by the anti-naturalist position that human affairs simply cannot be studied utilising the scientific methods commonly employed to study the scientific world (Gage, 2000). The main argument was based on the fact that natural phenomena are stable and uniform across time and space whereas, in contrast, human affairs are inextricably linked with the

intentions, goals and purpose which give them meaning (Gage, 2000: 4) and are, hence, variable and dynamic. Hence, the central debate focused on alleged inability to study both scientific and human / social phenomena utilising the same approach, manifested in the two opposing epistemological positions described in the preceding section of the chapter. As such, the paradigm wars gave rise to the 'Incompatibility Thesis' (Howe, 1988), which posits that qualitative and quantitative paradigms simply could not co-exist (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005: 270). This argument in favour of mono-method research (whereby the research was either exclusively qualitative or quantitative) was underpinned by the uncompromisingly different worldviews of each paradigm as they 'operate under different ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions about the goal and nature of the research' (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005: 270). Thus, it was argued that these two paradigms could not and should not be mixed. However, these views were challenged with the emergence of the pragmatist paradigm (Howe, 1988), the proponents of which asserted that quantitative and qualitative paradigms were neither mutually exclusive nor interchangeable (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005: 270) and that both subjective and objective orientations exist (Onwuegbuzie, 2002). In turn, this philosophy gave rise to the 'Compatibility Thesis' (Howe, 1988; Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). The pragmatic approach is adopted within the current research and is, therefore, discussed in more detail in section 4.4.3 of this chapter.

Much can be explained within the context of the conflicting paradigms, given the extent of the literature surrounding the paradigm wars (for example, Bryman, 1984; Bryman, 2008; Gage, 2000; Guba, 1987; Howe, 1988; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005; Smith, 1983). However, the current research is concerned with the opportunity presented within the literature to blur the methodological lines in an attempt to avoid the aforementioned dichotomy of methodological perspectives. The focus of the remainder of this section of the chapter focuses on the mixed-method approach to research.

#### **4.4.1 Bridging the paradigm divide: The mixed methods approach**

A crucial stage in the paradigm wars, particularly in achieving some respite in hostilities, has been the emergence of mixed methods research (Bryman, 2008: 15) – that is, research that combines both quantitative and qualitative methods. In an attempt to

define the blurring of the methodological lines, different terminologies were proposed within the literature, such as 'multiple methods', 'integrated research', 'multi-strategy research' 'multiple research approaches' and 'blended research'. However, consensus was reached on the term 'mixed methods research' (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010: 19). Mixed methods research is a relatively new approach, originating around the late 1980s and early 1990s based on work by researchers in diverse fields such as education, management, sociology and health sciences (Creswell, 2014: 217). Nevertheless, several factors have played a role in shaping the development of mixed methods research from its emergence in the late 1980s to its current state of understanding.

Traditionally, mixed method research is defined as a research design that implements a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods within one study (Cameron and Miller, 2007; Denscombe, 2021), encompassing philosophical assumptions, designs and methods (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). This multimethodology or methodological pluralism has become a dominant part of the research landscape (Cameron and Miller, 2007: 2), resulting in its own identification as a methodological field often referred to as the third research paradigm (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 14). It is commonly linked to researchers whom identify with the pragmatic paradigm. Denscombe (2021: 193) highlights the characteristic features of the mixed methods approach that set it apart from other strategies within social research. These characteristics are as follows:

1. The combination of different types of research within a single project.
2. A preference for viewing research problems from a variety of perspectives.
3. The choice of methods based on 'what works best' for tackling a specific problem.

It can, of course, be enticing to the researcher to embark upon a journey in which they can use whatever methodological tools required to answer a research question (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010: 7). However, they must be aware that there exist both disadvantages and advantages in the process. One key challenge for the researcher is that not only must they be familiar with both qualitative and quantitative methods but also, they must acknowledge the extensive time needed to undertake the collection of data. Furthermore, there exists an inherent risk that the findings from the various components

of the research may not always point in the same direction (Denscombe, 2021: 201). Further advantages and disadvantages are outlined in Table 4.1, below.

**Table 4.1** Advantages and disadvantages of mixed methods research.

Advantages	Disadvantages
A better understanding of the thing that is being studied	The time and costs of the research project can increase
A practical, problem-driven approach to research	The researcher needs to develop skills in more than one method
Clearer links between different methods and the different kinds of data	Findings from different methods might not corroborate one another
Compensating strengths and weaknesses	The QUAL/QUAN distinction tends to oversimplify matters

**Source:** Adapted from Denscombe (2021: 204-205).

In addition, it is important to not only understand the implications for approaching a research design from a mixed methods standpoint, but also to consider the added value of doing so. Clark et al. (2021) highlight the work of Bryman (2006) in their book '*Bryman's Social Research*' which identifies a number of different ways in which a mixed methods approach can add value to research. These are summarised in Table 4.2 below. These added values significantly emphasise the ways in which mixing both quantitative (quan) and qualitative (qual) data collection and analysis can provide a stronger understanding of the problem or question than each method might by itself (Creswell, 2014: 215).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2018: 12) elaborate on the advantages of using mixed methods:

One might argue that quantitative data is weak in understanding the context or setting in which people live. Also, the voices of participants are not directly heard in quantitative research. Further, quantitative researchers are in the background, and their own personal biases and interpretations are seldom discussed. Qualitative research makes up for these weaknesses.



**Table 4.2** The added value of mixed methods

Added Value	Explanation
1. Triangulation	Researchers combine quant and qual research to triangulate findings in order to mutually corroborate them.
2. Offset	Combining research methods associate with both quant and qual strategies allows the researcher to offset their weaknesses and draw on the strengths of both.
3. Completeness	The researcher can produce a fuller account of the area in which they are interested if they use both quants and quals research methods.
4. Process	Quant research provides an account of structures in social life, but qual research provides a sense of process.
5. Different research questions	Quant and qual research strategies can each answer different research questions.
6. Explanation	Researchers can use one of the two methods to help explain findings generated by the other.
7. Unexpected results	Sometime either quant or qual research methods generate surprising results which can be understood using the other strategy.
8. Instrument development	Researchers can use qual research to develop instruments for quant research methods.
9. Sampling	One approach can allow researchers to sample respondents or cases for the other approach.
10. Credibility	Using both approaches can enhance the integrity of the findings.
11. Context	Researchers can use qual research to provide contextual understanding, which can be used in conjunction with the generalisable findings or broad relationships among variables.
12. Illustration	Researchers use qual data to illustrate 'dry' quant findings, providing further information.

**Source:** Adapted from Clark et al. (2021: 557).

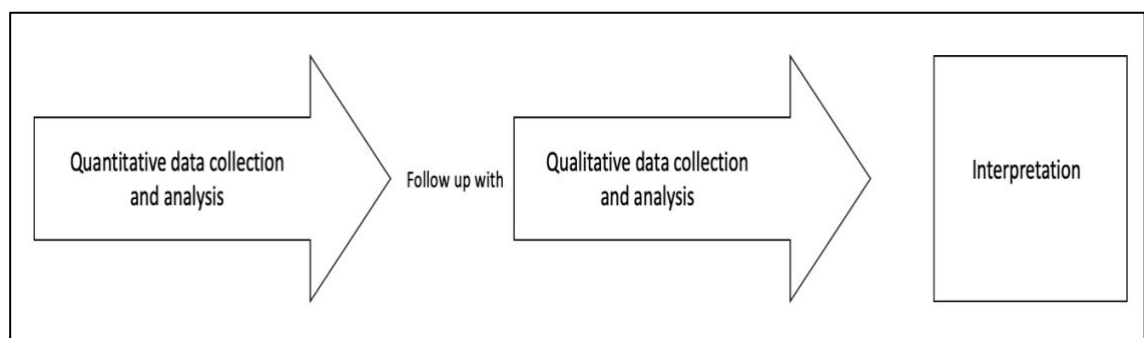
However, they also acknowledge that qualitative research can be seen as deficient because of the personal interpretations made by the researcher (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018: 12).

Despite this, employing a mixed methods approach to research offers a greater amount of evidence for studying a research problem compared to relying solely on either quantitative or qualitative research (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). Nonetheless, mixed methods may not always be the optimal choice for every researcher, and it is essential for researchers to take into account various considerations beyond the suitability of their research questions to a mixed methods approach. These considerations include, but are not limited to, the nature of the research, the intent of the research, the procedures and the strengths and challenges associated with the approach (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

#### 4.4.2 The explanatory sequential design mixed method

Once a mixed methods approach has been decided upon, it is then imperative to choose which type of mixed method design will be employed. Although over 40 mixed-method designs are offered within the literature (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010), Creswell and Plano Clark (2018: 66) identify three core mixed methods designs, namely: (i) the convergent design where the two sets of results are combined and compared; (ii) the explanatory sequential design where quantitative results are connected to and explained by qualitative results; and (iii), the exploratory sequential design whereby qualitative results are connected to and build to quantitative data collection and analysis.

**Figure 4.3:** Explanatory Sequential Design.



**Source:** Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark (2018: 66).

As outlined in Figure 4.3 above, the explanatory sequential approach is a method that involves a sequence of steps and is employed by researchers who wish to complement one set of quantitative findings with further qualitative findings. The purpose of the

succeeding qualitative phase is often to explain and expand on the findings from the initial stage of data collection, hence the term 'explanatory' (Toyon, 2021: 254). The purpose of this design in the current research was, first of all, to gain an understanding of post-millennial aged respondents with regards to their travel habits, their general consumer behaviour and their environmental values. This was then followed by a more in-depth qualitative exploration based and building on the initial quantitative data collection. The subsequent qualitative phase also served as opportunity to explore and explain some of the contradictory results that emerged from the initial quantitative phase. Indeed, it is essential to connect the quantitative data findings to the qualitative data collection (Creswell and Creswell, 2018: 222). Thus, the qualitative phase of the research design was planned using the key themes that emerged from the initial quantitative stage. Both sets of results were analysed and interpreted separately, each at their own time. One common challenge in implementing this strategy, however, is to effectively plan which quantitative results to pursue further (Creswell, 2014: 224). The key point is that that the collection of qualitative data is directly based on the quantitative results. The data collection phases will be explained throughout the design and analysis sections of this chapter.

It is now important to move on to explore the pragmatic philosophy in research. Often, mixed methods researchers endure the hardships of criticism; however, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004: 14) define mixed methods as the natural complement to traditional qualitative and quantitative data collection and, moreover, assert that pragmatism is an 'attractive philosophical partner' for mixed methods research.

#### **4.4.3 Pragmatism**

Although some researchers continue to participate in the 'paradigm wars', many proponents of mixed methods research have gone on to identify with pragmatism (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018: 39). Pragmatism is a distinctly American philosophical doctrine that can be traced back to the short-lived discussion group – the 'metaphysical club' (Pansiri, 2006) of the early 1870s – which brought together the founding fathers of pragmatism including Peirce, James, Wright, Holmes and Green (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). Philosophers including Dewey, Mead and Bentley further developed the doctrine, but it was in 1979 that Richard Rorty popularised the term 'pragmatism' beyond

philosophical circles and introduced it as research vocabulary to a wider audience in the United States. The emergence of the pragmatic philosophy was a result of the shared rejection by these scholars of conventional assumptions regarding the nature of reality, knowledge and inquiry (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). Whilst a discussion of these origins is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is nevertheless important to understand how they have significantly shaped research concerning the pragmatic worldview.

To a pragmatist, the mandate of science is not to find truth or reality, the existence of which are perpetually in dispute, but to facilitate human problem-solving (Powell, 2001: 884). And as a research paradigm, pragmatism asserts that researchers should employ the philosophical and / or methodological approach that is most effective for the specific research problem under investigation (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019), thus allowing researchers to employ a plurality of methods to address valued aims of inquiry (Hathcoat and Meixner, 2017: 435). Indeed, a rather broad consensus exists which asserts that the rationale for a mixed methods approach is a pragmatic one (Biesta, 2010). However, the appeal of the pragmatic paradigm to the research in this thesis is, as Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998: 30) observe:

pragmatism is intuitively appealing, largely because it avoids the researcher engaging in what they see as rather pointless debates about such concepts as truth and reality... you should study what interests you and is of value to you, study in different ways in which you deem appropriate, and use the results in ways that can bring about positive consequences within your value system.

In other words, it is this 'studying what interests you and is of value to you' that is of particular relevance to the current research rather than the so-called 'pointless debates'. Table 4.3 below highlights the key characteristics of pragmatism as proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2018: 10-11).

**Table 4.3:** Defining characteristics of pragmatism.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individual researchers have a freedom of choice. In this way, researchers are free to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pragmatists do not see the world as an absolute unity. In a similar way, mixed methods researchers look to many approaches for collecting and analyzing data rather than subscribing to only one method.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Truth is what works at the time. It is not based in a duality between reality independent of the mind or within the mind. Thus, in mixed methods research, investigators use both quantitative and qualitative data because they work to provide the best understanding of a research problem.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The pragmatist researchers look to the what and how to research based on the intended consequences—where they want to go with it.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pragmatists agree that research always occurs in social, historical, political, and other contexts. In this way, mixed methods studies may include a postmodern turn, a theoretical lens that is reflective of social justice and political aims.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pragmatists have believed in an external world independent of the mind as well as that lodged in the mind. But they believe that we need to stop asking questions about reality and the laws of nature</li></ul>

**Source:** Adapted from Creswell and Creswell (2018: 10-11).

As noted above, pragmatism dismisses the notion of being limited to a binary choice between positivism (including post-positivism) and interpretivism when it comes to methods, logic and epistemology (Pansiri, 2006). This is afforded by the idea that, according to a pragmatist, reality is renegotiable and debatable. Of particular interest and pertinent to the rationale for adopting pragmatism as a suitable paradigm for this research is its placement on the paradigm continuum, as outlined by Teddlie and Tashakkori (1998). They propose that pragmatism occupies a middle position on the continuum, situated between positivism on one end and interpretivism on the other end (see Table 4.4, below), which echoes what Bryman (2006) highlights: that pragmatists do not commit to a certain philosophical doctrine, as there exists a more practical way of addressing the research question.

**Table 4.4:** The paradigm continuum.

	<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Pragmatism</b>	<b>Interpretivism</b>
<b>Ontology</b> (Assumptions made about the nature of reality)	Reality is objective irrespective of the researcher's beliefs or viewpoint. It assumes that real world objects exist apart from the human knower	Reality can be objective or subjective and multiple realities exist. Recognition that no single perspective can provide a whole picture	Reality is multiple and relative. Knowledge is not determined objectively, but is socially constructed
<b>Epistemology</b> (The researcher's view of what constitutes acceptable knowledge)	Researchers must be independent and human interests and emotions should be irrelevant. Explanations must demonstrate causality. The quest is to generate facts, verifiable truths and time and context-free generalisations	Researcher's values are central. Knowledge can be subjectively and/or objectively derived. The quest is to solve problems and to produce research that has practical applications	Researchers are part of what is being observed. They and their subject(s) are interdependent. The quest is to increase in-depth understanding of a given situation
<b>Methodology</b> (Combination of techniques used in the process of the research)	Use of hypotheses and deduction. Generalisations are made through statistical probability. Sampling requires large numbers to be selected randomly	Use of any tool or framework in order to address and answer the research problem or question. Recognition that all methodology has limitations	Use of inductive technique. Small numbers of cases are chosen for specific reasons
<b>Methods</b> (Techniques, tools procedures used for data collection, analysis and evaluation)	Quantitative methods are used such as experiment, large scale survey and employ statistical analysis. Evaluation criteria: validity, reliability and generalisability	Methods are chosen for their practical value in tackling a specific research problem. Qualitative and/or quantitative methods may be used. Evaluation criteria for mixed methods combines both	Qualitative methods are used such as focus groups, interviews, small scale questionnaires. The data content are analysed using e.g. thematic analysis. Evaluation criteria: credibility, trustworthiness, authenticity

**Source:** adapted from Creswell, (2014); Creswell and Plano Clark, (2018: 38).

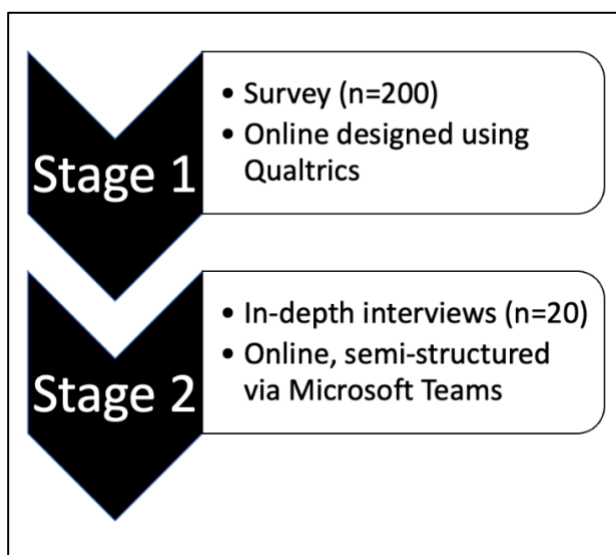
Ultimately, the key principle is that research approaches should be combined in ways that present optimal possibilities for addressing significant research inquiries (Johnson and

Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It is important to highlight here that a pragmatic line of inquiry is most suited to the current study, not least because rather than prioritising methods or philosophies, the research problem takes precedence as the most crucial aspect of the research, thus allowing the researcher the freedom to choose the methods, techniques and procedures that best align with their needs and objectives (Pansiri, 2006). Moreover, pragmatism enables the researcher to enjoy the complexity and disorderliness of social life (Feilzer, 2010: 14).

#### 4.5 Research design

As explained in the preceding sections, the research in this thesis employs a mixed-methods, explanatory sequential design whereby a quantitative method of research, in this case a survey employing Qualtrics software, was followed by a qualitative method, namely, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The purpose of this section of the chapter is to explain the data collection processes for each of the two stages, commencing with the survey. The structure of the research is depicted in Figure 4.4, below.

Figure 4.4 Research design



At Stage 1, a survey was designed using Qualtrics online software and subsequently distributed amongst post millennial-aged respondents using a convenience sampling technique. This included promoting the survey on social media platforms and by word of

mouth across the university campus, and amongst friends, family and colleagues. Once the number of respondents reached 200, the responses were then analysed using the statistical software platform, SPSS. The sample size was deemed appropriate for the purpose of the research, as it was essentially a scoping survey to identify key themes for further exploration at the interview stage of the research. Thus, the second stage of the research was informed by the first. That is, the key themes that emerged from the survey results were used to inspire the questions formulated for the semi-structured interviews. The interviews were carried out amongst 20 postmillennial-aged respondents.

#### **4.6 Stage 1: The survey**

The purpose of this section is to detail the reasoning, sampling and analysis of the survey as well as an overview of each step in the research design process.

Self-completion surveys rely on the respondent working at their own pace, independently from the researcher to provide answers in their own time (Denscombe, 2021: 212). The success of the survey relies on its completion, and although this did prove challenging for some responses in the current research (more details on which are provided in Chapter 5), the completion rate overall was high. In order to ensure the response rate was satisfactory at least, a number of considerations taken into account, including the length of the survey, the completion time, the wording of the questions and statements and the order of the questions, as well as the overall survey design. Using a survey to establish key themes to inform a second stage of research can be advantageous; however, disadvantages also exist. Table 4.5 below outlines some of the advantages and disadvantages that should be considered before going ahead with the survey design.

The reason for using a survey in the first stage of the research design process was to gain an overall insight into three key themes with regards to post-millennials: to establish their environmental awareness, their tourism consumption habits and their attitudes and declared behaviours in the context of general consumption practices. First and foremost, it was of particular importance to establish if the respondents considered themselves to be environmentally-aware, as the purpose of the research is to conclude whether this generation will adapt their tourism behaviours to align with their stated environmental



values. Thus, the survey employed Likert-scale statements to explore relevant themes and concepts that emerged from the literature review and informed the survey design.

**Table 4.5** Advantages and disadvantages of surveys

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Economical</b></li> </ul> <p>Surveys can supply a significant amount of data for no or low cost in terms of materials, money and time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Frustration</b></li> </ul> <p>Although ticking appropriate boxes is less demanding, equally pre-coded questions can prove frustrating and can deter respondents from completing the survey in full.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Easy to arrange</b></li> </ul> <p>Respondents are free to choose when and where they complete the online survey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Structure</b></li> </ul> <p>Pre-coded questions can bias the findings towards the researcher's, rather than the respondents' way of seeing things.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Data Processing</b></li> </ul> <p>Online surveys are saved automatically thus, the data can be fed directly into a statistical analysis package which effectively eliminates the human error factor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Honesty</b></li> </ul> <p>Self-completion surveys offer little opportunity for the researcher to check the truthfulness of answers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accessibility</b></li> </ul> <p>Online surveys can be configured in order for people with learning difficulties or slight impairments can have the same opportunity as others to respond.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Timely process</b></li> </ul> <p>If large numbers of responses are required, it can take longer than anticipated to gather the desired number of responses. The researcher must 'push' the survey as much as possible to reach the response number required.</p>

**Source:** Adapted from Denscombe (2021: 226-227).

Furthermore, the survey established some key areas of contradiction that could then be explored in the second stage of the research. For a copy of the survey report, see Appendix A.

#### 4.6.1 Survey design and approach

It was critical that the design of the survey took into consideration the response time and ease of completing the survey. Qualtrics is an easy-to-use survey design platform that provides step-by-step instructions, tips and guidance suitable for all researchers. Qualtrics provides a platform named Expert Review which guides users by measuring the data quality of the survey elements (questions, logic, quotas, etc.), recommending how users should improve those elements and providing documentation for research-based explanations on these recommendations (see Qualtrics, 2023).

In general, surveys are typically associated with quantitative research, as statistical data are derived and used to draw conclusions or to test hypotheses (Veal, 2018). However, it is possible to design a survey with the aim of determining the diversity of a topic of interest within a particular population (Jansen, 2010). In this research, because a deeper understanding is required of the connection between post-millennials' environmental awareness, general consumer behaviour and their tourism habits, the survey was intended as a scoping exercise, designed to draw out trends and themes to be explored in greater detail in the second stage of the research; the interviews.

Furthermore, it is essential to pilot test any survey to ensure clarity and simplicity of the questions and statements, avoiding jargon and ambiguity (Veal, 2018: 340); without a good design, good survey outcomes rarely result (Groves et al., 2009: 41). Therefore, the survey was piloted amongst 10 respondents, the purpose being to ensure rigour in its design, compatibility with mobile phone responses and in general that the questions and statements were easily understood and the response time was satisfactory. The Qualtrics Expert Review score stated 'fair', offering a number of tips such as reducing the number of 'matrix' rows, but the survey was deemed suitable by all 10 pilot respondents with an average completion time of just over the recommended time of seven minutes. The survey was then activated to begin the wider collection of responses. The majority of questions were closed ended, resulting in quantitative, numerical data (Swift and Piff, 2005), and most employed a five-point Likert scale. A small number of text entry boxes were included to allow respondents to elaborate on certain questions. During the survey administration process, the rate of data collection was slower than expected, but the

desired number of respondents was achieved between the months of May and November 2021.

#### 4.6.2 Survey analysis

The initial decision to use Qualtrics as the platform for designing the survey was underpinned by the added benefit of its StatsIQ tool which allows for statistical analysis of the data. However, upon commencement of the data analysis, it became evident that the licensing package provided for the university had changed and the version utilised to design and administer the survey was unable to provide the specific quantitative analysis tools required. However, this issue was soon resolved as the SPSS statistical analysis package was available for use. Hence, a short, self-taught course on utilising SPSS allowed for a smooth procedure in analysing the quantitative data. Overall, therefore, basic analysis was performed using Qualtrics whilst specific statistical correlations were derived from the SPSS software. Moreover, the SPSS package allowed for the data transfer from Qualtrics, eliminating any possibility of error by manually inputting data into a different software package.

As the key data were derived from Likert-scale statements, they were considered to be ordinal; thus, Spearman's Rho was deemed the most suitable measure for observing correlations between the variables (Bryman, 2008). Spearman's Rho, or Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, is a nonparametric technique for evaluating the degree of linear association or correlation between two independent variables. It can be used with relatively small sample sizes and is, therefore, easy to apply (Gauthier, 2001: 359). In other words, it measures the strength of association between two variables. Spearman's Rho is similar to Pearson's correlation in terms of the outcome, in that the value of rho will be either positive or negative, varying between 0 and + or - 1 (Clark et al., 2021: 336). However, despite the popularity of Pearson's correlation and its effectiveness for capturing the linear association or relationship between two continuous variables, it does not capture the relationship adequately on nonlinear relationships (Denis, 2020: 111), hence the use of Spearman's Rho.

Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) is read as follows:

- $r_s = 0$  means no relationship exists between the variables
- $r_s = +1/-1$  equals a perfect positive or a perfect negative relationship

Therefore, the further away from 0 the coefficient is, the stronger the relationship is between the variables. Whereas the +/- determines a positive or negative relationship. Spearman's Rho provides two figures, the first being the correlation coefficient, ( $r_s$ ), which represents the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. The second being the significance value which is depicted as P and indicates the statistical significance of that relationship. To determine if the correlation is statistically significant, the P value is compared to a predetermined significance level known as 'alpha' (Field, Miles and Field, 2012). The most commonly used value for alpha, and in the case of the current research is 0.05, representing a 5% significance level respectively, therefore the P value must be lower than 0.05 in order to be statistically significant.

Spearman's Rho will be briefly reiterated before the results of the statistical tests and descriptive data analyses are presented in the succeeding research findings chapter (Chapter 5).

#### **4.7 Stage 2- Semi-structured interviews**

The second stage of the data collection comprised 20 semi-structured interviews conducted with post millennial-aged respondents. The respondents were sampled from the first stage of the research, as the survey included an open text box at the end stating 'we will be conducting further research at a later date. If you would be interested in partaking, please leave your email address below'. A total of 40 respondents left an email address; all were subsequently contacted via email at the same time and out of those that replied to the email, 23 replied swiftly, agreeing to take part in the interview process between June and September 2022. The use of 20 interview participants was justified by the attainment of data saturation, where no new themes or insights emerged from the final few interviews. This suggests that the sample size was sufficient to capture the full

range of perspectives and experiences relevant to the research question, ensuring the robustness and comprehensiveness of the findings (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006).

It is important to note here that all interviews were conducted online using the Microsoft Teams platform. At the time of seeking ethical approval for the research, lockdowns were in place in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Given the uncertainty surrounding whether this would continue to be the case at the time of conducting the research, it was determined that the safest way to conduct the interviews would be online.

The justification for using semi-structured interviews in this research was that the interviewer can control and guide the question sequence, thereby slowly revealing the precise topic of investigation. Furthermore, the use of prompted and unprompted questions can help avoid the interviewee responding with what they believe to be socially desirable comments (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014). Additionally, the use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews to address the research aim allows for a deeper understanding of the issue under investigation – in this thesis, significance of tourism as form of consumption – as questions can be amended during the research as a result of the respondents' feedback (Brunt, Horner and Semley, 2017). Furthermore, as discussed in the preceding chapters of this thesis, there is very little evidence with regards to how people understand tourism as a form of consumption, so undertaking qualitative research in the form of semi-structured in-depth interviews provided an opportunity to create knowledge and unravel meanings attached to tourism consumption amongst post-millennials.

At the same time, as with any method of social research, interviews can also have their disadvantages. A summary of the advantages and disadvantages of interviews as a qualitative research method is provided in Table 4.6 below.

#### **4.7.1 The interview design and approach**

The interviews were informed by the first stage of the empirical research: the survey results. The key themes were observed and then explored further through relevant interview questions. During the interviews, the interview schedule of questions (which can be viewed in Appendix B) was followed as closely as possible; however, as the

interviews were semi-structured, respondents frequently deviated from the questions, allowing for an expansion of the conversation and subsequently presenting some interesting ideas and concepts. As Ghauri, Grønhaug and Strange (2020) explain, an in-depth interviewer must have complete understanding about what information is being sought and, hence, not miss out any opportunity to retrieve rich data. It is in this context that the semi-structured and in-depth elements of interviewing were advantageous to this research, as they provided opportunities to be more flexible with the interview schedule and to discuss novel and sometimes unexpected ideas which added additional scope and depth to the data generated.

**Table 4.6** Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Depth of information</b></li> </ul> <p>Interviews excel at generating data that thoroughly and comprehensively explore topics. They enable researchers to delve deeply into subjects, pursue issues and follow lines of investigation over a relatively extended period, facilitating in-depth and detailed insights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Validity of the data</b></li> </ul> <p>The data derived from interviews rely on individuals' verbal accounts of their actions, preferences and thoughts. However, it is important to note that such statements cannot be automatically accepted as an accurate reflection of the truth.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Insights</b></li> </ul> <p>The researcher is poised to acquire valuable insights through the richness of the gathered information and the expertise of the 'key informants', leading to a deeper understanding of the subject matter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reactive method</b></li> </ul> <p>Interviews are a reactive method, and the statements made by interviewees can be influenced by the identity of the researcher. Conducting online interviews can significantly help mitigate this issue.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Equipment</b></li> </ul> <p>An interviewer only requires basic equipment such as a computer, internet connection and a recorder.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reliability</b></li> </ul> <p>Maintaining consistency can be challenging with semi-structured interviews. The data gathered are influenced, to some extent, by the particular context and the participating individuals.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Informants' priorities</b></li> </ul> <p>Interviews serve as an effective approach for generating data that reflects the priorities, opinions and ideas of informants. This method allows informants to elaborate on their thoughts,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Time consuming</b></li> </ul> <p>Semi-structured interviews yield data that are not pre-coded and have a relatively open format. As a result, data preparation and analysis tend to occur towards the end of the research process.</p>

clarify their perspectives and identify the factors they consider to be crucial.	Transcribing and coding the data become significant tasks for the researcher.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Flexibility</b></li> </ul> <p>Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility to make adjustments to the lines of inquiry during the interview process. This allows for the exploration of a developing line of inquiry and the adaptability to follow new paths of investigation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Connection issues</b></li> </ul> <p>When conducting interviews online, there can be issues with internet connections, signals and computer updates. This can result in lag, or in some instances, failure to complete the interview in one call.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High response rate</b></li> </ul> <p>Interviews are prearranged and scheduled for a convenient time, ensuring a high response rate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inhibitions</b></li> </ul> <p>For face-to-face interviews, the presence of a recording device can inhibit the informer. Where this is not a problem with online interviews, the informer is still aware that they are being recorded.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Therapeutic</b></li> </ul> <p>Interviews can be rewarding for the informant, compared to questionnaires and experiments as they offer a more personal experience. People often appreciate the rare opportunity to express their ideas at length to a receptive listener who aims to understand and record their answers without judgement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Invasion of privacy</b></li> </ul> <p>Insensitive interviewing can intrude upon an individual's privacy and potentially cause distress to the interviewee. While interviews can be a positive experience, it is important to acknowledge that the personal nature of being interviewed also carries certain risks and potential drawbacks.</p>

**Source:** Adapted from Denscombe (2021: 245-246)

More specifically, there existed a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be asked. However, the interviews benefited from the flexibility in terms of the order of the topics discussed and, perhaps more importantly, the opportunity to allow the interviewee to develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised (Denscombe, 2021: 231). This occurred throughout almost all 20 interviews, as topics were raised that the interviewees thought strongly about or had different opinions on and, as a consequence, the interview developed and changed naturally with each interviewee. A key consideration throughout each interview was minimising the influence of the

researcher on the outcomes of the interviews and, therefore, the following steps, highlighted by Denscombe (2021: 235), were followed as closely as possible:

- The researcher presented herself in a light designed not to antagonise or upset the interviewee.
- The researcher remained neutral and non-committal on the statements made during the interview by the interviewee.

However, it was important to make the interviewee feel comfortable. Some were initially less open to engaging in a true dialogue with the researcher than others, so attention was paid to building a rapport with them, encouraging them to feel at ease and to 'open up' more. As a consequence, each of the 20 interviews ran smoothly with all respondents engaging in thoughtful conversations, offering valid ideas and expressing an interest in the overall outcomes of the research. A table of the interview participants' characteristics can be viewed below, in Table 4.7.

#### **4.7.2 Interview analysis**

As the interviews were carried out on Microsoft Teams, the platform allowed for recording alongside a transcription. Although this saved considerable time, a rigorous process was employed in order to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Therefore, each interview was listened to alongside reading the transcription and any errors were corrected. One particular repetitive error was the word 'travel' being mistaken for 'trouble'. Furthermore, individual interviewee's accents determined the quantity of transcription errors throughout the interview. Although a tedious process, this facilitated the analysis stage as the data were 'clean' and ready for interpretation.

Interviewing is a social interaction in which knowledge is constructed throughout (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015; Berg and Lune, 2017) and meanings behind experiences are uncovered (Frochot and Batat, 2013) – hence the selection of interviewing as the most appropriate method at this stage of the research. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2020) suggest that the most appropriate way to begin the analytical process and, therefore, to create the 'knowledge' is to condense the data and highlight the emerging themes



through a series of ‘codes’ related to the key areas of the research – in this case, travel, consumption and the environment. An example of an analysed transcript can be found in Appendix F.

**Table 4.7:** Interview sample characteristics

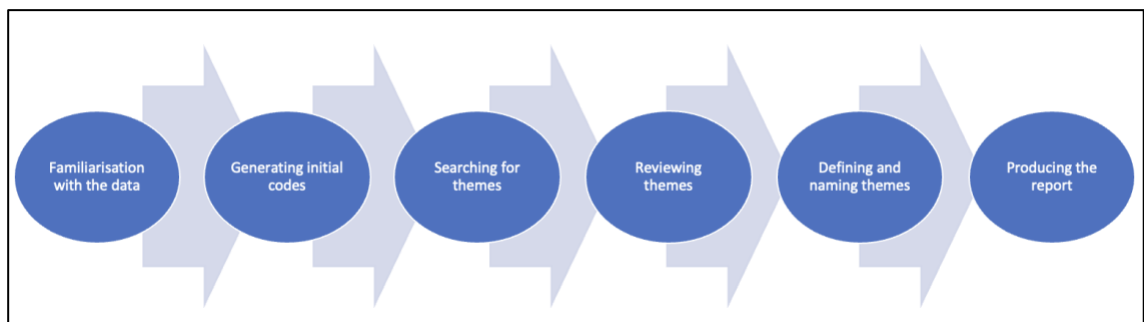
Participant	Age	Gender	Occupation
1	22	F	Interior design apprenticeship
2	21	F	Masters student
3	21	F	Student/ teaching assistant
4	24	F	Student support officer
5	18	F	Full time student
6	20	F	Full time student
7	23	M	Personal Trainer
8	23	F	Event Management
9	24	F	Procurement professional
10	23	F	Consultant in tourism and hospitality
11	25	F	PhD student
12	23	F	Masters student
13	22	F	Civil service worker
14	22	F	Cabin Crew
15	20	F	Full time student
16	25	M	Media officer and masters student
17	23	F	Retail worker
18	24	F	Full time student
19	21	M	Full time student
20	22	F	Masters student

One analytical ‘tool’ that proves useful when working with qualitative data is thematic analysis and there are several advantages to using it. Although not yet considered a branded method, thematic analysis is a flexible and relatively easy method of analysis that can provide a rich and detailed account of the data. Its use is extremely common in qualitative research, perhaps because it does not demand the theoretical commitments of other analyses (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 78). Moreover, it allows the researcher to become more immersed in the data in a versatile manner (Brunt et al., 2017); researchers who adopt thematic analysis are familiar with the data throughout the collection and transcription process (Howitt and Cramer, 2014). For instance, research conducted by Pocock and McIntosh (2013) employed a mixed method, inductive approach to data

collection and thematic analysis to explore distinct and unique long-term traveller experiences. They conducted interviews using open-ended questions to encourage participants to broadly discuss their experiences, thus deriving 'thick description' from the data. According to Tracy (2010: 843), thick description relates to concrete detail and is a means to achieving credibility in research.

In a similar manner then, this research adopts a thematic analysis approach with the intended outcome of deriving thick description from the data. According to Clark et al. (2021: 538), one increasingly popular form of thematic analysis is that proposed by Braun and Clark (2006, 2013, 2022), the popularity of which is due partly to its theoretical and methodological transparency. However, the application of such thematic analysis facilitates the generation of unanticipated results by unpicking or unravelling the surface of 'reality' (Braun and Clark, 2006: 81). Furthermore, thematic analysis works to capture themes which represent a patterned response or meaning from the data and, hence, flexibility as opposed to rigid rules works best for the researcher. Braun and Clark (2006: 87) propose a guide to conducting thematic analysis through six phases; these are depicted in Figure 4.5, below, whilst Table 4.8 provides a more detailed and descriptive outline of each step of the process.

**Figure 4.5** Six step guide to thematic analysis.



Source: Adapted from Braun and Clark (2006: 87).

It must be noted here that following the thematic analysis process, the interview transcripts were systematically worked through in an iterative manner in order to ensure rigour (Braun and Clark, 2022: 70).

In summary, thematic analysis is a relatively straightforward form of qualitative analysis, particularly for novice researchers (Clark et al., 2021).

**Table 4.8** The six-stage process of thematic analysis

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Familiarisation</b></li> </ul>	Transcribing the data, and examining the transcriptions, writing down any initial ideas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Initial coding</b></li> </ul>	Open coding is used to capture emerging themes and then do more theoretical coding of concepts as they become more relevant.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Identifying themes</b></li> </ul>	Compare and contrast emergent codes with both previous codes and any theoretical concepts of interests, thus making connections between the data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reviewing themes</b></li> </ul>	Further develop the themes by combining them into high-order constructs thus further articulating the analysis.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Defining themes</b></li> </ul>	Develop a narrative describing the properties of the themes and sub-theme, demonstrated how they may, or may not be related.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Producing the report</b></li> </ul>	Selection of vivid compelling extract examples, relating back to the aims of the research and linking the themes to the wider literature.

**Source:** Adapted from Braun and Clark (2006: 87) and Clark et al. (2021: 538).

#### 4.8 Ethics procedure

It is essential here to provide a brief summary of the ethical considerations of the research. The research was carried out in line with the University of Central Lancashire's (UCLan) ethics process, and no data were collected until the ethics process was completed and approval had been granted. Following the ethical conduct outlined by the university, all data were stored electronically on UCLan secured servers and protected by passwords. Any notes or material produced in paper format throughout the process of

data collection and analysis were kept in a secure location in the home office of the researcher. Hence, the risks of unauthorised access to any data was reduced to a minimum. Moreover, data were anonymised and stored only on an encrypted device.

The data collection process also followed ethical guidelines with approval and consent from participants at both stages of the research. The approval and consent process is outlined in the following steps:

1. Initially, the survey included a statement of consent and participants could not commence without reading and agreeing to take part in the survey.
2. For the interview process, a Participant Information Sheet was emailed to the participants which outlined the details of the interview and how their information would be anonymised and stored. Participants were encouraged to read through this before the interview commenced. The Participant Information Sheet can be viewed in Appendix C.
3. Participants also received a consent form which required them to tick each box to confirm understanding of the process and then sign and return a copy to the researcher. The Participant Consent Form can be viewed in Appendix D.
4. Before each interview began, the researcher read out a Verbal Consent Form which was stored along with the corresponding interview. Furthermore, all signed digital copies of the participant consent sheets were received by the researcher and stored safely, according to the aforementioned ethical guidelines. The Verbal Consent Form can be viewed in Appendix E.

#### **4.9 Chapter Summary**

In summary, this chapter has presented and explained the preliminary philosophical considerations of the research process. The philosophical underpinnings used to frame the research aim of exploring the significance of tourism as a form of consumption amongst the post-millennial generation were set out. More specifically, the chapter introduced and explained the adoption of an explanatory sequential design, mixed methods approach and specifically drew upon the adoption of the alternative research paradigm of pragmatism. The chapter outlined the research process, in which a Qualtrics-

based survey was followed up by in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Moreover, the data collection processes for each of the two stages, starting with the survey, were mapped out, giving a detailed justification for the use of thematic analysis. The ethical considerations of the research were then proposed. The next chapter of the thesis (Chapter 5) presents the research findings from phase one of the data collection process.

## Chapter Five

### Research Findings: Phase One – Survey

#### 5.0. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings from phase one of the data collection: the survey. As discussed in the preceding methodology chapter, the research adopts a mixed-method approach to data collection. Specifically, a Likert scale-based questionnaire was first created and analysed using the Qualtrics platform and SPSS software. This was then followed at phase two by in-depth interviews carried out using the online platform Microsoft Teams. The outcomes of the research are logically presented and discussed in the order they were generated. First, details and outcomes of the survey are considered in this chapter; the outcomes of the interviews are then presented and discussed in the next chapter. The organisation of the results in this manner reflects the explanatory sequential approach adopted in the research. That is, the scoping survey at phase one reveals relevant key themes and concepts which are then addressed in detail through the in-depth interview process at phase two.

The specific purpose of the survey was to establish the extent of environmental awareness amongst post-millennial-aged respondents (aged between 18 and 25), their tourism consumption habits, and their attitudes and declared behaviours in the context of general consumption practices. Furthermore, and most importantly, the survey presents emerging key themes related to the research objectives and confirms assumptions and arguments outlined in the preceding literature review chapters with regards to the post-millennial generation, their declared environmental awareness and both their general and specifically tourism consumption behaviours, habits and motivations. Therefore, the survey, although carried out as a 'scoping' exercise, provides significant context upon which the subsequent interview questions were developed, thereby contributing to the overall rigour of the research. Collectively, the quantitative and qualitative data complement each other in that they contribute to an understanding of the significance of tourism as a form of consumption in the context of the post-

millennial generation. Prior to presenting an in-depth discussion of the results of the survey, the next section details its administration.

### **5.1. Survey administration and purpose**

The scoping survey was predominantly administered online via the social media platforms Twitter and Facebook. Additionally, Qualtrics-generated QR codes and hyperlinks were distributed amongst friends, colleagues and students on the researcher's university campus. Overall, the survey attracted a total of 203 responses. Although the rate of responses was slower than initially expected, the desired number of responses was achieved by the end of the first year of the PhD.

Prior to discussing details of the survey, it is important to note here that when distributing the questionnaire both through social media platforms and verbally when handing out QR codes on the university campus, it was emphasised that it was to be completed only by respondents aged between 18 and 25. This was reiterated at the beginning of the survey instrument; the opening statement described the research (see Appendix A) and the very first response required of the respondent: 'I can confirm I am within the age brackets of 18-25'. Unfortunately, following completion of the survey process it became evident that 20 respondents who continued to access the questionnaire were not between the age brackets corresponding to the generational cohort of interest; when selecting 'I am not within this age bracket', they were then taken to the end of the questionnaire and despite not completing it, their response was automatically recorded and counted as a full response on Qualtrics. Nevertheless, the survey generated 180 complete responses from those in the correct age category. Upon examining the data, this number of responses was deemed fit for the purposes of a scoping exercise and for the analysis to continue. It is also important to emphasise here that the survey employed non-probability sampling and, therefore, the results cannot be generalised to the larger post-millennial population. Nevertheless, and as previously mentioned, it was a key element of the research in identifying the key themes to be explored critically in the subsequent qualitative stage.

As established in the preceding methodology chapter, the questionnaire was both distributed and analysed using the Qualtrics software. Owing to programme limitations within the available Qualtrics package, the data were then exported to SPSS in order to facilitate the analysis of correlations between the key themes of the survey. Qualtrics software allows the export of data directly to SPSS, meaning that results would be consistent and there was no danger of data being lost or misinterpreted when being transferred manually to other data analysis software such as Gretel. In order to undertake rigorous analysis, correlations were observed between variables using Spearman's Rank Correlation Co-efficient, otherwise known as Spearman's Rho. Spearman's Rho is a widely used statistical tool for measuring the strength of association between two random variables (Schmid and Schmidt, 2006) and is particularly useful when measuring attitudinal data from Likert scale statements. To reiterate the discussion in Chapter 4, Spearman's Rho is a measure of the strength and direction of the relationship between two ordinal variables; Spearman's coefficients range from -1 to +1.

Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) is read as follows:

- $r_s = 0$  means no relationship exists between the variables
- $r_s = +1/- 1$  equals a perfect positive or a perfect negative relationship

The further away from 0 the coefficient is, the stronger the relationship between the variables, whilst +/- indicate a positive or negative correlation. Spearman's Rho test provides two figures:  $r_s$ , which is the correlation coefficient, and P, which indicates the significance value. The P value must be lower than 0.05 in order to be statistically significant.

