

**School of Marketing
Curtin Business School**

**The impact of generational change on future demand for tourism
experiences: the case of Generation X and European river cruises**

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Doctor of Philosophy
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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)-updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number SOM2014070.

Signature: 

Date: February 28, 2017

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Abstract

As Generation X emerges to gradually become the principal market for what are presently, organised tourism products popular with 50+ travellers, it is crucial to understand what impact this generational change will have on demand for such experiences in the decades ahead. This thesis examines the motivation, needs and tourism expectations of this important generational cohort in the context of European river cruises, a fast growing segment of the world-wide cruising industry. It employs Generational Theory as the framework, a sociological approach to identifying unique features of generational cohorts and a frequently advocated theory by scholars in many contexts including tourism.

A review of the literature shows that there is insufficient knowledge among scholars and industry practitioners relating specifically to this important generational cohort in a general or tourism sense. Additionally, whilst there is plentiful research relating to the cruising industry, there is a dearth of knowledge relating to the European river cruise segment.

This thesis has employed the interpretive paradigm through the analysis