The questionnaire was constructed predominantly using a range of socio-demographic questions and attitudinal statements based on the three key themes of the research: travel habits, consumer behaviour and environmental awareness. The extent of respondents' agreement with particular statements was measured on a Likert scale ranging from 'strongly' to 'somewhat' agree / disagree at each end of the scale, with a 'neither agree nor disagree' midpoint option. As mentioned previously and given the focus of the research, it was necessary to include a statement to ensure the respondents



were of post-millennial age before commencing the questionnaire. Therefore, the age range of respondents across the sample is 18-25. Further, of the 180 respondents, 144 were female, 35 were male and 1 preferred not to disclose their gender. Although the gender balance of the sample is not of specific importance to the research in question, it is important to note that previous research has revealed that females are more inclined to participate in communications, such as surveys, as they are more likely to possess characteristics consistent with connective selves, such as empathy or emotional closeness (Smith, 2008). Given that when recruiting participants, the message included a statement regarding the importance of the survey's findings to the researcher, those possessing the aforementioned characteristics might be assumed to have felt inclined to offer support through responding to the survey.

#### **5.1.1 Presentation of the survey data**

The purpose of this section of the chapter is to explain how the data are presented in the subsequent sections. Primarily, this takes the form of textual description supported where appropriate with tables and / or figures. This format is adopted for each of the three themes referred to above.

The purpose of using tables is to present the attitudinal data derived from the Likert-scale variables, which provide an insight into respondents' agreement or disagreement with a range of statements relating to the key themes of the research. The Likert-scale statements used a seven-point scale, from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. It is important to discuss the findings from these attitudinal statements to gain an overall picture of the respondents' feelings towards tourism, consumption and the environment, thereby providing a foundation upon which the second primary data collection method can be built. Where respondents were asked open-ended questions, responses were thematically analysed and are displayed in tables and figures categorised by emergent themes.

Once the survey outcomes are discussed, tables are used to present findings from statistical tests. Specifically, non-parametric statistical tests were carried out, whereby one set of ordinal data was tested against another set of ordinal data to establish the

existence of any meaningful correlations across the data set. As mentioned previously, the most appropriate test to run for ordinal data is Spearman's Rank Correlation, more commonly addressed as Spearman's Rho (Bryman, 2008). Additionally, open text box responses are displayed in tables which organise responses into relevant themes and topics or are displayed in visual word clouds.

## 5.2. Survey Outcomes

As discussed earlier in the thesis, the questionnaire design was informed by the literature and, consequently, many of the questions and statements within the questionnaire reflect the key themes that emerged from the literature review. Hence, the following discussions focus on the following key themes below relating to the post-millennial:

- Environmental awareness and attitudes
- Tourism habits and motivations
- Consumer behaviour and habits

Each of these themes will be correlated against each other in order to determine their relationships and importance, and in order to discover subsequent themes to be explored in more detail in the second stage of the data collection.

The questionnaire commenced with the respondents being asked to select their age from a list (age 18 to 25 years old), their education level (from GCSE level to post-graduate) and their gender, nationality and current occupation (see Figure 5.1). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the results indicate that, at the time of completing the questionnaire, 53% of the respondents were undergraduate or postgraduate students. As a note, this may have influenced many of their subsequent responses as they were still of an age where they may be living at home with parents, establishing a career and enjoying limited disposable income. Arguably, however, this might be the expected profile of a typical post-millennial-aged individual.

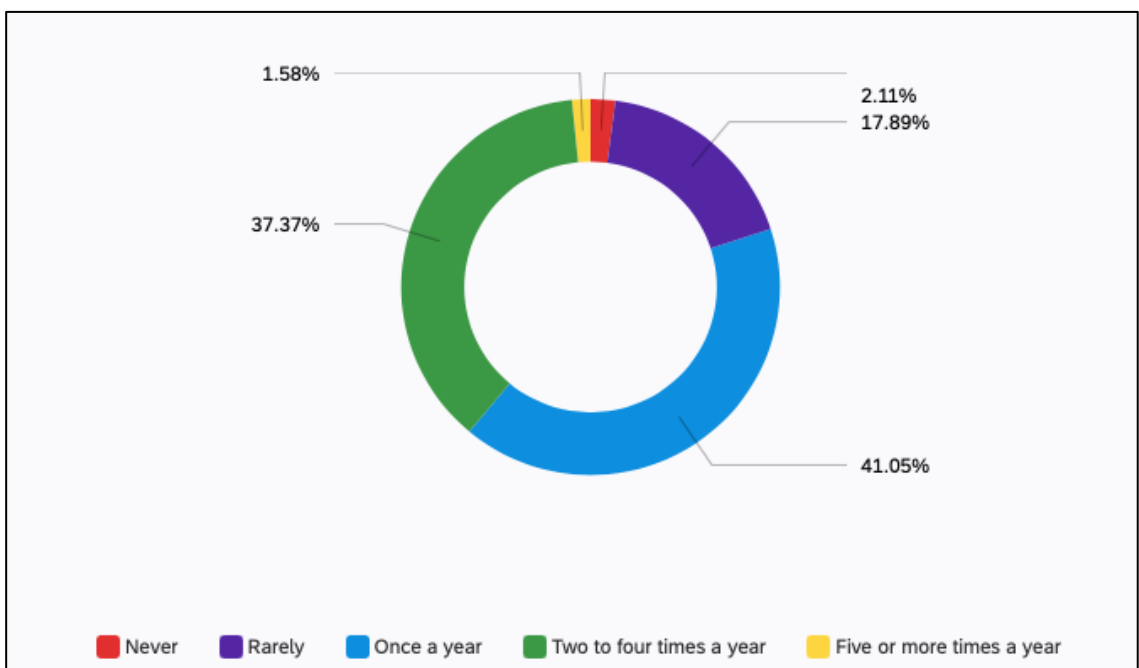
To examine their travel background, respondents were asked the question: 'How often do you normally go on holiday?'. As seen in Figure 5.2 below, the largest number of

respondents travelled once a year (41%) followed closely by those who normally go on holiday two to four times a year (37%).

Figure 5.1: Word cloud relating to respondents' occupation

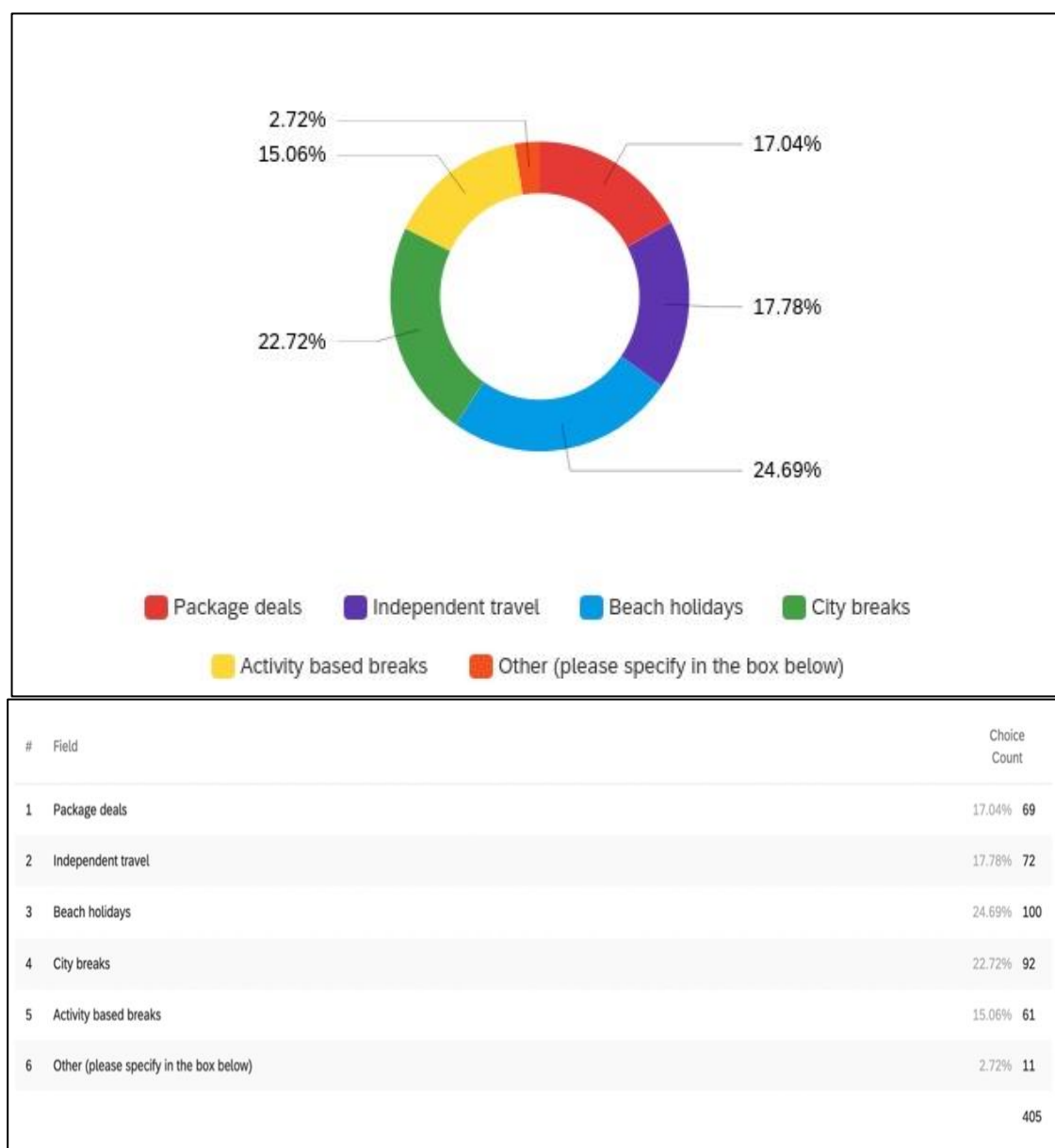


Figure 5.2: Respondents' travel background



The following question asked, 'Where do you like to travel to?'. The highest proportion of respondents stated that they like to travel short haul to neighbouring countries (53%); a further 29% of respondents indicated they like to travel as long-haul as possible (29%), whilst the remaining respondents (18%) indicated that they prefer to travel within their home country. The respondents then selected from a list which type of holiday they prefer. As seen in Figure 5.3, the most common selection (56%) was 'beach holidays', closely followed by 'city breaks' (51%).

**Figure 5.3:** What type of holidays do you prefer?



The principal themes emerging from the questionnaire are now discussed, commencing with those relating to the respondents' environmental awareness and attitudes.

### 5.3 The Environment: Are we aware and do we care?

Given the nature of the research, the first key aim of the survey was to determine the degree of environmental awareness amongst the post-millennial age group and the actions they undertake that support their claims. As discussed in the literature review, the post-millennial generation has been labelled 'the generation of change' (UN, 2019) and, hence, may be considered to be the most likely group to take significant action against climate change and environmental degradation. Therefore, first and foremost, it was necessary to identify the extent of environmental awareness amongst the sample of post-millennials. Consequently, the questionnaire asked: "Do you consider yourself to be environmentally aware?"

Unsurprisingly, 85% of the sample declared that they considered themselves to be environmentally aware. Indeed, a high positive response was expected given the social desirability of being seen to be environmentally aware (see Juvan and Dolnicar, 2016: 36-37). Hence, as discussed shortly, subsequent questions sought to elicit a more nuanced response. A follow-up question then listed 12 environmentally friendly actions, such as creating less waste, using refillable bottles, recycling and shopping locally, and asked the respondents to select which actions they regularly undertake. The purpose of this was to determine if and how the self-declared environmental awareness amongst respondents translates into related actions. Notably, 92% of respondents (more than those claiming to be environmentally aware) indicated that they regularly engaged in recycling, revealing that some respondents still take positive actions with regards to the environment despite their non-declaration of awareness. One explanation for this discrepancy might be that, arguably, not only is recycling considered a contemporary social norm but also it does not require much effort given that most homes have recycling bins to organise plastic and cardboard waste. In contrast, the results revealed that the actions 'offset my carbon footprint' and 'plant trees' were the least selected responses (2%). Importantly, later in the analysis, statistical correlation tests reveal some conflicting findings in terms of the declared environmental awareness of the respondents, specifically in the context of their tourism habits. These provide grounds for further investigation in the second stage of the research.

Table 5.1 below presents the findings from the environment-related attitudinal statements in the questionnaire, specifically those relating to the individual's environmental awareness and their views on and understanding of the climate crisis.

**Table 5.1:** Extent of agreement with environmental statements

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I consider myself to be worried about climate change	20%	37%	23%	6%	6%	5%	3%
I believe we can solve environmental problems through technology	8%	28%	32%	18%	7%	7%	0%
The current concern about the climate crisis is over emphasised	3%	3%	8%	9%	15%	31%	31%
I believe the greatest challenge facing the planet is global warming	23%	35%	20%	12%	3%	3%	4%
Greta Thunberg is correct in saying the climate crisis is the fault of older generations	19%	23%	23%	13%	13%	6%	3%
My generation is not really worried about climate change	5%	10%	15%	7%	22%	24%	17%
I would positively support actions for climate change	30%	36%	21%	8%	2%	1%	2%
Humans are severely abusing the environment	44%	28%	17%	4%	5%	0%	2%
It is the responsibility of the government to fix the climate issues	27%	30%	21%	10%	6%	3%	3%
In 30 years' time the environment will be worse off than it is now	46%	30%	12%	8%	1%	2%	1%
My generation will find the solution to the current climate crisis	7%	19%	24%	25%	12%	8%	5%

The above findings (Table 5.1) confirm there is an evident degree of environmental awareness of and concern for the climate crisis amongst the post-millennial respondents. In particular, a significant proportion of respondents appeared to be aware of and worried about the climate crisis (80%), with only 14% believing that it is over-emphasised. However, some ambivalence is in evidence in that only 20% 'strongly agree', whereas 23% 'somewhat agree' to be worried. Moreover, only 23% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement 'I believe the greatest challenge facing the planet is global

warming'. The overall strength of agreement is therefore perhaps less than might be expected considering that the post-millennial generation are widely considered to be the generational cohort most associated with climate anxiety or eco-anxiety. For example, the result of the largest ever survey of climate anxiety amongst 10,000 teenagers and young adults aged 16 to 25 (see Hickman et al., 2021) found that climate change is having a profound impact on young people. Specifically, over 50% of participants expressed feelings of sadness, anxiety, anger, powerlessness, helplessness and guilt. Additionally, over 45% of the respondents indicated that their emotions regarding climate change had a negative impact on their daily lives and overall functioning. Many of the participants also reported a significant number of negative thoughts about climate change; for instance, 75% expressed fear about the future and 89% believed that humanity has not cared for the planet adequately.

Similarly, in the current research some nuanced results arose in connection to the statement 'the environment will be worse off in 30 years than it is now'. Whereas the majority of respondents (88%) indicated that they believed it would be, only just over half (46%) of those were in strong agreement. This suggests that contrary to the aforementioned perceived worry of this generational cohort, climate change and concern for the future of the planet may not necessarily be at the forefront of their minds. Moreover, as Andre et al. (2021) argue, although there is general consensus that the post-millennial generation are concerned for, worried about or at least believe in the notion of climate change, some do not perceive climate change to be a pressing issue.

### **5.3.1 The environment: Is it my problem?**

Within the broad issue of environmental awareness, the questionnaire sought to elicit the extent to which respondents believed it to be their individual responsibility to bring about change. From Table 5.1 above, the results imply that many respondents did not feel that environmental issues are their problem or responsibility; hence, this section of the chapter considers these responses.

In their global survey, Hickman et al. (2021) found that there is an overall dissatisfaction with government responses to climate change with respondents reporting a greater

sense of betrayal rather than reassurance. In a similar vein, an interesting finding in the current research is that 78% of respondents held the government accountable for fixing climate issues and only 12% disagreed with the statement, half of whom (6%) only 'somewhat' agreed. In recent years, the policy focus has been on limiting the increase in global temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels (as outlined in The Paris Agreement, (UN, 2015)) and reaching what is known as 'net-zero' by 2050 (as previously referred to throughout the literature chapters of this thesis). However, some have little faith that these climate change policies will be achieved and findings from a recent study (Kantar Public, 2021) suggest that governments need to take lead and implement measures that combine encouragement and obligation in order to break down barriers of social norms. As climate change is an issue that requires international co-operation, the perceived lack of engagement from governments creates the impression of a lack of commitment from society as a whole, thus making it harder to encourage individuals to take personal responsibility. It has long been argued that one of the challenges to addressing the environmental crisis is the fact that individuals tend to transfer responsibility to governments and larger corporations to avoid acknowledging their own responsibility (Mkono and Hughes, 2020: 1236).

One primary reason for this lack of individual accountability and responsibility can be linked to a phenomenon known as attribution bias (Weiner, 1985) whereby individuals tend to attribute negative outcomes to external factors rather than accepting personal responsibility. This bias can help protect one's self-image and reduces cognitive dissonance by shifting blame onto others. Moreover, large corporations and governments are viewed as powerful entities with significant influence over policies and regulations and, therefore, can be perceived as possessing the capacity to make significant changes and mitigate environmental problems on a larger scale. Consequently then, these results suggest that people may hold them accountable and transfer the blame to them in the hope that they will take effective action. Interestingly, Feinberg and Willer (2013) found that individuals who strongly believe in individualism and self-reliance are nevertheless more likely to deny their personal responsibility for environmental problems and tend to place blame on others; this supports the idea that people's values and beliefs play a significant role in shaping their attributions of responsibility.



As previously discussed in Chapter 3, individuals tend to try to alleviate the tension arising from the misalignment of their values and actions by providing justification for this misalignment (the value-action gap). In this context, a recent study on the environment and climate change (Kantar Public, 2021) surveyed over 9000 adults in 9 European countries, the results of which found a significant gap between people's awareness and actions. Overall, the survey results revealed that 78% of respondents claimed to be concerned about climate change, considering it to be a 'very serious' problem. However, when evaluating their personal commitment to protecting the planet, 45% of respondents expressed feelings of powerlessness such as helplessness and sometimes fear. Moreover, 75% felt disappointed by the lack of action on the part of their national government which they said is not doing enough to tackle climate change. The results of the survey concluded that a collective global effort was the only way to solve climate change.

In accordance with the outcomes of that survey, when asked 'If you feel something prevents you from leading an environmentally friendly lifestyle, please list here' (see Table 5.2) some respondents in this study declared that they cannot see how their actions would make a difference in comparison to large organisations which appear, as one respondent commented, '*reckless towards the environment*' and another commented '*are much more harmful for the environment*'. However, this is arguably not the case; if collectively, individuals were all to commit to an environmentally friendly lifestyle, the impact would certainly be positively significant. For example, the global brands company Unilever estimates that almost 70% of its carbon footprint depends on which products customers choose and whether they dispose of them in an environmentally sustainable manner (White, Hardy and Habib, 2019). In other words, if people were to consciously navigate a more environmentally friendly lifestyle, the carbon footprint of large corporations would potentially decrease.

Furthermore, the great majority (89%) of respondents agreed (strongly to somewhat) with the statement 'humans are severely abusing the environment'. Such an outcome is to be expected, not least because there is undoubted widespread awareness of climate change and environmental crises amongst the post-millennial generation. After all, it is this generation that has grown up in an era of ever-increasing climate crisis information,

the placing of climate change high on the political agenda and the emergence of national and global movements seeking responses to climate change. Nevertheless, in contrast to the apparent high level of worry about climate change, it is of note that 30% of respondents agreed (strongly to somewhat) with the statement 'my generation is not really worried about climate change'; alternatively, only 41% disagreed / strongly disagreed with this statement. This suggests that although the majority of respondents are aware of climate change, addressing it is not necessarily top of their priorities and nor is it something they feel they need to worry about at the moment. This finding is reinforced by some in their response to the question: 'if you feel something prevents you from leading an environmentally friendly lifestyle, please list here'. The responses to this question are discussed in the next section.

Some other notable findings in Table 5.1 also point towards a shift in sense of responsibility. First and perhaps, the most apparent is the agreement with the statement 'Greta Thunberg is correct in saying the climate crisis is the fault of older generations', 65% somewhat to strongly agreed with this statement, with an almost equal divide between 'strongly agree', 'agree' and 'somewhat agree'. In a recent study comparing generations and their climate concerns, Swim et al. (2022) argue that as one generation gets older, their perception of the future can change and thus, the distant future can be of more concern to the younger generations. However, their study did not find younger generations to be more concerned or worried about climate change than the older generations. Moreover, they imply that the focus in the media on youth activism may not accurately represent the broader youth population as a whole. Second, the response to 'I believe we can solve environmental problems through technology' was equally surprising. That is, 68% of respondents agreed somewhat to strongly with the statement with only 14% disagreeing and 0% disagreeing strongly. This could be perceived as a highly techno-centric perspective and perhaps interpreted as a lack of desire or willingness to change/ reduce consumption, again placing responsibility elsewhere.

Overall, some of the results in Table 5.1 are predictable but others are more surprising, particularly those that counter the belief that the post-millennials are the 'environmental' generation. In fact, some results point to the fact that many respondents denied it is their

responsibility to do something about climate change. The next section will address the emergent barriers to adopting a more environmentally friendly lifestyle.

### **5.3.2 Barriers to leading an environmentally friendly lifestyle**

Although the impacts of climate change are often experienced on a global scale, the underlying causes can be traced back to the actions and behaviours of individuals, households and communities at the local level (Axon, 2017). In other words, if each and every individual was to adopt environmentally friendly behaviours or lifestyles, negative impacts would indeed be minimised. However, embedding sustainable behaviour into people's consumption habits outside of daily lifestyle practices remains one of the biggest challenges (Barr et al., 2009; Chwialkowska, 2019: 33). In other words, when facing lifestyle changes and choices, a number of barriers present themselves. Research broadly reveals two forms of barriers to leading an environmentally friendly lifestyle (EFL). On the one hand, there are practical barriers, such as costs, lack of opportunities (for example, recycling points) and lack of knowledge. On the other hand, there are personal barriers such as an unwillingness to transform current (materialistic) lifestyles or an individual's sense of powerlessness. Specifically, Blake (1999: 267) addresses these barriers to action at the individual level through the value-action gap (as discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis), arguing that environmental concern is outweighed by other conflicting attitudes such as lack of interest, lack of efficacy and lack of time and money. Moreover, as Dresner (2009) points out, many people are willing to support sustainability as long as it doesn't come at a personal cost to them.

Correspondingly, and as noted above, the questionnaire asked; 'If you feel something prevents you from leading an environmentally friendly lifestyle, please list here'. The purpose of this question was to identify those barriers that prevent respondents from leading an environmentally friendly lifestyle (EFL). Once the responses containing 'I don't know', 'N/A' or '...' had been discarded, the question generated a total of 111 written responses (62% of respondents). These were then thematically analysed and categorised into the following emergent themes:

- **Cost** of living an EFL
- Lack of **knowledge** on how to lead an EFL
- Changing of **lifestyle** or ease of current, non-EFL
- Over-availability of product packaging (excessive **plastic**) or lack of recycling

Some responses contained words relating to more than one theme and are, therefore, counted in each of the associated themes in Table 5.2 below.

**Table 5.2:** Emergent themes: Barriers to environmentally friendly lifestyle (EFL)

Theme	Example Comment	Responses
Cost	EF products are expensive; sustainable practices and products are expensive; lack of money to purchase EF items over their cheaper counterparts; ultimately it costs money to live completely sustainably.	68
Lifestyle	Changing my lifestyle is only going to have a minimal impact on climate change; avoiding the extra effort required; half of my happiness is derived from materialistic things; effort and convenience; I don't feel I have time for that lifestyle; not a top priority; society is centred around the way we currently live...not everyone is going to want to compromise what they have.	42
Plastic	The lack of correct recycling points available; the over availability of plastic packaging; you can't avoid plastic packaging when buying products.	11
Knowledge	Lack of understanding on how to be EF in my day-to-day life; I don't think I have a clear picture of what I should be doing; not enough knowledge of how to lead an EFL; knowledge of its impacts.	6

When looking at practical barriers to leading an EFL, one recurring theme (61%) was cost. Extensive research has been carried out connecting environmental concern and environmentally friendly attitudes and values with consumers' intention to purchase green products (for example, Han et al., 2011; Khoiriyah and Toro, 2018; Prakash et al., 2019; Ramayah, Lee and Mohamad, 2010; Sun, Li and Wang, 2021; Sun and Wang, 2020) and, specifically, relating to the cost of purchasing green products (for example, Biswas and Roy, 2016; Gomes, Lopes and Nogueira, 2023; Khoiriyah and Toro, 2013; Varah et al., 2021). Generally, these studies have found that if the individual perceives the green

product to be of good value, they are more willing to purchase it. Perhaps what is true of the post-millennial generation, however, is that they are individuals who are still in full time education, or at the early stages of their careers, therefore it is understandable that they may not have the disposable income to make sustainable lifestyle changes. That being said, many will still find a way to travel / go on holiday (as seen in the travel related results, shortly). This will be explored further in the next chapter.

Other practical barriers related to limited adequate recycling facilities or the over-provision of plastic-packaging (12%). Whilst consumers are generally aware of the environmental problems caused by food packaging, particularly packaging made from single-use plastic, they are unaware of environmentally friendly packaging solutions (Ketelsen, Janssen and Hamm, 2020). Furthermore, in their study, Ketelsen et al. (2020) found that a majority of consumers are likely prioritise factors such as cost or familiarisation of the brand rather than environmentally friendly packaging as such factors are of greater importance to them. In the context of the current research, this could perhaps suggest then that there is a need for wider spread marketing of environmentally friendly packaging. This also connects to the other practical barrier mentioned in Table 5.2, that is, a lack of education on how to lead an EFL (5%).

Perhaps what is most interesting regarding this question is that 38% of respondents commented on how leading an EFL conflicts with their current lifestyle. As previously mentioned, this is a major barrier to adopting pro-environmental behaviours. Respondents' comments ranged from not believing it was a priority to it was too much effort or would compromise their current lifestyle; 17% of responses mentioned 'effort', 'convenience' or 'compromise'. In one unusual case, a respondent commented that *'Half my happiness is derived from self-pleasure and a need for materialistic things'*. Another commented that *'ignorance is bliss'*. These responses suggest that leading an EFL would compromise the contemporary lifestyle habits respondents have already adopted or that simply ignoring any consequences of their lifestyle habits is an easier option. In other words, leading an EFL would diminish their happiness, convenience or the pleasure they gain from a consumerist lifestyle. As outlined in Chapter 3, the one consistent premise across much of the research on the environmental consequences of consumption lies within the materialistic values upheld across Western consumer societies (Kilbourne and

Pickett, 2007). In other words, the spiralling consumer culture prevalent among citizens of Western industrial societies is identified as a fundamental cause of environmental degradation (Helm et al., 2019: 264). Whilst these arguments ring true of the current research findings in the context of their resistance to leading an EFL, there is a need to understand why these barriers exist and, more importantly, how they can be overcome. One suggestion is simply that many consumers may not realise how their individual consumption contributes to the problem (Helm et al., 2019: 265). The extensive research on materialism identifies it as a personal value in which an individual's pursuit of happiness is based on the acquisition of material things rather than through relationships, experiences or achievements (Richins and Dawson, 1992: 304). However, as previously discussed in Chapter 4, it is often found that the acquisition of material goods does not provide the level of happiness such as that derived from the consumption of experiences such as holidays. Therefore, when considering these responses regarding the barriers to leading an EFL, it is necessary to understand whether the post-millennials value experiences over 'things'. This finding is discussed in more detail later in this chapter in the section 'the importance of tourism', where similar findings are revealed.

Some other interesting comments not categorised in the table above include 'Man-made climate change is the greatest scientific fraud in history' and 'Wokeness'. These could suggest a denial of climate change altogether amongst some respondents.

### **5.3.3 The environment: Green at home but not on holiday?**

As discussed earlier in this thesis, academic attention has long been paid to the complex relationship between the environment and tourism. From the 1970s onwards, innumerable studies have explored the various impacts of tourism on the physical environment within which it occurs, from pollution to the degradation of both natural and built environments (for example, Becken, 2007; de Kadt, 1979; Rosenow and Pulsipher, 1980; Sharpley, 2000; Turner and Ash, 1975; Young, 1973). Over the last decade, however, extensive research has been undertaken into the relationship between tourism and climate change in particular (for example, Goodwin, 2016; Gössling and Higham, 2021; Lenzen et al., 2018; Scott, Hall and Gössling, 2019). Much of this is concerned with either adaptation or mitigation policies at the destination level

although most recently, attention has focused on the incompatibility of tourism-related emissions with objective of 'net-zero', particularly given the sector's commitment to be 'carbon neutral' by 2050 through its 2021 *Glasgow Declaration: A Commitment to a Decade of Tourism Climate Action* (Scott and Gössling, 2021: 14). In other words, although there is a commitment across the tourism sector to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, this is considered by some to be an unrealistic objective; tourism simply cannot continue on its current path whilst achieving acceptable levels of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Hence, a fundamental transformation (reduction) in the consumption of tourism is required (see Sharpley and Telfer, 2023) – and the focus of this thesis. Therefore, in order to address the key aim of this thesis – whether the 'tourists of the future' are willing to make changes to their own tourism habits for the sake of the environment – it was important to explore in the questionnaire their current tourism behaviours and attitudes.

Specifically, in order to understand the relationship between their travel habits / attitudes and their environmental awareness / concerns, respondents were asked to express their agreement / disagreement with a number of attitudinal statements regarding the environment when on holiday. As discussed in the literature review, previous studies have found that, in general, people do not want to harm the environment yet, when on holiday, not only are they are less likely to act in an environmentally friendly manner (Juvan et al., 2016) but also seek to justify this in a number of ways. One particular justification that tourists provide for not behaving in accordance with their stated beliefs is that, similar to the aforementioned blame on large corporations, they consider that the responsibility for reducing the environmental impacts of tourism lies with tourism providers rather than with themselves (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014).

Although some of the statements displayed in Table 5.3 below are similar in context, the results are rather contradictory. For example, a majority of respondents (74%) agreed (from somewhat to strongly) with the statement 'It is the tourism industry's responsibility to provide more environmentally friendly holidays', as such denying their own role or responsibility. Yet interestingly, only 25% agreed with the statement 'Tourists shouldn't need to worry about the environment when they are on holiday'. Furthermore, almost all respondents (96%) agreed with the statement 'When on holiday it is important to treat the local environment with respect' but, at the same time, an overwhelming 63% agreed

that the last thing they are thinking about on holiday is the environment. Moreover, almost half (48%) indicated that they care about the environment but are not willing to change their holiday habits for it. Another significant finding was that 83% of respondents agreed to a lesser or greater extent that if someone offered them a free holiday that was not environmentally friendly, they would nevertheless still take it.

**Table 5.3:** Environment, tourism and holiday habits related attitudinal statements.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Tourism is a significant contributor to climate change	11%	32%	29%	14%	8%	4%	2%
I care about the environment, but I am not willing to change my holiday habits for it	10%	13%	25%	18%	15%	11%	8%
It is the tourism industry's responsibility to provide more environmentally friendly holidays	12%	28%	34%	13%	6%	4%	3%
People will travel more now they have experienced a pandemic	36%	31%	12%	11%	5%	3%	2%
When on holiday it is important to treat the local environment with respect	62%	27%	7%	3%	0%	1%	0%
Even if I had the money, I would sacrifice my holiday for the benefit of the environment	3%	8%	20%	13%	23%	19%	14%
Tourists shouldn't need to worry about the environment when they are on holiday	7%	7%	11%	8%	19%	30%	18%
When I am on holiday the last thing I am thinking about is the impact I'm having on the environment	14%	17%	32%	8%	14%	12%	3%
If someone offered me a free holiday to somewhere that was not eco-friendly, I would still take it	38%	27%	18%	8%	4%	3%	2%

These contradictory findings are indicative of a significant value-action gap in tourism; whilst there exists the awareness that people should play a part in looking after the environment when on holiday, there is a positive rejection of environmentally sound behaviours when consuming tourism. This, in turn, points to the perhaps unique



influence or power of tourism as a form of consumption in encouraging a denial of environmental responsibilities, an issue which is explored in more detail in Chapter 6. Certainly, it is evident from the results summarised in Table 5.3 above that there undoubtedly exists a conflicting relationship between an individual’s environmental awareness and their tourism behaviours. As highlighted in the previous chapters, increased awareness and attitude does not necessarily constitute increased behavioural change (Antimova, Nawijn and Peeters, 2012) and, in the specific context of tourism, it is observed that this is very much the case; tourist patterns of behaviour do not change in response to their environmental knowledge (Becken, 2007; Hares et al., 2010). Indeed, as Cohen and Higham (2011) argue, people with the greatest environmental awareness are those least likely to alter their tourism behaviours.

**Table 5.4:** Correlations of the environment and holidays variables

<b>Statement</b> (against <i>when I am on holiday the last thing I am thinking about is the environment</i> )	<b>P value</b>	<b>r<sub>s</sub> value</b>
Even if I had the money, I would sacrifice my holiday for the benefit of the environment	<.001	-.400
Tourists shouldn’t need to worry about the environment when they are on holiday	<.001	.549
I care about the environment, but I am not willing to change my holiday habits for it	<.001	.485
People should choose holiday destinations closer to their home	<.001	-.302
I would positively support actions for climate change	<.001	-.428
The environmental impacts of flying are exaggerated	<.001	.288
Humans are severely abusing the environment	<.001	.276
People need to buy/consume less for the sake of the environment	<.001	-.265

In order to explore this issue in the context of the current research, further analysis was undertaken of the interrelationships between an individual’s stated environmental awareness and their holiday habits. Table 5.4 above presents the statistical tests that determine the correlations run against the variable ‘when I am on holiday the last thing I am thinking about is the environment’. The results reveal some interesting and significant correlations. The most statistically significant, yet unsurprising, positive relationship was the correlation with ‘tourists shouldn’t need to worry about the environment when they

are on holiday’. This was followed closely by the positive relationship with the statement ‘I care about the environment, but I am not willing to change my holiday habits for it’. However, the variable ‘even if I had the money, I would sacrifice my holiday for the benefit of the environment’ produced a statistically significant negative correlation. This negative relationship between the two variables reiterates and confirms earlier discussions relating to holidays being placed extremely high in the post-millennial’s values and consumption hierarchy. Again, this is something that will be explored further in the next chapter.

**Table 5.5:** Correlations of environmental awareness and tourism habit variables

Statement (against <i>I consider myself to be worried about climate change</i> )	P value	r <sub>s</sub> value
I would be just as happy to have a holiday in the UK, rather than going abroad	<.001	.263
I believe that tourism is a right, not a privilege	.018	-.177
People who travel a lot have a better quality of life than those who don’t travel	.010	-.192
I believe that tourism is a luxury	<.001	.316
Travelling is an essential part of my lifestyle	.028	-.164
Having holidays is essential to my happiness	.012	-.186

Table 5.5 reveals the correlation between various statements and the independent variable ‘I consider myself to be worried about climate change’. An interesting observation here is the positive correlation between the variables ‘I consider myself to be worried about climate change’ and ‘I believe that tourism is a luxury’. This positive correlation suggests that the more respondent’s worry about climate change, the more they believe tourism to be a luxury. Furthermore, a positive relationship can be seen between the independent variable and the variable ‘I would be just as happy to have a holiday in the UK’. In addition, although relatively weak, there are still statistically significant negative correlations between the independent variable and the variables ‘people who travel have a better quality of life’ and ‘having holidays is essential to my happiness’. What these results imply is that perhaps those respondents who claimed to worry about climate change issues are also, to some extent, concerned that consuming tourism negatively impacts the environment, as there are significant correlations determining that they do not believe holidays are essential to their happiness, to the quality of life of others or that going abroad for a holiday is desirable. In comparison to

the findings in table 5.4 above, this set of respondents do not seem to hold holidays in as high a regard than their environmental concern. However, as demonstrated thus far, there are many conflicting findings regarding respondents' environmental values, concerns and behaviours. Therefore, the following section of the chapter aims to explore these further within the context of tourism.

#### **5.3.4 Summary**

As discussed in this section, the first aim of the survey was to establish whether the sample of post-millennials considered themselves to be environmentally aware. The results indicate that the majority of the sample (85%) declared they are and, furthermore, 92% undertook actions associated with being environmentally aware, such as recycling. Therefore, it can be concluded that there undoubtedly exists a level of awareness concerning the environment amongst the respondents. However, when presented with attitudinal statements associated with the environment, some conflicting results emerged. Specifically, despite 89% of respondents believing that humans are severely abusing the environment, in the context of their personal contributions, 61% believed it was too expensive to lead an environmentally friendly lifestyle and 38% believed doing so would conflict their current lifestyle. Moreover, some went as far as saying they are too materialistic, it is too much effort, or it is not a priority for them to make the changes in the consumption behaviours. Furthermore, it was established that a majority of respondents believed that large corporations and governments should be making the changes. Lastly, when evaluated in the context of personal travel and holidays, some respondents were more reluctant to make the environment their priority, whereas statistical findings suggested that those that are more concerned about climate change, may not be as concerned about taking holidays. What these results suggest is that despite holding environmental awareness on the whole, aligning personal behaviours with these values is much more difficult. The next section will explore the responses to travel-related questions in the survey.

#### 5.4 Air travel: The plane will fly anyway

While various habitual consumption activities outside the home contribute to carbon emissions and, thus, play a role in climate change, individual travel behaviour has attracted increasing attention in the media and academic research (Barr, Shaw and Gilg, 2011). Specifically, as outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the focus has predominantly been on leisure air travel, which is the most significant contributor to tourism-related greenhouse gas emissions, particularly since the emergence of 'low-cost carriers' which offer frequent, affordable and usually short-haul flights. Correspondingly, respondents were presented with the statement 'low-cost airlines are good because they allow more people to travel (see Table 5.7, presented shortly). A majority (84%) of respondents agreed, 25% 'strongly agreed', 33% 'agreed' and 26% 'somewhat agreed'. What is perhaps more surprising though, is that only 1% of respondents 'strongly disagreed' and a further 1% 'disagreed', with just 5% 'somewhat' disagreeing. These results suggest that despite the aforementioned widespread criticism directed towards the contribution of low-cost carriers to environmental degradation, people nevertheless view them positively. This again may suggest that, in the context of personal travel and holidays, post-millennials are more reluctant to make the environment their priority.

For the purpose of this stage of the research, then, it was important to explore if there was anything at all that would stop or discourage respondents from taking flights. Consequently, respondents were asked the open-ended question: 'What would make you stop flying?'. Their answers were categorised into key emerging themes. Table 5.6 below displays the themes derived from the analysis, along with examples of comments and the total number of responses in relation to each particular theme. Some comments included more than one theme, for example: '*a viable, cheaper alternative mode of transport that was more eco-friendly*'. These were categorised into each of the corresponding themes.

Interestingly, 12 respondents indicated they were unsure or did not know; these responses were discarded from the overall results. Significantly, 44 respondents (26%) claimed that nothing would stop them from flying. This indicates that air travel is important to these respondents; they are expressing no intention or compunction to alter their behaviour.

**Table 5.6:** Themes derived from question 20 ‘What would make you stop flying?’

Theme	Example Comment	Responses
Cost	If it was too expensive; if the prices rose higher than I can afford; lack of money; if flying became more expensive; like many people, if it became too expensive; cost; if I couldn’t afford it.	55
Nothing	Nothing, as I require flights to see my family; nothing, unless planes were not a thing, as there are other ways to protect the world; I really enjoy holidays and being on a plane is part of that	44
Law	If there were laws against it; war; governmental restrictions, terrorism, politics; if the government introduced certain sanctions on travel; safety issues; an economic crisis.	36
Alternative transport	An alternative mode of transport that is just as quick and cheap; a viable and affordable alternative solution; if cheaper modes of public transport were available.	27
Environment	Environmental effects: Seeing the constant state of the world and climate crisis makes me worry about my future and I would be happy to cut down on my flying knowing it is a major contributor to climate change.	21
Time	If I had more time to travel with other transports; if there were alternative travel options that were just as quick as flying; if there was an alternative method of travel that didn’t take twice as long.	13

In their research, Mkono and Hughes (2020: 1231) identify similar comments as their subjects dismissed any attempts to making them feel guilty or to shame them for their choice of transport, such as: ‘I’m not going to deny myself the greatest joy of my life, which is travel overseas... that requires flying if I’m going to accomplish it in the vacation time I’m allowed’. Similarly in the current research, one respondent declared ‘*I really enjoy holidays and being on a plane is part of that*’. Interestingly, Lumsdon and Page (2004) provide an overview of the concept that tourism transport can be seen as a continuum, ranging from a perspective where transportation is seen purely as a functional utility with minimal inherent value as a tourism experience, to the opposite viewpoint where it is considered an integral part of the tourism experience, possessing significant intrinsic value. Evidently then, for some individuals, flying is a part of their holiday experience which they are not willing to give up for anything. However, one respondent did put forward the idea of changing their air travel habits and acknowledged the contribution of air travel to the climate crisis: ‘*...environmental effects: Seeing the*

*constant state of the world and climate crisis makes me worry about my future and I would be happy to cut down on my flying knowing it is a major contributor to climate change.'* However, their comment does not suggest they have stopped or will stop flying; rather, that they recognise the impacts and would be happy to cut their flying down accordingly. Given the declared awareness of the impacts of air travel on the environment amongst many of the respondents (see Table 5.7, below – 63% of respondents disagreed strongly to somewhat with the statement: 'the environmental impacts of flying are exaggerated'), this is something that will be explored further in the second stage of the research in order to understand why this generation may not be willing to change or adapt their tourism behaviours.

As consumers take into account their available discretionary time and income when selecting holiday destinations, the availability of low-cost carriers has redefined the thresholds of distance, cost and time associated with accessible destinations (Larsen and Guiver, 2013). Perhaps unsurprisingly, cost and time were both reoccurring themes in the responses, cost being the most frequently mentioned (55 responses) with comments such as '*a viable cheap alternative*', '*If I had more time to travel with other transports*' and '*if there were alternative travel options that were just as quick as flying*'. All these responses suggest that the respondents have limited money and time to travel, which could possibly be generational as, generally speaking, the older people get the more discretionary money and time they have to travel. Having said that, it has long been acknowledged that cost is a determining factor in travel choices, irrespective of income.

13% of respondents mentioned the words 'environment', 'eco-friendly' or 'climate' in their answers, as in, for example, '*alternative eco-friendly transport options*'. This suggests that more people would be willing to stop flying if there were appropriate alternative methods of transport. However, some respondents felt they needed more in-depth information on the impacts of flying on the environment, by responding with statements such as: '*being aware of the direct link between my flight and the environment*', and '*knowing the specific facts about how much it (flying) is affecting global warming*'. This perhaps suggests that people are confused about the direct impact of their personal flight-related carbon footprint, even though easy and free-to-use carbon footprint calculators are readily accessible online (for example, see [myclimate.org](http://myclimate.org)). This

again could be related to the value-action gap which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

Also revealed in Table 5.6 is the fact that 36 respondents (20%) would only stop flying if it was illegal or if there was an epidemic, pandemic, war or other governmental restrictions. In other words, they would stop flying only for reasons beyond their control. This outcome did not come as a surprise given the results derived from the comments seen shortly in Table 5.9 relating to travel. This table draws some interesting implications regarding the importance of travel to the respondents, and as mentioned, air travel is indeed, as one respondent quoted *'a part of that'*.

Further responses categorised under 'law' related to safety issues, such as the threat of terrorism, or regulations, such as travel sanctions or restrictions. Such laws, though perhaps undesirable, are effective when implemented. In the UK, for example, sales of single-use plastic carrier bags have dropped by 95% since charges were introduced in 2015 (Smithers, 2020).

**Table 5.7:** Flying related statements

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There should be laws in place to limit the number of times people can fly each year	7%	13%	15%	16%	14%	15%	20%
There should be an option for frequent travellers to pay voluntary taxes, so they don't feel guilty about their carbon footprint	11%	22%	21%	18%	7%	10%	11%
The environmental impacts of flying are exaggerated	4%	5%	9%	19%	16%	29%	18%
There should be a limit on how often and how far people can travel	8%	11%	16%	14%	13%	17%	21%
Low-cost airlines are good because they allow more people to travel	25%	33%	26%	9%	5%	1%	1%

Other responses not categorised into Table 5.6 included: *'having more diverse activities available within the UK'*; *'if I lived in a warm country, I would probably not feel the need to fly often'*; *'I rarely fly anyways- I have only taken 2 return flights in my life'*; *'something unrelated to environmental impacts'* and *'seeing the detrimental impacts closer to home'*.

Table 5.7 highlights the extent of agreement / disagreement with statements specifically relating to air travel. When presented with the statements 'There should be a limit on how often and how far people can travel' and 'There should be laws in place to limit the number of times people can fly each year', around half of the respondents (50-51%) somewhat to strongly disagreed. As such, the results would suggest that many respondents would not be happy if travel was limited beyond their own control although, in contrast, around one third (35%) of respondents were positively disposed to such enforced restrictions. This evident lack of support for such measures might reflect the fact that respondents had recently experienced limitations to travel throughout the 2020-2021 period due to the Covid-19 restrictions and, therefore, possessed strong feelings associated with their experience of not having the freedom to travel as and when they like. Perceived freedom appears to play a large part in individuals' lives, particularly in the context of travel (Font and Hindley, 2016). This concept will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Only 18% of respondents agreed with the statement 'The environmental impacts of flying are exaggerated', whereas 63% of respondents disagreed. Furthermore, over half of the respondents agreed with the statement 'there should be an option for frequent travellers to pay voluntary taxes so they don't feel guilty about their carbon footprint', whereas 18% were unsure. These results suggest that a majority acknowledge the widely publicised environmental consequences of flying, but only go as far as agreeing that voluntary payments may be a way to alleviate the 'eco-guilt' discussed in Chapter 3. It should also be reiterated that, despite acknowledging the impacts of flying, a majority of respondents would be unwilling to fly less.

As previously mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, some statements within the questionnaire were similar in context but worded differently. An example of this can be seen in Table 5.8 below, as follows:



1. There should be laws in place to limit the number of times people can fly each year.
2. There should be a limit on how often and how far people travel.
3. People should choose holiday destinations closer to their home.
4. I would be happy if there were laws introduced that affected how often and when I could take holidays.

Despite the implicit similarities between each of these statements, no perfect correlations were revealed between them. However, Table 5.8 does indicate high levels of statistical significance between each of them, particularly between statements 1, 3 and 4. Another expected finding revealed in Table 5.8 is the negative correlation between ‘there should be laws in place to limit the number of times people can fly each year’ and ‘the environmental impacts of flying are exaggerated’, suggesting that those who believe that flying should be regulated also believe it is damaging to the environment.

**Table 5.8:** Correlations of there should be laws in place to limit the number of times people can fly each year variables

<b>Statement</b> (against <i>there should be laws in place to limit the number of times people can fly each year</i> )	<b>P value</b>	<b>r<sub>s</sub> value</b>
There should be a limit on how often and how far people can travel	<.001	.788
The environmental impacts of flying are exaggerated	<.001	-.340
There should be an option for frequent travellers to pay voluntary taxes so they don't feel guilty about their carbon footprint	<.001	.374
People should choose holiday destinations closer to their home	<.001	.567
I would be happy if there were laws introduced that affected how often and when I could take holidays	<.001	.609
I would be just as happy to have a holiday in the UK, rather than going abroad	<.001	.323

The following section of the chapter will look at the travel related attitudinal statements that were presented in the questionnaire, and how the results reflect the level of importance of tourism to the individuals.

### 5.4.1 The importance of tourism

A number of statements were presented in the questionnaire in order to further establish respondents' attitudes towards tourism and travelling. The breakdown of findings in Table 5.9 provides some insight into how the respondents perceived tourism as a form of consumption and how meaningful / important it is to them and their lifestyle.

**Table 5.9:** Travel related statements

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I would be just as happy to have a holiday in the UK, rather than going abroad	14%	23%	22%	5%	16%	14%	6%
I believe that tourism is a luxury	21%	42%	19%	7%	6%	2%	3%
It would feel strange not to go on holiday at all in a year (pre Covid-19)	29%	25%	17%	3%	8%	12%	6%
I would be happy if there were laws introduced that affected how and when I could take holidays	2%	10%	10%	9%	18%	18%	33%
I'm determined to go on holiday this year after months of lockdown	31%	28%	14%	9%	6%	6%	6%
Holidays to me are all about escaping everyday life	34%	34%	20%	6%	3%	1%	2%
Travelling is an essential part of my lifestyle	22%	23%	18%	15%	4%	10%	8%
Having holidays is essential to my happiness	24%	23%	24%	10%	7%	6%	6%
If money was no object, I would travel further for longer	64%	20%	8%	2%	3%	1%	2%
I don't mind where I travel to, as long as I get away	21%	23%	22%	8%	14%	9%	4%
People who travel a lot have a better quality of life than those who don't travel	15%	21%	24%	18%	8%	11%	3%
Holidays are something I need to keep me going	17%	25%	24%	11%	6%	11%	6%
Holidays are a major part of who I am	12%	17%	21%	16%	5%	15%	14%
I believe that tourism is a right, not a privilege	6%	15%	19%	19%	12%	16%	13%

The results presented in Table 5.9 suggest that tourism is, for the majority (82%) of respondents, considered to be a luxury. In contrast, however, an almost equal number of respondents agreed and disagreed that tourism is a right and not a privilege, whilst 19% of respondents were unsure either way. This discrepancy is difficult to explain although, as discussed previously in the thesis, tourism has arguably merged into and become an

accepted part everyday life; it is a form of consumption that is accepted and expected (as a right) within contemporary society. Perhaps those (19%) who were unsure if tourism is a right have simply never perceived it in that way. Furthermore, as seen in Table 5.9, 63% of respondents believed tourism to be an essential part of their lifestyle, 71% admitted it is essential to their happiness and 66% believed that holidays are something they need to keep them going. Collectively, these responses point to the extent that tourism has become embedded in contemporary lifestyles, perhaps to the extent that participation in it is not questioned. Tourism is, as suggested by these results, both an accepted and expected form of consumption. This is, again, an issue that is considered in more detail in Chapter 6.

As previously indicated, the research revealed that the majority of respondents travelled between once and five times a year (78%); however, most respondents (92%) declared they would travel further for longer if they had the financial means to do so. This particular finding implies that, regardless of environmental concerns and in the absence of financial restrictions, the great majority of respondents would travel to further away destinations (perhaps more frequently) and spend longer there. Interestingly, however 59% agreed that they would be just as happy to take a holiday in the UK whilst 66% agreed that they do not mind where they travel to as long as they get away. This reiterates the discussion in Chapter 2 surrounding the argument that humans have a deep-rooted impulse to travel and it is no secret that 'humans are the world's greatest travellers' (Pasternak, 2021: 13). In other words, travelling is biologically hard-wired into us. This finding could also confirm that motivation to travel is just 'a need to get away from it all', regardless of where that is getting away to. Again, this is a theme that will be explored further in Chapter 6.

The association between travel and quality of life was addressed in the statement: 'People who travel a lot have a better quality of life than those who don't'. It could be assumed that this statement is plausible, as quality of life is implicit in much of the academic literature concerning tourism impacts (Moscardo, 2009: 159). However, although the majority (60%) of respondents agreed with the statement, on further examination the results appear to suggest something else. That is, only 15% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, whereas 42% somewhat agreed or

neither agreed / disagreed. This may imply that whilst tourism and quality of life are often assumed to be conjoined in a positive light, some individuals may be sceptical of the association or may simply believe that quality of life is more pertinent to their everyday lives. Moreover, Iso-Ahola's (1983: 48) argument that a person who travels abroad can be considered successful and, therefore, be seen positively in the eyes of others, may not always be the case. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 3, consuming experiences, such as holidays, are often associated with well-being and longer lasting levels of happiness (Gilovich and Kumar, 2015) and, therefore, the link between tourism, quality of life and well-being / happiness is an important theme to be explored further in Chapter 6. As previously discussed, the question remains unresolved as to whether tourism experiences contribute towards longer term well-being or contentment (eudemonic happiness), as it appears the happiness from tourism experiences remains short lived (hedonic happiness).

Of particular interest, and referred to in the literature review, is the concept of revenge travel (Wang and Xia, 2022) which emerged following Covid-19 pandemic; once they were able to do so, people wanted to travel more as a result of being restricted from doing so during lockdowns. Correspondingly, an overwhelming 73% of respondents declared they were determined to go on holiday after experiencing many months of lockdown and 71% agreed that it would feel strange not to go on holiday at all in a year. These results provide a foundation for further exploration of the importance of tourism to the post-millennials in the second stage of the research. Furthermore, the idea that people need to escape their day-to-day routines is considered in the next subsection.

In order to establish the relationship between tourism as a right and the importance of tourism to the respondents, correlation tests were undertaken. The tests revealed statistically significant positive relationships as outlined in Table 5.10. As previously mentioned, there is a notion that many consider participation in tourism a right (Gascón, 2019). In order to understand the relationship between tourism as a right and the importance of tourism, the related variables were correlated against one another.

**Table 5.10:** correlations of tourism as a right and the importance of tourism to the individual

Statement (against <i>I believe tourism is a right, not a privilege</i> )	P value	r <sub>s</sub> value
Having holidays is essential to my happiness	<0.01	.373
Travelling is an essential part of my lifestyle	<0.01	.355
Holidays are something I need to keep me going	<0.01	.428
Holidays are a major part of who I am	<0.01	.422
People who travel a lot have a better quality of life than those who don't	<0.01	.407
I am determined to go on holiday this year after months of lockdown	<0.01	.377

As outlined in Table 5.10, there is indeed a significant positive relationship between tourism as a right and the variables point to tourism being an important part of an individual, their lifestyle, their happiness and as something that 'keeps them going'. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Krippendorf (1987) argued that going away on holiday is such a deep-rooted part of contemporary life that it is considered 'normal' behaviour. Therefore, tourism has become a social norm and, as such, the post-millennials belonging to those societies may indeed see tourism as the 'normal' thing to do.

#### 5.4.2 The importance of tourism: A means of escape

As established in Chapter 2, escape is highlighted throughout the literature as one of the dominating tourism motivation factors; tourism facilitates the desire to leave the everyday, routine environment behind (Iso-Ahola, 1982: 259). Alternatively put, tourism is considered by many to be an essential part of the contemporary society life cycle because, in order to endure the pressures associated with modern society, there is a need to occasionally escape from it (Krippendorf, 1986). Accordingly, then, the questionnaire sought to establish if this was the case with the post-millennial respondents; as was seen in Table 5.9 above, 88% of respondents did indeed see holidays as a means of escape. It is worth noting that the majority of these respondents (68%) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.

**Table 5.11:** Correlations of travel and escape related statements

<b>Statement</b> (against <i>Holidays to me are all about escaping everyday life</i> )	<b>P value</b>	<b>r<sub>s</sub> value</b>
Having holidays is essential to my happiness	<0.01	.356
Travelling is an essential part of my lifestyle	<0.01	.208
I don't mind where I travel to, as long as I get away	<0.01	.323
Holidays are something I need to keep me going	<0.01	.339
I can let myself go when I am on holiday	<0.01	.361
Even if I had the money, I would sacrifice my holiday for the benefit of the environment	.003	-.221

When testing for correlations in this context, a significant and strong positive correlation was found between travel as a form of escape from everyday life and the attitudinal statements relating to the respondent's feelings of how travelling makes them feel (Table 5.11). When correlated against the statement 'Even if I had the money, I would sacrifice my holiday for the benefit of the environment', a strong negative correlation was revealed. This finding may suggest that the significance of tourism as a means of escape from everyday life is held above the environmental values of the respondent. This, in turn, points towards a hierarchy in which travel may accorded higher importance than the environment. The notion of a particular hierarchy is now discussed in the next section and will be a key topic to be explored further in the interviews.

### **5.4.3 The importance of tourism: A hierarchy**

The third objective of the research is to determine where tourism lies in the post-millennial's hierarchy of desired products / experiences. The results of the survey discussed in the previous subsection confirm that travel is something that is held in high regard by the respondents and, as a result, it could be suggested that tourism occupies a high position in their hierarchy of desired products and experiences. Therefore, respondents were required to indicate their agreement / disagreement with statements regarding their consumption choices between travel and what can be defined as larger, long-term assets or significant consumer products which represent considerable capital investment (Andersson, 2007: 55), such as houses and cars. Table 5.12 below highlights the key statements related to this particular objective.

**Table 5.12:** Products, experiences and travel related statements

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Owning a home and/or a car is more desirable than having multiple holidays a year	18%	20%	24%	14%	11%	9%	4%
I would be happy to sacrifice my holidays for the year to save towards a mortgage	23%	24%	26%	10%	9%	4%	4%
If I had limited money, I would usually choose to buy a holiday rather than other things	13%	22%	16%	14%	19%	8%	8%
My happiness is more dependent on having friends and good experiences, than having 'things'	39%	33%	16%	7%	4%	1%	0%
A leisurely, relaxed lifestyle is the most desirable achievement	18%	33%	29%	11%	7%	1%	1%

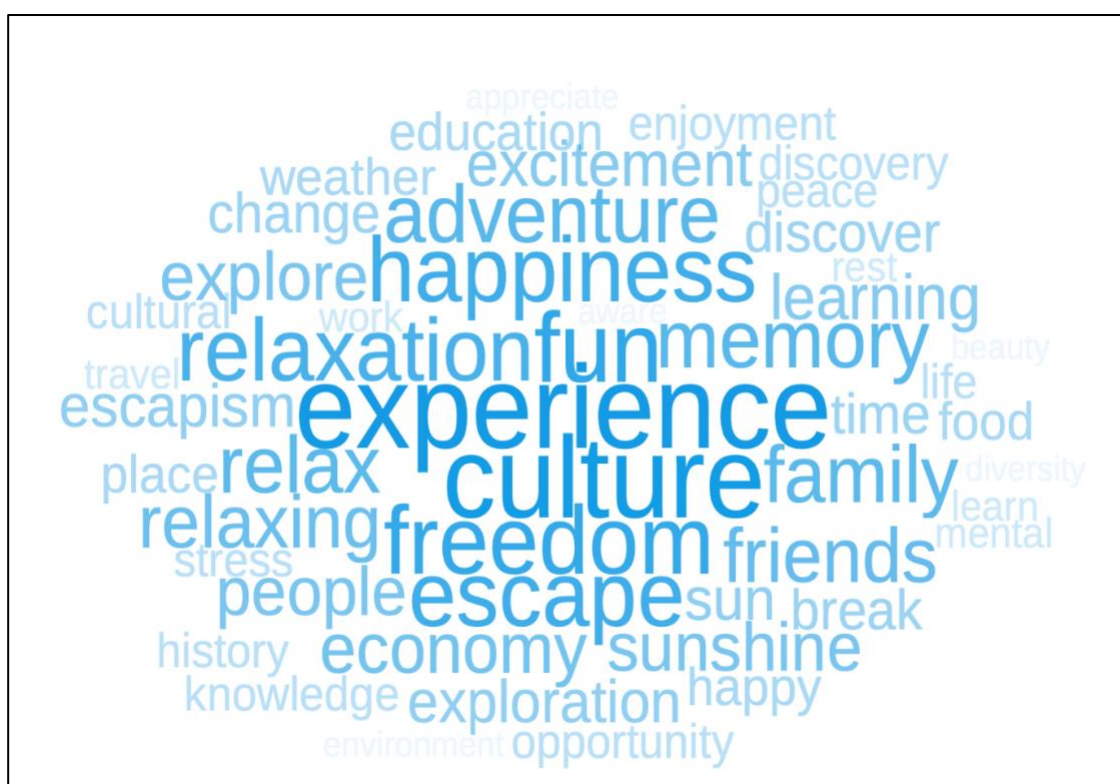
The results in Table 5.12 indicate that, for 88% of the respondents, enjoying good experiences as opposed to material things is a key contributor to their happiness. As elaborated on in Chapter 3, material goods can act as symbol of status and play a part in creating identity through material consumption. However, as decades of happiness research suggests, spending money on material items does not necessarily bring joy to individual's lives (Mackinnon, 2021: 11). In fact, it has been suggested that in the contemporary world, consumers achieve greater satisfaction from experiences rather than material goods (see Weingarten and Goodman, 2021). Section 5.5 below details more statements relating to consumer behaviour and the notion of 'materialism'.

Furthermore, the majority (73%) of respondents indicated they would be happy to sacrifice their holidays for a year if it is for something directly relating to significant personal benefit, such as for a home. In addition, 64% of respondents agreed that 'owning a home and /or car is more desirable than having multiple holidays a year', though in both cases there was a tendency towards 'somewhat agree / agree' rather strongly agree'. These responses suggest that a tourism experience might be sacrificed in favour of a more significant material asset. However, over half of the respondents (51%) would still choose to spend their money on holidays rather than other things. Given that these

results reveal some contradictions, more investigation is required into exactly what ‘things’ people would be willing to sacrifice their holidays for – this is a theme which is explored in stage 2 of the research.

To further identify what tourism meant to the respondents, they were asked to list five words that explain why tourism is important to them. The word cloud in Figure 5.3 below, illustrates the top 50 descriptive words used by respondents in response to this question.

**Figure 5.4:** Word cloud from the question ‘list 5 words that explain what tourism means to you’



Interestingly, as illustrated in the word cloud above, the top 10 words used to describe what tourism means to the respondents are listed below:

1. Experience
2. Culture
3. Fun
4. Freedom
5. Escape



6. Happiness
7. Relaxation
8. Adventure
9. Memory
10. Family

The word most used in response to this question was 'experience', which was mentioned by a total of 72 respondents. As the second chapter of this thesis was dedicated to the tourist experience as a whole, it came as no surprise that this word was the most featured and, as revealed previously, the concept of the tourist experience embraces everything about what it means to be a tourist. Moreover, the tourist experience can be thought of as Sharpley and Stone (2012: 3) argue:

the experience of being a tourist, which results not only from a particular combination of provided experiences but also from his or her normal socio-cultural existence.

The tourist experience is one of the most researched areas within the tourism literature, with over three and a half million journal articles available on Google Scholar addressing the topic. Essentially, as previously discussed, tourism facilitates an experience that involves escape from an individual's day-to-day life (Dann, 1977), albeit temporarily, to seek meaning, fulfilment and authenticity in other places and cultures (MacCannell, 1989). Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the second word mentioned in the word cloud above is, 'culture', which was mentioned by 69 respondents. As discussed in Chapter 2, Dann (1977: 187) refers to the concept of anomie and argues that the anomic state of loneliness / disconnection translates into a need for 'love and affection and the desire to communicate'. Indeed, experiencing tourism amongst other cultures can fulfil needs and desires which are denied to tourists in their day to day lives. According to McCabe (2009), tourism encompasses many personal benefits including exposure to novel experiences that expand one's perspectives and offer opportunities for learning and intercultural communication as well as rest and recovery from the work environment, visiting friends and family and enhancing subjective well-being. Interestingly, the word 'family' was also mentioned by 17 respondents, with some referring to '*enjoyable family time*' and '*visiting*

*family*'. According to Larsen (2013), the social aspect of a holiday with family encompasses both ordinary moments of simply being together and, perhaps more interestingly, the extraordinary excitement derived from engaging in fun and enjoyable activities.

The benefits of tourism can be wide ranging but of particular interest to the current study are the personal benefits of tourism to the individual – the overall aim of the thesis is, of course, to recognise what tourism means to the post-millennial generation to contribute to understanding of whether they can make changes to their tourism behaviours. Accordingly, there is undoubtedly, an interesting relationship between tourism, well-being and happiness. In this study, happiness has a clear association with the meaning of tourism to the respondents. As witnessed here, happiness is the 6<sup>th</sup> word with 27 respondents mentioning it. Although this seems a relatively low number of mentions, other respondents used words such as enjoyment, no worries and excitement, all of which are arguably interconnected with happiness and subjective well-being. Moreover, another phrase which can be associated with happiness and well-being is 'having fun'; the third word most mentioned by the respondents was 'fun'. The sense of having fun or 'fun' as an emotive state is very much associated with tourism and is arguably linked with subjective well-being, as high levels of subjective well-being are associated with happiness and life satisfaction (McCabe and Johnson, 2013: 43). Moreover, in a study on travel blogs by Bosangit, Hibbert and McCabe (2015), it was found that aspects of self-reflection and emotions play a pivotal role in the transformation of individuals travel experiences into personally significant and meaningful experiences.

Again, the fourth and fifth words most mentioned in the above word cloud can also be used interchangeably, namely: 'freedom' and 'escape'. The concept of tourism as escape was examined in detail throughout Chapter 2; for many people, the motivation to go on holiday is a response to the need to get away from their mundane everyday routines. Therefore, these needs can be categorised as escape or 'avoidance', as discussed by Iso-Ahola (1982). It may also be for these reasons that respondents utilised the word 'freedom' 37 times. In fact, for one respondent, freedom was clearly a dominant factor as their response was simply '*freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom, freedom!*'. This may well reflect what was discussed in the introductory chapter of the thesis, that the demand

for travel post-pandemic would soar owing to the universal hunger for freedom of mobility (Gössling, Scott and Hall, 2020) that was enhanced by the Covid-19 pandemic. Indeed, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, many of the post-millennial respondents were students and the survey was administered during the uncertain times following the pandemic. The pandemic was labelled a 'defining moment' (Fox, 2020) for this generation as their studies were undoubtedly impacted by it; many were confined to their university halls of residence, away from friends loved ones and friends and, in some cases, prevented by security staff from leaving (BBC, 2020). For others, jobs were lost, or significant pay cuts were implemented (Fox, 2020). What this implies is that for many of the post-millennials, the need to 'escape' and the desire for 'freedom' would have been very much at the forefront of their minds. Accordingly, as seen in previous findings earlier in the chapter, when respondents were asked if they would be happy if laws were introduced regarding how and when they could take holidays, 70% disagreed. These responses suggest that the freedom to travel is significantly important to them and having external factors determining their travel patterns is not something that sits comfortably with them. This is a concept that will be explored further in the second stage of the research.

Not every respondent left just a word; some, rather, provided a statement. Perhaps the most interesting of these were: *'Second hand nostalgia from relatives who have been to these places'*; *'tourism contributes to my positive mental health'*; *'tourism makes me more conscientious of others'*; *'tourism makes me appreciate what I have'* and *'tourism makes me feel more connected to the planet'*. All of these offer interesting insights into this generation and the meaning of tourism to them.

In conclusion, then, the responses to this question developed some insightful results which will be built upon in the next stage of the research and discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

#### **5.4.4 Summary**

This section aimed to provide an overview of the findings relating to the post-millennial's tourism habits and motivations. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, air travel is a significant contributor to tourism related emissions and, therefore, it was deemed

necessary to understand what, if anything would encourage respondents to stop taking flights. Specifically, an open-ended question was included in the survey to gather responses to 'what would make you stop flying'. From these responses, five key themes were established: these related to time, cost, law, alternative transportation (or lack of) and the environment. Most interestingly, over a quarter (26%) of the respondents who left a comment claimed that nothing would stop them flying, with some going as far as to say only their death would stop them.

The importance of travel to the sample was then explored through a number of attitudinal statements relating to their tourism habits and what travel means to them. Strong correlations appeared between travel as a right, travel being an essential part of the respondent's happiness and something that they need to keep them going. It was also proposed that travel is associated with quality of life, happiness and well-being. To further understand the meaning of tourism, an open-ended question asked the respondent to list five words that explain what tourism meant to them. The results of this placed the word 'experience' at the top of the list, followed by 'culture', 'fun', freedom, 'escape' and 'happiness'. 'Culture' surprisingly surpassed words such as 'escape', 'freedom' and 'happiness', which are mostly associated with the tourist experience, as outlined in Chapter 2. These outcomes are a matter of further investigation in the next chapter. However, the final section of this chapter considers the results emerging from the survey with regards to respondents' consumer behaviour.

### **5.5 Consumer behaviour: does the environment matter?**

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the post-millennial generation have been recognised for their alleged strong pro-environmental values and their concern for the sustainability of the planet. Given the overall aim and purpose of the thesis, then, it was important to establish the extent to which the respondents take the environment into consideration in the context of their consumption habits in general. Hence, the questionnaire sought their agreement / disagreement with a number of statements regarding their 'green' consumption behaviour. Therefore, question 11 presented a number of attitudinal statements which are displayed in Table 5.13 below.

**Table 5.13:** Consumer purchasing habits in relation to environmental concern

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The eco-friendliness of a product is more important than the cost of it	4%	7%	22%	15%	26%	16%	10%
I take into account how my purchasing decisions may affect the environment	8%	10%	21%	12%	26%	13%	10%
I try to find the most eco-friendly option when buying something	10%	9%	20%	16%	19%	14%	12%
I like to upcycle rather than buy new	6%	10%	24%	19%	17%	13%	11%
I sometimes buy 'green' products because I feel guilty about the non-eco-friendly purchase decisions I've made in the past	9%	15%	20%	10%	13%	18%	14%
I prefer to purchase products or experiences that give back to the environment through initiatives such as planting trees	11%	14%	25%	18%	12%	12%	8%
I prefer to shop second hand	9%	8%	21%	19%	10%	21%	12%
Feeling guilty about climate change motivates me to make better decisions as a consumer	8%	21%	33%	13%	11%	8%	6%
I feel proud when purchasing something that is labelled eco-friendly	13%	26%	27%	19%	6%	6%	3%
I do a lot of research before I make the decision to purchase something	13%	25%	27%	8%	8%	15%	4%
I spend a lot of time looking online at things to buy	23%	29%	21%	8%	7%	10%	2%

Putting it another way, given the aim of the research, it was important to understand how the respondents considered the environment when making general purchases. As can be seen in Table 5.13, the results were contradictory. For instance, whereas 62% of respondents agreed to a lesser or greater extent that feeling guilty about climate change motivates them to make better consumer decisions, only 39% declared that they take into account how their purchasing decisions affect the environment. Upon closer examination of the results, almost half (46%) of respondents 'somewhat' agreed or were

neither in agreement / disagreement with the statement 'feeling guilty about climate change motivates me to make better decisions as a consumer' and only 8% strongly agreed that they consider the environment when making purchases. Moreover, 73% indicated that they spend a lot of time looking at things to buy. Indeed, as previously mentioned, whereas post-millennials declare their support for eco-friendly products, evidence of dissonant consumption exists. Cost may be a contributing factor; for example, a study by Accenture (2021) revealed that 68% of post-millennial respondents cited high prices as a barrier to purchasing sustainable products. Therefore, limited financial resources may lead them to prioritise affordability over environmental concerns.

Furthermore, the results demonstrate an element of contradiction in the sense that perhaps eco-friendliness is not always a concern for the respondents, or that guilt is a key driver when they do purchase environmentally friendly products. That is, 44% of respondents declared that they sometimes buy green products to alleviate the guilt they feel about their past non-eco-friendly purchasing decisions, 66% of respondents feel proud when they purchase an eco-friendly product yet only 39% try to find the most eco-friendly option when they are making a purchase. Moreover, only 4% of respondents strongly agreed that the eco-friendliness of a product is more important than the cost' conversely, 52% of respondents somewhat to strongly disagreed with 15% being unsure.

Overall, then, a rather muddy picture emerges with regards to the extent of the respondents' environmentally driven consumer behaviour; evident awareness of climate change and the need to adopt more appropriate consumption is tempered by more limited attempts to do so; even more 'simple' behaviours, such as upcycling or buying second hand, are relatively unpopular, suggesting that it is not only cost that represents a barrier. In turn, this suggests that the need exists to further understand the extent to which eco-friendly purchasing behaviour is something that is important to the post-millennials. This is investigated further in the interview stage of the data collection.

### **5.5.1 Consumer behaviour: Consuming for happiness or conspicuous consumption?**

As discussed in Chapter 3, in contemporary consumer culture products and experiences are purchased for reasons beyond their utilitarian value. Undoubtedly, consumption is driven by the belief that the acquisition of material possessions is a source of happiness

and well-being but, perhaps more significantly, it is a means of creating identity and is often evidenced through the notion of conspicuous consumption. Tourism in particular has long been recognised as a form of such conspicuous consumption, as a status symbol (Culler, 1981), whilst more recently attention has been drawn to its role in identity creation (Bond and Falk, 2013). Therefore, the questionnaire sought to elicit respondents' understanding of their consumption habits and behaviours and of how emotions influence their acquisition of material goods as a foundation for exploring the consumption of tourism during the qualitative stage of the research. More specifically, respondents were required to indicate the extent of their agreement / disagreement with statements that sought to reveal how emotions, such as overall happiness, envy and guilt, influence their purchasing practices, as well as their perceptions of the role of consumption in identity creation (see Table 5.14).

**Table 5.14:** Consumer behaviour and conspicuous consumption related statements

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I often buy things I don't really need	16%	17%	22%	9%	15%	14%	7%
I try not to buy unnecessary things	15%	30%	23%	9%	13%	8%	2%
I like to buy things that I can show off to others	4%	9%	16%	12%	13%	28%	17%
When I feel down I buy myself things to cheer myself up	19%	19%	23%	8%	12%	13%	5%
It makes me feel happy when I buy things that are popular on social media	7%	11%	10%	16%	11%	22%	23%
Impulsive shopping makes me feel happy	15%	18%	21%	13%	10%	18%	5%
I can sometimes feel envious of people who share their purchases/ experiences on social media	8%	21%	22%	11%	10%	14%	14%
I often feel guilty or disappointed with myself after an impulsive purchase	16%	23%	28%	12%	10%	8%	4%
I often compare what I have to what others around me have	7%	18%	25%	12%	8%	20%	10%
I believe what I buy is a reflection of who I am	10%	21%	32%	18%	8%	8%	3%
Looking good is important to me	14%	33%	27%	11%	6%	6%	3%
I often purchase things that make me feel good	19%	35%	32%	4%	4%	4%	2%
Other people's opinions are irrelevant to me	10%	21%	19%	13%	23%	13%	2%

The findings detailed in Table 5.14 above suggest that over 70% of respondents spend a lot of time looking at things to buy online and although 68% try not to buy unnecessary things, over half (55%) declare they do often buy things they don't really need. Furthermore, the majority (86%) associate purchasing 'things' with feeling good or cheering themselves up (61%). Moreover, 67% declare that this can also lead to uncomfortable feelings of guilt or disappointment. The link between the acquisition of material goods and happiness has been addressed previously within this thesis. The general consensus remains that when people acquire material products such as clothes, jewellery, cars and so on as a means of improving their image, happiness or social status, they are often left feeling dissatisfied (Christopher et al., 2007; Dittmar and Isham, 2022; Kashdan and Breen, 2007), or with lower levels of happiness (DeLeire and Kalil, 2010). This may well explain why 68% declared they try not to buy unnecessary things (as they understand the good feelings associated with a purchase are short lived) and why 67% of respondents admitted strongly to somewhat that they often feel guilty or disappointed with themselves after making an impulsive purchase. Importantly then, what these results suggest, as widely supported in the literature; is that purchasing experiential products such as holidays create longer lasting happiness, than the acquisition of material products.

Moreover, when associating their consumption habits with the opinions of others, or how they believe they look to others, 74% agree that looking good is important to them and 63% agree that what they buy is a reflection of themselves; however, only half of the respondents declared that other people's opinions are irrelevant to them. Self-image and ego-enhancement are both concepts associated with the acquisition of material goods and, therefore, these findings raise the question of conspicuous consumption amongst the post millennial respondents. Indeed, research suggests that social media facilitates conspicuous consumption amongst this generational cohort, particularly in the context of luxury goods (Dennis and Sobari, 2022) or even replica luxury goods (Yilmazdođan, Özhasar and Kılıç, 2021: 614). This has also been linked to 'fear of missing out' (FOMO), in the sense that consumers have a strong desire to mimic the people they look up to, usually celebrities and social media influencers (Lajnef, 2023), and, therefore, are more likely to purchase products that are advertised by those whom they idolise. As alluded to in Chapter 3, this may suggest that social media influencers may be a key driver in



promoting more sustainable products in the hope that the post millennial generation will follow.

Following on from the previous discussion, one final finding evident in the above table is that 51% agreed strongly to somewhat that they sometimes feel envious of people who share the things they buy and the experiences they have on social media. As social media clearly plays a key role in the identity creation of post-millennials, it was therefore important to investigate this theme further.

### **5.5.2 Consumer behaviour: The social media gaze**

In contemporary society, social media plays a leading role in consumers' holiday destination choice, particularly through posts shared on social media platforms. Arguably, it is also the opportunity for people to post holiday experiences on social media, which influences much tourism consumption. For example, a study by Schofield Insurance (2017) found that 40% of 18–33-year-olds choose their holiday destination based on its 'instagramability' or, in other words, how worthy a location it is to post on their Instagram social media account. A more recent global survey by We are Social (2021) discovered Instagram as the favourite social media platform amongst post-millennials, whilst the majority of its users belong to the post-millennial or millennial generational cohorts. The study also revealed that '#travel' was the thirteenth most used hashtag on the platform, with over 607 million posts. The influence of social media on consumers' holiday destination choice is a contemporary phenomenon afforded by the rapid advances in information and communication technologies, particularly the smartphone. Whereas in earlier years, prior to the development of social media, travellers relied on brochures and travel agents for visual aids to help decide on their destination choice, in modern society, these visual aids can be accessed at any moment in any place via social media. At the time of writing, people can easily access over 170 million photos of holiday destinations around the world instantly via the hashtag #travelgram on the social media platform Instagram, enabling them to be inspired by others travels, which in turn, can determine the destination of their next holiday (Instagram, 2023).

Given the influence of social media amongst the post-millennial generation, it was important to discover if a relationship exists between the two in the context of the current research and, specifically, to identify the extent to which social media has a significant effect on tourism choices and behaviour. Table 5.15 below reveals the degree of agreement / disagreement with statements relating to a respondent's use of social media in relation to their tourism consumption.

**Table 5.15:** Social media related statements

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Social media posts inspire me to travel	20%	28%	31%	4%	2%	7%	7%
I like to share my travels and experiences on social media	18%	26%	26%	8%	8%	5%	9%
I like to make my holiday photos as amazing as possible on my social media feeds	8%	14%	23%	14%	8%	17%	16%
It makes me feel happy when I buy things that are popular on social media	7%	11%	10%	16%	11%	22%	23%
I can sometimes feel envious of people who share their purchases/ experiences on social media	8%	21%	22%	11%	10%	14%	14%
I spend a lot of time looking online at things to buy	23%	29%	21%	8%	7%	10%	2%

Over the past few decades, the methods through which information is conveyed have undergone significant transformations, primarily driven by technological advancements and the rise of social media (Pesaresi, 2021). Furthermore, the intricate relationship between social media and travel is a topic relating to the development of technology, not least in relation to travel photography. Essentially then, the two go hand in hand. Travel photography is discussed by Urry (1990, 2001 and Urry and Larsen, 2011) in his seminal text 'The Tourist Gaze'. For Urry, the tourist 'gaze' essentially defines the tourist experience (Sharpley, 2020: 438). To echo Haldrup and Larsen (2003: 24), it is almost unthinkable to travel for pleasure without returning home with some snapshot memories. This raises the question then, of why travellers engage in such an activity. Taking photographs is a significant activity for tourists to record their experiences whilst in the destination and such, tourists often display them through their social media

platforms, thus photographs posted on social media can prove where the tourist is and what they gaze (Zhang et al., 2022). Moreover, posting travel related photographs on social media can be a powerful influence for how other users view those places and, as a consequence, they can become inspired to travel to those same places. In other words, it helps travellers during the decision-making process to make more informed choices (Arica et al., 2022).

Significantly, as can be seen in the above table, a majority of respondents (79%) indicated that social media posts inspire them to travel, with a high percentage of agreement / strong agreement (48%). This finding relates to the influence of social media on the destination or travel choice. The role and impact of social media on the entire travel planning process – before, during and after the trip – is widely explored in the literature (for example, Arica et al., 2022; Chung and Koo, 2015; Fotis, Buhalis and Rossides, 2012; Li, Zhang and Hsu, 2023; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014). Much of this literature suggests that social media are predominantly used after holidays for experience sharing. Correspondingly, in the current research, 70% of respondents declared that they do indeed like to share their travels and experiences using social media, with a high number of respondents (44%) strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement. Oliveira, Araujo and Tam (2020) explored the reasons for holiday experience-sharing through social media; they found that perceived enjoyment was the most important motive for travellers to share their travels on social media, suggesting that posting user-generated content online can be fun and enjoyable. More generally, Sharpley (2021: 443) considers the intricate relationship between the smartphone and the hedonic aspect of the tourist experience, arguing that they are a fun source of entertainment, contributing to a more relaxed and less stressful experience. However, there are consequences of the increasing touristic use of smartphones in that the tourist becomes disconnected from the experience in the destination. These consequences are twofold.

First, and as previously mentioned, the 'instagrammability' of a destination is of significant importance in the travel decision-making process, particularly for post-millennial aged tourists (Unger and Grassl, 2020). The desire to take photographs that go viral on Instagram is of importance to some travellers, as confirmed in Smith's (2019) research titled '*landscapes for likes*'. Smith (2019) uses images captured, edited and

posted on Instagram by travel bloggers to illustrate and articulate how ideological representations of the landscape are utilised on social media to enhance one's self-image, thus relating the concept of 'instagrammability' to that of conspicuous consumption. That is, users travel to particular 'instagrammable' destinations or spots to take images of themselves in place or alongside a particular object of interest. See Figure 5.5 below as an example.

Figure 5.5 Kelingking Beach, Nusa Penida, Bali.



Source: Author's own image.

The point here, in relation to the current research, is as Smith (2019: 620) puts it:

*ever increasingly, the social media platform works to embed the logics of late capitalist consumerism into the very rudiments of how the self is imagined and positioned in relation to "others."*

What this represents then, is the opportunity to boost one's ego through conspicuous consumption, as previously discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Secondly, the concept of 'nowstalgia' is increasingly common amongst travellers. According to Korin (2016: 62-63), nowstalgia refers to:

*...the production and distribution of visual documents with potential future nostalgic value by an individual who becomes increasingly engaged in its documentation and sacrifices her participation in the activity or situation deemed likely memorable in a time to come.*

This implies then, that the tourist experience is defined less by being in place and more by the production of images for the future consumption of experience (Sharpley, 2020). The relationship between social media, photography and travel are all of relevance to the current study and therefore will be examined further in the second stage of the research.

Given the relationship between travel and social media, particularly in relation to conspicuous consumption, or 'others', correlations were run to establish the relationships between the social media related variables and the independent variable 'it is important to me that I am seen to be going on holiday'.

**Table 5.16:** Correlations of the importance of being seen to be going on holiday and social media

<b>Statement</b> (against <i>it is important to me that I am seen to be going on holiday</i> )	<b>P value</b>	<b>r<sub>s</sub> value</b>
I like to share my travels and experiences on my social media	<.001	.332
Social media posts inspire me to travel	<.001	.334
I like to make my holiday photos look as amazing as possible on my social media feeds	<.001	.475
I like to buy things that I can show off to others	<.001	.515
It makes me feel happy when I buy things that are popular on social media	<.001	.513
Looking good is important to me	<.001	.196
I often compare what I have to what others around me have	<.001	.360
I can sometimes feel envious of people who share their purchases/ experiences on social media	<.001	.259
I believe what I buy is a reflection of who I am	<.001	.235

As can be seen in Table 5.16 above, there are statistically significant positive relationships between the independent variable and the social media related variables. Specifically, the most significant were: 'I like to buy things that I can show off to others'; 'it makes me feel happy when I buy things that are popular on social media'; and 'I like to make my holiday photos look as amazing as possible on social media'. All these statements support the previous discussion surrounding the importance of 'others' in relation to oneself, particularly in the context of holidays and social media. Considering the above discussions, then, what is interesting and of direct relevance to the research is whether the post-millennial generation will use social media posting to facilitate the popularisation of more environmentally friendly ways to travel.

### **5.5.3 Consumer behaviour: Summary**

This section of the chapter has focused on consumer behaviour relating to the sample population. Results from the analysis suggest a number of considerations for further investigation at the second stage of the research. First, despite claiming to be environmentally aware, respondents indicated that cost is a more important factor than eco-friendliness when making a purchase. This result is not surprising; as previously mentioned, price usually supersedes environmental credentials. For example, fair trade products typically suffer lower demand as they tend to cost more than alternatives.

Second, whilst a majority of respondents indicated that they feel proud when purchasing eco-friendly products, the results and correlations displayed in section 5.5.1 suggest that other factors may be at play with regards to their consumption habits. In particular, conspicuous consumption is apparent within the results, with many respondents admitting to spending a lot of time looking at things to buy, buying things to cheer themselves up and feeling guilty over their past purchases.

Third, when investigating the role of 'others' in the purchasing decisions and associated emotions, it appears that other people's opinions do indeed matter; more than half of respondents admitted they can feel jealous when others share their purchased products and experiences online. The influence of social media in (tourism) consumer behaviour was then discussed, with the research outcomes suggesting social media does indeed

play a key role in influencing tourism decision making and behaviour. One important question that comes to mind and needs to be addressed further is if it is assumed that this generation is the generation to change their tourism habits, will social media allow them to do so?

The second stage of the data collection and analysis will delve into these ideas to understand why social media plays such a crucial role in young people's travel habits and how they can potentially use social media to change the travel consumption habits in the future.

## **5.6 Chapter Conclusion**

At this point of the research, emerging correlations point towards travel and tourism being a significant feature in the lifestyle of post-millennials. However, as a generation comprising younger people who are mainly still in education or at the beginning of their careers, levels of disposable income are likely more limited which, in turn, may impact on their travel choices. As the results of the survey indicate, many respondents specified that they would travel further and for longer if money was not an issue, whilst financial cost was often cited as a contributing factor to not leading a more environmentally friendly lifestyle or for travelling (more cheaply) by air. In short, a lack of money generally impacts on post-millennials' eco-friendly consumer decisions. At the same time, the research has revealed that although a clear awareness of the environmental impacts of consumer behaviour, including travel, exists amongst post-millennials, they are however mostly unwilling to sacrifice their own holidays unless for a personal benefit or commitment, such as a mortgage. The results also suggest that some people will continue to live their lives without consideration for the wider environment or viewing smaller lifestyle-changes as insignificant in comparison to what larger organisations could do. The purpose of stage two of the research is to delve more deeply into these findings in order to establish how, if at all, post-millennials might change their tourism habits in response to global environmental concerns, particularly global warming.

The analysis of the survey revealed the three key areas of the research as discussed in the introduction. These three key areas associated with the research are:

- Environmental awareness and attitudes
- Tourism habits and motivations
- Consumer behaviour and habits

More specifically, throughout this chapter a number of key themes have emerged that warrant further examination in the second stage of the research.

For instance, it has been established that, generally, respondents claimed to be environmentally aware yet, at the same time, the survey provided evidence of a lack of individual accountability and responsibility. Also revealed in the survey were two broad barriers to leading an environmentally friendly lifestyle, namely: practical barriers and barriers related to personal issues, lack of money being the principle practical barrier and desired lifestyle a personal barrier. The desired lifestyle barrier emerged in the findings suggesting that leading a more environmentally friendly lifestyle would be too much effort, or that the respondents enjoy the pleasures they gain from their current consumeristic lifestyle.

Conversely, it could be suggested that post-millennials value experiences (such as tourism) over material possessions. However, responses suggest that a tourism experience might be sacrificed in favour of a more significant material asset, such as a home or car. Yet, over half of the respondents (51%) would still choose to spend their money on holidays rather than other things. Given that these results reveal some contradictions, more investigation is required into exactly what 'things' people would be willing to sacrifice their holidays for. This will be explored further in Chapter 6.

Moreover, it appears tourism as a form of consumption holds a unique influence or power in encouraging a denial of environmental responsibilities. There undoubtedly exists a conflicting relationship between the respondent's individual environmental awareness and their tourism behaviours, with holidays being placed extremely high in the post-millennial's values and consumption hierarchy. Aspects of self-reflection and emotions play a pivotal role in the transformation of individuals travel experiences into personally significant and meaningful experiences. In the context of personal travel and



holidays, post-millennials appear more reluctant to make the environment their priority. An important finding from these results is that many respondents would only stop flying for reasons beyond their control. Furthermore, the respondents were not in favour of losing control, through regulation, of their tourism consumption choices, thus highlighting the importance of perceived freedom to the respondents. Freedom to travel is of significant importance to the respondents and the potential for external factors determining their travel patterns is not something that sits comfortably with them.

The results further suggest that freedom and escape are important elements of travel and, for many of the respondents, the significance of tourism as a means of escape from everyday life supersedes their environmental values. Moreover, the results of the survey point to the extent to which tourism has become embedded in contemporary lifestyles, perhaps to the extent that participation in it is not questioned. Rather, it is an expected form of consumption, or something that many people simply 'do'. Equally, it appears that a significant motivation to travel is just 'a need to get away from it all', regardless of where that is getting away to, and that the link between tourism, quality of life and well-being/happiness is an important theme to further investigate.

The relationship between social media, photography and travel are all of relevance to the current study and therefore will be examined further in the second stage of the research. What is interesting and of direct relevance to the research is whether the post-millennial generation will use social media posting to facilitate the popularisation of more environmentally friendly ways to travel.

Building on the aforementioned outcomes of the survey, the second stage of the research sought, through semi-structured interviews, to enhance understanding of tourism as a form of consumption, to explore its particular significance that, against the background of increasing environmental concerns, continues to render it such a popular activity in contemporary societies, and to consider if post-millennials can adapt or even give up their travel habits in light of the contemporary environmental crisis. The outcomes of this second, qualitative stage of the data collection are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter Six

### Research findings: Phase Two- Interviews

#### 6.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to build upon the outcomes of the survey discussed in the previous chapter through a discussion and analysis of the outcomes of the semi-structured interviews. In so doing, it seeks to enhance understanding of post-millennials' values, actions and emotions relating the environment, consumer behaviour and tourism. Specifically, the key themes that emerged from the rigorous thematic analysis of the twenty semi-structured interviews will be discussed. As explained in Chapter 5, the results from the quantitative survey informed the development of the questions asked at the subsequent, qualitative stage of the research, the purpose being to gain an understanding of the meaning of tourism as a form of consumption to the post-millennial generational cohort and how those meanings will influence their future tourism decisions in the context of contemporary environmental concerns. By way of introduction, the next section of the chapter discusses the structure of the chapter alongside the specific themes derived from the analysis of the interview transcripts. A sample of an analysed interview transcript can be found in Appendix F.

#### 6.1 Presentation of the data

Corresponding with the research objectives and overall aim of the thesis, the themes that emerged from the interview stage of the research fall into the following themes / categories that were summarised at the end of Chapter 5. These themes are:

- Environmental responsibility and individual accountability
- The meaning and significance of travel to the post-millennial
- The importance of travel in the post-millennial's hierarchy of values and consumption
- Perceived freedom
- Conspicuous consumption, social media and social norms

- The future as perceived by post-millennials

The discussion of the interview outcomes is, then, arranged under each of the above themes and split into sub-themes as emerged from the interviews. Each subtheme is supported with direct quotes from the interview participants, presented in italics and accompanied by the participant number. The interview sample characteristics are provided in Table 6.1 below.

**Table 6.1:** Interview sample characteristics

Participant	Age	Gender	Occupation
1	22	F	Interior design apprenticeship
2	21	F	Masters student
3	21	F	Student/ teaching assistant
4	24	F	Student support officer
5	18	F	Full time student
6	20	F	Full time student
7	23	M	Personal Trainer
8	23	F	Event Management
9	24	F	Procurement professional
10	23	F	Consultant in tourism and hospitality
11	25	F	PhD student
12	23	F	Masters student
13	22	F	Civil service worker
14	22	F	Cabin Crew
15	20	F	Full time student
16	25	M	Media officer and Masters student
17	23	F	Retail worker
18	24	F	Full time student
19	21	M	Full time student
20	22	F	Masters student

## 6.2 The environment: whose responsibility is it?

As outlined in the previous chapter and evidenced in the literature (see Chapter 3), it is claimed that individuals rarely accept their accountability with regards to their actions in the context of environmental crises, often placing blame on others. In particular, the fault is generally seen to lie with large corporations which are criticised for recklessly relying on fossil fuels for energy production in order to fuel their mass production lines (Oxfam,

2022); over 70% of carbon emissions since 1988 can be traced to just 100 fossil fuel producers (CDP, 2017). At the same time, despite being ascribed a pivotal role in protecting the environment through the implementation of policies that protect and solve environmental problems (Kulin and Sevä, 2019: 110), governments are often blamed for their lack of action on climate change (Fridays for Future, 2021). Therefore, it was deemed necessary at this stage of the research to explore this issue further with the interviewees; the following section discusses the various perceptions of the participants regarding their individual accountability in the context of climate concerns.

### 6.2.1 Individual accountability vs. governments and corporations

*It's the governments that need to be doing more about it. They sign the Paris agreement and agree to be net zero by 2030 or whatever but come on, look at them, all they're worried about is how big their wedge is. They don't care about us and I doubt they care about the planet as half of them will be dead and gone before we see any real implications from our actions. They should be working with the large corporations that are producing so much waste and CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. Then they should be looking at how they can help us as individuals. They can't expect us to do everything on our own with no real knowledge. We recycle and try to drive less, walk more, use refillable water bottles and don't waste food but really what else can we do unless they say we must do something. It's all a bit crazy but I don't think we'll like, see a change soon. It's going to be when the shit hits the fan. Excuse my language. But you get what I'm saying. That's when they'll all flap and panic and it'll probably be too late! (Participant 3)*

As can be seen, the perception of Participant 3 above is that the government does not really care about the environment; rather, they only care about making money (*how big their wedge is*). Moreover, this participant considers that individuals cannot be responsible for the climate crisis without a level of government interaction, in the sense that they believe individuals can only do so much, such as recycling or cutting down on waste, implying some form of regulation is necessary. Similarly, another Participant (17) believed that although everybody should be worried, it is not feasible for individuals to

be responsible for responding to the environmental crisis due to the significant carbon footprint of larger companies:

*And I think the environment is something that everybody should be worried about definitely, but us doing things as individuals, even as like a consumer, it's not feasible because 90% of the amount of carbon emissions and the carbon footprint is coming from larger factories and things that are out of our control as individuals. But obviously trying to like protest that and demonstrate that to people would be the way forward and try to stop this. (Participant 17)*

This participant believes that education in the form of protest is one way of demonstrating to others how to tackle the climate issues. Similarly, in her book 'Too Hot to Handle', Willis (2020) argues that climate change should be tackled through more democracy, highlighting that as organisations such as 'Fridays for Future' and 'Extinction Rebellion' increasingly take to the streets in some countries, greater levels of political attention on addressing the climate crisis has subsequently been stimulated (Willis, 2020: 4).

Indeed, when asked about how they feel regarding climate change and action, all the participants expressed the view in one way or another that individuals are unable to make a difference because of the overwhelming carbon footprint of large corporations and the lack of action on the part of governments. The consensus amongst interviewees was that, as Willis (2020: 4) argues, in their present state our democratic systems fail to provide people with a meaningful choice to endorse climate actions as politicians often avoid open discourse about the pressing climate crisis, resulting in a lack of public exposure to climate-related issues and limiting influence over political strategies. Participant 16 actually labelled governments as 'sneaky', displaying a sense of anger that governments and corporations are simultaneously profiting and shifting blame onto the individual:

*So, they're very sneaky with it. They put the pressure on us to make us feel bad for throwing away rather than recycling, whereas they are the reason we're in the situation right now. The oil spills in the Gulf Coast, the emissions that they're emitting is far more than I do on my drive. I'm made to feel guilty for driving and*

*not getting the train and stuff like that, but they never meet their CO<sub>2</sub> goals, or they're happy for their companies to take the money to do the deforestation in Africa or to get the oils that they need to mine, which then spoils the planet because they wanted their profit. The environmental damage that the Gulf Coast that Shell and BP had was catastrophic. It's irreversible. Yeah, you saw all these protests, and the protesters are made out to be the bad people because they're stopping you getting to work, whereas it should be they're the ones that are trying to make general people realise that they're being told propaganda about who's really in the wrong. Also, with the energy prices going up, stuff like that. It's not like energy is costing the companies more, they're still making billions. They're just going oh well, it's gonna go up for a bit. So, we're gonna make you pay more, and then we're then left to make changes we need to try and save money like not having heating on and not eating certain foods, or opting for cheaper, unhealthier foods, which again are less economically friendly. For example, you might have to buy badly caged hen eggs which are not as environmentally friendly than having free range. So, it should be more on politicians and companies. But they're the big powerful people and they blame us, and some people believe that. But it's a scary thing. (Participant 17)*

This participant was angry that governments and corporations hold all the power whilst individuals suffer the consequences of having to make decisions based on rising costs that essentially also come at a cost to the environment. They used the example of having to buy 'badly caged hen eggs' as opposed to free range and the fact that they are made to feel guilty for using their car instead of a train when there are large corporations causing deforestation and oil spills. What this highlights, then, is that individuals can feel hopeless due to the limitations of their own actions towards reducing their carbon footprint, often feeling that their actions are inadequate in comparison to those of large corporations. This was not the view of every respondent, however. One participant in particular (3) argued that people who believe they cannot make a change are just 'copping out':

*I think it's down to us as like individuals to engage civically, to put pressure not only on the government, but on the corporations which fund the government and vice versa. Because at the end of the day, I really believe we vote with our money.*

*Like you can say, you don't agree with what this company does but at the end of the day, you're still giving them your money. Therefore, you're giving them the power to continue doing what they're doing. People don't care because they're still making money. So, I think it's a cop out when people say like, 'ohh, what can I do? It's not my responsibility!' But it is, because it's up to you to demand better. And then once everyone is standing up and saying no, like, we demand more as active citizens then they have to because otherwise like, they still want to continue to make money you know so I do feel there is a heavy responsibility on us as individuals to put pressure on those in power who have the ability to make the changes. (Participant 3)*

This participant highlights a critical aspect of societal responsibility with regards to environmental issues, inasmuch as they emphasise the power individuals hold in influencing corporations and governments through their consumer choices; spending habits inadvertently support corporations and, by extension, the policies those corporations influence through their financial contributions.

That said, an important finding from the interviews is the clear indication that individuals often use excuses to justify their own actions because (as highlighted in the above comments of Participant 3) they consider their personal carbon contributions to be small in comparison to those of large corporations and, hence, see them as insignificant. One specific example of this emerged when the participants were asked if they were able to justify travelling by air is explored in the next section. This reveals some interesting responses to this question, specifically those that compare respondents' air miles to those of highly mobile individuals, such as celebrities.

### **6.2.2 Justifying air travel in the current environment**

As discussed in earlier chapters, aviation is increasingly seen to be in conflict with societal goals to limit climate change (Gössling et al., 2019). Hence, this was considered an important focal point of discussion in the interviews, not least because, as the survey at stage one revealed, most respondents (84%) believed low-cost airlines are a 'good thing' because they allow more people to travel. One interesting and reoccurring theme that emerged from the analysis of the interview data was the comparison that respondents

made between their own air travel habits and those of celebrities. Despite its 'democratisation' with the advent of low-cost airlines, air travel continues to symbolise success within society whilst, for celebrities in particular, it is an important prerequisite for producing content to be communicated via social media to online followers (Gössling and Stavrinidi, 2016). Recently, however, the private jet usage of celebrities has been subject to much scrutiny from their online followers. For example, Taylor Swift was recently exposed as the celebrity with the worst private jet CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2022 with an average flight time of just 80 minutes (Soteriou, 2022). In this context, Participant 1 expressed the following views:

*I don't think it is justifiable. In terms of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that planes put out. Well. But also, there's bigger things going on in the world that cause more damage than a student getting on a plane to go and have some down time with her friends or boyfriend. Like what about people who travel in private jets. Taylor Swift does it all the time! And she's supposed to care about the planet, isn't she? It's very hypocritical if you ask me. So maybe that's my justification. I don't think it's fair to the everyday normal person to have it put on them to give up the little things they have that make them happy when in comparison to the likes of Taylor Swift and the Karadshian's, it's just a small drop in the ocean! (Participant 1)*

Clearly, this participant is claiming is that 'normal' people should not be made to sacrifice the 'little' enjoyment they have in life (such as travelling) for the benefit of the environment when, at the same time celebrities are travelling frequently in their private jets. Other participants noted a direct comparison between their own (less frequent) air travel compared with that of celebrities:

*I mean, personally, I don't feel like we need to justify it, like us, compared to a lot of celebrities. If you look at it like that, they travel a lot, so us going on two or three or whatever holidays, it's not gonna add much to the environmental problems, like what harms it, in the grand scheme of things. (Participant 5)*

Comparisons were also made between the nature of celebrities' air travel and that of participants:



*I do completely agree that flying is not very environmentally friendly. I think the thing that I would argue though is the longer haul flights are a lot more environmentally friendly, I'd say, but some celebrities, they fly the seven minutes and that offsets obviously the CO<sub>2</sub> that I would spend driving for the full year! So, I don't think it's actually the general holiday people, that is the bigger issue with carbon dioxide and the emissions caused from flying, it's more the short haul private jets that I think is the bigger issue. (Participant 16)*

Similarly, although others recognised that each individual is responsible for doing their part for the environment, they considered their actions 'a small drop in the water' in comparison to celebrities:

*So, I've not seen figures, but I've seen reports on people who use private jets and how much that causes climate change. So, I would say, like, if everyone did their part, I do think it would help. But on the sort of global scale and the massive part of climate change, I do think that it's a small drop in the water. So, people going on holiday like, yes, they are contributing. But I don't think it's fair to say 'ohh people shouldn't be allowed to go on holiday at all because it's contributing' when there are bigger contributions being made by say celebrities and travel of you know like moving products across the world. So, I think all kinds of travel need to be restricted, not just holiday makers flights. (Participant 12)*

Interestingly, some respondents expressed quite assertively the view that there is no requirement to justify their air travel habits, not only because celebrities travel frequently in private jets but also because there are more contributing factors (to the environmental crisis) to consider:

*Well, yes there's definitely an association but I don't think you can really justify or even need to justify flying unless you're one of the celebrities that travels everywhere in a private jet. I would think that's where the problems are between travel and the climate issues. I think there are a lot of other contributing factors too. But I don't really think about it a lot. It's not something I feel I need to justify or change if I'm honest. (Participant 20)*

Overall, the research revealed an awareness amongst respondents that every individual is accountable for contributing to climate change. However, many focused on the fact that celebrities travel frequently on private jets and, as Participant 15 points out above, just one short trip in a private jet makes as significant a contribution in terms of emissions as ‘driving a car for a full year’. Certainly, as Askew (2023) reiterates, personal jet aircraft have significantly higher emissions than other modes of transport – an average journey in one produces CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent to driving a petrol car from Paris to Rome 16 times. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the post-millennials feel that comparing their own actions to those of highly mobile individuals such as celebrities is an appropriate way of justifying their actions, not least due to the exposure this generation has to multiple media outlets displaying this ‘wasteful luxury’ (Askew, 2023). Nevertheless, post-millennials are now beginning to call these celebrities out via social media for bragging about their lavish lifestyles. One particular example of this occurred in 2022 and involved the world-famous, youngest self-made billionaire celebrity, Kylie Jenner, who uploaded a picture (see Figure 6.1 below) captioned ‘You wanna take mine or yours?’ (Bossinakis, 2022).

The image was later removed by Kylie Jenner due to the substantial backlash on the Internet. For example, one commentator wrote:

Can people not comment "goals" under Kylie Jenner's very tone-deaf picture about taking out a private jet for a short trip?! Like what is goals about that? Polluting the earth and not giving a damn about our planet?! (Twitter, 2022)

What is interesting is that younger people are no longer accepting the choices and actions of celebrities which are environmentally damaging, and many are beginning to fight back. This is evident through the recent call by climate activist group Greenpeace for the EU and national governments to ban private jets as part of a plan to tackle the climate crisis in a more equitable way (Greenpeace, 2023). Conversely, as this research confirms, the actions of celebrities nevertheless provide an excuse for individuals to feel less guilty about their own seemingly less relevant carbon footprints. This resonates with the views of Barr et al. (2010: 478), who argued that a denial of air travel’s negative impacts on

climate change represented a 'deep conflict between lifestyle aspirations and environmental beliefs'.

**Figure 6.1:** Kylie Jenner, Travis Scott and their daughter with their private jets



**Source:** Bossinakis, 2022

During the interviews, an element of dissonance was in evidence in the sense that respondents knew flying is harmful to the environment, but they nevertheless still continue to fly, justifying this on the basis that their contributions are irrelevant in comparison to larger-scale carbon footprints. Such dissonant behaviour can be regarded as a manifestation of the value-action gap (Gregory-Smith et al., 2013) whereby consumption choices can easily override stated values due to the role of emotions in the decision-making process. It may be, however, that as travelling by air is considered the 'norm' to most travellers, it is difficult for the individual to understand the significance of the collective individual. Moreover, over half of the respondents stated that 'the plane will go anyway'. In other words, even if they do not buy a ticket the plane will still fly and, hence, the only consequence in their view is that they will be missing out.

In relation to this, Participant 18 expressed the following view:

*Ha! Here's the part where I'm going to start feeling guilty. This is a good question actually. It's selfish isn't it, I can't actually justify it really except selfishly to say it's the cheapest and easiest mode of transport to get to most places. If I had more money and more time, I'd probably consider more options but while the option to fly for a relatively decent price is still there then why wouldn't I take it? If like, if I decide not to take that plane to somewhere, it's still going to go there regardless, isn't it? It actually annoys me a little bit when I think about it because we want to do more for the environment but when they are like shoving flights in our faces that are cheap, or at least affordable then how can we. But also, I don't think flying is the be all and end all of the world's environmental problems. There's a lot more things that contribute to climate change than flying so I don't think I should feel that guilty about it. You can choose to offset your carbon emissions if you're worrying that much about it, so I think there's always a way around it so to speak.*  
(Participant 18)

This quote reveals some interesting assumptions. First, as previously alluded to, the participant quite smugly states '*Ha! This is the part where I'm going to start feeling guilty*', suggesting that they are well aware of the environmental consequences of air travel and the associated feelings of guilt. In the literature, it is argued that that guilt can subtly shape behaviour by motivating people to behave so as to avoid it (Mkono and Hughes, 2020); here, however, it appears that the participant openly admits that they will not stop taking flights despite claiming it is not justifiable and, rather, that '*it's selfish*'. Second, the participant appears frustrated that having the option of low-cost air tickets forbids them to, in their words, '*do more for the environment*'. This statement is extremely important to the research, as it indirectly exposes the importance of tourism to the participant. Primarily, (leisure) tourism is not mandatory; it is a non-essential form of consumption and, therefore, they could simply choose not to travel. This perhaps does not occur to this participant as leisure travel is regularly considered a social norm (Gössling et al., 2020). In addition, the participant makes a number of other comments that allude to dissonance, such as air travel not being the '*be all and end all of the...environmental problems*' and suggests offsetting carbon emissions '*if you're worrying that much about*

*it*'. Moreover, the participant ends their statement with the comment that '*there's always a way around it*'. It is this latter comment which confirms the need to alleviate the gap between one's values and actions or, in other words, to justify it to oneself in order to get around the feeling of guilt.

The above quote is notable for its directness yet, when analysing other responses, it emerged that many others convey the same message. That is, many respondents appeared to accept the negative impacts of air travel on the environment and believed that celebrities are far more accountable and that the plane will fly anyway, regardless of whether they are on it or not. For example:

*I think it's really, really important that people know how much travel contributes and it's been quite interesting recently actually, because I think people have noticed that Taylor Swift flies a lot on her private planes and everyone's been sort of judging her for it. But then it's like, how much can we judge these celebrities when we're all travelling on planes every single year? Myself and all my friends were very like, environmentally aware. But I don't think people want to sacrifice a holiday for the sake of the environment, cause a lot of my friends' mindsets are like all the planes going anyway. So, what difference does it make if we get on it?*  
(Participant 15)

Here, the participant is stating that, on the one hand, it is important to understand the contribution of air travel to the climate crisis. On the other hand, despite declaring their own awareness of environmental concerns, they conclude that as long as the flights are operating, there is no difference whether they get on them or not. As such, they miss the obvious point that if a majority of people stopped or significantly reduced their flying, then planes would not operate anyway owing to a lack of demand.

This leads to the inevitable conclusion that, as discussed to in Chapter 3 and pointed to in the survey at stage one, a value-action gap exists amongst post-millennials with regards to their environmental values and their travel habits, creating a psychologically uncomfortable feeling of dissonance. This, in turn, results in dissonant consumption. Despite the respondents' awareness of the negative environmental impacts, they openly

admit to continuing to make (travel) consumption choices, often justifying the 'insignificance' of their own actions compared to those of celebrities flying in private jets. Moreover, there exists a clear narrative that participants, although feeling guilty, do not wish to sacrifice their travel habits in favour of the environment, suggesting that travel occupies a higher position in their hierarchy of values than their environmental concerns.

Moving on from air travel, the participants were asked what their opinions were with regards to adopting environmentally friendly behaviour whilst on holiday. The next section explores their responses.

### 6.2.3 Being environmentally responsible on holiday

*Well, you aren't going to be going on anymore holidays if we continue to behave in the way that we are, and I think that's maybe a point that should be strongly reiterated to people. (Participant 4)*

As alluded to in the survey analysis in Chapter 5, there was a significant level of agreement (96%) with the statement that 'when on holiday it is important to treat the local environment with respect'. Therefore, it was important to investigate this issue further to identify how post-millennials feel about their environmental responsibility when they are on holiday. As seen in the statement provided by participant 4 above, it was suggested that the behaviour of individuals would have direct consequences for holidays in the future, in the sense that there will be fewer opportunities to go on holiday if people are not taking care of the environment. The participant further suggested '*I feel like it's got to be presented in a way that people will want to respond to*' implying that governments and educational institutes need to warn and teach people persuasively that their actions have (environmental) consequences.

However, some respondents were of the opinion that individuals are unlikely to take action, for the simple reason that 'they are on holiday', very much reflecting themes in the literature. Certainly, research has demonstrated that sustainable forms of behaviour are closely linked with everyday habits, providing evidence that for certain groups in

society, such behaviour can become embedded into daily lifestyle practices (Barr et al., 2010: 475). However, findings from related studies suggest that there are significant gaps between what individuals are willing to do (for the environment) at home and what was acceptable when on holiday (Barr et al., 2010). Previous research also suggests that, in general, people frequently consider holidays to be distinct from their regular, day-to-day lives, particularly with regards to their environmental responsibilities, with some participants going as far as to say holidays are a time to be self-centred and focus on their own needs because it is their personal time 'away' (Barr et al., 2006).

The current research elicited similar responses. Participant 5, although alluding to the fact that adding up all the 'small' individual actions would make a difference, echoed the idea that tourists do not act in an eco-friendly manner for the simple reason that 'they are on holiday'. Indeed, as mentioned in earlier chapters, people tend to disregard their environmental beliefs when on holiday, even those who follow responsible behaviour patterns at home (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014).

*Everyone can like, make change be more eco-friendly on holiday like little things will make a difference. If everyone did it. But I know a lot of people just wouldn't so because you're on holiday and a lot of people are like no! But I feel like a little change would not impact your holiday massively (Participant 5)*

Moreover, importantly, as Participant 5 suggests in the above statement, 'a lot of people just wouldn't'. From the interviews, it emerged that some respondents strongly believed that holidays are different to 'real life' in the sense that people are more relaxed and therefore they do not consider the environmental consequences of their actions. This was certainly the case for Participant 6:

*No, it's not real life. Holiday is not real life. It doesn't count. It's not that it doesn't matter, it's just we don't consider it. You just don't consider it, do you? Because you sort of take advantage of what's there on holiday. Like it's a new place. So, you sort of take advantage of what's your surroundings and stuff like that and you're sort of a little bit more laid back when it comes to it when you're on holiday.*

*I suppose so. Yeah. No, for me, it's not the first thing on my mind when I'm on holiday. (Participant 6)*

Another participant (8) felt it was difficult to adopt more eco-friendly behaviours on holiday, which consequently evokes feelings of guilt. This association was discussed by Mkono (2020) and Mkono and Hughes (2020) in their research concerning the phenomena of eco-guilt and eco-shame.

*Yeah, because things like when I'm at home and I have a bottle of water, I'll put it in the recycling bin, but on holiday it's not easy to just recycle. So, you feel a bit guilty, and I would never leave litter, but I do feel bad I'm not recycling, but I don't worry in the respect of like the flight. I do use public transport over taxis, one because it's cheaper. But two, you feel a bit better if you, you know, do something rather than get in taxis or hire a car. I think you should feel more responsible because even though you are relaxing, there's nothing wrong with being environmentally responsible. (Participant 8)*

In contrast, another participant (9) emphasised that individuals should absolutely act in an environmentally responsible manner when on holiday, perhaps even more so than in their normal home environment:

*I mean, no judgment, but yeah. Could you imagine, like, of course you've got to look after where you go, the same way if you go to someone's house, you wouldn't put your dirty feet on the couch. You should make more effort even than when you're at home. And that's probably wrong. But yeah, 100%. Anything you can do and usually not all the time, but if you can do anything that is useful. Then you definitely should. Like you can make a huge impact whereas here, it wouldn't make as big an impact perhaps. (Participant 9)*

Participant 10 shared this view but nevertheless acknowledged that, in practice, people are less conscious about the environment when on holiday:



*Yes, absolutely. I think there is a difference between when you're at home and when you're holiday because you allow yourself different things, you have less of a routine, so you might be a bit less kind of like conscious and maybe you would, I don't know, like buy stuff you wouldn't buy at home or do stuff you because you feel maybe less disconnected to the place or just because it's exceptional, it's a holiday and being less careful. But I think it's really not how we should see it. And I think when you go to a place, you have to be, it's someone's home and it's also technically on the same planet as us. So, it's gonna affect us anyway and so I think a lot of people are less conscious when they're on holiday, but I don't think it's right. (Participant 10)*

What is evident here is that there was undoubted awareness amongst respondents of the desirability of protecting the environment when on holiday. For many, however, a holiday is seen as a time to relax and therefore they do not engage in pro-environmental behaviours when away. Previous studies have demonstrated the existence of such a value-action gap as people are more likely to behave less environmentally in the holiday context than at home (for example, Dolnicar and Grün, 2009; Holmes et al., 2019; Miao and Wei, 2013), although they fall short in identifying the underlying reasons as to why this occurs. For Wu, Font and Liu (2021: 23), the discrepancy is explained by the change of context, in particular by the change in the perceived availability of infrastructure and a lack of necessary facilities. However, what has emerged from the current research is that, quite simply perhaps, tourism facilitates and provides an escape, the opportunity to relax and not to be concerned with issues such as the environment.

One participant (11) believed that for some, travelling provides an excuse and an escape from acting environmentally:

*Yeah, I think we should always be environmentally conscious, not just when travelling, but many people use travelling as an excuse and as an escape from behaving sustainably or consciously. But we should be. We should think about our actions. All day, every day, and how it impacts the world. And sometimes we choose not to, and sometimes we let go a little bit, because if we would always only think about how sustainable our actions are, I think it would mess with our*

*heads as well. I mean sometimes we need to escape, but if you go on a long-haul flight and you do something else not good for the environment, you should really think about how can I make this count a little more and make it more sustainable when I'm at the destination. (Participant 11)*

Moreover, the participant emphasises the challenge of maintaining sustainability in daily life and highlights the need for occasional respite or escape from the mental strain of conscious decision-making. Again, however, this is possibly an attempt to alleviate the cognitive dissonance that is experienced when values and actions are misaligned.

#### **6.2.4 Section Summary**

From the outcomes of the interviews thus far it is evident that, despite their awareness of the importance of protecting the environment, particularly in relation to travel, for the majority of respondents a significant gap exists between their values and their actions. Certainly, previous research has highlighted that even amongst apparently conscious environmentalists, there is an unwillingness to accept that reducing air travel is a good thing as it would inevitably impinge on lifestyle choices (Barr et al., 2010: 478). Similar sentiments were in evidence amongst the interview respondents but, perhaps of greater significance, the research revealed that such is the importance of holidays to the respondents that, for the most part, they appear to be held in a higher regard than the environment. At the same time, many respondents shared the commonly held view that it is difficult for individuals to make a difference when governments, large corporations and celebrities alike are harming the environment at a more significant level.

It is important to point out here that although many respondents emphasised the insignificance of their own individual actions in the 'grand scheme of things', they appear to be missing the point. That is, if all the 'small' individual actions are added up, they collectively become much greater. This is particularly true in the context of air travel emissions; if all people significantly reduced the amount they fly, this would eventually result in far fewer flights and much lower carbon emissions. The next section of the chapter focuses on the meaning and significance of travel and tourism to the interview participants and their overall feelings towards the tourist experience.

### 6.3 Why travel? The significance of the tourist experience

As established in the previous chapter, travel and tourism is a significant feature in the lifestyles of post-millennials. Indeed, its significance is such that, as the results from the survey stage of the research revealed, most would travel further and for longer if practical and personal barriers were removed to enable them to do so. More specifically, the survey revealed that the freedom to travel was of significant importance to the respondents, in the sense that they would not be happy if restrictions and regulations were put in place preventing them to do so. Furthermore, freedom and escape are important elements of travel itself and, for many of the respondents, the significance of tourism as a means of escaping from everyday life supersedes their environmental values.

Given these findings from the survey, the significance of travel and tourism was explored further during the interviews in order to delve deeper into why tourism is so important to post millennials. As considered in the following subsections, some interesting and substantial results emerged.

#### 6.3.1 Holidays vs home- escape and 'getting away from it all'

*Holidays are an escape from reality and a change of scenery.* (Participant 4)

*Holidays are related to escapism, sort of something to look forward to, you know, like if you got something to look forward to something it keeps you going. For example, when you're at work and you think ohh I've had enough of today and then you remember... 'ohh holidays in so many days'.* (Participant 8)

As stated in Chapter 2, the need to escape has long been posited as a dominant motivating factor in tourism (Cohen, 2010). Indeed, tourism has become an essential part of the contemporary society life cycle and, in order to endure the pressures associated with modern society, there is a need to occasionally escape from it (Krippendorf, 1986). Although no questions during the interview focused specifically on the topic of escape, many respondents openly alluded to the concept of escape when talking about their feelings associated with holidays (for example, see the above fragments from Participants

4 and 8). Similar to the views of Participant 8 (above), Participant 1 considered that taking a holiday is an escape, travelling to an environment that facilitates not thinking about work or other things in their life:

*To me having a holiday or travelling is an escape. Not necessarily like I'm running away but to just almost freeze time like have a void moment that like nothing else really matters. If I want to get away from everything and say, lie on a beach all day and not think about work or other things in my life, then I can do that on holiday and not feel guilty about it. (Participant 1)*

However, Participant 18 made an interesting observation, suggesting that travel provided an opportunity to escape to, rather than from everyday life:

*Travelling doesn't necessarily mean escaping from your everyday life and routine but an escape to amazing places that open your eyes to how other people live their lives. It enriches your everyday life by allowing you to experience something different to your day-to-day life. (Participant 18)*

Iso-Ahola (1982) broadly suggested that travel facilitated an escape from people's personal and interpersonal routines. Riley (1988: 317) came to a similar conclusion; that is, tourists escape from the dullness and monotony of their everyday routines, from their jobs and other responsibilities. Correspondingly, the idea that a slower pace of life or a shorter working week might influence people's travel patterns was discussed with each of the interview participants. It emerged that although the majority of participants would in fact travel more if they had more time to do so, for some there would be less of a 'need' to escape. Specifically, Participant 4 expressed the idea that having less stress in the workplace may reduce the need to travel as far or as frequently:

*You'd maybe not want to go as further afield as often because you wouldn't feel you would need to as you wouldn't have as much stress, but I think you would still want to go for a longer period of time, but not as frequently because you don't need that escape as much. You know, you don't want that freedom because everything would be a lot calmer, and you just wouldn't feel the need for the*

*escape and the change of pace or the change of environment that holidays often give you. (Participant 4)*

Here, the respondent is suggesting that reducing the pressures of the working environment would allow for a better work-life balance which, in turn, might result less of a felt need to escape the work routine as *'everything would be calmer'*. This is an interesting observation which contrasts with the views of other participants. For example, Participant 3 stated that it would allow people to slow down more during their holiday time:

*If people had less stress at work or they worked like shorter weeks or whatever, like maybe when they went on holiday, they'd be more inclined to have a walk and explore and stuff instead of just thinking Oh my God. OK, I'm knackered. Let me just lay in the sun for a bit. (Participant 3)*

For another, (Participant 18), a shorter working week would allow for more quality time with friends and family and, moreover, more time to explore:

*Yes, to be honest, if we had less stress in our lives and the weeks and days weren't as chaotic, we might even travel more. If we worked... um... Tuesday to Thursday, we could travel Friday to Monday. See more, explore more. Probably places closer to home but I think it would bring families and friends closer together to go out and experience more of the country or the world. Yeah, I think it would be a good thing. It's crazy how much people work and are literally just like living to work. They should just be working to live, to have good quality time with their families and friends and having the freedom to go away more. That's the ideal world I guess, isn't it? (Participant 18)*

Interestingly, Participant 7, who did not work in a typical regime, believed that condensing workdays might induce more stress and, thus, there will be a need to travel more often:

*It probably causes, not more stress, but it would made people sort of work a little bit harder, they have to work more efficiently. So especially if we had to sort of condense days. I know for me because I'm self-employed. Like, I don't work a nine to five like everyone else, but I work to accommodate the times that suit my clients. So, for me, if I was, like, to condense days and get rid of days, I'd feel more pressured and more stressed, so I would feel more obliged to escape and have a holiday because I'd feel more stressed. (Participant 7)*

Dann (2014: 54) argued that in order to escape everyday tedium and thereby put life back into a familial relationship, it is necessary to travel abroad and enjoy multiple new experiences. Similarly, for Crompton (1979), escape from the perceived mundane environment was considered in his seven socio-psychological motivations for travel. However, no optimum environment was found to facilitate 'escape'; the only key ingredient was that the holiday setting should be physically and socially different from the environment in which tourists live their day-to-day lives. This resonates with the attitude of Participant 9, who believed that there is a need to get away from the mundane in order to prevent life from becoming stagnant:

*You need to get away from the mundane, well if you are doing something mundane, you know, like a nine to five like I am. Working hard, but like you said, I think just you need it. just to have a break like, so it doesn't become stagnant. You know. It's gotta be done. (Participant 9)*

What became apparent during this stage of the research is that, for many respondents, the idea of taking a break from work and going on a domestic, rather than an overseas holiday, was not favoured. Indeed, for some it was something that they would not even begin to consider. For example, when discussing the destinations that they usually travel to, Participant 2 emphasised that they would never take a holiday within their home country:

*I would hate it. I would absolutely hate it. I have never holidayed in the UK and I don't think I ever will. I think the whole idea of a holiday is to get away, to like, go somewhere where you're not...in your own like, home country. So, for me, I don't*

*think I'd be able to cope. Covid was hard enough, feeling trapped in your own country, I couldn't imagine choosing to holiday here out of choice. (Participant 2)*

Here, the respondent expresses the feeling of being trapped in their own country, claiming that they would never holiday in their own country out of choice. When asked to elaborate further, the respondent continued:

*I think because I've always been brought up this way, like, since I was like born. I've always been going away like every year, and this is the only year where I've actually never been away [because of Covid-related travel restrictions]. It's the idea of, like, the whole experience, like the airport experience, and I think that comes into a lot of it. Like, I love going into the airport. I love sitting there with the drink at like 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning and eating the weirdest food at that time in the morning, I think it's a whole experience of being surrounded with people who are also very like-minded, and everyone is just so happy, and I think for me...I have to go away, like I couldn't stay in the UK. Definitely not. (Participant 2)*

Interestingly, the participant links the experience of going to the airport, eating and drinking and being around 'like-minded people' as being an important part of their holiday. This implies that, as Clawson and Knetsch (1966) suggested more than half a century ago, the journey is also a part of the 'escape' (see Chapter 2, p. 38), since when others have also argued that the tourism experience embraces the journey to the destination and back as well as the on-site activity at the destination (Cohen, 1979; Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). Others shared this view. For Participant 6, for example, UK breaks are not considered to be 'real holidays' and similar, to Participant 2, the journey to the holiday is also considered a defining segment of the whole holiday experience:

*There's not a thing, no! That is not for me! But UK holidays are just as expensive as going abroad anyway, and we don't get the weather and we don't get half like the experience as you can get by being abroad. UK holidays don't feel like.... I wouldn't say it's a holiday, like we're going to Centre Parks in January. I won't count that as a holiday. Yes, it's like a break away from work or whatever but, like,*

*a real holiday is the journey to the place, like the excitement before the journey and properly like being abroad (Participant 6)*

From another perspective, many of the respondents described the need to travel as 'getting away' from the stresses of day-to-day life. This is of course, unsurprising. As observed throughout Chapter 2, a key motivation for the consumption of tourism is the need to get away from the monotonous daily routine. Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that many respondents shared similar views. This may suggest that travelling (abroad) is not necessarily only a means of escape but also that it is a part of post-millennials' lifestyle, in that they can have different experiences away from the home environment. As such, holidays represent opportunities to escape from regular routines but, at the same time, as Cohen (2010) argues, may also satisfy other needs and desires. In particular, travelling allows them to shape their identity through seeing how other people in other cultures live their lives. The next sections of the chapter will discuss these ideas.

### **6.3.2 An appreciation for life - diverse cultural experiences and broader worldviews**

*I think it's really important that if you're going to a new place, like, you might as well just enrich your understanding of different places and cultures rather than just using it as an excuse to just lie around. I think it's important to sort of make the most of where you are. (Participant 15)*

When people travel outside their familiar surroundings, they experience a sense of other cultures, of the 'Other', and they can compare how others live with their own home life experiences. Wearing, Stevenson and Young (2010) emphasise that travel experiences offer authentic encounters that have the potential to influence a person's self-identity by involving them with diverse cultures and individuals. Moreover, a need to experience a different culture may signal the desire to integrate elements of the other culture into the tourist's own personal identity (Michael et al., 2020: 468). Certainly, during the interviews, respondents expressed the meanings they associate with the importance of travel. For Participant (11), for example, travelling is not only a very important part of



their life, but also provides an opportunity to experience other cultures which, in turn, shapes their worldview:

*Connecting with myself to some extent and also with different cultures, and it makes me happy, and it makes me feel independent to travel, to walk through different places. And I think my travelling experiences, especially when I travel by myself, really had a huge impact on me and how I, yeah, viewed the world and how I engage with foreigners. It is a very important part of the life I want to live and the lifestyle I want to have. I think if we wouldn't travel the world would be full of prejudice. And yeah, I think, like, countries would kind of keep their borders closed a little more and yeah, we would just be less open. Tourism is a very important tool for intercultural understanding, at least for the people who want to experience different cultures. I think when we experience a place that is so different from all day lives. It kind of.... It gives us a broader view of the world and things are just different than they are at home. Sometimes it's just... It's yeah, the experiences, really. They have the potential to shape how we see the world because it gives us. Yeah, it gives us a broader sense of different cultures and languages and places. (Participant 11)*

In a similar vein, Participant 20 stressed how important travel is in their life and explained that travelling facilitates an opportunity to learn about life through experiencing how others lead their lives:

*I think travelling is special. It's something that makes life more exciting. You can see new places, meet new people and it unlocks opportunities, doesn't it? You can learn so much from travelling too. It is just amazing and fascinating at the same time that people are living all over the world leading different lives, with different outlooks on everything. It opens you up to understand more about life itself. You appreciate things more. You are happier. It means a lot to me. I wouldn't survive if I couldn't travel. And I know it's not all about sunshine, beaches, drinking and hanging out with your friends without work or studies getting in your way, but it's also about the part of it that changes you and makes you a more open person. You are more understanding and more open because you have travelled to different*

*places and met different people from different walks of life. It's sad that not everyone gets the opportunity to travel, don't you think? Yeah, it wouldn't be a good life if you couldn't be free to travel to new places. So, I guess it means everything to me. (Participant 20)*

More specifically, Participant 16 explained how their experience of volunteering in other countries helps to put things into perspective in their own life:

*We volunteered at the street homeless kids centre, that kind of thing, and I coached some football out there and that experience definitely shaped me as a person and allowed me to reflect on how lucky I am as a person. So, when I was going through some tough times or annoyed that I couldn't do something, I think 'hang on a minute'. There's some child in Africa. Or some child in Morocco that is lucky to have a football, let alone lucky to have a house, or hot food and stuff like that. So sometimes it puts things into perspective of what I'm able to do in obviously this country and in my general day-to-day life. (Participant 16)*

Participant 14 revealed that when experiencing the characteristics of different cultures, they wanted to 'bring them home' and to adopt them into their own lifestyle:

*It just sort of makes you compare it to here, like when I was in Japan, everyone was so polite, like when you get to road crossings. They're all lining up and waiting in line as you got to the crossing. Whereas here, like, everyone's pushing to get ahead. Everyone's dead polite over there. Some locals missed their train just to show us where we were going and stuff like that. So, it makes you sort of compare it. And then obviously like America again, everything's different. You know, everyone's like, over the top, friendly. It kind of makes you wanna bring that stuff back home or sometimes it makes you think 'Oh my God I wanna move here'. Cause I really like it and yeah, I don't know. Like some of the things, you think I'm gonna start doing that at home. (Participant 14)*

The interesting point being emphasised here is the comparison the respondent is making between their own lifestyle and their cross-cultural experiences. Eudaimonic experiences – that is, experiences that contribute to longer term contentment, can provide opportunities for individuals to learn and grow (Pung, Gnoth and Chiappa, 2020). Such growth through tourism experiences has been referred to in the literature as ‘transformative tourism’ (see Christie and Mason, 2003; Morgan, 2011), which occurs through activities that facilitate cross-cultural understanding and tolerance (Caton, 2012). The extant literature demonstrates that transformative tourism can lead to positive changes in values and attitudes (Christie and Mason, 2003: 9) and subsequently, meaningful changes in behaviour (Kirillova, Lehto and Cai, 2017) and lifestyles, particularly with regards to sustainability and global citizenship (Pung et al., 2020). Hence, participation in tourism and subsequently gaining cross-cultural understanding may encourage the adjustment of behaviours to follow more sustainable lifestyle. Moreover, through this broader view of the world and its diverse cultures, tourism has the potential to endow people with a sense of appreciation of their own life and even – as implied in some of the quotes above – a desire to adopt different ways of living in their home environments. This could help explain why tourism holds significant importance for the post-millennial generation. It also presents an opportunity to align their values and behaviours with environmental concerns, as positive experiences from travel can shape the identities of post-millennials.

Identity creation through travel, a strong theme that emerged from the interviews, is discussed in the following section.

### **6.3.3 Identity creation through tourist experiences**

*I think everyone should be allowed the option to travel and I think it definitely broadens your mind.... it's just something that I personally believe in. It's something that everyone should be entitled to, and I think it just makes you a different person once you start realising and understanding how other people live.*  
(Participant 2)

As discussed in Chapter 2, the motivation to travel has progressed beyond the satisfaction of utilitarian needs to become an important expression of identity for both individuals and societies (Niblett and Beuret, 2021: 7). More precisely, tourism, as a particular form of contemporary consumption, possesses symbolic meaning which not only provides memories and creates emotions but also, arguably, facilitates identity creation. In other words, identity related questions, such as 'who am I?' and 'where do I fit in?', are increasingly acknowledged as representing the key underlying motivations of individuals seeking out specific tourism or leisure experiences (Bond and Falk, 2013: 430). Throughout the interviews, particularly when questioned what travel means to the interviewees, respondents often claimed that travel 'changes you as a person' or, as in the preceding quote, it '*makes you a different person*'.

Participant 13 explicitly associated travel with shaping their identity:

*I think it just makes and shapes you as a whole. It implements itself into your life in a way. Because you see things in different perspectives when you travel. Like, I think if people don't travel, people don't know what's out there in the world, like. You know, travelling far and wide, no countries are the same. No people are the same. It all depends on the culture as well, like where you're going. And that can really make a difference in how you are as a person and how you live your life.*  
(Participant 13)

For Featherstone (2010), the quest for self-development has become a central concern for the contemporary, Western tourist. Moreover, the experiences afforded by tourism offer the potential for not only hedonic but also eudaimonic rewards, such as personal growth, accomplishment and self-acceptance (Matteucci and Filep, 2017: 40). It is this personal growth aspect that some participants associated with their travel and tourism experiences, indicating that the connections they feel with other cultures when travelling opens their eyes to new ways of living. For Participant 18, travelling not only facilitates this but also allows them to create their own identity:

*It's meeting new people, experiencing new cultures, its freedom, I guess. You can be anyone you want to be, well within reason I guess, but you feel so free on*

*holidays. It's just a whole amazing experience and I doubt I'd be the person I am today if I never travelled.* (Participant 18).

Erving Goffman, arguably one of the most influential sociologists (Fine and Manning, 2003: 34), used the dramaturgical metaphor to explain how individuals can put on a show for the benefit of others (Goffman, 1959). In a similar fashion, tourists are able to, as Participant 18 put it, *'be anyone you want to be'*. This is of significant importance as it could explain why post-millennials hold travel and tourism in such a high regard, in that they can break away from their day-to-day familiar surroundings to places where they are surrounded by people who don't know them which allows them to be 'free' and express themselves in whatever way they wish. This could arguably mean that they are expressing their true identity which they may feel the need to suppress in their home environments due to social pressures. A relevant example here, related to the first section of this chapter, is that post-millennials may not have to be perceived to care so much for the environment when on holiday because they are able to relax and not feel socially pressured to act in an environmentally friendly manner. Indeed, as Urry (1995) emphasised, tourism is quite the opposite of everydayness, and it is a quest for more desirable and fulfilling places to consume.

What becomes apparent from the responses of these participants is that travel helps to shape who they are, and in some cases, who they want to be. In short, travel experiences help facilitate identity creation. Moreover, it is cross-cultural experiences, or comparing the way others live their lives to the tourists' own lifestyle, that appears to be the key element in the travel and identity creation process. As Campos et al. (2017) argue, memorable tourist experiences provide opportunities for individuals to 'build' their identities whilst, importantly, it is social interactions within the tourist experience that help create those memorable experiences. This suggests that the importance of travel to the post-millennial lies in cross-cultural experiences which, in turn, shape their own world views, building their identities in the process. Returning to the first quote in this subsection, Participant 2 emphasised that *'It's something that everyone should be entitled to, and I think it just makes you a different person once you start realising and understanding how other people live'*. Here, it is evident that, for this respondent, it is understanding how others live their lives that 'makes you a different person', perhaps

emphasising the importance of travel to post-millennials. This point was expanded upon by Participant 18:

*It's meeting new people, experiencing new cultures, its freedom, I guess. You can be anyone you want to be, well within reason I guess, but you feel so free on holidays. It's just a whole amazing experience and I doubt I'd be the person I am today if I never travelled. I understand some people don't or can't travel but I really do feel like that's a shame as they don't have this feeling of enrichment that travelling brings to your life. I don't even think I could tell you why we travel but I just know we're lucky to be able to do it and I think covid made us reflect on that.*  
(Participant 18)

The importance or meaning of travel was a theme explored throughout the first stage of the data collection in the survey, however, due to the limitations of survey methods, it was important to explore this theme further at the second stage of the research.

The previous sections have explored specific reasons why tourism might be important to post millennials; however, it was also deemed necessary (given the overall objectives of the thesis) to ask respondents to consider the more general, and difficult question of what tourism means to them.

#### **6.4 The meaning of travel**

In the introduction to this thesis, it was emphasised that in order to explore ways of addressing how tourism / tourists might respond to the challenge of the environmental crisis, it is necessary to understand why people need to travel in the first place and, in particular, the role of tourism in contemporary societies. In order to do so, a key focus of the discussions in the interviews was on what travel means to post-millennials as the allegedly most environmentally aware generation. Here, respondents encouraged to talk freely and openly and in as much detail as they wanted or needed to; they were instructed to take as much time as they needed to think about the question of the meaning of tourism to them and often, repeating the question elicited more detailed, considered responses. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, many respondents said that it was difficult to answer the question (implicitly because it is something they had never thought

about); they did not know where to start or whether they could even talk about it at all or explain it, using phrases such as 'it just means a lot and I'm struggling to explain why'. Nevertheless, it was the question upon which most emphasis was placed at this stage of the research.

The purpose of this discussion, reflecting objective number five of the research, was to establish the extent to which the post-millennial generation might be willing or able to adapt their tourism behaviours to align with environmental values. In other words, this research seeks to establish whether the meaning of tourism as a form of contemporary consumption may or may not prevent post-millennials from consuming tourism differently in light of the environmental crises. It has already been established that tourism settings provide a more relaxed environment where individuals may detach themselves from their pro-environmental values and practices. Therefore, it is important to establish what it is about tourism, as a particular form of consumption, that sets it apart from other consumption practices.

As previously discussed in this chapter, many respondents viewed tourism a means of experiencing different cultures which subsequently provides them with opportunities to (re)shape their lives in various ways once they return. Furthermore, the majority of respondents declared that they could not envisage life without travel. Some, as will be revealed shortly, claimed that life would be 'bleak' if they could not travel, whilst others suggested they would feel they had been stripped of their freedom. This section, therefore, focuses on the reasons for these respondents' need to travel and, in particular, on the significance of travel to the individual's happiness and wellbeing.

#### **6.4.1 The need and desire for travel**

*I just love doing it [travelling]. And to me, it's a way to make memories and tick places off your list. You want to go and see the world. You want to see it in another light. It's so hard to answer that one. But I would never want to not travel.*

(Participant 13)

The respondent here (Participant 13) is explaining how much travel means to them, and how they and their partner were ticking off destinations from a list of '46 countries before we turn 30 years old'. To them, the idea of not travelling is not an option; quite the opposite – travel is necessary in their life and, implicitly, happiness.

Of course, tourism is a form of discretionary expenditure; it is consumed out of choice. However, during the interviews it became evident that, for the post-millennial respondents, it was more than just a simple consumptive choice. Rather, it was something they believed was necessary in their lives, particularly given the previously discussed experiences and feelings associated with its consumption.

*I think everyone should be allowed the option to travel and I think it definitely is needed...it's just something that like, I personally believe in. It's something that everyone should be entitled to, and I think it just makes you a different person once you start realising and understanding how other people live. (Participant 2)*

Here the respondent is claiming that not only is tourism necessary to their life, implying that it is fundamental to feeling happy or fulfilled, but also that there is an entitlement to participating in tourism. During the first stage of the data collection (the survey), it was highlighted that tourism is a form of consumption that is both accepted and expected (as a right) within contemporary society. Indeed, although many interview respondents struggled to explain exactly what tourism meant to them, they nevertheless believed it was a necessity in life with some going as far as to suggest that, as Participant 2 does, 'everyone should be allowed to travel'.

*Surely unless there's a war or a natural disaster, then we should have freedom to travel in whatever way we want to; it's our right, you know, freedom of movement. I know we sometimes need visas which is fine but if I was told 'no' full stop, yeah, I'd be pretty annoyed about that to be fair. (Participant 1)*

When discussing the possibility of travel restrictions, such as those experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was very apparent that, for this respondent, this was not something they were comfortable with. Participant 1 stated in an abrupt manner that



they should have *'freedom of movement'*, later on in the interview going on to suggest that *'unless travel was financially unachievable, then nothing would stop me from doing it'*. When later trying to explain what travel meant to them, this respondent repeatedly admitted that *'it's so difficult to explain'*, although they did acknowledge that *'I guess I've never really thought about it too deeply as it's something I've always done, and I don't think I could live without it'*. In a sense, this reveals that people do not always know, understand or even think about why they travel; it is simply something that they just do.

*I don't even think I could tell you why we travel, but I just know we're lucky to be able to do it and I think Covid made us reflect on that. I guess maybe, like, it's just in our DNA, we see it in our everyday lives constantly. Every day I see videos on Instagram of people travelling, even TV adverts, the main topic of conversation in July is 'are you going away for your summer holidays'. I mean, can you imagine a life without all that? I certainly can't.* (Participant 18)

As discussed in Chapter 2, a strong impulse to travel (or what is often referred to as 'wanderlust') may well be attributable to a deep-rooted, instinctive human need. Similarly, Participant 18 above suggests that travel is *'in our DNA'*, reflecting an argument in travel motivation literature that the need to travel is, in some way, biologically hard-wired into all of us (Pasternak, 2021). Furthermore, for most of human existence, travel has been an essential part of the human genetic make-up (Ryan, 2019). For those that do travel, it appears that this indeed, is the case.

Participant 17, in particular, was of the view that the need to travel is primal in that people need to move around, supporting Ryan's (2019) argument that for most of the history of humanity, people have lived as nomadic hunter-gatherers, frequently moving about. More specifically, this respondent suggested that travel is also a necessity to escape the constant cycle of overwork, although this did not necessarily entail travel to far away destinations:

*I'm I think that everybody needs to travel. They need a holiday. They need to, like, get away from everything because quite a lot of the time, humans are very overworked, like we will work like 40 plus hours a week and just not have time*

*specifically for ourselves to go and visit things like nature or other cultures, other places and I just.... I think it's really important for people to understand that that we do need to just get out of the house sometimes and just kind of relax and like a park or doesn't even have to be far, just somewhere to travel to. Even with just, like, holidays, it doesn't have to be far just to get out of the constant cycle that people get trapped in. I think it could be like something primal within a human, so like moving around a lot so that you don't get like caught by prey, that kind of thing. Or it could just be just a need like our body is telling us that we need to travel to help with our mental health. Well, it's one or the other. (Participant 17)*

The interesting point here is that many of the post-millennial respondents considered the need to travel to be genetic; it is not simply a socially induced escape from monotonous day-to-day activities but an inherent biological need.

In addition, Participant 17 alludes to a connection between travel and mental health inasmuch as if we do not travel, our mental health will deteriorate. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022b) more than 13% of the global population suffer with mental health problems, whilst studies have shown that younger people are increasingly susceptible to mental health issues (Youngminds, 2023), not least as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic (Youngminds, 2020). Hence, travel and tourism not only provides the means of 'escape' as discussed earlier in this chapter, but it has arguably become an increasingly important self-care tool in promoting positive psychology, well-being and quality of life. In recent years, many studies have focused on the relationship between tourism, life satisfaction and happiness and well-being (for example, Binmonte and Faralla, 2012; Chen and Li, 2018; Christou and Simillidou, 2020; Kim, Woo and Uysal, 2015; McCabe and Johnson, 2013; Ryan, 2015; Smith and Diekmann, 2017). For this reason, the following section of the chapter discusses the attitudes of the interview respondents to the idea of travel and tourism facilitating happiness and well-being.

#### **6.4.2 Travel, happiness and well-being**

Almost half a century ago, both Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1976) argued that most individuals tend to lead disconnected and inauthentic lives and, hence, engage in tourism

in pursuit of a more fulfilling, authentic existence. Since then, travel and tourism have become much more integrated into people's lives – from a postmodern perspective, tourism and day-to-day life have become de-differentiated – and nowadays it is often associated with pleasurable experiences, perceived freedom, happiness and well-being. Yet, to echo Sharpley (2018: 163), 'the question must be asked: is to consume tourism to consume happiness?'. In other words, and as reviewed earlier in this thesis (see Section 3.4, p. 84), although it is generally perceived that travel experiences positively affect an individual's subjective well-being and quality of life (Kwon and Lee, 2019), the outcomes of many studies exploring the relationship between tourism, happiness and well-being (for example, Corvo, 2011; Filep and Deery, 2010; Nawijn, 2010; Nawijn 2011a, b) are often inconclusive. Interestingly, however, from the interviews it emerged that the consumption of tourism was seen by many respondents as enhancing their sense of happiness and well-being level. This was particularly the case for Participant 2:

*Like, I'm always, I'm happiest when I'm travelling, like 100%. I know it's a bit stressful when you're getting everything sorted, but I think once you're sat on the plane and you're, like, you're getting ready... all your worries kind of, like, go away then and you're, like, you're in the zone; you're 100% happy. (Participant 2)*

In a similar vein, Participant 16, regarded travel as contributing to stress relief and as something that can boost happiness:

*I think with people's everyday life there's lot of different issues, there's stress, there's unhappiness. So, the excitement and the freedom you get from travelling I would say, it's important for you mentally. It is a real stress relief, a happiness booster, if you will. (Participant 16)*

In the following quote, however, another respondent refers to the idea of travel being less about their own life and more about the destination they are experiencing and widening their understanding of the world and the diversity of its people. Moreover, they claim it 'brings out what I like best about my life':

*I'd say it makes me feel alive, which might sound a bit cliché, but it's kind of when I feel like I make the most of my time and my energy. It's almost like it's less about me and my life and more about what's going on and where I am and everything. I guess I like widening my understanding of the world in general and the people, people that don't necessarily have the same lives as me. Other cultures and the places in general. So yeah, it brings out what I like best about my life, I guess.*

(Participant 10)

What was interesting, however, was that when discussing their feelings associated with returning from a holiday, many respondents admitted that they were glad or thankful to be home and appreciative of being back in familiar surroundings, despite their stated need to travel in the first place:

*I guess I feel enriched and happy, but I'm also always happy to come home, so when I travel, especially for a long time, I really learned to appreciate my home country and surroundings as well. So, you really connect to the place you call home a little more when you're far away.* (Participant 11)

This participant describes feelings of happiness on returning from their travels. This is, perhaps, an unexpected outcome given the extent to which they and other participants expressed a need and desire to escape their home environment in the first place. This arguably reveals that tourism is part of a cycle; the tourist escapes from the stress of everyday life but then reaches a point whilst away from the familiarities of home where they start to miss home and so are happy when they return. For other respondents, however, this was not the case. For instance, one revealed that as soon as they return from a holiday, they are already thinking about the next one:

*Depressed, just depressed like you wanna go again, like looking at where you can go, like seeing it. When can you get time off? Where can I go again? Or can I stay longer? Just so depressed like holiday blues!* (Participant 14)

In fact, over half of the respondents indicated that they experienced negative emotions when thinking about returning from their travels, with a majority mentioning having

another holiday 'to look forward to'. This finding inevitably questions whether tourism experiences contribute towards longer term well-being or contentment (eudemonic happiness) – from this research at least, the answer is probably 'no'.

Thus far, the chapter has explored the significance and meaning of travel to the post-millennial research participants. Throughout the interviews it became clear that although many respondents were unable to provide clear reasons why travel and tourism was so important to them, the idea of not travelling or a life without holidays was not something they could comprehend. Hence, the final subsection in this part of the chapter explores the responses to the question posed during the interviews: 'How would you feel if your holidays were restricted, or laws determined how often or for how long you can travel?' and the general conversations that emerged surrounding the question.

#### 6.4.3 A life without travel

During the interviews, respondents were asked a variety of questions related to the idea of a life without travel. Broadly, when reflecting on the travel restrictions imposed as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, many expressed their dismay at losing their freedom to move around the globe. More specifically, however, the conversations unearthed strong emotions, often expressed with determination, on the part of respondents about the importance of holidays to them and in particular about the importance of the freedom to travel where they wanted, as often as they wanted and for as long as they wanted.

During the conversation about Covid-19 related travel restrictions, the idea of future restrictions on destinations or holiday duration were discussed with Participant 1 who expressed the opinion that people should have the freedom to travel:

*That would be pretty annoying if I'm honest. Surely unless there's a war or a natural disaster, then we should have freedom to travel where we want to travel and how long for, I know we sometimes need visas which is fine but if I was told 'no' full stop, yeah, I'd be pretty annoyed about that to be fair. (Participant 1)*

Another respondent, reflecting on the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, emphasised how they felt like they had been stripped of their freedom. As discussed earlier, the idea of freedom was one that was of particular importance to them:

*Mmm... very much like I've been stripped of my freedom, I guess, especially because I don't live in the same country as my family, so I've experienced that [during the Covid-19 pandemic] and it's been very weird. And yeah, like a very big hit to my freedom, my personal freedom. (Participant 10)*

Whilst the respondents quoted above associated not being able to travel with a loss of freedom, others expressed strong negative emotions in relation to the meanings they associate with travel:

*So, the idea of [travelling] not being a possibility, it's immediately impactful. But it's also like a chain of events which leads to, like, not just broadening your own horizons, but future horizons to be broadened. (Participant 9)*

Here, the respondent interestingly described the meaning of travel as the broadening of horizons, suggesting that travel allows the opportunity for future horizons to be broadened, thus indicating a broader perspective on the impact of travel. It goes beyond the personal level, suggesting that travelling has a cascading effect on future opportunities, experiences and understanding. This comment conveys a sense of urgency and significance attached to the phenomenon of travel. Reflecting on their own personal travel experiences, this respondent added:

*if you are fortunate enough to travel the world, opportunities that you could not even begin to comprehend will begin to appear around you....to me, that is what creates the meaning of travel. Like, what I mean is without travel how can we possibly expand our minds to push us beyond the limitations of our home environments. A life without travel would be completely bleak. Unfortunately, I think it would be fantastic if it wasn't the case, but... umm, yeah, I think 'cause of like my generation stuff I can't fathom not just being able to shoot away. I mean, we obviously need to take finances and things like that into consideration. But,*

*like, the actual level of being able to go buy a plane ticket and go anywhere in the world, pretty much the idea of not being able to do that is like mortifying. horrifying, yeah. (Participant 9)*

For this respondent in particular, not being able to 'buy a plane ticket and go anywhere in the world' is described as 'mortifying' and 'horrifying'. In addition to use of these strong words, they displayed strong emotions when describing these feelings associated with a life without travel. Stating that 'if you are fortunate enough to travel the world', they revealed an awareness that travel is, perhaps, a privilege, and that not everybody is fortunate enough to access it. Similarly, Participant 11 acknowledged that travel is a privilege:

*I think that would really devastate me because I know travelling is a privilege, but it's also something that is important to kind of, to enrich one's personality and experiences. When I did my eight months in New Zealand, I changed so much as a person and I feel like travelling and experiencing different cultures and meeting different people makes us more open, makes us more tolerant or however you want to phrase it. So, I think it's not just about hedonistic experiences, but also about how we see the world, how our personalities develop. So, restricting travelling I think would not be a good idea in terms of cultural understanding and stuff like that. So, I think, yeah, that would make me really upset. (Participant 11)*

A notable relationship is displayed here between travel and the opportunities it presents to enrich one's life. As discussed earlier in this chapter, many respondents expressed the opinion that the consumption of tourism to different cultural areas of the world afforded them alternative perspectives on life. Quite evidently, if this opportunity was taken away, people would find difficulty in understanding people from different cultures. Correspondingly, Participant 15 suggested that a lack of travel could even result in individuals lacking respect for other cultures:

*If no one ever went to different countries, we would never know that different things affect them differently, like they have different beliefs, perspectives. And it's like, I don't know, I think we would just be, we wouldn't know like without these*

*experiences, we just wouldn't have enough knowledge to know how to act around different people, know how to still be respectful with different cultures, that kind of thing. (Participant 15)*

Similarly, Participant 20 was concerned about the consequences of not travelling on inter-cultural communication and understanding:

*Yeah. It means a lot to me. I wouldn't survive if I couldn't travel. And I know it's not all about sunshine, beaches, drinking and hanging out with your friends without work or studies getting in your way, but it's also about the part of it that changes you and makes you a more open person. You are more understanding and more open because you have travelled to different places and met different people from different walks of life. It's sad that not everyone gets the opportunity to travel don't you think? Yeah, it wouldn't be good life if you couldn't be free to travel to new places. So, I guess it means everything to me. (Participant 20)*

The interesting point made here is that the respondent believes that they could not survive without travel, which indicates that travel is not just a preference for them, rather, it is a fundamental need for their well-being. They also acknowledge the privilege of having the opportunity to travel and recognise that not everyone is fortunate enough to travel, which reflects a sense of gratitude for the enriching experiences afforded by mobility. The respondent appears to have a deep and profound connection to travel and they see travel as a transformative experience rather than a superficial one. Moreover, they express a strong belief in the idea that exposure to different places and people from diverse backgrounds makes an individual more open minded and understanding.

These findings are perhaps unsurprising given the evident importance of travel to the post-millennial participants. Travel has undeniably long been recognised as a transformative experience (Morgan, 2010) that enriches people, providing them with new perspectives that deepen their understanding of the world. When people immerse themselves in different cultures or environments, they are exposed to a plethora of new stimuli. As Pidduck et al. (2020) noted in their research concerning cross-cultural experiences, exposure to new information stimulates intellectual growth and broadens



people's knowledge base. Moreover, this exposure not only enhances social skills, but improves people's ability to understand and communicate with people from diverse backgrounds, thereby promoting tolerance, empathy and a deeper appreciation of different ways of life. Therefore, it is understandable that the interview participants expressed negative emotions when discussing travel restrictions and the possibility of a life without travel. What is particularly interesting at this point is that travel and tourism here is viewed positively as a means of developing understanding, tolerance and world views, or as some may argue, seeking purpose. Therefore, it appears that respondents are afraid of losing these opportunities in a 'life without travel', rather than missing out on the hedonistic pleasures of holidays where the focus of the holiday is usually on pleasure, comfort and feeling good (Ryan and Deci, 2002).

#### **6.4.4 Section Summary**

The purpose of this section of the chapter was to consider what the interviews revealed with regards to the meaning of travel and tourism to the post-millennials. Certainly, all the respondents emphasised the importance of travel to their lives, yet there was still a lack of reasoning as to why they choose to consume tourism as a discretionary consumption practice. Many respondents expressed the need to travel and believed that everyone should be entitled to it; they claimed to possess a strong impulse to travel, with some going as far as saying that travelling is in their DNA. The meanings associated with travel included positive mental health, happiness and wellness, and freedom. Moreover, many of the respondents were of the belief that travel enriches their life through the ability to learn from other cultures. Most displayed strong negative emotions when discussing the idea of travel restrictions or the inability to travel, one in particular highlighting that they could not survive if they were unable to travel. In contrast, another respondent viewed travelling as a hobby and possessed a list of destinations that they wanted to visit before reaching the age of 30. One conclusion that can be drawn at this stage is that the deep-rooted significance of tourism among post-millennials is evident from their shared sentiment that it surpasses a leisurely pursuit, forming an integral part of their identity and well-being. Despite struggles to articulate its exact meaning, respondents unanimously emphasised its indispensable role, attributing it to personal fulfilment, mental rejuvenation and a fundamental need for happiness. Moreover, they viewed tourist, as an innate right and a catalyst for cultural understanding and personal

growth. Ultimately, travel and tourism emerges not only as a leisurely activity, but as a transformative experience, enriching their perspectives, adopting empathy and contributing significantly to their overall happiness and sense of self. This will be discussed further in the concluding chapter.

Although the discussion of the interview results thus far has revealed that, for a variety of reasons, tourism is of significant importance to the respondents, whether in terms of identity creation, escape or personal benefits of happiness, well-being or cultural awareness, it is still unclear why tourism appears to be prioritised as a form of consumption. That is, there is a need to understand the significance of tourism in relation to the potential or actual consumption of other things, or whether tourism is dominant in a hierarchy of objects of consumption.

### **6.5 Travel in a hierarchy: Holidays or things**

In order to establish where tourism might be located in the participants' hierarchy of consumption, during the interviews a number of questions were asked with regards to what respondents chose to spend their money on and whether they could envisage a more simplistic life of more limited consumption. As discussed earlier in the thesis, there is some evidence that consumers are increasingly expressing their concerns and obligations for society and the environment through their consumption decisions (Hoffman et al., 2018), in particular through the practice of anti-consumption or reduced consumption as they follow the path of what some refer to as voluntary simplicity (Rebouças and Soares, 2021). Therefore, to explore whether or not post-millennials are willing to adapt their consumption practices for the sake of the environment, the interviews sought insights into the respondents' thoughts on buying and travelling less.

For Participant 11, it was immediately evident that the idea of travelling less would not be acceptable, although they would be willing to choose more environmentally friendly transport alternatives:

*I mean, I could see myself being very conscious about buying less and, for example, if I don't necessarily need new shoes, I'm not going to buy shoes. But with travelling, I think if I had the money and the time, I would always choose to travel,*

*but I would be conscious about them, for example transport. So recently I've been taking the train a lot more and I've been cycling shorter distances, so I'm trying to be a bit more conscious. But it's not always an easy choice to make, especially when you have a low income. (Participant 11)*

In contrast, Participant 6 explicitly claimed that neither buying nor travelling less was an idea they were willing to consider:

*The only thing I would say is like holidays and clothes and designer things. That's what makes me happy. Like, that's why I go to work. Cause I wanna pay for those things. So, if I was then told you can't have those things or you have a limit on how many things you can have kind of thing, I think then my work ethic would, like, obviously go straight down and I would probably be more miserable. (Participant 6)*

This respondent in particular was very honest in admitting that they derived a significant pleasure from material possessions and holidays; their comments suggested a strong connection between their sense of well-being and these specific consumption practices. Furthermore, the prospect of being restricted or limited in acquiring materialistic pleasures would have a direct impact on their motivation and satisfaction. Similarly, Participant 20 explained that without buying and travelling there would be no way of 'treating' themselves, suggesting that their motivation is strongly tied to rewards. In fact, the participant went as far as stating that although they may be willing to buy less in general if there was an incentive, travelling less in particular was not something they would be willing to do:

*I don't think that's my cup of tea. How would I treat myself? Maybe if there was a good incentive to then I could buy less. But travel less. Absolutely not. My goal in life is to travel more. So that's definitely not a vibe with me I'm afraid. (Participant 20)*

Interestingly, Participant 11 acknowledged that spending a significant amount of money on travel can be considered materialistic. This view stems from the idea that investing in

a particular lifestyle, one centred around travel and experiences, could also be categorised as a form of materialism, albeit a different kind – one focused on intangible experiences as opposed to tangible possessions:

*I would always prefer spending money on travel than materialistic stuff like clothes. At the same time though, I think spending a lot of money on travelling is materialistic as well because that's the lifestyle I wanna have. That's what I want to spend my money on. I grew up always having everything, I mean everything I needed, not everything I wanted. So, I grew up relatively wealthy and I wanna have that lifestyle when I grow up also. It's important for me to enjoy materialistic things once in a while. (Participant 11).*

Despite valuing experiences and travel, the significance of indulging in materialistic pleasures occasionally is also acknowledged. This suggests an understanding that material possessions and experiences also contribute to personal enjoyment and satisfaction, albeit not as a primary focus.

*Yeah, I am probably just contradicting what I've just said but I am slightly materialistic and like to have nice things but that's just the world we live in, isn't it? I'd much rather have experiences over things though. Holidays in particular! As I'm sure you've guessed... ha ha. (Participant 18)*

In the above quote, Participant 18 confesses to being materialistic and enjoying having things. This confession highlights an awareness of their own inclination towards material possessions, aligning with the prevailing societal norms that emphasise the acquisition of desirable items.

### **6.5.1 Section summary**

It is apparent from the findings that post-millennials value experiences over material possessions. At the same time, all respondents highlighted the fact that they would struggle to 'give up' tourism more so than materialistic consumption. Furthermore, the findings challenge the traditional definitions of materialism as solely centred around physical possessions by encompassing experiences and lifestyle choices as part of a

materialistic inclination. Moreover, the findings underpin the influence of upbringing and personal values on consumption patterns, highlighting how an individual's background can shape their perceptions and aspirations regarding wealth and consumption. In order to understand how the post-millennial respondents view themselves in the context of consumer culture, the following section explores their responses to consumerism-related questions and expands on their thoughts regarding materialism and conspicuous consumption.

## 6.6 Consumerism and consumer culture

At specific moments throughout the interviews, the discussion revolved around topics such as the significance of owning material goods and the concept of materialism, advocating for owning or purchasing fewer items, and broader environmental concerns. As previously discussed throughout the thesis, the excessive consumption patterns prevalent in affluent nations pose a significant threat to the quality of life of both present and future generations. Furthermore, as MacKinnon (2021) highlights, there are many positive implications for the environment if people were to reduce their level of consumption as currently 'we are using up the planet at a rate 1.7 times faster than it can regenerate' (Mackinnon, 2021: 6).

*So, I'm not materialistic, but it has been something that, like, I have worked over the years to improve because, like, I've always been slightly environmental... at primary school I was on the green team. But it was as I got older, and I started to learn about things like educate myself more that I started to think more about my consumer habits. So, like now, like my clothes. Like everything I buy now, like if I've not had it for long time, it's all coming second hand or from the charity shop or if I did buy it from the store, it's probably been on sale. In fact, it's mostly always on sale because then it's not a new line coming in, like, they don't need to make more of that. Like this is something they're trying to get rid of. And, like, I have to think, OK, how many years am I gonna wear this? Like, I really have a problem with waste like food waste, but that's a separate conversation. So, I really tried to be more conscious about, like, the things I buy. But it is hard because, like consumerism is so pushed in our face and like when everyone around or I was around you is like*

*buying things you can kind of think like ohh like I need to get something and it's like no you don't even like you don't need that. (Participant 3)*

Here, Participant 3 provides a detailed insight into their perspective on materialism and their conscious efforts towards more sustainable consumption practices. They highlight their early exposure to environmental concerns at primary school which laid the foundation for their evolving perspective on consumption. Thus, as they grew older, they delved deeper into self-education and became more mindful of their consumer habits. This reflects the impact of increased knowledge and awareness on personal choices, particularly in relation to environmental sustainability (Peschel et al., 2016). Moreover, the participant articulates a conscious effort to align their purchasing behaviour with their environmental values by minimising their contribution to waste and the production of new goods. Despite their efforts, they acknowledge the difficulty in resisting the pervasive influence of consumerism, especially when surrounded by others engaging in conspicuous consumption. This, indeed, highlights, as Ciadinin and Jacobson (2021) suggest, the societal pressure and influence that can impede efforts to adopt more sustainable practices.

Later on in the interview, this respondent reflected on these societal pressures. In particular, they highlighted the moral dilemma individuals face when confronted with the ethical implications of their consumptive choices, especially once they become aware of the social and environmental costs associated with consumerism:

*And it is hard to know to not get caught up in it, but I think like once you know, like you've educated yourself in the cost of your consumerism, like the repercussions that it has on other parts of the world, I just don't know how. Like, ethically you can just be OK with that when, like, you've seen the countless documentaries on fast fashion or, like, the people who are making your chocolate, you know, like, I don't know, it doesn't sit well with me. So I think even if, like, my personal actions might not have. (Participant 3)*

Furthermore, during a conversation regarding lowering individual consumption levels, Participant 9 offered an insight into the psychological and societal influences on consumer behaviour:

*People have so many things and like, we could definitely be buying less, no one needs to be buying as much as we do like. You can't even keep up with it. It's like every market is saturated. And, like, you could you want it to be a budding entrepreneur, you'd probably struggle because everyone is selling everything to everyone all the time. You know, you've got cookies and ads and stuff, so, you know, just don't be drawn into the adverts like be aware and don't get drawn in. But at the same time, the option is always there to buy things, whereas before it just wasn't that easy, was it? And constant, like, instant gratification. It's never ending. It's like, like you know, retail therapy, even that as a saying is, you know, it's almost been drilled into, you know, if you ever watched Sex in the City or anything when you're little, it's drilled into you, isn't it? You go shopping when you're sad, but why? Why does you know it? I think it's always been a little bit of a thing. But again, because people want to sell stuff to us, I suppose. And like you were saying in your other point that a simpler sort of lifestyle would sort of maybe force a little bit more. Not self like sustaining as in like growing your own potatoes and milking your own cows. But it would force a little bit more responsibility as well because you'd have to be aware, you couldn't just break something and buy a new one. (Participant 9)*

This respondent noted the omnipresence of advertisements, particularly on social media and online platforms, and emphasised the importance of resisting these marketing tactics. As contributors have argued, it is crucial to be aware of the influence that marketing companies exert on consumers (for example, Cherrier, 2009; Odou and De Pechpeyrou, 2011; White, Habib and Hardisty, 2019).

Importantly, this participant emphasised the concept of instant gratification and the Western culture of 'retail therapy', questioning why people follow such notions. In so doing, they highlighted how these notions have been ingrained into people from a young age, potentially impacting their subsequent buying behaviours. In concluding, the participant alluded to an earlier conversation regarding the idea of simpler living and offered this as a solution that could possibly be imposed on society to make people more wary of their over-consumption.

In relation to this discussion regarding simpler living, Participant 1 delved into the concept of voluntary simplicity and its potential to counteract the effects of excessive consumption and materialism, particularly in Western societies:

*I think like I just said, maybe we should start thinking more carefully about what we buy and stop buying pointless stuff. I was actually thinking about something like this the other day you know! I watched this programme on Netflix where this couple had decided to get rid of their big house and, like, all their stuff and move into this small, home. I don't know what it was but wasn't like a normal house. Everything looked so neat, and everything was space saving, so it didn't look like too small or cluttered. I was like, wow! That's actually pretty cool. Imagine if people stopped striving for bigger and better and stretching themselves too far. Like going back to what we were saying about materialistic. If we stopped all that and made cute little homes, then maybe that's the answer to the world's problems. Not the world, sorry, I do realise there's a lot going on out there, but I mean the Western world where we're all, like, brainwashed into buying stuff like here and the States and places like that. Count me in. It's a great idea. Plus, we'd have more money for holidays wouldn't we! (Participant 1)*

Here, the participant suggests that embracing smaller, well-organised living spaces as opposed to pursuing the acquisition of larger, more materialistic possessions could offer solutions to societal issues. As mentioned in Chapter 3, in order to address the global environmental crisis an overall reduction in consumption is necessary as opposed to a simple shift towards the adoption of new forms of consumption (Moore, 2008). Moreover, as Participant 1 suggests, by shifting away from the pursuit of material wealth and excess, it might be possible to address some of the problems associated with consumerism, in so doing freeing up funds for other pursuits, such as travelling.

However, for participant 12, a more nuanced response to the idea of living in a more simplistic manner was offered:



*I think it's good. I admire the people who can do it. I don't necessarily think it's plausible for everyone, and I think if everyone probably tried to have one area of their life that they were more minimalist in, that would probably be more doable. Rather than trying to make everything really minimalist, but I admire the people who can do it in every aspect. I do think it's a good step forward to trying to reduce the effects of over-consumption. (Participant 12)*

This particular participant acknowledges the practical limitations of achieving a fully minimalist lifestyle for everyone. They suggest it may not be plausible or achievable on a broad scale due to varying individual circumstances, preferences and needs. They do, however, see embracing voluntary simplicity, even in limited aspects of life, as a positive step towards mitigating the effects of over-consumption.

In the context of conspicuous consumption and social media, Participant 17 reflected on the excessive consumer behaviour of some of the people around them:

*It's disgusting. It's a disaster because, like, these people like these guys you see on social media, say like a typical girl who just doesn't care. Like, they know for a fact that the PrettyLittleThing or Missguided dress that they bought in the sale for 99p, they know that that has been made using unfair work means, and the environmental damage that causes. Like, often there are children involved in these factories, like slave labour type situations and they just don't care. Like there's such like a divide between people of my age these days. (Participant 17)*

The respondent expressed a strong negative sentiment towards the disregard that many individuals exhibit towards the ethical and environmental implications of their consumption, particularly in the context of fast fashion. Their strong disapproval was apparent in their tone of speech, particularly when emphasising the generational divide, indicating a stark contrast in attitudes and values with regards to ethical consumption among post-millennials. This contrast was addressed earlier in the thesis in the context of the predicament that many post-millennials find themselves in; that is, wanting to stay relevant in their social groups, as well as to make a difference environmentally. Moreover, Participant 17 also points out the apparent indifference and lack of care amongst some

post-millennials who seem disconnected from or apathetic towards the human rights violations and environmental degradation linked to the production of cheap, fast fashion items.

As these conversations surrounding conspicuous consumption evolved during the interviews, the viewpoints of the respondents collectively acknowledged a definitive problem with regards to over-consumption. Whilst some underscored the ethical and moral implications of consumer behaviour, such as in the fast fashion and social media driven contexts, others addressed the widespread adoption of more minimalistic lifestyles as a solution to societal issues stemming from excessive consumerism. The psychological and societal impacts of materialistic cultures were addressed, in particular inviting further exploration of role that social media plays in driving excessive consumption and the level of influence social media influencers possess in potentially influencing post-millennials to direct their consumption habits to more environmentally friendly ways.

### **6.7 The role of the Social Media Influencer (SMI)**

As established in Chapter 3, SMIs may be a key driver in promoting more sustainable products in the hope that the post millennial generation will follow. In the initial stage of the data collection (the survey), respondents were presented with specific statements relating to compulsive purchasing and the guilt associated with such purchases. An overwhelming number (over 70%) of respondents agreed that they spend a lot of time looking at things to buy online. As previously mentioned in this thesis, the link between compulsive buying and the online environment has been associated with exposure to influencers through their social media feeds (Dinh and Lee, 2022). During the subsequent interviews, when discussing the role that social media plays in excessive consumption and perhaps a shift to more sustainable consumption, SMIs were often referred to. As previously mentioned, SMIs exert a significant influence on their followers' and peer consumers' decisions (Ki and Kim, 2019), particularly those belonging to the younger demographics, (Lajnef, 2023), which results in compulsive and excessive consumption.

Participant 4 expressed a preference for authentic, real-life experiences over the polished and often superficial portrayal of products or experiences portrayed by SMIs:

*Now I know social media influences are real people. That sounds bad, but I would rather see a regular Joe or Sheila, you know, go in off to wherever and showing you what a place is really like not the best, not the five star, not the clean cut. You know, the straight lines. Brand spanking new. I'd rather see what the real thing is. Like what the culture is, what the local people are like. You know what's there rather than 'ohh, look at this five-star hotel'. And you'd, like, I was there. Nothing more to it, nothing deeper. (Participant 4)*

This respondent's viewpoint challenges the conventional role of SMI's in promoting consumerism and highlights the growing demand for authenticity and genuine representation. Furthermore, it underpins a desire for more immersive and culturally rich experiences rather than surface-level depiction often perpetuated by influencer marketing. The respondent also emphasised the importance of genuine storytelling and the portrayal of realistic experiences in shaping consumer perceptions and choices in an increasingly digital and influencer-centric world.

Participant 4 continued:

*I think there's certainly social media pressures, with that, a lot from the influencers that are out there. Because they have all this, you know, stuff and like all the branded goods. So, then the younger generation are like, 'ohh well so and so is doing that; I want to be like them'. You know, 'I want to wear what they're wearing'. So social media influencers can actually be useful if they use their platform for the greater good. But then I also think the younger generation are becoming more aware and I mean, I guess it's a lot to do with how they're brought up as well and what they see in society, you certainly can't bubble wrap younger people, they will learn inevitably, one way or another, but I think if you can start it off from a younger age, it will certainly help. (Participant 4)*

Here, the participant delves deeper into the complex interplay between SMIs and the formation of values and attitudes amongst the younger generations. This highlights the

potential for influencers to direct their audience towards more positive purchasing behaviours. Moreover, the respondent emphasises the importance of early education and societal influence in shaping values and perceptions, suggesting that positive influences from a young age can underpin a more conscious and responsible consumer mindset amongst future generations.

Indeed, in other contexts, participants, such as Participant 5, scrutinised the authenticity and credibility of some SMIs, particularly regarding their promotion of sustainability while engaging in behaviours that seem contradictory:

*So, like, if you've got, like, a celeb that you know goes on holiday a lot and they're promoting trying to be more sustainable like you look at the Kardashians for instance, they and they've got their own private jets and they can promote something like using, like, straws or something to be more environmentally friendly when you just know they're going to be jetting off to Paris for a week, like. (Participant 5)*

In a similar manner, Participant 13 expressed scepticism with regards to influencers' motives in promoting sustainable, eco-friendly products:

*They possibly could influence people to be more sustainable, to be fair. It's like, when they are saying 'ohh buy such and such' and a lot of people do because they're like, 'ohh Kim Kardashian bought this' and then they go and buy it straight away and that product is sold out in a matter of minutes. I think sustainable products could be pushed a bit more through them [Influencers] but then, it's if they're willing to do that because obviously, they're all sort of in it for money really. So, it's never really going to be eco-friendly, is it? it's just about making money, 'do this and you'll get this a reward' type thing, so, it's not for the greater good is it. (Participant 13)*

In other words, this respondent is explaining that the primary focus of SMIs is on financial gain rather than influencing consumers to shop in an 'eco-friendlier' manner. In contrast, other respondents held more nuanced perspectives on the potential for SMIs to promote more environmentally sustainable consumer options:

*I think they definitely could have a role, and if they're promoting the things that their audience likes to see, but obviously in a more environmentally friendly choice. So go in with the brands that do help rather than going with the fast fashion kind of thing. I think obviously they do have a massive impact on what the trends are and where people are buying from. So I definitely think that would make a big difference. But at the same time like, I mean, it's not really their responsibility, but they definitely have a major effect on the majority of people that are on social media. So, most like, people will probably do something that their favourite influencer will do. Like, say, for example, if their favourite influencer shops at a certain brand or whatever, they're probably more likely to shop at that brand. Same with like adverts on social media like because the things that you've seen or searched for, the advert for it always seems to pop up, like, to do what you've just searched on Google. So, if influences sort of target and promote more sustainable brands, that's more than likely going to influence a change with people's opinions. But like I also think they need like brands and social media influencers needs to sort of like work together with that. Then they can highlight things, like, when it comes to like recycling and sustainability, all that stuff, because there's loads of things that people don't know about it either. So I think they could all like sort of team up together to help people with their understanding of things like that.*

(Participant 6)

In short, Participant 6 believes there is potential for SMIs to become agents for positive change and the promotion of sustainability, not least because, as Lim et al. (2017) assert, they are seen as trendsetters and can impact consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the respondent suggests the need for collaboration between influencers and brands to amplify the message of sustainability and advocate for more environmentally responsible choices.

Participant 15 similarly concurs that SMIs could use their platforms for better causes:

*I think it would do, yeah, because my as much as I hate to say it, everyone is influenced by these sorts of people and if they're shown to be like enjoying this sort*

*of more environmentally friendly way to live, like if they present it as a really, really good thing, then I really think people would take on to it. But because so many of these influencers don't care about that, that means that, we see them and think 'ohh these people- these influencers, they don't care about the environment'. So, like, why should we- the normal people care about it? (Participant 15)*

Indeed, it is acknowledged by Participant 15 that there is potential for influencers to shape public perception and behaviours towards EFLs. However, the respondent highlights the challenges that arise from the lack of commitment amongst some influencers, suggesting it might undermine efforts to encourage their audiences to care about environmental matters.

Participant 10 viewed the role of SMIs as complex owing to their large followings, explaining how challenges may arise from such influencers 'promoting' sustainable travel, such as over-tourism:

*They [SMIs] have an influence for sure and I don't think that's gonna disappear anytime soon. So, it might as well be used for a better cause. But I also think that if you're an influencer, you have a lot of, like, followers. Even if you promote, like, a sustainable destination, there's still a risk of, like, over tourism. And it can be a lot of different things and it can be like, I know just like, in London, which is not a very vulnerable destination. People like taking photos in front of, like, houses and Notting Hill has been very annoying just for residents cause it's their homes and stuff, so it's really everywhere and I think it's really hard to promote in a sustainable way. So yeah, it's tricky and it's also a kind of like, a case-by-case scenario. So, I've read about islands kind of making the tourists coming there sign a pledge and stuff like, which I thought was really cool because you really take responsibility. So, you're not like prevented from going, but you go under specific conditions that are set-up by locals, which I thought was really cool. (Participant 10)*

To summarise then, SMIs exert substantial power in shaping consumers' behaviours and preferences (Lim et al., 2017), including attitudes towards environmentally friendly

products and practices (Jacobson and Harrison, 2022). Indeed, consumers can be persuaded by sustainable influencers, particularly if they are already informed about sustainability (Johnstone and Lindh, 2017) and often, influencers play a role in impacting consumption habits by disseminating knowledge and advocating for sustainability (Chwialkowska, 2019). However, previous studies have indicated that mere interest in environmental or human rights issues is not sufficient to alter consumer behaviour, and whilst SMI's platforms provide them with an opportunity to advocate for sustainability, challenges persist due to influencers' diverse motivations and the apparent dissonance between being profit-driven and genuinely committed to environmental causes (Buvár, Zsila and Orosz, 2023). During the interviews, the respondents generally recognised the potential for SMIs to drive positive change by promoting sustainable alternatives. However, there is perhaps a need for greater alignment between influencer, brands and societal values (Jacobson and Harrison, 2022). A particularly important finding here, as suggested by Participant 4, is the significance of early exposure through education to form the foundation for more mindful and accountable consumers in the future. What this could anticipate is that future generations are not as easily influenced to consume in a spontaneous and unnecessary fashion.

During these conversations focusing on the role social media, it emerged that documenting / recording the products and experiences they consume, particularly travel experiences, was of particular importance to the respondents. The next section of the chapter, therefore, considers the role of photographic images and the importance of sharing them through social media as discussed by respondents.

## **6.8 Life through a lens: Holidays and photographic images**

As noted earlier in the thesis, the post-millennial generation is the first to have grown up in the digital age with easy access to digital technology such as smart phones, social media and instant messaging. As a result, they have been referred to as the generation of 'digital natives' (Cilliers, 2017). What was important to establish at the interview stage of the research, however, was the degree of significance of sharing images on social media to the respondents. During the survey stage of the research, it was deemed important to discover if a relationship exists between social media and holidays and, specifically, to

identify the extent to which social media has a significant effect on tourism choices and behaviour. It was established that a majority of respondents (79%) indicated that social media posts inspire them to travel, which is a finding that relates to the influence of social media on the destination or travel choice. However, much of the related literature (for example, Arica et al., 2022; Chung and Koo, 2015; Fotis, Buhalis and Rossides, 2012; Li, Zhang and Hsu, 2023; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014) suggests that social media are predominantly used after holidays for experience sharing. Correspondingly, in the survey, 70% of respondents declared that they do indeed like to share their travels and experiences using social media.

One method of measuring the value that individuals place on discussing their experiential and material acquisitions is by observing their reactions when they are unable to share information about them. In essence, how much would the inability to talk about a purchase reduce the pleasure derived from it, and does this reduction vary between experiential and material purchases? (Kumar and Gilovich, 2015: 1322). Kumar and Gilovich (2015) conducted a number of studies seeking the answer to this question. Specifically, 98 participants were requested to outline two preferred purchases within a specific category, for example, identifying their top two desired destinations for a beach holiday. Following this, they were presented with a theoretical scenario: they could either opt for their first choice but without the liberty to discuss it or they could select their second choice and have the freedom to share it with others. Perhaps surprisingly, 67% of participants selected their second choice so they could talk about their experiences rather than their top-rated holiday destination that they could not discuss with others. These results provided motivation for the current research, in that there was a curiosity as to whether the post-millennials would change their holiday plans if they could not share their experiences. Therefore, the respondents were presented with a scenario to which they had two options. The scenario was:

*'If you were given the opportunity to choose between two free holidays, the first being your dream holiday to anywhere in the world for a longer duration, but not being able take pictures or to share the holiday on social media, and the second*



*being a destination perhaps closer to home, for less time and being able to share it with everyone and on all your social media, which would you choose? Why?'*

The results were not as originally anticipated; that is, they did not reflect Kumar and Gilovich's (2015) findings. For example, Participant 1 appeared torn between the two choices. Their response reflected a conflict between the value of personal memories captured through photographs and the allure of sharing experiences on social media platforms:

*Hmm. That's a difficult one. I guess the posting online on Instagram or whatever wouldn't bother me too much but not taking pictures would be quite sad because they are your memories, do you know what I mean? Like, of course you wouldn't forget a place or things that you've done that are amazing but it's always nice to have pictures. Still though, I think I'd have to take the first because it's my dream to go and explore somewhere far away like Bali or Thailand and if someone else was paying and I could stay for quite a while then that's my dream, so I'd have to follow it! So yeah, number one. Definitely. (Participant 1)*

This respondent expressed the sentiment that while the inability to take pictures might detract from the experience's documentation, the chance to fulfil a long-held dream of exploring a far-away dream destination is ultimately more appealing. This response in particular taps into the contemporary societal phenomenon where social media serves as a means of sharing experiences and creating a digital narrative of one's life. The participant appears to struggle with the trade-off between personal experience and the desire for digital validation or recognition through social media. This conflict highlights what has been previously discussed in the thesis, that is, the influence of social media in shaping modern experiences, and suggests the significance of personal aspirations in decision-making, even in the context of travel choices.

For Participant 18, the decision was just as difficult:

*That's a really difficult question. Especially if there's no pictures allowed at all, not even for yourself. I love to look at holiday pictures, but I guess the memories are what is most important, so I'd have to say number one. If you, like, gave me 20k and said go wherever you want but leave your phone I'd be quite happy with that. I'd probably explore more and soak up more because I wouldn't be as busy like snapping away, ha! I guess we get like, carried away sometimes with trying to get the perfect pictures of places we go. It would be quite nice if we couldn't do that, um, I think you'd be able to like, live in the moment more wouldn't you. (Participant 18).*

Here, the participant initially acknowledges the difficulty of the decision, particularly concerning the inability to take any pictures, but then expresses a preference for the first option, valuing memories over capturing photos. Their response particularly emphasises the significance of memories and living in the moment and, interestingly, they suggest that removing the distraction of taking photographs may actually enhance the travel experience. Correspondingly, they note the tendency to get caught up in capturing the perfect picture and highlight the potential benefits from being more present and immersed in the experience. This all links to the broader debate about how smart phones, selfies and sharing online all detract from the immediacy of the tourist experience (see Sharpley, 2022: 438-450; see also pp. 204-5 above).

Participant 14 was faced with the same dilemma but again leaned towards the first option, driven by a personal desire to explore destinations like Bali and Thailand:

*I think I'll choose the first one So like, just 'cause I've always wanted to do like Bali and Thailand and obviously I would, you know, like, I would like to post it and be like, 'Oh my God, look where I am'. But also, I wanna go for myself. You know, so. Uh, maybe if you would have asked me a few years ago, I might have been, like, no, I choose the second option. But now I would definitely go with the first one because that's something I really wanna do. And I suppose I'd just be doing it for myself and like, a lot of things on social media are fake as well. I mean, so like,*

*what's the point? I might as well enjoy, you know, the places where I really wanna go. (Participant 14).*

Here, the respondent expresses a shift in perspective over time, indicating that previously, the attraction of sharing on social media might have influenced their decision differently. This points to a shift in priorities, with a greater emphasis the importance of personal fulfilment rather than the superficial, conspicuous aspects of sharing experiences on social media. Moreover, the respondent realised that social media can often present an artificial portrayal of experiences and, hence, prioritised genuine enjoyment and personal fulfilment in their travel choices.

Similarly, Participant 16 favoured the first option, emphasising the personal nature of the holiday and the importance of the experience itself rather than seeking external validation through sharing the holiday on social media:

*Ohh, 100% the first one because the holiday is for me and the people that I'm obviously there with obviously it's nice to look back at photos, but I'll still remember them anyway. Obviously, I can still have these memories about what I actually want to do rather than try and please people or say, 'look at me'. (Participant 16)*

This response suggests a recognition of the distinction between seeking personal fulfilment and the external pressures of seeking validation or attention through social media sharing. Moreover, this delves into the intrinsic motivation behind travel choices, highlighting the significance of personal experiences and authentic enjoyment over external validation or approval through social media platforms.

Participant 17's interpretation was slightly different in that they viewed the first option as more adventurous with an element of secrecy:

*I would probably choose the first one. I feel like not only is it obviously like, within what I would do as a person, but I feel like it's more adventurous because of the*

*fact that you won't be able to tell anyone, it'd be kind of like a fun little secret.*

(Participant 17)

Their response highlights the appeal of the unknown and the excitement derived from keeping the experience private, viewing it as a unique, personal adventure.

Overall, a clear pattern emerged from these responses to this particular scenario. In essence, they collectively suggest a growing awareness of the balance between personal experiences, the influence of social media and the desire for authenticity and fulfilment in travel choices. In particular, a prevalent acknowledgment emerged of the intrinsic value of experiences and memories being prioritised over the external validation and superficiality associated with social media sharing.

The responses of many of the other participants, similar to those above, underpinned the significance of capturing memories through photography which, according to Bay-Cheng (2017: 338), fundamentally affirms who we are, where we are and our relation to the world. Furthermore, while the hypothetical inability to share on social media might not bother respondents as much, the prospect of not taking any pictures at all posed a greater challenge owing to their desire to preserve memories. Participant 13 in particular, provided a more nuanced perspective as they struggled to choose between the two options due to the significance of memory preservation and the impact of constant camera presence on experiences:

*I'd go for a bit of both cause in one way, if you went on a holiday which was a bit secret and just known to yourself, you like, block out all the cameras and the pictures and everything like that. Because I feel like a lot of things now, like, you notice on videos, everyone is recording things, taking pictures and it's not like in the moment. So that really effects like people's views. Like you're just always seeing through a camera, never just like, in the moment. And then on the other hand, if you didn't capture the memories [on camera], it sort of it goes to the back of your mind. I don't think you forget, but if you're taking a picture, you're like 'ohh yeah, that happened' and so it's so hard to choose, I'm 50/50 because I look at*

*myself sometimes, I'm like, yeah, I use my phone a lot, but then it's like if I never use my phone, I would never have captured that memory. (Participant 13)*

Here, Participant 13 acknowledges the prevalence of constant documentation through cameras and phones, noting that constant recording detracts from 'living in the moment' of the particular experience. Simultaneously, they recognise the value of capturing memories through photos and note that while they use their phone extensively, refraining to do so might mean missing out on preserving certain memories. What this suggests is that taking photos solidifies memories and makes them more accessible for recollection. Academically, this response acknowledges the impact of technology on contemporary experiences, emphasising the tension between documenting moments and genuinely living them. As Sharpley (2022) explains, smart phone photography serves to diminish the tourist experience.

Demonstrating this finding, Participant 11 provided an insightful perspective on the impact of excessive photo-taking on the travel experience and memory creation during holidays:

*I think it's horrible [excessively taking photos]. I think some people just run around with their phones or cameras at the most beautiful spots, I feel like they are missing out. I remember when I was in New Zealand, we went on a boat cruise to the most popular tourist destination in New Zealand. I remember we were on the ship, there was a big outside deck where we would stand and just experience the nature and look at everything. The weather was really bad, it was raining heavily, and it was windy and cold. But we were on the on the top deck, looking at everything the whole time, even if it was freezing and every time there was a significant spot or a nice photo opportunity, all the tourists would come running outside, quickly taking all the pictures and then go back inside. So, yeah, they could never have had the same experience as I did because I think I really took in the place. I still took some pictures, but I feel like I was really in the experience, whereas the other people were like sitting and talking during the whole boat ride. And when there was an announcement saying now you can see this or now you can see a*

*nice waterfall, they would all come running outside, take pictures and then vanish. So yeah, and they might have nice pictures to look at back home, but I don't think they will fully remember the trip (Participant 11)*

This particularly interesting encounter exposes the dichotomy between experiencing a place authentically and engaging in excessive photo taking. Indeed, as Urry (1992) argues, tourists' use of photography often portrays them as detached from the environments they encounter, emphasising the visual and detached nature of their travel experience through the camera lens. Therefore, it highlights the risk of missing out on genuine experiences and forming lasting memories when prioritising photo documentation over immersion in the holiday experience. In other words, as Sharpley (2022: 447) argues, tourist photography in the digital revolution has become less about creating future memories, and more about creating and sharing images as an element of the actual tourist experience.

One respondent, however, provided a different type of response to the other interview participants:

*Yeah, I feel like, to be fair, my dream holidays probably come from social media in the first place. It's that, I think it would be an age dependent thing, if I was a bit older then I'd take the full-on dream holiday, but at this stage now, I know like it's very embarrassing, I mean I know social media is not everything, but when I go on holiday like, everyone kind of does just want to show off like 'look where I am', kind of thing and it's not even just like, taking pictures and stuff, like, it's all your memories and having them to keep and look back on. I think that's nice. So, to be fair I probably would go for the second one because I mean I'm a bit of an Instagram girl. (Participant 6)*

This respondent openly offers an introspective view on the influence of social media on personal preferences for holiday destinations and the desire to document experiences by taking photos. They further acknowledge that their idea of a dream holiday has possibly been influenced by their exposure to idealised representations on social media platforms in the first place. Moreover, the respondent reflects on the age-dependent nature of their choice, recognising that, as they grow older, they might prioritise the dream holiday.

However, at their current life-stage, the attraction of showcasing their experiences on social media holds considerable significance – the respondent openly admits to the influence of social media on their decision-making process, indicating a preference for the second option which has been driven by the desire to capture memories and share them on Instagram. Although this was not a position held by the majority of participants, it nevertheless offers an insight into the evolving nature of travel preferences influenced by social media. Moreover, it also highlights the impact of digital platforms on shaping ideals and desires relating to holiday experiences, particularly amongst younger generations.

## **6.9 Section Summary**

The investigation into the post-millennial generation's travel choices in the context of social media reveals a complex interplay between personal experiences, the influence of social media and the intrinsic value of memories. Whilst the interview respondents predominately prioritise the idea of personal fulfilment and genuine experiences over social media validation, a nuanced understanding emerges. Certainly, the desire to capture moments in photographs is prevalent, highlighting the importance of preserving memories. At the same time, however, the research reveals an increasing awareness of a trade-off between documenting experiences and living them authentically, or in the moment, perhaps pointing to a shift in priorities over time. In other words, the respondents appear to navigate between the desire to share images on social media and the richness of genuine experiences, acknowledging the impact of technology on their travel choices. As previously mentioned in the thesis, tourism in particular has long been recognised as a form of conspicuous consumption and as a status symbol (Culler, 1981) whilst, more recently, attention has been drawn to its role in identity creation (Bond and Falk, 2013). This resonates with the findings from the scenario presented in the interviews, as the results uncover a transition from valuing external validation through social media to prioritising personal fulfilment, authenticity and the intrinsic value of experiences in shaping travel decision within a digital era.

As the interviews drew to a close, the respondents were offered the opportunity to express their opinions on the future, particularly in the context of the challenges posed by the environmental crisis and climate change.

## 6.10 The future according to the post-millennials

During the first, quantitative stage of the research, the survey results suggested that the great majority of the post-millennial aged respondents were worried about climate change (80%), the environment would be worse off in 30 years' time (88%) and humans are severely abusing the environment (89%). However, only about half of the respondents believed that their generation would find solutions to the contemporary environmental crisis. Therefore, it was important to investigate these views in more depth during the second stage of the research and so, before bringing the interviews to a close, participants were asked to express their views on the environmental challenges that the world is currently facing and, furthermore, their thoughts as to whether they believe there could be a solution.

Surprisingly, perhaps, many respondents were not hopeful that positive change would occur during their lifetime. Participant 11, for example, was deeply pessimistic about the future with regards to the climate crisis:

*I'm actually extremely pessimistic about the future and I think we are going to face extremely difficult times in the future. And I also feel like the next generation, so my kids, have a very uncertain future, and I don't think we will come up with the solutions on time. So, I think that humankind really will get hit heavily and maybe then we will see change. But this would, I think, cost a lot of lives in the process. But I think it's extremely important that each and every one of us does what is in their power, so maybe buying organic food and consuming sustainable products*  
(Participant 11)

This respondent expresses much concern for the future generations, particularly their own children, and paints a grim picture of an uncertain future. Furthermore, they also express scepticism about humanity's ability to find and implement solutions within the necessary timeframe, implying a belief that only a significant crisis might provide the impetus for change. However, they worry that such a change may come at a potentially high cost in terms of human lives. Despite this bleak outlook, however, the respondent emphasises the importance of individual action, suggesting that personal choices, such



as buying locally sourced foods and consuming sustainable products, can contribute positively to the broader environmental cause. This viewpoint encapsulates a mix of scepticism about collective action and a call for individual responsibility, reflecting a sense of urgency and personal agency in addressing environmental issues whilst acknowledging a profound lack of faith in larger systemic changes happening in time.

For Participant 9, scepticism was mixed with hope regarding the timeline for substantial changes to occur to address environmental issues:

*I want to be hopeful and say in my lifetime. I'm just thinking it's quite a long time to hopefully see some change. I think we probably will see changes, but probably small changes. Because the government would have to take it seriously and they would have to start implementing massive changes. So, I think something might happen, but it would probably take until the end of my lifetime to see any real big scale change. (Participant 9)*

Here, a sense of realism is being conveyed in as much as the respondent acknowledges that substantial changes require not only public engagement but also significant government action. They portray a lack of confidence in the immediacy of large-scale changes due to the slow pace at which governments may address these issues. Moreover, the respondent suggests that while small changes might occur in the foreseeable future, significant transformations necessitate a more serious governmental commitment, thus highlighting, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, a perceived dependency on governmental policies and actions.

Although many respondents alluded to the idea of necessary change only occurring far in the future, Participant 12's response reflected a shift from a detached perspective to a more engaged and concerned view on climate change. Initially, they revealed a tendency to avoid thinking about the issue due to its alarming nature, but then referred to their personal experience of the recent heatwave in the UK:

*I tend not to think about it because it's kind of terrifying, like the heat wave that we just had. Umm, we reached the highest temperatures the country has ever had. It was horrible. And I was saying to my dad, I can't wait till this is over. And you know summer's ended and then we won't have this kind of weather again. Then he looked at me and said "Well, this is going to happen more and more often. You know, climate change isn't gonna go away". And it hit me and I thought, 'Oh no', if this is sort of the new standard, we're going to have to really put it into perspective that we keep saying, things need to change. But the people in charge seem to think that if they just ignore it, it won't be their problem. But it's gonna be someone's problem, even if it's not mine. Like I'm quite fortunate that it might not be a massive problem in my lifetime. But I know people who want kids and it'll be their kid's problem and it's, you know, it's our planet, no one's getting away from it at the moment anyway. It's everyone's problem. So, I don't understand why people aren't taking it more seriously, because it's not gonna go away. We had 40-degree weather. It's not gonna stop. (Participant 12)*

The heatwave appears to have triggered a realisation about the escalating frequency and severity of climate-related events and, notably, continually rising global temperatures. Moreover, the respondent draws attention to the perceived irresponsible behaviour of those in power who seem to disregard or downplay the issue and emphasises the necessity of acknowledging the long-term implications for future generations. This viewpoint emphasises collective responsibility and the urgent need for unified action to address climate change.

The abnormal weather was referred to frequently during the interviews. For example, Participant 13 acknowledged the need to address climate change but appeared to be conflicted; scepticism was expressed with regards to the efficacy of certain actions, in particular those of an activist nature, and it was suggested that people will maintain their own opinions regardless of external influence:

*You see people marching on the streets. I mean, some people are really anti-travel or anti-littering and all this stuff, and I think, 'Oh my gosh, just like get on a bit',*

*like, it is what it is, you can't change people. I mean, it is fine to be respectful. But there's no need to be so obsessive with it. Like it's gonna happen, you know, you can't change it. It's like if you do one thing that's different, your whole life is not gonna be different. So, I mean, being eco, it doesn't necessarily mean you're gonna change things completely. Like marching on our street isn't going to change someone's perspective. I mean, there might be a solution in years to come. Obviously, there's not really much now. I mean, you can notice now the like the air's hotter. I can't stand the heat. We're not used to this heat. It's getting hotter and hotter, like in the 1970s the hottest it would be is like 25 degrees. Now we're hitting like 38 degrees and it's unbearable because we're not used to it and it is polluting the earth. (Participant 13)*

As with other participants, Participant 13 was of the view that individual accountability will not significantly alter the broader environmental crisis. Another participant was similarly sceptical about the collective impact of individual action towards mitigating climate change:

*I suppose I can only say that everyone can do something, but I just don't think everybody would. I don't think enough people would do something to make that much of a difference. If the government did do something, you know, made it a bit clearer or safer, not necessarily a law but just little changes and then people would get used to it more and understand it more. I don't! I mean, obviously it is down to everyone, but I just don't think people understand enough that know enough about it. And I don't think enough people would do it for it to make that much of a difference. But I suppose if everybody did something, then yeah, it would. But I don't think people would. (Participant 14)*

This respondent suggests that whilst everyone can contribute, they doubt enough people actually would. Moreover, they express a desire for clearer guidance from governments regarding eco-friendly practices, indicating a belief that clearer regulation or guidelines could encourage a more widespread adoption of sustainable behaviours. However, their perspective implies a lack of faith in people's understanding and motivation to support

and promote significant change, highlighting a need for greater awareness and education around environmental issues to incite collective action.

The efficacy of individual efforts is similarly questioned by Participant 1, attributing greater responsibility to the governments:

*Obviously, I am worried about it, but not in a sense that I'm lying awake at night scared for my life. But then you see what's going on in Pakistan and it's like, well maybe we should be more scared than we are? They're just a poor country and really, they are suffering because of us. Well, I'm guessing, surely, they are not contributing as much to the climate issues as we are? I don't know, it's all just unthinkable, but I don't really think there will be much change. Like what can we do except what we are told to do? So maybe if we saw the government taking it seriously and maybe guiding us more then maybe we can do more? So maybe they should start making them accountable first and when we see that they are taking it seriously then maybe we will do the same. I don't think it's going to change until later in our children's lives or maybe even their children's. Who knows. (Participant 1)*

Although sceptical about immediate change, this respondent in particular predicts a prolonged timeline, suggesting that significant transformations will only be implemented by future generations, highlighting a lack of optimism about shorter-term resolutions to the environmental crisis. Furthermore, they emphasise the disproportional suffering of underdeveloped countries arising from climate change caused primarily by developed nations.

As the conversations developed during the interviews, a pattern emerged in that almost all respondents admitted that they '*don't really think about*' climate change and environmental crises:

*I do care and it is pretty terrifying to think that at some point in the future the earth will be ruined, and everyone may die. But I don't really think about it if I'm honest. I don't think it is something that is going to happen soon. But I do think scientists will find the answers. Maybe not now, but in the future. Something*

*technological will come along and make things okay again. There's always something being invented that people always thought was impossible. So, I don't think it's something I need to worry about!* (Participant 20)

This respondent demonstrates a level of concern about the potential consequences of environmental degradation but adopts a dismissive attitude towards its immediacy. Though acknowledging the severity of the issue, they distance themselves from feeling directly impacted and attribute the responsibility to the government. Moreover, their perspective portrays a sense of hope in technological advancements as a potential solution in the future. Although they express a belief in technology and human inventiveness, there is a sense of detachment from personal accountability.

Indeed, as previously mentioned, throughout the interviews a lack of stated individual accountability became increasingly apparent. Although some respondents expressed a nuanced understanding of collective action and the need for widespread environmental change, others were pessimistic, adopting the position that *'it is what it is'* and that little will change. However, many respondents were concerned about escalating environmental issues, particularly when talking about the unprecedented temperatures being experienced sooner than predicted which evoked a sense of worry about the future. Nevertheless, Participant 11 observed that, for many people, climate change often feels distant, something remote and detached from their immediate reality:

*Yeah, to some people, climate change is so far away. But we have more forest fires or heavy floods now. Last year [in Germany] we had devastating floods where many, many people lost their lives. With those events, climate change suddenly got a face. While these events get heavier and more frequent, people will be able to kind of grasp the concept of climate change more, but at the moment, especially in Europe, in many places, it's still so far away from our everyday lives that all these horror scenarios that we hear from, from scientists, they, they don't phase us as much because we don't experience it first-hand. And I think humans always need to experience.* (Participant 11)

This respondent refers to a recent fatal incident in their home country, which brought the consequences of climate change closer to home. They suggest that such catastrophic events serve as a kind of '*face*' for climate change, making it more tangible and understandable for individuals. They argue that as these extreme events become more frequent and severe, people may better comprehend the implications of climate change. Their view reflects a common challenge in communicating the urgency of the environmental crises, where abstract scientific warnings may struggle to resonate until individuals experience the effects first-hand.

What this highlights then, is the psychological barrier between understanding climate change as a distant concept and perceiving it as a present and imminent threat in everyday life.

### **6.10.1 Section Summary**

Throughout the conversations focusing on climate change, the respondents provided a variety of perspectives on the future of the environment, offering insights that reflected diverse attitudes and concerns. While some expressed pessimism, anticipating challenging times ahead with uncertainty for future generations, others perceived a gradual, albeit slow, transition towards change. Overall, however, there was general recognition of the gravity of the challenges posed by climate change, with more frequent extreme weather events being seen as catalysts for heightened awareness and urgency and rendering climate change more tangible and immediate.

Nevertheless, many of the respondents pointed to the disconnect between current experiences and the perceived severity of the crisis, referring to a lack of first-hand impact as a barrier to fully comprehending the urgency. What this perhaps suggests then is that the role of personal actions, societal movements and government intervention emerges as crucial in tackling environmental issues. Yet, the evident scepticism expressed by many respondents with regards to the effectiveness of individual efforts again, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, emphasises that they are perhaps missing the point that the need exists for collective individual action to drive substantial change.

The theme of temporality also recurred during the interviews with several respondents suggesting that significant transformations might only unfold over extended periods,

potentially spanning generations. That said, they acknowledged a shifting societal perspective with younger generations increasingly embracing environmental concerns and advocating for substantial action. Moreover, many expressed the need for unified efforts, particularly initiated by governments, to educate younger people about the severity of the environmental issues.

To conclude, then, these perspectives reveal a complex interplay between personal agency, societal responsibility and systemic change in addressing environmental challenges.

### **6.11 Chapter Conclusion**

Drawing on the findings from the second stage of the research, this chapter has sought to offer a comprehensive understanding of the values, actions and emotions relating the environment, consumer behaviour and tourism of the post-millennial generation. More specifically, the chapter has considered the key themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the twenty semi-structured interviews, the purpose being to elicit deeper understanding of the meaning of tourism as a form of consumption to the post-millennial generational cohort and how those meanings will influence their future tourism decisions in the context of contemporary environmental concerns. A number of key points have emerged.

First, there exists the recurring theme of individual accountability versus the role of larger, perhaps more powerful or influential entities such as governments and corporations in addressing environmental concerns. Despite acknowledging the immediate necessity of protecting the environment, respondents struggled to reconciling their values with their actions, a challenge that is particularly evident in the context of air travel. Many expressed the belief that individual actions are inconsequential compared to the action of, for example, celebrities who frequently make use of private jets, leading to a perceived inaction in personal contributions. To put it differently, survey participants feel that their own minor efforts appear insignificant compared to those who arguably contribute significantly more to climate change through their extensive air travel in private jets. Moreover, the research revealed a crucial misunderstanding amongst the respondents regarding the collective power of individual actions in effecting substantial

change, particularly concerning air travel emissions... or perhaps given their readiness to make excuses for their travel behaviour, simply an unwillingness to acknowledge the collective power of individuals.

Second, the research has revealed that participation in travel and tourism is of undoubted significance to post-millennials as a form of consumption, transcending mere leisure time to become an integral part of their identity creation and well-being. The respondents attributed travel and tourism to positive mental health, happiness, wellness and personal growth through diverse cultural experiences. Moreover, a strong emotional attachment to the phenomenon of travel was expressed by many respondents; negative emotions were evoked when contemplating travel restrictions or the inability to travel which, as highlighted earlier in the thesis, was heightened by travel restrictions implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Third, when the discussions progressed to comparing experiences and material possessions, the significance of experiences over material possessions became evident, with respondents favouring tourism over materialistic consumption. This highlights a nuanced view of materialism encompassing experiences and lifestyle choices. For most respondents, their upbringing and personal values significantly shaped their perceptions and aspirations regarding wealth and consumption.

Fourth, the research has revealed the influence of social media on travel choices. Many respondents admitted to valuing the documentation / photographic recording of travel experiences and sharing them on social media. Interestingly, however, the interviews revealed a growing awareness of the trade-off between documenting experiences and authentically living them, suggesting a potential shift in priorities over time.

Finally, from an environmental perspective, diverse attitudes amongst respondents range from pessimism about the future to a gradual transition towards change. There is a recognition of the gravity of climate change, often triggered by extreme weather events. However, the disconnect between personal experiences and the perceived severity of the crises acts as a barrier to full comprehension and urgency.

Overall, these findings underpin the complexities surrounding individual responsibility, personal values, societal influences and the perceived importance of travel and tourism and experiences amongst post-millennials. The value-action gap is indeed prominent, not



least because there exists a clear emotional attachment to travel which, from the evidence of this research, supersedes any concern for the widespread environmental issues. Therefore, in order to address the gap between how important people perceive environmental issues and how urgently they need to act, unified efforts between governments, educational institutes, societies and indeed, individuals is necessary.

This chapter has built upon the outcomes of the research from stage one discussed in the previous chapter, through a discussion of the research outcomes of stage two- the semi-structured interviews. The chapter has provided further analysis of the post-millennials' values, actions and emotions relating to the environment, consumer behaviour and tourism. In order to bring the whole thesis together, the next chapter seeks to review and summarise the key findings of the research in line with the aim and objectives of the research set out at the very beginning of the research journey.

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusion

#### 7.0 Introduction

Having presented the outcomes of both stages of the empirical research in the preceding two chapters, this final chapter has two broad purposes. First, it considers the extent to which the overall aims and objectives have been achieved before, second, going on to draw conclusions from the research, highlighting the contribution of the thesis to knowledge and identifying limitations to the research. It also concludes with some personal reflections on the overall PhD journey of which this thesis is the outcome.

As established in the introductory chapter, the overarching aim of this thesis has been to explore critically the significance of tourism as a form of consumption amongst post-millennials in relation to their environmental values, the specific purpose being to identify the extent to which this generational cohort might consider changing its tourism behaviour in response to contemporary environmental concerns. Within this context, it was initially argued that within Western societies in particular, tourism has long been an accepted and, indeed, expected form of consumption; for some, participation in tourism is considered a human right (Breakey and Breakey, 2013). However, as the thesis has evolved, a more nuanced understanding of the consumption of tourism has emerged, notably that individuals are not always conscious about their travel and tourism decisions or, putting it another way, the consumption of tourism is not necessarily the outcome of rational, proactive decision making. Rather, the research suggests that people engage unquestionably in tourism as a form of consumption that, although arguably irrational, is considered to be an intrinsically necessary part of their lives. Moreover, as argued throughout the thesis, tourism as a form of consumption cannot be separated from other forms of consumption.

Pursuing the broader aim of the thesis, a critical review of the literatures on travel motivations and consumerism more broadly was undertaken in order to consider extant contributions to the understanding of the significance of tourism as a form of

consumption. This revealed a notable gap in the literature with regards to the contemporary meaning of tourism as specifically related to the likelihood of achieving voluntary transformations in the consumption of tourism within the context of the acknowledged need to reduce levels of consumption more generally in response to the global environmental crisis. More specifically, despite widespread assumptions with regards to the supposed pro-environmental values and consumer behaviour of post-millennials, to date no research has been undertaken to explore critically the extent to which this generation might adapt their tourism behaviours in ways that reflect their alleged environmental concerns.

Consequently, then, the research in this thesis has sought to consider critically the consumer behaviour of the post-millennial generation in general, and their tourism consumption in particular, in order to identify how their environmental concerns might compete with their desire to consume tourism. To achieve this overall aim of the research, the following objectives were established (see Chapter 1):

1. To explore the consumption of tourism within the broader consumer culture literature.
2. To identify the extent to which the post-millennial generation consider themselves to hold environmental values and how this is reflected in their day-to-day behaviours.
3. To appraise critically the extent to which the value-action gap exists with regards to post-millennial tourism consumption.
4. To identify the post-millennial generation's understanding of the significance of tourism.
5. To conclude the extent to which post-millennials are likely to adapt their tourism behaviours in line with environmental concerns.

The following section and its subsections now summarise the key findings of this thesis in accordance with the above research objectives.

## **7.1 Meeting the research objectives**

As summarised above, five research objectives were established in order to achieve the overall aim of the research. Throughout the philosophical journey of this thesis, some interesting and often unexpected findings arose, further contributing to the knowledge of the significance of tourism to post-millennials. Therefore, this section commences by assessing the extent to which the research objectives have been met, including an outline of the findings from both stages of the research – the survey and the interviews – in relation to those objectives. It must be re-emphasised here that the research was sequential, the interview stage of the research seeking to build upon and develop the findings that emerged during the initial survey-based stage of the research.

### **7.1.1 Objective 1: to explore the consumption of tourism within the broader consumer culture literature.**

In addressing this objective, Chapter 3 explored in detail the demand for tourism within the wider context of consumer culture, the purpose being to develop a broader understanding of the tourism demand process beyond the more typically discussed motivational factors. Underpinning this approach is the fact that much of the established literature focusing on the consumption of tourism arguably adopts an overly tourism-centric perspective. That is, most researchers have to a great extent studied the consumption of tourism in isolation from the broader social and cultural influences that shape consumer behaviour as a whole and, as a consequence, little or no reference is made to the influence that consumer culture has on tourism as a form of consumption.

Therefore, Chapter 3 commenced by exploring consumer culture in general as a contemporary and highly influential cultural phenomenon. It then went on to explore critically the influence of consumer culture on tourism and, in particular, on the consumption of tourism amongst the post-millennial generation. Two key themes to emerge from this chapter were, first, that a link does indeed exist between hedonic consumption and perceived well-being. As addressed throughout Chapter 6, tourism experiences appear to equate to happiness (at least, shorter-term happiness) as all the respondents revealed that travelling makes them happy, perhaps more so than material acquisitions. However, it must be noted here that the question remains as to whether

these tourism experiences contribute to longer term happiness, well-being and contentment. And second, Chapter 3 addressed the fact that satisfying personal needs remains central to consumer behaviour (Paul, Modi and Patel, 2016) and, further, that consumers place much significance on material goods and experiences in relation to their identity. Nevertheless, the results discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 did reveal that most post-millennials would rather consume experiences than material goods. Hence, Chapter 3 contributes effectively to meeting the first objective of the thesis.

### **7.1.2 Objective 2: to identify the extent to which the post-millennial generation consider themselves to hold environmental values and how this is reflected in their day-to-day behaviours.**

In order to meet the overall aim of the thesis, it was critical to identify whether or not post-millennials do indeed have significant concerns for the environment. As observed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, on the one hand it is widely assumed that there is growing awareness amongst the post-millennial generation in relation to environmental concerns, not least because numerous young people around the world supported Greta Thunberg's 'Fridays for Future' campaign by spending each Friday protesting against their government's lack of action on the climate crisis (Fridays for Future, 2021). On the other hand, however, it was also noted in Chapter 1 that many criticise the younger generation for talking a great deal about climate change but not behaving accordingly (Skeiryte et al., 2022). At the same time, although there are undoubtedly many environmentally active adolescents and young adults (a significant proportion of whom benefit from affluent backgrounds with well-grounded educations), there also exist post-millennials on the opposite side of the social spectrum (Hurrelmann and Albrecht, 2021). In other words, there are also those who are unable to prioritise environmental concerns over their personal circumstances and the challenges they face in their day-to-day lives.

Therefore, the preliminary stage of the research (the survey – see Chapter 5) set out first and foremost to identify the extent to which post-millennials are indeed environmentally aware. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, 85% of survey respondents (most of whom were in higher education) declared that they considered themselves to be environmentally aware. Arguably, however, such a high positive response might have been expected given

the social desirability of being seen to be environmentally aware (see Juvan and Dolnicar, 2016: 36-37). The survey further revealed that 92% of respondents engaged in environmentally friendly day-to-day actions, such as recycling and using reusable water bottles, whilst it was also revealed more generally that a degree of environmental awareness of and concern for the climate crisis exists amongst the respondents. Nevertheless, some more nuanced results suggested that perhaps some post-millennials do not perceive climate change to be a pressing issue.

Drawing on these preliminary results, the second stage of the research (the interviews – see Chapter 6) sought to delve further into the nature and extent of participants' environmental values, in particular through conversations focusing on their consumption habits and their visions of the future in terms of the environmental crises. The results from this stage of the research suggested that the majority of the participants were indeed concerned about the environment but nevertheless appeared sceptical about their individual ability to do something about the environmental crisis given its extent. The message drawn from this stage of the research was that respondents felt that individual accountability is insufficient to address the environmental crisis; during the interviews, most participants expressed their belief that their own day-to-day actions, such as recycling, make little positive contribution to tackling global warming and the environmental crisis as a whole and that the responsibility for action lies with governments and large corporations. This key finding is discussed further in section 7.2 below but, of particular relevance to this thesis, the interviews further revealed that individual environmental values are often selective inasmuch as in the context of certain consumption practices, such as tourism, less importance is accorded to them. In other words, environmental values are subordinated to, or over-ridden, by particular forms of consumption which, implicitly, are of greater significance than environmental concerns. This highlights the prevalence of the value-action gap amongst post-millennials which not only suggests that Objective 2 has been met but also, in turn, leads to the third objective of the research which is addressed in the next section of this chapter.

### **7.1.3 Objective 3: to appraise critically the extent to which the value-action gap exists with regards to post-millennial tourism consumption.**

Inevitably, this section of the chapter extends the discussion on Objective 2 by exploring the complexities of the consumer decision-making process in relation to environmental values. In particular, the concern here is with these complex decisions with regards to post-millennial tourism consumption but, first, it is useful to return briefly to the key concept of the value-action gap and, specifically, dissonant consumption.

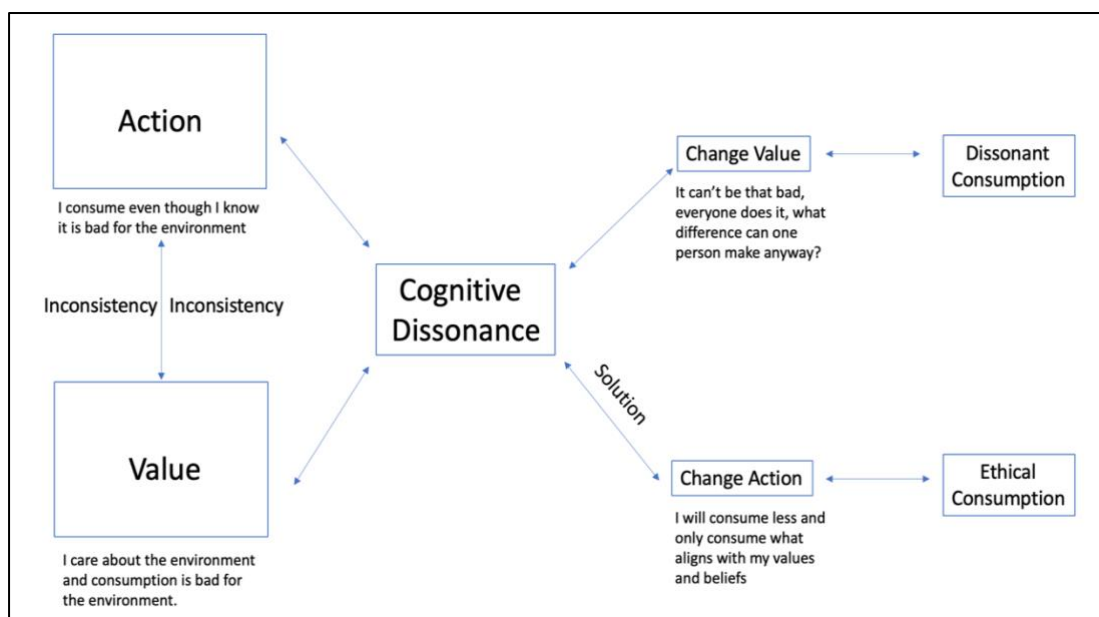
Chapter 3 reviewed the key concept of ‘cognitive dissonance’. Dissonance, as originally conceptualised by Festinger (1957, 1962), arises when an individual holds two opposing or contradictory expressed values, the outcome of which is a negative and uncomfortable state of mind that the individual then attempts to reduce or eliminate. It is suggested that one of the most common ways of reducing dissonance is through a change in these expressed values (Harmon-Jones and Harmon-Jones, 2007: 8); it is considered to be easier for people to change their expressed values to align them with their behaviours rather than to change a behaviour that has already happened. Such dissonance is manifested in what is referred to widely as the value-action gap.

More specifically, consumer choice is driven by emotions (Elliot, 1998). In other words, emotions play a key role in the decision-making process of consumers. Notably, self-conscious emotions are considered to be powerful motivators through the process of self-evaluation which, as previously explained, assumes a comparison between the actual self and the ‘ideal’ self (Tracy and Robbins, 2004). On the one hand, emotions such as shame and guilt can lead to an uncomfortable state of dissonance owing to the moral appraisal of what is either ‘good’ or ‘wrong’ behaviour. On the other hand, a sense of pride can motivate ethical behaviour when choices are internalised and accomplished (Gregory-Smith et al., 2013).

Consequently, then, Chapter 3 proposed a conceptual framework (adapted from Festinger 1957, 1962) of dissonant consumption (see Figure 7.1, below). Dissonant consumption occurs amongst environmentally conscious consumers when they fail to align their actions with their (environmental) values. Rather, they justify their actions by making excuses, thereby changing their values. To summarise, a psychological process

exists (as Festinger explains in his theory of dissonance) whereby the consumer understands that their consumption choices can to a lesser or greater extent contribute to environmental degradation in some way or another. Whether they consume ‘with sensitivity through selecting ethical alternatives’ (Szmigin and Carrigan, 2005: 609) in line with their environmental values or not thus indicates whether they are engaging in ethical or dissonant consumption. What is important here, then, is to place this conceptual framework in the context of post-millennial tourism consumption.

**Figure 7.1** A model of dissonant consumption



**Source:** Adapted From: Festinger (1957, 1962)

The preliminary survey results relating to consumer behaviour pointed to a complex and nuanced relationship between environmental awareness and actual eco-friendly consumer behaviour amongst post-millennials. Despite awareness and feelings of guilt, various factors including cost and, perhaps, competing priorities contribute to a lack of consistent environmentally friendly decision-making. One of these competing priorities is tourism consumption. As previously discussed in the summary of Chapter 5, it would appear that tourism, as a specific contemporary form of consumption, holds unique influence or power in encouraging a denial of environmental responsibilities amongst post-millennial consumers. As such, a paradoxical connection is evident between the survey respondents’ personal environmental consciousness and their tourism



behaviours, as holidays hold a particularly elevated position of the values and consumption hierarchy of post-millennials. Importantly, the transformation of individual travel experiences into personally significant and meaningful moments is heavily influenced by aspects of self-reflection and emotions. As a consequence, in the realm of personal travel and holidays, post-millennials appear hesitant to prioritise the environment over their consumption of tourism, a notable finding at stage two of the research. Also, a significant finding from the research is that, despite widespread publicity regarding the environmental cost of flying, a considerable number of respondents indicated they would only refrain from flying as a result of circumstances beyond their control.

Generally, stage two of the research revealed explicitly that even the most environmentally friendly post-millennials find it challenging to disengage completely with the consumption of tourism. They may, of course, opt for alternative transport methods, seek more pro-environmental destinations and in-destination activities; ultimately, however, they seek to continue participating in tourism.

More specifically, and as previously highlighted, the extant research suggests that, in general, people frequently consider holidays to be distinct from their regular, day-to-day lives, particularly with regards to their environmental responsibilities. Holidays are considered to be the time to be self-centred and to focus on personal own needs because it is personal time 'away' (Barr et al., 2006). Corresponding to this, some of the interview respondents in this study admitted to allowing themselves, as one suggested, a '*longer leash*', when on holiday, meaning they are less engaged in pro-environmental actions when on holiday than when they are in their day-to-day environments. Furthermore, the results suggest that post-millennials look for ways to alleviate the feelings of dissonance that arise when their environmental values and actions do not align, often justifying their actions through statements such as '*the plane will fly anyway*' and '*what difference can I make*'. Moreover, one participant in particular openly admitted to not taking the environment into consideration at all, because holidays are '*not real life*'.

What these results suggest, then, is that not only does the value-action gap exist in relation to post-millennial tourism consumption but also that there is an even greater

disconnect in that tourism is considered to be separate from day-to-day life. Hence, environmental concerns are put aside during time spent on holiday.

In sum, Objective 3 can be considered to have been met.

#### **7.1.4 Objective 4: to identify the post-millennial generation's understanding of the significance of tourism.**

This objective is of fundamental importance to the thesis as, throughout the research process, it became evident that the freedom to travel was of substantial significance to the research participants. The first stage of the research revealed that post-millennials would not be happy if restrictions and regulations were put in place that prevented or limited their participation in tourism. Moreover, freedom and escape were found to be important elements of travel itself and, for many of the survey respondents, the significance of tourism as a means of escaping from everyday life superseded their environmental values.

This important finding was then explored in the interviews, during which the extent to which tourism is significant to the post-millennials' lifestyles was further emphasised. Notably, the respondents explained how they valued the transformative experiences that travel opportunities afford, such as learning from other cultures and enriching their lives, thereby forming an integral part of their well-being and identity.

Most importantly, however, when the interview respondents were asked what tourism meant to them, most found it quite difficult to articulate their feelings or perceptions. Although no questions during the interview focused specifically on the idea of escape, many respondents nevertheless openly alluded to the concept when talking about their feelings associated with holidays. Some suggested that rather than escaping *from* their day-to-day lives, it was more importantly an escape *to* other places to experience and learn about different cultures in order to, as one particular respondent suggested, '*enrich your everyday life*'. Others suggested that it added value and meaning to their everyday lives as it provided a respite in order for life not to '*become stagnant*'. What this suggests, then, is that post-millennials, despite comprising a younger generation of people who are

perhaps still studying or exploring their early career options, still feel the need to escape the pressures of day-to-day life. This is, perhaps, unsurprising given that much of the relevant literature reviewed in Chapter 2 asserts that the key motivation underlying the consumption of tourism is the need to get away from a monotonous daily routine. However, importantly other motivations point towards people's need to shape their individual identity through, as Cohen (2010) argues, seeing how other people in other cultures live their lives.

Moreover, more generally and as previously mentioned, (leisure) tourism is not mandatory; it is a non-essential form of consumption and, therefore, people could simply choose not to travel. That this does not often occur, certainly amongst the participants in this research, reflects the fact that leisure travel is widely considered to be a social norm (Gössling et al., 2020).

#### **7.1.5 Objective 5: the extent to which post-millennials are likely to adapt their tourism behaviours in line with environmental concerns.**

This final research objective is arguably the most important as it addresses the overall aim of the thesis, namely, to identify the extent to which post-millennials are likely, if at all, to adapt their tourism behaviours in line with environmental concerns. This section of the chapter is, then, inextricably linked to sections 7.1.2, 7.1.3 and 7.1.4 above.

It was established early in the research that the post-millennials consider themselves to be environmentally aware (see Objective 2). However, once the research delved deeper into the meaning and significance of tourism to the participants, it became evident that tourism is an extremely important factor that, as outlined above, enriches their lives and shapes their identity. Although some respondents acknowledged that to consume travel experiences should be considered a privilege, many were also of the opinion that to participate in tourism is a right. In addition, as the interviews unfolded, it emerged that, as a form of experiential consumption, tourism is held in higher regard – or is felt to be of greater significance – than the consumption of material goods or things. This reflects the belief on the part of many respondents that, although it is important to care for and protect the environment, the need to relax, switch off and enjoy time away from home supersedes the need to give precedence to environmental concerns. This in turn returns

the discussion to the key argument presented throughout the thesis, that people tend to disregard their environmental beliefs when on holiday, even including those who follow responsible behaviour patterns during their normal day-to-day lives at home (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014).

From the research outcomes, therefore, it would appear unlikely that post millennials will accord environmental concerns to their consumption of tourism either before or during their touristic experiences. Further support to this argument can be found in the fact that most respondents placed the blame on governments, corporations and even the travel industry itself when discussing the possibility of adapting travel habits for the sake of the environment. During the interviews, this issue was explored in detail in the particular context of air travel whilst it was clearly evident that respondents more generally justified their own actions because they considered their personal carbon footprints to be small and, hence, insignificant in comparison to those of large corporations. Moreover, given that, as revealed by this research, tourism is considered by post-millennials to be distinct from their to day-to-day environmental practices, they would be unwilling to give precedence to their environmental values over and above the importance they attach to the tourism consumption. Hence, overall, Objective 5 has been met fully.

## **7.2 Conclusions from the research**

Having considered the extent to which the research objectives have been achieved, it is now important to highlight the key conclusions that can be drawn from the research as a whole. In so doing, it is important to note here that initially inspiring the research is the fact that post-millennials have been labelled by some as the generation that would be most willing to change their consumption habits to respond to the challenges posed by the global environmental crises.

Through a critical examination of the post-millennials' approach to tourism consumption, an important finding has emerged, namely, that discernible parallels exist between them and other generations. In other words, despite the prevailing narrative with regards to their alleged heightened environmental awareness, from the results of this research at least it would appear that post-millennials demonstrate an intrinsic, almost biological,

inclination towards tourism. This inclination, rooted in the desire to escape daily routines, explore diverse cultures, experience different environments and derive enjoyment from these experiences, echoes the sentiments expressed by other generations, leading to the initial conclusion that post-millennials are no more likely to adapt or reduce their consumption for environmental reasons than any preceding generation.

Additionally, this research reveals the fact that post-millennials, undoubtedly akin to those generations before them, do not rigorously dissect the rationale behind their innate need for travel. Rather, they intuitively recognise it as an integral aspect of their lives. This deeply ingrained inclination in their day-to-day existence is arguably similar to other fundamental instincts, such as the act of breathing. In this context, the decision to take a holiday becomes unquestioned and instinctive, reflecting a behavioural pattern engrained in contemporary society. Indeed, it is recognised and acknowledged that tourism is a form of irrational behaviour, characterised by significant financial expenditures, often facilitated through credit cards and payment plans. This pursuit of short-term happiness through tourism consumption, as opposed to the quest for long-term contentment, prompts critical questions regarding the rationalisation of such behaviour. The tension between short-term pleasure and long-term consequences is particularly relevant in the context of post-millennials who, much like other generations, exhibit resilience against sacrificing the immediate joy derived from tourism consumption for the sake of addressing the pressing global environmental concerns.

In exploring the reasons behind this resistance, this research has emphasised the difficulty, if not impossibility, of post-millennials articulating the logical reasoning behind their innate need to consuming tourism. This sheds light on the contradictory nature of tourism behaviour, where the act of taking a holiday is so deeply integrated into people's lifestyles that questioning it seems irrational. The intrinsic nature of tourism consumption, coupled with its deeply ingrained status, underscores the challenge of justifying this behaviour. The conclusion to be drawn here is that, as Krippendorf (1986) observed many years ago, tourists simply do not know what motivates them. A lack of empirical studies into tourist motivation serves to confirm this, suggesting that tourists might find it difficult to rationalise transformations in their behaviours if they do not understand it in the first place.

It is important to reiterate here that some participants in the research exhibited limited awareness of the environmental harm associated with their tourism choices. The ease of acquiring holidays coupled with the financial accessibility of low-cost air tickets further underscores the profound importance of tourism in the lives of the post-millennials whilst one particular respondent admitted that they do not actually think of the environment at all when they are on holiday. Moreover, some participants blamed the travel sector for allowing such easy acquisition of holidays; as previously mentioned, one respondent appeared frustrated that the widespread availability of low-cost air tickets in a sense forbade them, in their words, to '*do more for the environment*'. This statement is extremely important to the research, as it indirectly exposes the importance of tourism to post-millennials. This respondent is implicitly claiming that not only is tourism necessary to their life, that it is fundamental to feeling happy or fulfilled, but also that there is an entitlement to participating in tourism. What emerges from this research then, is not just a desire for tourism, but a pervasive entitlement to it. Post-millennials view tourism not only as a necessary aspect of their lives, but as fundamental to personal happiness and fulfilment. The reference to the affordability of tourism – to which post-millennials and others inevitably respond in seeking to satisfy their innate desire for tourism experiences, also points to the conclusion that any change in the consumption of tourism is likely to come about only through transformations in the supply of tourism, particularly with regards to cost.

It must be acknowledged here that the restrictions placed on tourism consumption during the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on post-millennials (indeed, on all potential tourists). All the interview respondents expressed that they were not happy with the regulations that prevented them from travelling and, furthermore, that they felt a need to make up for the time lost in terms of their holiday plans. At the time of writing, it is evident that the number of international tourism arrivals is fast approaching pre-pandemic levels, supporting the argument outlined in the introduction to the thesis that the tourism sector is resilient and that the pandemic has not discouraged people from travelling.

Furthermore, the research has highlighted the distinction between environmentally friendly material consumption and experiential consumption. While it is easier for

individuals to align with environmental preservation through material consumption, experiential forms of consumption, such as tourism, demands greater discipline in the decision-making process. Buying a material product which explicitly claims to be 'eco-friendly' can make the consumer feel like they are doing their part for the environment, but the same cannot be said for tourism. This poses a challenge for those post-millennials seeking to reconcile their desire for travel with environmental concerns.

In conclusion, then, the research posits that post-millennials are not dissimilar to previous generations with regards to their tourism consumption behaviours. Their intrinsic inclination towards tourism, coupled with a reluctance to sacrifice short-term happiness for environmental concerns, underscores the deeply rooted and perhaps instinctive nature of their travel behaviours. Hence, post-millennials are no more likely than any other generation to adapt or reduce their consumption of tourism.

The research therefore points to the need for a comprehensive exploration of potential short and long-term practical solutions in aligning tourism behaviours with environmental concerns. When questioned about the future of the global environment and climate crises, most respondents expressed a discerning lack of hope that sustainable goals will be achieved, particularly during their lifetime. Consequently, some, both importantly and concerningly, suggested they did not want to bring children into a world of environmental uncertainty and instability and so their unwavering and commitment to an activity that remains largely unquestioned and irrational in nature is both contradictory and worrying.

Given the overall findings of this research, the only logical conclusion must be that, for tourism's contribution to the environmental crisis to be reduced, regulations concerning tourism consumption should be implemented, perhaps on advertising as well as restricting complete and unlimited access to low-cost flight tickets and environmentally degrading tourism activities. It must be acknowledged, however, that such a conclusion is, controversial, not least because of issues surrounding personal liberties but also because there is a continuing debate as to whether the travel industry should be regulated or allowed to self-regulate in order to address the negative environmental impacts associated with tourism consumption. Proponents of regulation argue that stringent policies and standards are necessary to mitigate the adverse effects of tourism

on ecosystems and local communities. Regulatory measures can enforce compliance with environmental standards, such as limiting visitor numbers in sensitive areas, mandating sustainable practices and promoting conservation initiatives. For instance, Gössling and Peeters (2015) highlight that effective regulation can significantly reduce tourism's carbon footprint and improve the sustainability of travel practices by setting clear guidelines and penalties for non-compliance. These measures ensure that tourism development aligns with broader environmental goals and can help protect vulnerable natural resources.

Conversely, advocates for self-regulation contend that the industry is best positioned to implement and adapt sustainable practices through voluntary initiatives and market-driven approaches. They argue that self-regulation allows for greater flexibility and innovation as businesses can tailor their sustainability efforts to specific contexts and consumer demands. According to Higham and Carr (2014), industry self-regulation can lead to the adoption of more progressive and context-specific sustainability practices, driven by competitive pressures and consumer preferences. However, while self-regulation can promote innovation, it often lacks the enforcement power of formal regulations, which may result in inconsistent application and insufficient environmental protection. Therefore, a balanced approach, combining both regulatory frameworks and self-regulatory practices, may be essential to effectively address the environmental challenges posed by tourism consumption.

Either way, given the focus and findings of this thesis, in the longer-term, education can play a vital role in introducing younger generations to the actions they can adopt to preserve the environment rather than normalising the consumptive quests of contemporary societies.

### **7.3 Contribution to knowledge**

Before this research was undertaken, very little empirical evidence existed which confirmed the widespread claim that the post-millennial generation will make the changes or adopt lifestyles necessary to 'save the planet'. In support of this, a recent explorative study by Pinho and Gomes (2023) concluded that the behaviour of the post-



millennials does not live up to their stated concern for sustainability in general and sustainable tourism in particular. Other than their work, at the time of writing this thesis there appeared to be no other empirical research that explores the alleged environmental concerns of this generation specifically and their corresponding intentions (or otherwise) to adapt their tourism consumption. Hence, there existed a significant gap in the literature that this thesis sought to address, specifically whether post-millennials might adapt their consumption habits for the sake of saving the environment and achieving the global sustainability objectives and goals.

In doing so, the research has made a contribution to knowledge in several ways. First, more generally it has considered tourism consumption in the wider context of consumer culture. As previously mentioned, relevant research has typically adopted an overly tourism-centric approach that fails to embrace the influence of broader consumer culture on tourism consumption. Hence, this study has extended our understanding of the consumption of tourism by critically appraising contemporary consumer culture and exploring how this impacts upon tourism decision-making processes. Specifically, it was revealed that social media-related conspicuous consumption, particularly in terms of the role of social media influencers, has significant influence over post-millennial consumption purchases, including tourism. Developing this argument, it was also suggested that these influencers may have the power to encourage their followers to consume more ethically in general and to consume tourism more sustainably in particular.

Second, the thesis has established a new framework to depict the problematic choices that often confront post-millennials when considering the environmental crises in their consumptive decision-making processes. Importantly, this framework highlights a significant finding of the research, namely, that people believe that their own individual actions and choices cannot make a difference. In so doing they are failing to recognise that collective transformations in consumption behaviour may have considerable impact. This relates back to the discussion presented in Chapter three regarding The Tragedy of the Commons (see p.125). For example, if in principle all those who fly on low-cost carriers decided to stop doing so, demand for (and hence supply of) cheap air travel would decline, with positive environmental outcomes. In practice, such collective action

is of course highly unlikely, not least because, as this research has established, individuals are willing to follow this course of action because they consider tourism to be an important part of their lives. Therefore, in order for change to occur, arguably an overarching regulatory system should be established to ensure more sustainable levels of tourism consumption. What form this might take and how it might be put in place should be the focus of further research.

Third, this research has established that people do not understand or think about why they are tourists; they consume tourism because, as previously mentioned, it has evolved into a social norm. In other words, it is socially difficult to reject tourism, to not be a tourist. During the interviews, most respondents found it difficult to articulate what it is about tourism that means so much to them, in all likelihood reflecting the fact that they did not in fact know.

Fourth, the research has categorically challenged the widespread (albeit largely anecdotal) belief that post-millennials respond to environmental values in relation to their tourism consumption habits. Although they are undoubtedly aware of the environmental crises, the research has revealed them to be no different to any other generation; if anything, they are more likely to increase their consumption, particularly of tourism, not least because of the role of social media in their identity creation.

Finally, this research contributes to our understanding by highlighting the critical link between consumer behaviour in general and environmental degradation, emphasising the potential for positive change within the travel and tourism industry. By raising awareness of these connections, the research suggests that as people become more conscious of environmental crises, the tourism industry may increasingly adopt sustainable practices. Travellers could begin to favour eco-friendly accommodations, low-impact activities and destinations that prioritise conservation and responsible tourism. This heightened demand for sustainability might drive the industry to invest in green technologies, such as renewable energy and carbon offsetting, while also supporting local communities and ecosystems. Ultimately, this awareness and shift in consumer behaviour could lead to a more resilient and sustainable tourism industry, where

economic growth is harmonised with environmental protection, ensuring the preservation of destinations for future generations.

#### **7.4 Research limitations**

As discussed in the preceding sections, this thesis has achieved its overall aim, in so doing meeting the five research objectives that were established in the introductory chapter. Moreover, the thesis has contributed to the body of knowledge with regards to the post-millennial generation, their environmental values and their perceptions on the consumption of tourism. Nevertheless, the research has a number of limitations, as now acknowledged.

First, while this research provides valuable insights into the values and behaviours of post-millennials regarding their willingness (or otherwise) to adapt their consumption habits for environmental reasons, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations related to the sample. One primary limitation relates to the non-probability sampling. Specifically, convenience sampling was adopted with the result that the majority of respondents were in higher education, potentially skewing the results owing to their lower income and time spent studying. It is acknowledged that a broader sample of post-millennial aged respondents may have yielded different results. Furthermore, the research was UK based, although it is arguably unlikely that significantly different results would have been evidenced from an international sample. Moreover, the post-millennial generation is a highly heterogeneous group, characterised by diverse backgrounds, values, and experiences that may influence their values and behaviours. As already acknowledged, the sample comprised mostly university students, or recent graduates, and therefore may not fully represent the broader generational population, as it inherently skews toward individuals with access to higher education, potentially higher socioeconomic status, and specific regional or cultural contexts. Furthermore, the survey and subsequent interviews were conducted for a specific academic purpose (this thesis) which, in turn, might have influenced participants' responses due to exposure to educational content related to sustainability. As will be mentioned shortly, these factors suggest that further research is recommended to explore the attitudes and behaviours of a more diverse cross-section of the post-millennial generation.

This points to the need for future research that, first, draws on a broader sample that extends beyond higher education students to include the post-millennial workforce, and second, perhaps more interestingly, to transfer the research to the older retired generation who generally have more time and money to consume tourism. This would offer further insights into the extent to which people more generally are willing to adapt their consumption habits for the greater good of the environment.

The second research limitation relates to the online methods of data collection. This limitation can perhaps be justified given that the was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic, inasmuch as pandemic-related restrictions limited the data collection to online methods, thereby preventing face-to-face interviews as originally outlined in the preliminary ethics stage of the research process. However, in the event this did not prove to be a major barrier. Although face-to-face interviews allow for more open, natural discussions which include responses to body language, all respondents were familiar with the use of online meeting platforms and all interviews were completed fully and successfully. Moreover, the Covid-19 restrictions offered a contemporary 'lock down' experience for each participant in the research, allowing them to reflect on recent feelings and emotions related to a period of time that completely restricted their travel consumption. This, in turn, added value to the research in that participants were able to openly express these feelings when responding to questions and statements regarding the possibility of future travel restrictions. Correspondingly, as the data revealed, these periods of lockdowns and uncertainly presented an opportunity for individuals to re-evaluate their priorities when it came to travel and consumption, contributing further to the discussions throughout the interview process.

A final point to note here is that the focus on the discussions in this research primarily focus on what is referred to generally as tourism. Many respondents throughout the second stage of the data collection allude to mass, organised tourism. However, it must be acknowledged that there do exist numerous other forms of tourism in terms of demand and supply; for example, slower, backpack tourism, eco-tourism, community-based tourism, which all encourage tourists to behave in a more environmentally friendly

fashion. Nevertheless, an inescapable fact is that, by definition, tourism involves travel, and it is this travel element that is the most environmentally damaging aspect.

### **7.5 A personal reflection on the research**

This final section of the thesis is presented in the first person in order to provide a personal reflection on the research journey as a whole. By way of background, I have an overwhelming attachment to the world of travel and tourism. As a child, I often enjoyed memorable holidays with my family, and I listened to my father's stories and his global travels with his own family when his father served in the RAF. I particularly remember being eight years old when my best friend at the time told me she was going on holiday to Turkey with her mum and sister; all I could envisage was a giant turkey, not really understanding how that could be a place to spend your summer! Little did I know that some ten years later I would be travelling there myself and it subsequently becoming the place I would call home for over six years and where I would work in the tourism sector. I studied travel and tourism at college, and I can proudly say I have travelled to around 30 countries in my lifetime. Tourism really is a part of me and although I made every effort to maintain impartiality throughout my research, my own experiences often resonated with those of some of the interview participants when they explained to me how much tourism has shaped who they are today.

It is true to say, then, that travelling is something I consider to be deeply embedded in my very being; it is something that has, over the years, moulded my identity and carved my way of thinking and view of the world. I recognise with honesty that, because of my long involvement in travel and tourism, my beliefs could have influenced this research had I not made a conscious effort to remain as impartial as possible throughout each stage of my research journey. And that journey is something I would like to touch upon now.

In 2017, after living a life full of enriching and endless (mainly tourism related) experiences, I decided to complete my academic journey by enrolling to study for a degree in International Tourism Management at the University of Central Lancashire. I truly believe this was the most important decision I have made in my life. Not only was I able to think about tourism from multi-disciplinary perspectives and approaches, but I

was able to make important connections between my own industry experience and the academic discourse. I particularly enjoyed exploring concepts and theories on a deeper level, which I believe is reflected in my academic success and achievements to date. This, in turn, encouraged the researcher in me to undertake a dissertation in the final year of my degree course. At that time, Greta Thunberg was very much the talk of the media, and I just could not fathom how one young girl could care so greatly about something so beyond her control. She piqued my curiosity. Determined to develop my understanding further, I knocked on Professor Richard Sharpley's office door and asked him if he could advise me on a suitable topic on which to focus my dissertation research.

That dissertation is the very reason this thesis is complete today. After finishing my dissertation, I, along with my then supervisor (and for my PhD, my Director of Studies) Professor Richard Sharpley, believed there was a lot more to be said on the topic of the future of tourism (over 100,000 words, actually!), particularly the potential dilemma faced by the post-millennials when their desire to consume tourism competes with their environmental values and concerns. Therefore, I was delighted to have the opportunity to pursue the research further at a doctoral level. I met with Professor Sharpley, and we had quite the lengthy discussion (fuelled by coffee and muffins!) about how this would materialise. At that time, given that we were amidst a global pandemic, uncertainty within the travel industry was at a peak – yet this only served to fuel my excitement and interest. I read many articles on how the earth was 'healing itself' as result of the slowdown of anthropological activity, one of which in particular fascinated me – it was claimed that a pair of dolphins had been sighted swimming happily in the (much less polluted) Venice canal. This story eventually turned out to be a myth, and other studies reveal that despite a fall in global carbon emissions during lockdown the overall amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere did not decline. Hence, the idea of nature healing during lockdowns was quickly challenged. However, I still possess faith in that, if we were able to reduce our consumption activities, we would indeed witness a change for the greater good. I was particularly interested to hear the views of the interview participants on this matter and, as mentioned in Chapter 6, many do not possess the same hope.

This journey has been eye-opening, exciting and, at times, challenging. However, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to converse with many post-millennials openly about their tourist experiences and how they view the concern that the tourism sector is

facing in its battle with environmental sustainability. This is a debate I often engage in with my own students in the classroom setting and I am curious to know whether we will witness a harmonious relationship between the environment and tourism consumption in our lifetime.

I would like to draw this thesis to a close with a quote from the inspirational Nelson Mandela that I believe we should all carry with us:

*It is in your hands to make a better world for all who live in it.*

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## Appendix A- Survey

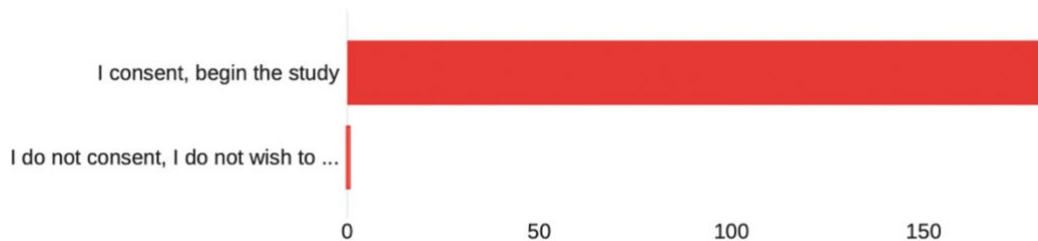
### PhD Research Survey

The purpose of this study is to explore the environmental awareness and behaviour of post-millennial tourists (those aged between 18 and 25) for a PhD thesis. You will be presented with statements relating to your understanding of tourism, consumer behaviour and environmental awareness. Please be assured that this survey is anonymous, and no personal information will be identified. Please try to answer all questions; it will take you approximately 6 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at anytime by clicking out of the survey. Please answer openly and honestly. Thank you for participating! If you would require more information on the research, or have any questions, please email [Sfroberts2@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:Sfroberts2@uclan.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

- I consent, begin the study
- I do not consent, I do not wish to participate

### Q1 - Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

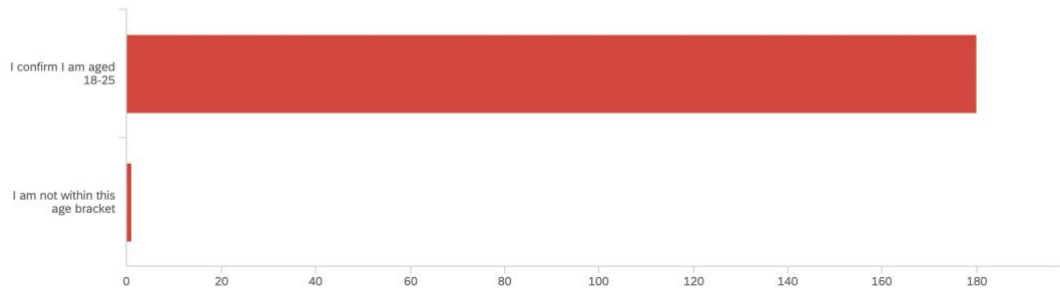


Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire	1	1	1	0	0	180

Field	Choice Count
I consent, begin the study	180
I do not consent, I do not wish to participate	0
Total	180

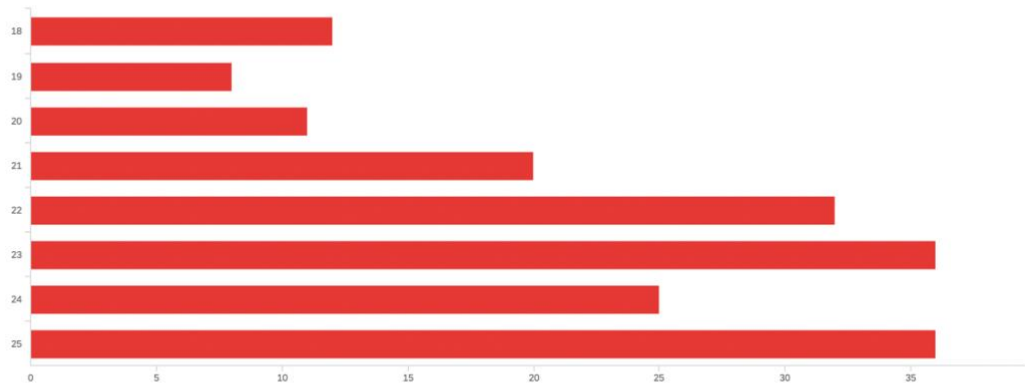
Q2 - I can confirm I am within the age brackets of 18-25

Page Options ▾



Q3 - Please select your age from the list below

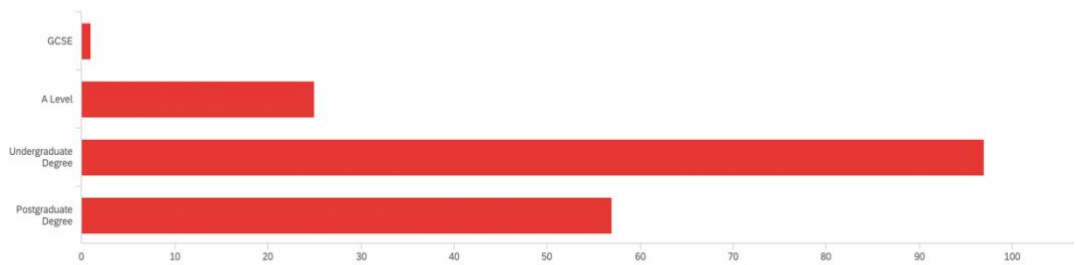
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#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Please select your age from the list below	1.00	8.00	5.44	2.04	4.18	180

Q4 - What is your education level?

Page Options ▾

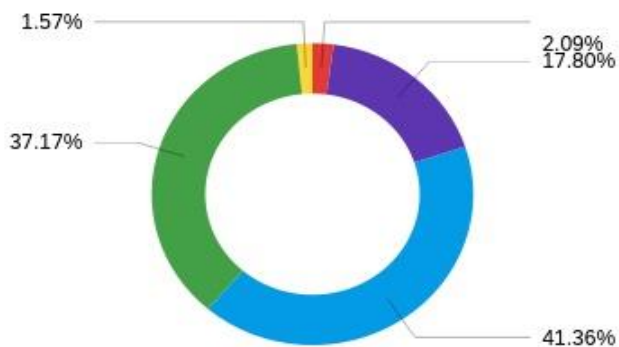


#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	What is your education level?	1.00	4.00	3.17	0.67	0.45	180

Q5 - What is your occupation?



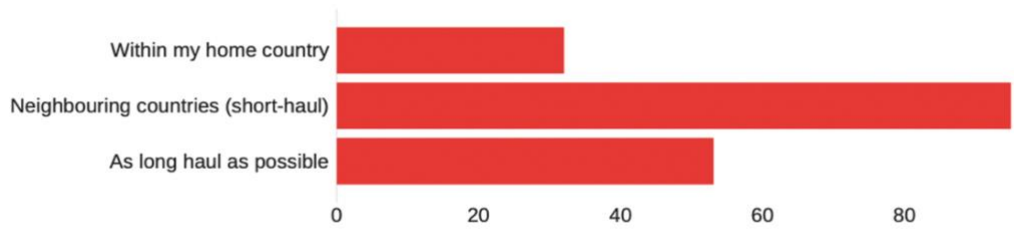
Q6 - How often do you normally go on holiday?



■ Never   
 ■ Rarely   
 ■ Once a year   
 ■ Two to four times a year   
 ■ Five or more times a year

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Never	2.09% 4
2	Rarely	17.80% 34
3	Once a year	41.36% 79
5	Two to four times a year	37.17% 71
11	Five or more times a year	1.57% 3
		191

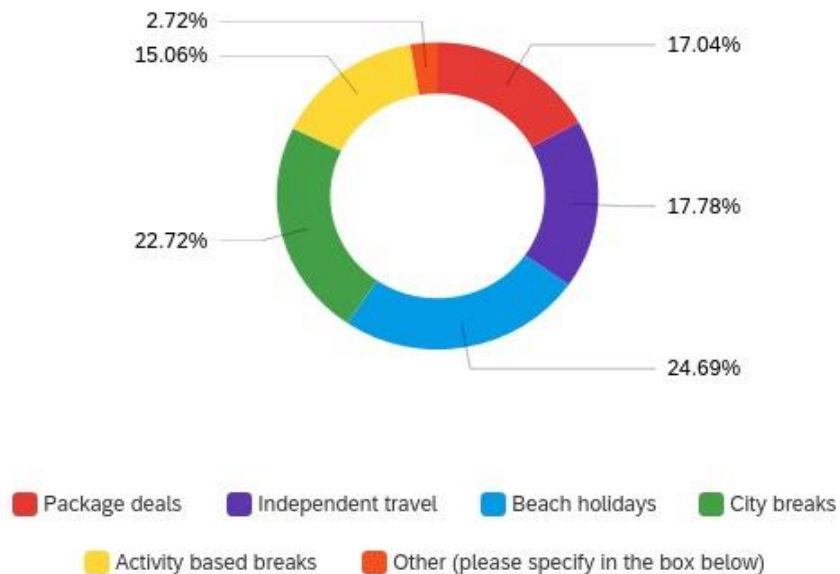
Q7 - Where do you like to travel to?



Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Where do you like to travel to?	4	6	5	1	0	180

Field	Choice Count
Within my home country	32
Neighbouring countries (short-haul)	95
As long haul as possible	53
Total	180

Q8 - What kind of holiday do you prefer? Tick all that apply



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Package deals	17.04% 69
2	Independent travel	17.78% 72
3	Beach holidays	24.69% 100
4	City breaks	22.72% 92
5	Activity based breaks	15.06% 61
6	Other (please specify in the box below)	2.72% 11

405

Q9 - If 'other' please specify



Q10 - Please select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

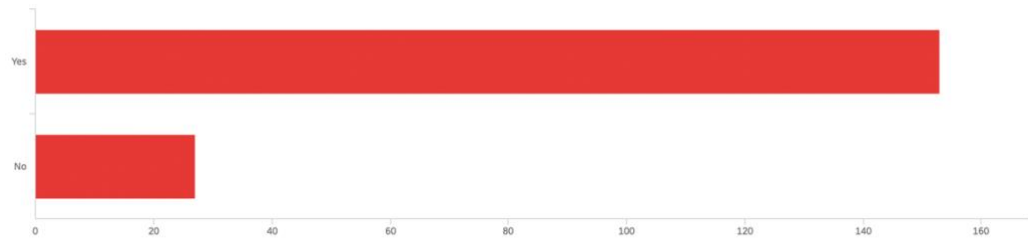
#	Field	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
1	I would be just as happy to have a holiday in the UK, rather than going abroad	13.89% 25	22.78% 41	22.22% 40	5.00% 9	16.11% 29	13.89% 25	6.11% 11	180
2	I believe that tourism is a luxury	21.11% 38	42.22% 76	19.44% 35	6.67% 12	5.56% 10	2.22% 4	2.78% 5	180
3	It would feel strange to not go on holiday at all in a year (pre- Covid-19)	28.89% 52	25.00% 45	16.67% 30	3.33% 6	8.33% 15	11.67% 21	6.11% 11	180
4	Even if I had the money, I would sacrifice my holiday for the benefit of the environment	2.78% 5	8.33% 15	20.56% 37	12.78% 23	22.78% 41	18.89% 34	13.89% 25	180
5	I would be happy if there were laws introduced that affected how often and when I could take holidays	1.67% 3	10.00% 18	9.44% 17	8.89% 16	18.33% 33	18.33% 33	33.33% 60	180
6	The environmental impacts of flying are exaggerated	3.33% 6	7.78% 14	5.56% 10	16.67% 30	19.44% 35	31.11% 56	16.11% 29	180
7	I'm determined to go on holiday this year after months of lockdown	30.56% 55	28.33% 51	13.89% 25	8.89% 16	6.11% 11	5.56% 10	6.67% 12	180
8	Holidays to me are all about escaping everyday life	34.44% 62	34.44% 62	20.00% 36	5.56% 10	2.78% 5	1.11% 2	1.67% 3	180
9	Travelling is an essential part of my lifestyle	21.67% 39	22.78% 41	18.33% 33	15.00% 27	4.44% 8	10.00% 18	7.78% 14	180
10	It is important that I am seen to be going on holiday	4.44% 8	9.44% 17	10.00% 18	13.33% 24	12.78% 23	21.67% 39	28.33% 51	180
11	Having holidays is essential to my happiness	23.89% 43	22.78% 41	23.89% 43	10.00% 18	6.67% 12	6.67% 12	6.11% 11	180
12	Owning a home and/or a car is more desirable than having multiple holidays a year	17.78% 32	20.00% 36	23.89% 43	13.89% 25	10.56% 19	9.44% 17	4.44% 8	180
13	I would be happy to sacrifice my holidays for the year to save towards a mortgage	23.33% 42	24.44% 44	26.11% 47	9.44% 17	8.89% 16	3.89% 7	3.89% 7	180
14	I like to share my travels and experiences on my social media	17.78% 32	26.11% 47	25.56% 46	7.78% 14	7.78% 14	5.56% 10	9.44% 17	180
15	Low-cost airlines are good because they allow more people to travel	25.00% 45	33.33% 60	25.56% 46	8.89% 16	6.11% 11	0.56% 1	0.56% 1	180
16	If money was no object, I would travel further for longer	64.44% 116	20.00% 36	7.78% 14	2.22% 4	3.33% 6	0.56% 1	1.67% 3	180
17	I don't mind where I travel to, as long as I get away	20.56% 37	22.78% 41	22.22% 40	7.78% 14	13.89% 25	8.89% 16	3.89% 7	180
18	Tourists shouldn't need to worry about the environment when they are on holiday	7.22% 13	7.22% 13	11.11% 20	8.33% 15	18.89% 34	29.44% 53	17.78% 32	180
19	If I had limited money, I would usually choose to buy a holiday rather than other things	12.78% 23	21.67% 39	15.56% 28	13.89% 25	18.89% 34	8.33% 15	8.89% 16	180
20	Social media posts inspire me to travel	20.00% 36	28.33% 51	30.56% 55	4.44% 8	2.22% 4	7.22% 13	7.22% 13	180
21	Holidays are something I need to keep me going	17.22% 31	25.00% 45	23.33% 42	11.11% 20	6.11% 11	11.11% 20	6.11% 11	180
22	I can let myself go when I am on holiday	25.56% 46	36.11% 65	20.56% 37	8.33% 15	5.00% 9	3.33% 6	1.11% 2	180
23	I like to make my holiday photos look as amazing as possible on my social media feeds	8.33% 15	14.44% 26	23.33% 42	13.89% 25	7.78% 14	16.67% 30	15.56% 28	180
24	Holidays are a major part of who I am	11.67% 21	17.22% 31	20.56% 37	15.56% 28	5.56% 10	15.00% 27	14.44% 26	180
25	My happiness is more dependent on having friends and good experiences than having 'things'	38.89% 70	32.78% 59	15.56% 28	7.22% 13	3.89% 7	1.11% 2	0.56% 1	180
26	When I am on holiday the last thing I'm thinking about is the impact I'm having on the environment	13.89% 25	16.67% 30	31.67% 57	8.33% 15	13.89% 25	12.22% 22	3.33% 6	180
27	People who travel a lot have a better quality of life than those who don't travel	15.00% 27	21.11% 38	23.89% 43	18.33% 33	7.78% 14	10.56% 19	3.33% 6	180
28	I believe that tourism is a right, not a privilege	6.11% 11	15.00% 27	18.89% 34	19.44% 35	12.22% 22	15.56% 28	12.78% 23	180
29	A leisurely, relaxed lifestyle is the most desirable achievement	17.78% 32	32.78% 59	28.89% 52	11.11% 20	6.67% 12	1.67% 3	1.11% 2	180



Q11 - Please select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

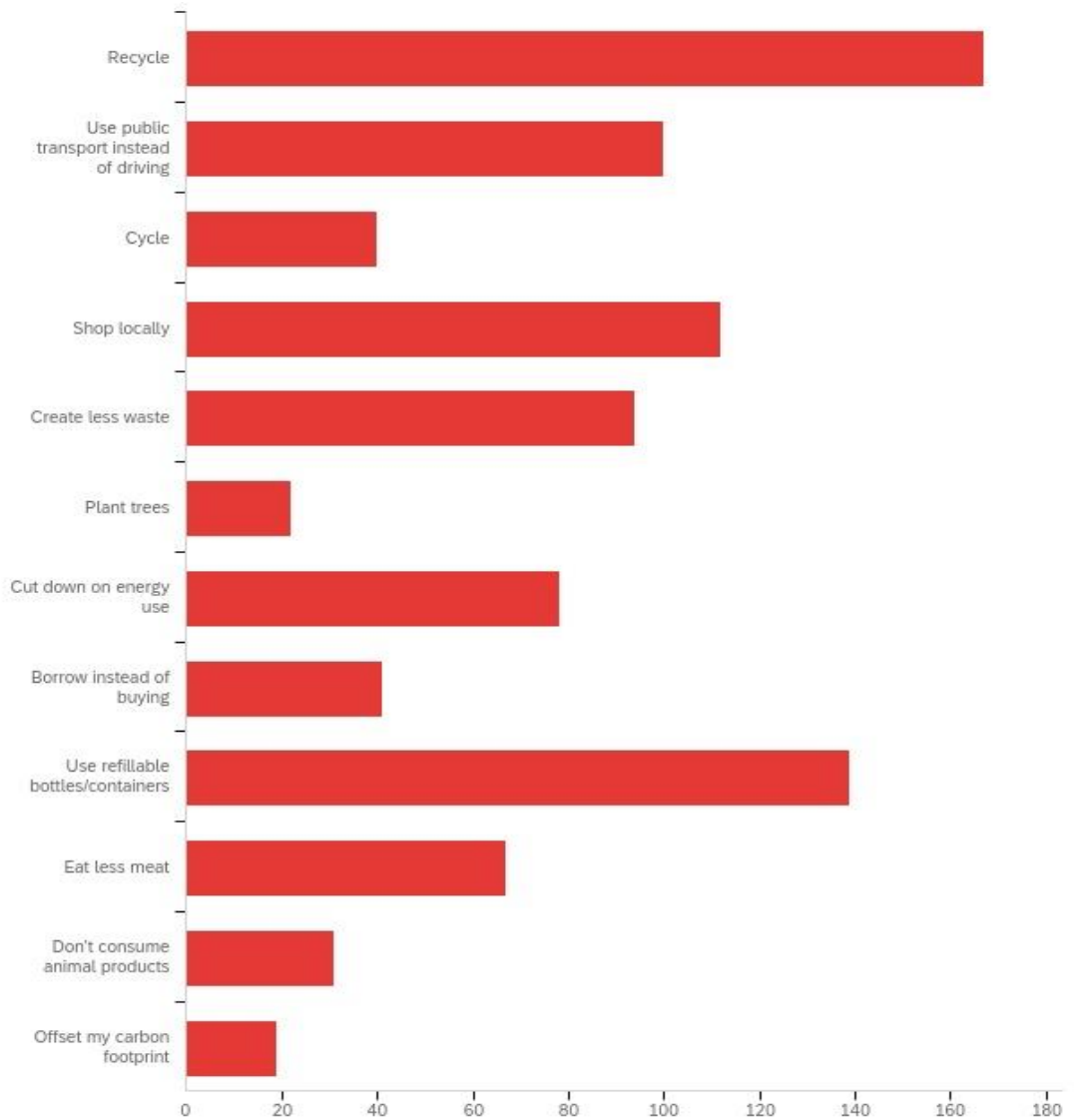
#	Field	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	I spend a lot of time looking online at things to buy	22.78% 41	28.89% 52	20.56% 37	8.33% 15	7.22% 13	10.00% 18	2.22% 4	180
2	Impulsive shopping makes me feel happy	15.56% 28	17.78% 32	21.11% 38	12.78% 23	10.00% 18	17.78% 32	5.00% 9	180
3	I often buy things I don't really need	16.11% 29	17.22% 31	22.22% 40	8.89% 16	15.00% 27	13.89% 25	6.67% 12	180
4	I prefer to shop second hand	8.89% 16	7.78% 14	20.56% 37	19.44% 35	10.00% 18	21.11% 38	12.22% 22	180
5	I often purchase things that make me feel good	19.44% 35	35.00% 63	31.67% 57	3.89% 7	3.89% 7	4.44% 8	1.67% 3	180
6	I like to buy things that I can show off to others	4.44% 8	9.44% 17	16.11% 29	12.22% 22	12.78% 23	27.78% 50	17.22% 31	180
7	It makes me feel happy when I buy things that are popular on social media	6.67% 12	10.56% 19	10.00% 18	16.11% 29	11.11% 20	22.22% 40	23.33% 42	180
8	I like to upcycle rather than buy new	6.11% 11	10.00% 18	24.44% 44	18.89% 34	17.22% 31	12.78% 23	10.56% 19	180
9	Looking good is important to me	14.44% 26	32.78% 59	27.22% 49	11.11% 20	6.11% 11	5.56% 10	2.78% 5	180
10	I often compare what I have to what others around me have	7.22% 13	17.78% 32	25.00% 45	12.22% 22	8.33% 15	20.00% 36	9.44% 17	180
11	I try not to buy unnecessary things	15.00% 27	30.00% 54	23.33% 42	8.33% 15	13.33% 24	8.33% 15	1.67% 3	180
12	I often feel guilty or disappointed with myself after an impulsive purchase	16.11% 29	22.78% 41	27.78% 50	11.67% 21	9.44% 17	7.78% 14	4.44% 8	180
13	I try to find the most eco-friendly option when buying something	10.00% 18	8.89% 16	19.44% 35	16.67% 30	18.89% 34	13.89% 25	12.22% 22	180
14	Other people's opinions are irrelevant to me	10.00% 18	20.56% 37	18.89% 34	12.78% 23	22.78% 41	13.33% 24	1.67% 3	180
15	The eco-friendliness of a product is more important than the cost of it	4.47% 8	7.26% 13	21.79% 39	14.53% 26	26.26% 47	16.20% 29	9.50% 17	179
16	I sometimes buy 'green' products because I feel guilty about the non eco-friendly purchase decisions I've made in the past	9.44% 17	15.00% 27	20.00% 36	10.00% 18	13.33% 24	18.33% 33	13.89% 25	180
17	I believe what I buy is a reflection of who I am	9.44% 17	21.11% 38	31.67% 57	18.33% 33	7.78% 14	8.33% 15	3.33% 6	180
18	I feel proud when purchasing something that is labelled eco-friendly	13.33% 24	26.11% 47	26.67% 48	18.89% 34	5.56% 10	6.67% 12	2.78% 5	180
19	When I feel down I buy things to cheer myself up	19.44% 35	19.44% 35	22.78% 41	8.33% 15	11.67% 21	13.33% 24	5.00% 9	180
20	Feeling guilty about climate change motivates me to make better decisions as a consumer	8.33% 15	21.11% 38	32.78% 59	13.33% 24	10.56% 19	7.78% 14	6.11% 11	180
21	I can sometimes feel envious of people who share their purchases/experiences on social media	8.33% 15	21.11% 38	22.22% 40	10.56% 19	10.00% 18	13.89% 25	13.89% 25	180
22	I do a lot of research before I make the decision to purchase something	13.41% 24	24.58% 44	27.37% 49	8.38% 15	7.82% 14	14.53% 26	3.91% 7	179
23	I take into account how my purchasing decisions may affect the environment	8.33% 15	9.44% 17	21.11% 38	12.22% 22	26.11% 47	13.33% 24	9.44% 17	180
24	I prefer to purchase products or experiences that give back to the environment through initiatives such as planting trees	10.61% 19	14.53% 26	25.14% 45	17.88% 32	11.73% 21	12.29% 22	7.82% 14	179

Q12 - Do you consider yourself to be environmentally aware?



#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Do you consider yourself to be environmentally aware?	1.00	2.00	1.15	0.36	0.13	180

Q13 - If so please select the actions that you regularly undertake



Field	Choice Count
Recycle	166
Use public transport instead of driving	99
Cycle	40
Shop locally	112
Create less waste	93
Plant trees	22
Cut down on energy use	78
Borrow instead of buying	40
Use refillable bottles/containers	139
Eat less meat	66
Don't consume animal products	31
Offset my carbon footprint	19
Total	905

Q14 - If there are any other actions, please list here



Q15 - If you feel something prevents you from leading an environmentally friendly lifestyle, please list here



Q16 - Please select the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

#	Field	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
1	I consider myself to be worried about climate change.	20.56% 37	36.67% 66	22.78% 41	6.11% 11	5.56% 10	5.00% 9	3.33% 6	180
2	I believe we can solve environmental problems through technology	7.78% 14	28.33% 51	31.67% 57	17.78% 32	6.67% 12	7.22% 13	0.56% 1	180
3	People in richer countries need to consume less	27.78% 50	28.89% 52	16.67% 30	18.33% 33	3.33% 6	2.78% 5	2.22% 4	180
4	Tourism is a significant contributor to the climate crisis	10.56% 19	31.67% 57	28.89% 52	14.44% 26	7.78% 14	4.44% 8	2.22% 4	180
5	The current concern about the climate crisis is over emphasised	2.78% 5	3.33% 6	8.33% 15	8.89% 16	15.00% 27	31.11% 56	30.56% 55	180
6	I care about the environment but I am not willing to change my holiday habits for it	10.00% 18	12.78% 23	25.00% 45	18.33% 33	15.00% 27	11.11% 20	7.78% 14	180
7	People should choose holiday destinations closer to their home	3.33% 6	14.44% 26	17.22% 31	27.78% 50	13.89% 25	12.22% 22	11.11% 20	180
8	I believe the greatest challenge facing the planet is global warming	23.33% 42	35.00% 63	20.56% 37	11.67% 21	2.78% 5	2.78% 5	3.89% 7	180
9	Greta Thunberg is correct in saying that the climate crisis is the fault of older generations	18.89% 34	23.33% 42	22.78% 41	13.33% 24	12.78% 23	5.56% 10	3.33% 6	180
10	My generation is not really worried about environmental issues	5.00% 9	9.44% 17	15.00% 27	7.22% 13	22.22% 40	23.89% 43	17.22% 31	180

11	I would positively support actions for climate change	29.44%	53	36.11%	65	21.11%	38	8.33%	15	1.67%	3	1.11%	2	2.22%	4	180
12	There should be laws in place to limit the amount of times people can fly each year	6.67%	12	13.33%	24	15.00%	27	15.56%	28	13.89%	25	15.56%	28	20.00%	36	180
13	There should be an option for frequent travelers to pay voluntary taxes so they don't feel guilty about their carbon footprint	10.56%	19	22.22%	40	20.56%	37	18.33%	33	7.22%	13	10.00%	18	11.11%	20	180
14	The environmental impacts of flying are exaggerated	3.89%	7	5.56%	10	8.89%	16	18.89%	34	16.11%	29	28.89%	52	17.78%	32	180
15	It is the tourism industry's responsibility to provide more environmentally friendly holidays	11.67%	21	27.78%	50	33.89%	61	12.78%	23	6.11%	11	3.89%	7	3.89%	7	180
16	It is the responsibility of the government to fix the climate issues	27.22%	49	30.00%	54	21.11%	38	10.00%	18	5.56%	10	3.33%	6	2.78%	5	180
17	People will travel more now they have experienced a pandemic	35.56%	64	30.56%	55	12.22%	22	10.56%	19	5.56%	10	3.33%	6	2.22%	4	180
18	Humans are severely abusing the environment	43.89%	79	28.33%	51	17.22%	31	4.44%	8	4.44%	8	0.00%	0	1.67%	3	180
19	In 30 years time the environment will be worse off than it is now	46.11%	83	30.00%	54	12.22%	22	8.33%	15	1.11%	2	1.67%	3	0.56%	1	180
20	My generation will find the solution to the current climate crisis	7.22%	13	18.89%	34	23.89%	43	25.00%	45	11.67%	21	8.33%	15	5.00%	9	180
21	People need to buy/consume less for the sake of the environment	23.33%	42	38.33%	69	21.11%	38	6.67%	12	5.56%	10	3.33%	6	1.67%	3	180
22	There should be a limit on how often and how far people can travel	7.78%	14	11.11%	20	15.56%	28	14.44%	26	13.33%	24	17.22%	31	20.56%	37	180
23	There wouldn't be any environmental problems if people only travelled once in a year	2.22%	4	2.78%	5	6.11%	11	12.78%	23	14.44%	26	27.78%	50	33.89%	61	180
24	If someone offered me a free holiday to somewhere that was not eco-friendly I would still take it	38.33%	69	27.22%	49	17.78%	32	7.78%	14	4.44%	8	2.78%	5	1.67%	3	180
25	When on holiday it is important to treat the local environment with respect	62.22%	112	27.22%	49	6.67%	12	2.78%	5	0.56%	1	0.56%	1	0.00%	0	180

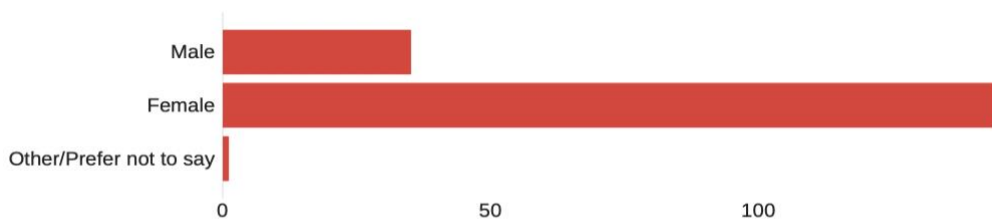
Q17 - What would make you stop flying?



Q18 - Please list five words that explain why tourism is important to you



Q19 - What is your gender?



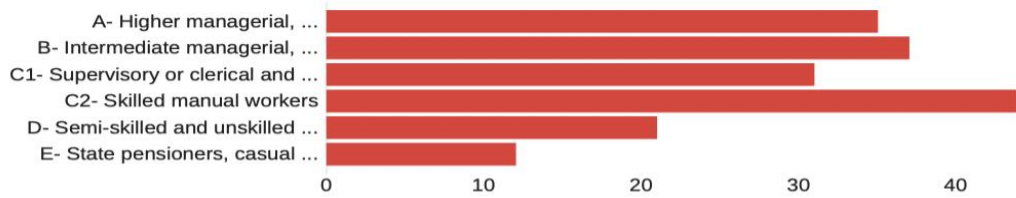
Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
What is your gender?	1	3	2	0	0	180

Field	Choice Count
Male	35
Female	144
Other/Prefer not to say	1
Total	180

Q20 - What is your nationality?



Q21 - Please select your family background from the following list



Field	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance	Responses
Please select your family background from the following list	1	6	3	2	2	180

Field	Choice Count
A- Higher managerial, administrative or professional	35
B- Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional	37
C1- Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional	31
C2- Skilled manual workers	44
D- Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers	21
E- State pensioners, casual workers, unemployed or state benefits only	12
Total	180

## Appendix B- Interview Schedule of Questions



### The interview schedule.

#### Checklist.

- Participant name:
- Participant occupation:
- Date and time of the interview:
- Ethical briefing:
- Received consent:

#### Interview questions.

READ VERBAL CONSENT THEN START RECORDING AND START TRANSCRIPTION MODE

- Can you please tell me a bit about yourself; your age, your occupation, where you live, any hobbies or interests?
- Do you travel and if so, please can you tell me a little more about your usual travel habits? (Where you go, how you get there, how often and who you go with? Reasons for travelling in such way?)
- Would you say you would often choose a holiday over most other larger purchases? (For example, of you had to save for a car or mortgage, or the latest laptop or perhaps a designer item of clothing or accessory, would you sacrifice a holiday for that?)
- How would you feel if your holidays were restricted, or laws determined how often and for how long you can travel? (Think of how you felt during the periods of lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic).
- What, if anything, would make you change the way you currently travel? (use Scenario 3 if they are unsure of an answer).



- I'd like you to think deeply about your response to this question. Can you explain to me what going on holiday or travelling really means to you? (Prompts, how does it make you feel, why do you want to go on holidays?)
- So why do you think, deep down that you feel this way? What is it about travel? (Think of it in comparison to another form of consumption, why travel?)
- If life was a lot slower in pace, if the working week was shorter and there was less stress in everyday life, do you feel your travel habits would change? (How so? Would you perhaps travel less frequently?)
- I'm going to give you a scenario now to think about and answer. Please take a moment to think and share your honest feelings with me. (Scenario 1).
- Given all the publicity surrounding climate change / global warming and the contribution of flying to that, can you justify why you might continue to go on holiday by air / frequently?
- Do you like to share your experiences and purchases frequently on social media?
- I am going to present you with a scenario now, so please be as open and honest with your answers and imagine yourself in the following situation (Scenario 2).
- Do you think that being eco-friendly is something to worry about when you are on holiday? (Or in general if the participant does not travel)
- how important is buying / having stuff? – would you say you are materialistic? - and do you try to be a 'green' consumer in any way?
- What do you think about adopting a simpler lifestyle – for example, buying less / travelling less, and so on?
- How do you feel about climate change and environmental problems that the world is currently facing? Do you believe there is a solution? Is it down to the individuals or large corporations, the government etc?

#### Scenarios:

- If you were given a significant amount of money to spend on travelling, would you use it on 3 or 4 short breaks or on one longer holiday that would allow you time to explore the area, the culture, and spend quality time relaxing, which would you choose? Why? Can you elaborate on your reasoning?

- If you were given the opportunity to choose between two free holidays, the first being your dream holiday to anywhere in the world for a longer duration, but you couldn't take pictures or share the holiday on social media at all. The second being a destination perhaps closer to home, for less time but you could share it with everyone and on all your social media, which would you choose? Why?
- Back up scenario: (I'm sure you have seen the chaos at the airports recently in the news and online or heard of someone you know going through this situation where they've had their holiday cancelled last minute or experienced severe delays at the airport.) If these chaotic situations at the airports were to continue, how do you think that is likely to change your travel patterns, if at all?

If the participant doesn't travel, has never travelled, or does not value the consumption of tourism:

Can you explain your reasons for not travelling? Is it not of interest or for financial reasons, upbringing? Would you like to, given the opportunity?

Why do you think that people do travel? What are your thoughts on this?

What do you think of the association between travelling and the climate change, e.g. travelling on a plane?

What about consumption in general? Do you like to go out for food, drinks? Do you like to go shopping? How often and what type of purchases do you usually make? Fast fashion, designer, homeware? Can you explain why your consumption habits are like this?

What do you think of the impact of social media and younger peoples? Such as influencers? Does it have an impact on consumption or make you want things that they have?

### **Interviewee questions and requests.**

- Questions:
- Request:

### **Timing.**

- Interview length:

## Appendix C- Participant Information Sheet



### Participant Information Sheet- Interviews

#### Title of Study

Environmental awareness and tourism consumption: will the post-millennials save the world?

#### 1. Version Number and Date

Version 1

06.07.2022

#### 2. Invitation Paragraph

*You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask us if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends and relatives if you wish. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.*

*Thank you for reading this.*

#### 3. What is the purpose of the study?

The overall purpose of the study is to explore the significance of tourism as a form of consumption, travel motivations and how to overcome the value-action gap. Specifically, the research focuses on the role of post-millennial aged tourists and how they will change their tourism behaviours in the context of contemporary environmental concerns. The study further

examines consumer behaviour and the environmental awareness of post-millennials. Overall, the aim is to broaden knowledge about how and why tourism is consumed in the ways that it is despite the impact it has on the environment.

#### **4. Why have I been invited to take part?**

You have been invited to take part in this study as you are within the ages of 18 and 25 which is relevant to this study which focuses on tourists of your age.

#### **5. Do I have to take part?**

Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw participation at any time, without explanation, and without incurring a disadvantage.

#### **6. What will happen if I take part?**

The aim of the interview is to develop a dialogue surrounding the topic of travel motivations and how this will impact the future of tourism in light of the contemporary environmental concerns. During the interview process you will be asked questions relating to holidays you have been on, holidays you may wish to go on in the future and questions about your environmental awareness. Data collected from the interview is then thematically analysed to develop insights into travel motivations and tourism as a form of consumption. The format of interviews is semi-structured, which means that the researcher will gently direct the course of the conversation; however, there are no restrictions on what topics can be raised. What matters most is that you have the opportunity to express your thoughts and opinions on the matter. The interviews will take place via Microsoft Teams. In the unlikely event that the call terminates, the researcher will attempt to call you again.

There are no expectations or responsibilities, we just ask that you share your experiences and opinions as honestly as possible. The interviews will be recorded using a dictaphone as well as recorded on teams, this is solely so the researcher can transcribe the interviews.

#### **7. How will my data be used?**

All data collected during the interview will only be stored on a secure password protected personal computer. Moreover, all data will be anonymised, with the exception of the researcher alone. Importantly, data will be handled strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1988). If you wish, you can withdraw from the interview at any time without the need for

explanation. In that case, all data collected from you will be immediately and permanently deleted. The data from completed interviews only will be analysed and presented within the thesis.

The University processes personal data as part of its research and teaching activities in accordance with the lawful basis of ‘public task’, and in accordance with the University’s purpose of “advancing education, learning and research for the public benefit”.

Under UK data protection legislation, the University acts as the Data Controller for personal data collected as part of the University’s research. The University privacy notice for research participants can be found on the attached link [https://www.uclan.ac.uk/data\\_protection/privacy-notice-research-participants.php](https://www.uclan.ac.uk/data_protection/privacy-notice-research-participants.php)

Further information on how your data will be used can be found in the table below.

How will my data be collected?	Data will be collected through a semi-structured interview process. You are free to contribute as much information as you like to this process.
How will my data be stored?	All data will be stored on a secured, password protected server.
How long will my data be stored for?	The data will be stored until the research has been analysed and the thesis is written up. This should be no later than June 2023.
What measures are in place to protect the security and confidentiality of my data?	All data is secured in a password protected laptop
Will my data be anonymised?	All data will be anonymised, with the exception of the researcher alone.
How will my data be used?	Data will be used to draw themes and correlations in relation to the study. Data will be handled strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1988)
Who will have access to my data?	The data will only be accessed by the researcher and the Director of Studies.
Will my data be archived for use in other research projects in the future?	No
How will my data be destroyed?	Data will be destroyed by deleting all recordings and files. If any information is hand written, this will be shredded once used.

## 8. Are there any risks in taking part?

There are no perceived disadvantages or risks involved. It is unlikely that any sensitive topics may be raised during the interview, it nevertheless is expected that, overall, you should find the interview to be a very positive experience. If, however, you experience any discomfort (mental, emotional or physical) or disadvantage as part of the research, please make this known to the researcher immediately.

**9. Are there any benefits from taking part?**

There is no intended/likely benefit to taking part in the study.

**10. Expenses and / or payments**

N/A

**11. What will happen to the results of the study?**

When the study is complete, results of the study can be requested by emailing [sfroberts2@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:sfroberts2@uclan.ac.uk) The results will be published in the final PhD thesis no later than October 2024. You will not be identifiable from the results unless you have consented to being so.

**12. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?**

You are free to withdraw your participation at any time and you do not need to offer any reasons or explanation for withdrawing from the study. If you wish to withdraw, please contact the researcher on the details at the end of this form. Results or data collected up to the period of withdrawal may be used but no further data will be collected following withdrawal.

Data can only be withdrawn prior to anonymisation; afterwards it will not be possible to tell which results belong to which person. Additionally, once data has been collated and/or reported it may not be possible to isolate and extract, therefore please withdraw your consent no later than 14 days after you have been interviewed.

**13. What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?**

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let us know by contacting Sara Roberts and we will try to help. If you remain unhappy, or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with, then please contact the Research Governance Unit at [OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk).

The University strives to maintain the highest standards of rigour in the processing of your data. However, if you have any concerns about the way in which the University processes

your personal data, it is important that you are aware of your right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office by calling 0303 123 1113.

**14. Who can I contact if I have further questions?**

If you have any questions with regards to the study, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Sara Roberts either via [sfroberts2@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:sfroberts2@uclan.ac.uk) or 07772907761. Thank you.

## Appendix D- Participant Consent Form



### Participant consent form

**Version number & date:** 1 06.07.2022

**Research ethics approval number:**

**Title of the research project:** Environmental awareness and tourism consumption: will the post-millennials save the world?

**Name, position and contact address of Researcher:**

Sara Roberts, PhD researcher. Email: [sfroberts2@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:sfroberts2@uclan.ac.uk)

**Other Contacts (if you have any questions):**

Professor Richard Sharpley, Director of studies. Email: [rajsharp@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:rajsharp@uclan.ac.uk)

Dr Sean Gammon, Supervisor. Email: [sjgammon@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:sjgammon@uclan.ac.uk)

Name of researcher(s):

Please initial

box

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated 06.07.22 for the above study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that taking part in the study involves a recorded interview via Microsoft Teams.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop taking part and can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without my rights being affected. In addition, I understand that I am free to decline to answer any particular question or questions.
4. I understand that if I withdraw from this study data collected prior to my withdrawal will be retained but no further data will be collected.
5. I understand that the information I provide will be held securely and in line with data protection requirements at the University of Central Lancashire.
6. I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the University of Central Lancashire until the study is complete in 2023.
7. I agree to take part in the above study.








\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



## **Appendix E- Verbal Consent Form**

### **Verbal Consent Form**

The following script will be read out to each interview participant prior to the start of the interview. The participants will receive the participant information sheet and sign the consent form prior to the interview. Participant's verbal consent will be recorded and stored in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Hello again, my name is Sara, and I am currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Central Lancashire and I have asked you to participate in my research. Do I have your consent to tell you a little bit about my research? **(Await confirmation to proceed).**

My research relates to the tourism and consumer habits of the post-millennial generation, otherwise known as Generation Z, considering the current climate concerns. You do not have to have travelled or have any prior knowledge on travel or the environment. If you chose to continue to participate in the study, I will have a conversation with you that will last approximately one hour, and I will ask you questions and present you with scenarios relating to the areas of my research. Your answers will form the base of my PhD thesis. I will change your name for the purpose of anonymity and I, as the researcher, will store your data safely and securely in line with the Data Protection Act 1988. At the same time, I would like to be able to use your anonymised data in future studies, and to share that data with other researchers. Do I have your consent for that? **(Await confirmation to proceed).**

In any publication of the research a fictitious name (pseudonym) will be used. I will not ask you any sensitive information, but I will ask you to think deeply and answer honestly about your thoughts and experiences and you can share with me as much information as you like. Is that okay for you? **(Await confirmation to proceed).**

You don't have to take part; you can ask me any questions you want before or throughout the conversation and you can also withdraw without giving reason at any point of the conversation. With your permission I would like to make a recording of the conversation to make sure I have an accurate record of your thoughts. Should you have any concerns you can contact me on my mobile number: 07772907761 or my email address: [sfroberts2@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:sfroberts2@uclan.ac.uk). These details are available to you in your participant information sheet.

Finally, do I have your permission to start the interview and to audio record you? **(Await confirmation to proceed).**

And do you give me permission to quote you in my thesis and future research using a fictitious name (pseudonym)? **(Await confirmation to proceed).**

## Appendix F- Analysed Transcript Example

Questions and Answers	Themes
<p><b>Please can just tell me a little bit about yourself. Like how old are you? What do you do for a living? What are your hobbies?</b></p>	
<p>Yeah. So I'm 24. Uh, I am working procurement by like building materials and things like that. Very glamorous, I know. My hobbies are sort of like, I like going out to eat. I like relaxing at home and, like, keeping my house clean and things like that? And yeah, uh, spending time with my dog. All sounds quite boring, but there you are.</p>	<p>Personal Information Hobbies</p>
<p><b>So would you say that you usually travel?</b></p>	
<p>Yeah, with COVID and stuff that obviously put a gap in my travels. But before that I'd done quite a bit of traveling, a lot of it with my family and I immigrated for a few years when I was 14 to 17 I lived in Qatar Doha, so yeah, I enjoyed that. Umm. And then from there it's sort of stemmed. Spent a bit of like independent time in America, India and Thailand and but then holidays with family and stuff in between as well.</p>	<p>Travel Experiences before Covid A gap- travel as a repetitive activity Living abroad influenced travel Long haul travelling</p>
<p><b>Yeah, that sounds great. And would you say that you usually travel by plane if you were going abroad?</b></p>	
<p>Definitely, yeah. And maybe bar France or something, you know, on the train, yeah.</p>	<p>Preferred mode of travel- flight</p>
<p><b>So would you say that you'd usually choose to travel or choose to purchase a holiday over other things, such as, saving for a car or something.</b></p>	
<p>Definitely. Yeah. UM. And I think...Actually, I think it's probably about 50/50 from people I know. Some people are very much in the mindset that they love the idea of a home and a car. And you know everything that comes with it. And I think the other half of whether they see it as unattainable or whether they just like to sort of rebel against it and or feel it isn't for them. I yeah, I'd say I personally would choose to go on holiday or go away rather than buy something significant. It's definitely, my biggest purchases so far have been going away, plane tickets and things like that.</p>	<p>Travel versus material possessions Hierarchy of preferred possessions/ experiences Recognition of people aspiring for homes and cars (significant purchases) Compared to people who rebel or don't want that</p>
<p><b>And I know we've experienced this recently with COVID, but how would you feel if your holidays were restricted? Maybe if there were laws in place that determined how often you travelled or where you travelled to.</b></p>	
<p>Yeah, I think that would definitely deter me from going places. Just cause I'm quite a practical thinker and I know on the ground when you do get somewhere on your own, it's scary. And to have things that make it even harder when you've come from a position of feeling like you can do anything to have those physical restrictions in your way. Yeah, a deterrent. Unless you are very firm sort of and like sound information from sources there, like saying it's OK. But now I think at the moment the restrictions would, yeah, put me off.</p>	<p>Influence of travel restrictions Feelings towards travel restrictions Restrictions are a deterrent</p>

<p><b>And do you think, how did you feel during COVID did that and kind of ruin any of your plans or did you feel?</b></p>	
<p>Yeah, UM, I'd actually. I've been working at a bar for. I don't know, a year or so, two years. Set my target to <b>save up money to go back to Asia</b>. And that was in February 2019, and then in March everything shut down. So I ended up not going and didn't get furloughed. So, <b>I spent all that on sort of being around</b> and. Yeah, it did. It put <b>a major impact on my plans and obviously I was gutted</b> but you know, it wasn't the worst. I suppose. You know it. <b>It was devastating for some people</b>. Mine was just I couldn't go away. <b>It was sad</b>, but you know, <b>you get around it</b>.</p>	<p>Impact of travel restrictions Saving money for travel Major impact Negative emotions- devastating / sad / gutted</p>
<p><b>And what, if anything, would make you change the way that you currently travel? For example, if there was something that would kind of make you feel like ohh, I don't know if I should be travelling.</b></p>	
<p>I think, yeah, <b>I'd be a lot more cautious</b>. I'd be a lot more am <b>invested in planning</b> UM, so the past few times I've gone away, I've just sort of been like, <b>see what happens</b> and, you know, especially in places where every man and his dog has gone. As a backpacker, <b>you felt safe just going and seeing what happened</b>, whereas now it would have to be quite a <b>lot of research into the places that I was going to make sure that everything like online was up to date</b> because you don't know and like my sister's actually in Vietnam at the minute, she was in Cambodia and she used to live in Vietnam but she said when she got to Cambodia a lot of the things that she'd intended to do and <b>the people she intended to meet weren't actually like thriving anymore</b>. They weren't about <b>because of, obviously, all the different factors</b>. And yeah, it's first-hand sort of insight into how much you would have to make sure it's the right thing to do because she is saying it wasn't the right thing to do for her at the moment. Due to all of that.</p>	<p>Risks of travel Caution Planning travel Feeling safe travelling Impact of covid on feeling safe Relatives experience- negative- covid related</p>
<p><b>And so I want you to take some time to think about this question. Can you explain to me like what it really means to you to travel?</b></p>	
<p>I think this is probably something I've thought about before. UM. <b>I think it's such a privilege and it's so important</b>. I think you don't know what you don't know because you don't know. <b>You can't comprehend what you're missing because there's nothing within your like vicinity to even hint at what could be out there</b>. And I think. Like for me personally, the <b>sort of life I've had</b> like, like living in Qatar, I couldn't have had that experience if it weren't. If you weren't able to travel. And I went to school in this country, that was like an international boarding school. And 95% of the kids there wouldn't be able to be there if it weren't for travel. And same sort of stemming back a lot of the people in my life, I wouldn't have had if it weren't for people being able to travel around. <b>So the idea of that not being a possibility, it's immediately impactful</b>. But it's also like <b>a chain of events which leads to like not just</b></p>	<p>Purpose of travel Meaning of travel Travel experiences Travel as a privilege and opportunity Expressing importance of travel and how it impacts life's paths Explore new horizons</p>

<p>broadening like your own horizons, but future horizons to be broadened. You know, I mean, yeah.</p>	
<p><b>And how does it make you feel inside when you, you know, when you've got that trip booked or when you just about to depart somewhere?</b></p>	
<p><b>Nervous.</b> Honestly. Yeah. UM, obviously <b>excited</b>. You get exciting stuff, but yeah, <b>nervous</b>, I'd say. Unless it is a holiday to the hotel then. Yeah. You just, like, can't wait for a break. It's gonna be <b>so fun</b>. But if it's sort of a big trip, maybe <b>preparing</b> for that, you know it's gonna be quite taxing. And I've always found when I get somewhere first, first few days, I'm like, <b>oh my God, what have I done?</b> Why am I here? <b>This is obscene</b>. But then you love it after that. And it's just sort of <b>preparing yourself for that</b>. So, I'd say <b>nervous is the initial feeling</b>. But then everything else that stems from that, like excited for the adventure.</p>	<p>Emotions and feelings associated with travel Nerves Excitement Anticipation Preparation Adventure Travel not rational?</p>
<p><b>So it's if you were going on a holiday and you say you've been, I don't know, working hard and saving up for it and like what? Why do you think you need that holiday?</b></p>	
<p>Like saying <b>to get into the sunshine</b> personally. <b>Getting away from the mundane</b> if you are doing something mundane, you know, like a nine to five like I am. Working hard, but like you said, I think just <b>you need it</b> just to. Break like so it doesn't become stagnant. You know <b>it's gotta be done</b> like. Yeah. Think you've <b>always got to be able to learn something</b>. And usually like I know I don't have something in my day-to-day that's teaching me something new. I'm sure you do be an at university, so you're fine, but It's a, you know <b>you need something to keep you ticking over</b>. I think. And like I said before, <b>you don't know what you missing</b>. So if you go somewhere new at least then <b>you might spot something that could peak your interest and you can take home with you</b>.</p>	<p>Association of weather (sun) and travel Travel as an escape and adventure Escape from work/ mundane routines Travel as a necessity Travel and educational opportunities</p>
<p><b>And what about like when you return from a holiday, how does that make you feel?</b></p>	
<p>Sort of quite pensive, I guess you start to <b>reflect</b> on. Umm. what you've got here, whether <b>it makes you appreciate it more</b> like, say if you're a bit like by the <b>end of the holiday, you're like, oh, I</b> wanna come home now, then you might feel a bit more. Oh, this is nice, but say if you've just been, I don't know, someone's <b>whipped you away to Barbados</b> or something. And it's been gorgeous. And you're like, what am I doing in Stockport in Manchester, you know, I mean like. So it can make you think obviously depending on where you've just come from. So I'd say, yeah, <b>It's obviously sad flying into Manchester Airport, it's the worst feeling. It's so grey, it's just horrible</b>. Exactly. So yeah, you have that initial thought. Yeah.</p>	<p>Reflection and appreciation of home Dependent on travel destination Association of exotic far-away locations with not appreciating coming home Worst Feeling/ Grey/ Horrible</p>
<p><b>And do you think it's like travelling like a cycle almost like, do you think we can get ultimate satisfaction or we always craving more?</b></p>	

<p>I think definitely <b>you always want more</b>, I think that's like a nature of, like, a lot of things, but <b>definitely with travel</b>. Because don't <b>you can't see it all</b> like no matter, no matter who you are, <b>you can't see it all</b>. So, there's always a new place to go, <b>something else to see</b> or <b>somewhere to return</b> if you're inclined to look deeper into the place. Like I said, it's that <b>constant</b>, like <b>wanting more</b>, I think. Definitely.</p>	<p>Travel and wanting more- you can't see it all. New travel experiences Exploration of familiar destinations</p>
<p><b>And what would like without travel look like to you?</b></p>	
<p>Completely bleak. Unfortunately, I think it would be <b>fantastic</b> if it wasn't the case, but. Umm yeah, I it's I think <b>cause of like my generation stuff I can't fathom not just being able to shoot away</b>. I mean, if we take obviously if we <b>take like finances and things like that</b>. But I'm like the <b>actual level of being able to go buy a plane ticket and go anywhere in the world pretty much the idea of not being able to do that is</b>. It's like <b>mortifying horrifying, yeah</b>.</p>	<p>Resistance to not travelling Importance of travel Negative associations with not traveling – bleak life, mortifying, horrifying Freedom to travel Funds to travel</p>
<p><b>And do you think that we travel to forget real life or to appreciate it? I think you just touched on this a little.</b></p>	
<p>Yeah, I'd say probably a mixture of the two, depending on who you are, the life you lead, I think. And probably everyone has a bit of both. You know <b>you're either a glass half full or glass half empty</b>, but you'll have your moments. You may be <b>more inclined to just escape</b> and be like ohh my gosh. You know and I think definitely like when I look at like, that's probably like how my parents are. Uh, they <b>appreciate it</b>, but because <b>they've worked so hard</b>. It's like <b>a reprieve</b>. That's what it is. First and foremost, <b>rather than like an adventure</b>, I'd say. But maybe like I said, if you 18 taking your gap year, it's probably not to get away from the stress of your bedroom. You know what I mean.</p>	<p>Travel as an escape Travel as a reward for working hard Relief rather than adventure</p>
<p><b>So do you think if life was a lot of us like at a slower pace, maybe the working week wasn't as hectic, do you think that you would still have that need to travel?</b></p>	
<p>I think <b>we would still have that need</b>, umm, but I do think it would be <b>less frantic</b>. It would be <b>less of people desperately going away</b> in June and July for two weeks with when the kids are off school, they would be a lot more, you know, <b>everyone has that breathing room</b> to maybe even just take... because you have three days a week. You can take a <b>long a weekend in the lakes or something or go to Brighton for a weekend and still have that extra time to do things</b>. Suppose if you've been away on some city breaks, you're not too fussed about flying on a <b>long-haul flight to somewhere for a longer time</b>.</p>	<p>Slower paced Less frantic travel Time to breathe Long weekends and short haul breaks may lead to not wanting long haul two week</p>
<p><b>Do you think if people had the opportunity to go on like more, I guess, domestic holidays then that would perhaps take away the urge of going away on a big holiday in the summer?</b></p>	
<p>Yeah, I do. I definitely think so. I mean, <b>if we have nice weather, we're suckers for nice weather</b>, aren't we? Like if it's <b>warm</b>, I think a lot of <b>people are happy with places</b> like Cornwall and Devon and place in</p>	<p>Weather Domestic holidays as a replacement for international travel</p>

<p>Scotland. All these, you know, like British and UK. Like you said, domestic holiday type things and then yeah, I can't see why they wouldn't. I think because it's just natural, isn't it? You'd be tired if you've been away too much. Just wanna be at home for a bit.</p>	
<p><b>And so I'm just gonna give you a scenario now. And so if you can just let me know which of the two you would choose. So if you were given a significant amount of money and to travel, would you use that money on, say, three or four shorter breaks or would you prefer to use it on one longer holiday and why?</b></p>	
<p>I would personally choose a longer holiday. And like one sort of excursion. Umm. Because I think with a lump sum like it's a big amount of money, you could make it stretch really far and you might go somewhere and meet someone who says 'uh, I've just been wherever I think you should go'. Whereas if you've just got two weeks in wherever booked and you've got your return flight you might think, oh, I can't do that. But if you've got you one way ticket with like a little extra time, you think yeah, I'll do that! I'll see what you're talking about. It gives you a bit more option. I think if you do one.</p>	<p>Longer holiday- see more, more freedom to explore Money and opportunities to do more/ stay longer Association of unlimited funds with longer travel</p>
<p><b>Do you mean like to maybe immerse yourself in the culture more or.</b></p>	
<p>Yeah, definitely, I mean, some people, I found when I was travelling, I didn't do much. To be fair, I sort of got to this the point I stayed in one place for longer times. So, say like when I went to America, I was in sort of one or two states for like 2-3 months when I was in India, I was in one state. Those sorts of things. And it was because I don't know, maybe I'm just, like, chilled out and like to sort of enjoy it rather than always wanting the change. But yeah, it's nice sort of be in an amongst it and get to know it a bit more and see what each day has to offer I suppose.</p>	<p>Slow travel Relaxing/ chilled Experience what the destination has to offer Deeper connections Immerse yourself</p>
<p><b>And I guess moving on to like the environmental side of things. So given all like the publicity surrounding climate change and global warming and the contribution of flying to that. Could you justify why you may continue to travel by aeroplane?</b></p>	
<p>Yeah, I think, umm, obviously it would be more than ideal if there was a way to power planes and things of clean energy. Unfortunately for other reasons, that's not going to happen, but it's not the point. I think my one way of sort of justifying it without trying to, without trying to be political or anything. It's just facts that I think while there's still sort of like humongous sea trawlers whipping up coral reefs. Me flying somewhere. It is bad yet, but it is sort of a droplet in a pool in and I'm I don't really have the facts like I don't. I'm no scientist and if I saw things that told me that's not a true statement, I would believe it. I'm just sort of going off little bits. I've heard. And like I said, you almost don't want to justify doing it. And but I feel that if we had fantastic boats, I would love to go by boat. But I think too many people get seasick.</p>	<p>Justification for air travel Don't want to justify it Worse things for the environment than one person flying Dissonance Reasons for not taking alternatives</p>

<p><b>Moving on from that. Do you like to share your experiences, perhaps purchases and on social media?</b></p>	
<p>No, not purchases. I wouldn't say. I'm not really a social media person. You know I have Instagram and things like that, and I definitely do post like, you know, pictures of beaches and things. But I'd say maybe. I don't know, maybe one or two of the time. But I'm not really a picture person in general. I don't know.</p>	<p>Social media Travel photography No real interest</p>
<p><b>So off the back of that, I'm gonna give you another scenario now. And so just obviously just be as open and honest as you can with this. And so if you were given the opportunity again to choose between two holidays. All expenses paid to say your absolute dream destinations, something that is maybe somewhere far in the future for you. You know, in terms of being able to get there. But you couldn't share any pictures. You couldn't take any pictures. It would just be a, like, live in the moment experience. Or the second option to go somewhere that you'd love to go to, you know, but perhaps is a more achievable destination to visit in the near future. But you could take pictures and share that wherever you wanted with whoever you wanted on social media. Which one would you choose and why?</b></p>	
<p>Definitely the first one and definitely. Again, it's more just because of. I don't. You know, I don't care what anyone sees on my Instagram. It's sort of like. To what end? Like what would you physically gain? Nothing. And like I'm quite private. Anyway, it's my account and it's private. Who even sees it? You know that sort of thing. No, I don't think that would even cross my mind. I don't know. I don't take pictures. My phones old. You know, my laptop doesn't have a good microphone and things I'm not, you know, definitely the first one. And you know, it's nice to be able to show your family pictures of where you've been, but you know, you can describe it. You can, you know, we've not always had cameras and stuff. That's OK like no one really cares what I'm doing. Anyway, if they do, they're boring, you know? It's true.</p>	<p>Living in the moment Social media sharing is not important Doesn't prioritise sharing experiences</p>
<p><b>What do you think about other people in your generation, do you think that's something that's across the board or do you think people are more kind of sucked into social media?</b></p>	
<p>Yeah, I like my generation. We sort of saying like maybe like early 20s to I don't know, late 20s or whatever. Yeah, I wouldn't say it's across the board. No. But I wouldn't also say that it's everyone because again, in every generation, there's always people that want to be different. You know the contrary, you don't wanna be the sheep. But I think if in this instance the sheep would be the people who do like to post on social media. But again, I wouldn't know with numbers. I guess it's we see the people who post there could be 10 times as many who don't, but the ones that we're shown in the ones that we see in day-to-day are the people that like it and it is interesting like I know a few people slightly older than</p>	<p>Social media impacts Sheep-people posting on social media Selfies, filters Don't care</p>

<p>me that take so many selfies and use so many fillers and always say ohh is this OK? Does this look too filtered and you just you don't wanna be horrible, but you have to say that? I'm really sorry, I don't care about your selfie. Like not to be mean. But you shouldn't care either. Like the fact you do is a little bit sad. But you look great? You look great, do you what you like? But it doesn't really matter. Umm. And then yeah, then you get the people who don't care, I suppose it's a mix.</p>	
<p><b>Do you think social media influences have a lot to do with that?</b></p>	
<p>Like people like Kylie Jenner and stuff. Yeah, definitely. I mean, everyone wears the same. They watch the same contouring videos. Like they're literally painting their faces the same shape. It's. I'd definitely say so. And I'd even say, like, even younger people than me, perhaps, like, I get, I get the bus to work, and I see girls in school uniform. All they're doing is on Snapchat, and they're not. They're not like taking pictures of things, they're taking pictures of their face. I noticed there's just no shame in it, which you could argue is very good. You know, I'm glad no one's feeling any shame, obviously, but I personally would be horrified of anyone seeing me trying to take a selfie on the bus in my school uniform. Like, I don't know, like, so I'd say it's even a slightly younger thing at that point as well. It it's trickling down. Almost sad to say, but yeah, they do. I think its because of these social media influencers.</p>	<p>Social media influencers Younger generations- social media</p>
<p><b>Also there is a lot of media attention stating that the younger generations are the generation of change. They're the ones that are going to be the eco warriors that will change the world. What do you think about that?</b></p>	
<p>I don't know I like. I think it's great to see people like, I mean, I don't know much about EM, Greta Thunberg. But you know, a little kid doing a thing like and being aware is fantastic. But I also think every generation again, the newest one thinks that they are the most rebellious, the most cutting. You know, children of the revolution, they love it and think everyone likes to think that they're gonna be part of the big change. And I'd love to think that it will come. Do I think it's gonna be my generation? Not particularly, but I don't, you know, again, no reason to think this. Just observation, no facts. And maybe, just maybe, a few years down the line, because I've got a younger brother who's 19. So that's only five years younger, but even he is so different to me and his girlfriend, so different to me in their mindsets and things like that. And so perhaps maybe when they're parents and they have kids and they've been the bosses for a while, like I wouldn't know. But I don't think it's far off. Hoping not.</p>	<p>Hope for future generations Awareness of younger generations Future generations of change</p>
<p><b>And then what do you think about when you're on holiday? Do you think it's important that that you should be eco-friendly or do something for the environment?</b></p>	



<p>I hope no one answered yes to that second one. I mean, no judgment, but yeah. Could you imagine, like, of course you've got to look after where you go, same way if you go to someone's house, you wouldn't put your dirty feet on the couch. If you make more effort even than when you're at home. And that's probably wrong. But yeah, 100%. Anything you can do and usually not all the time, but like me personally a lot of the places I've been on holiday or a lot poorer than the UK as countries. So if you can do anything that is useful then you definitely. Of course, you should. Like you can make a huge impact wherever, but here...it wouldn't make as big an impact perhaps.</p>	<p>Environmental impacts Sense of responsibility to do more when on holiday Do more on holiday for the environment than at home Poorer places than the UK.</p>
<p><b>What do you think about adopting like a simpler lifestyle? For example, like buying less, maybe travelling less?</b></p>	
<p>Yeah, I think that would be lovely, I think people have so many things and like, we could definitely be buying less, no one needs to be buying as much as we do like. You can't even keep up with it. It's like every market is saturated. And like you could you want it to be a budding entrepreneur, you'd probably struggle because everyone is selling everything to everyone all the time. You know, you got your phone and all cookies and ads and stuff and you know, so right, you know, just don't be drawn into the adverts like be aware and don't get drawn in. But at the same time, the option is always there to buy things, whereas before it just wasn't that easy, was it? Yeah. And constant like instant gratification. It's never ending. It's like. Like you know, retail therapy, even that as a saying is, you know, it's almost been drilled into, you know, if you ever watched sex in the city or anything when you're little, it's drilled into you, isn't it? You go shopping when you're sad, but why? Why does you know it? I think it's always been a little bit of a thing. But again, because people want to sell stuff to us, I suppose. And like you were saying in your other point that a simpler sort of lifestyle would sort of maybe force a little bit more. Not self like sustaining as in like growing your own potatoes and milking your own cows. But it would force a little bit more responsibility as well because you'd have to be aware, couldn't just break something and buy a new one. Have to look after it a bit I suppose.</p>	<p>Embracing simplicity Reducing consumerism Awareness of consumer society Never ending Retail therapy Consumer culture recognition Simpler lifestyle needed More responsibility</p>
<p><b>How do you feel about climate change and like the environmental problems that we're currently facing, do you think there's a solution or?</b></p>	
<p>I wish I knew I would love to think there is. Because the Earth's like amazing, isn't it? Like stronger than us? So, if it if it can be healed, it'll probably not heal itself. But if we did everything that we could, as in like the necessary steps that we've all been told to do and not done. And if us just easing off the gas pedal a bit allowed the Earth to, like, regenerate and stuff. That's what I would love to think could happen.</p>	<p>Hope for solutions Optimistic Collective responsibility</p>

<p><b>Do you think it's down to us as individuals or do you think it's more on the larger corporations or governments?</b></p>	
<p>I do think it's corporations again. You don't know if it's a mixture of propaganda. It's almost like you've got to quadruple think everything. But I think at a core level, I personally think again with no real research behind it that, yeah, corporations. If there wasn't such a greed and need for quick cash, it's like it's like Jenga the building each other up. Everyone's so desperate for money because there's such a high demand. But there's such a high demand because everyone's desperate for money and if they just chilled out there. Like, look, you don't need to make £20 billion. Just make a billion. If that's so, if you're all right with that and then we don't need to make as much because people are OK and everyone can just and I think the environment is damaged a lot because of our needs. Well, what we're living in, you know, like clothing factories and stuff and all the stuff. It's the stuff in the ocean. I think that's sort of really. And again, that's not little fisherman that is corporate humongous trawler boats and things. But I wouldn't know. Everyone can help though by doing bits I think.</p>	<p>Hope for sustainable future Money Awareness that human needs destroying the earth Large companies- money- responsibility Propaganda Contemporary society- using earth's resources Everyone can do their part</p>
<p><b>Do you think it's going to stop or change?</b></p>	
<p>Yeah, like you said, a circle. There's just no. And then I think a lot of it's like cultural too, if you like. Obviously, I don't really know, but like in certain places where again, you can't just have lots of new things, there's a respect, but like in Qatar, for instance, when I lived there, this was you know, a good 10 years ago now. But there were more cars than people that drove them. Everyone had like 2-3 Toyota land cruisers. So not even little cars. The amount that these people would just drive everywhere and like just it was insane, and I feel like that's a culture over there. We like cars, we like driving cars, you know, and that would be hard to stop on a tiny scale. And I think if you size it up with everyone and everything, it's a, it's a huge feat, isn't it?</p>	<p>Cultural differences and environmental impacts Recognition that collectively, people make an impact</p>
<p><b>Yeah, definitely. So do you think really like travel is a significant contributor to all that is going on with the environment?</b></p>	
<p>Yeah, I'd say probably you wouldn't dismiss it as a factor, would you? Like you'd be silly too. And like you said, the way people fly, you know, I couldn't. You wouldn't know how many flights are out there or, you might know, having researched it about, it's a lot flights every day. That added up year by year, it's like pennies to pounds, isn't it? When you start looking at it that way? 100%. No, you couldn't dismiss it as a factor. How big a factor it is. I would. You know, I'd love to know. I'll just read your thesis and find out. But yeah.</p>	<p>Travel as a contributor to environmental issues Particularly air travel</p>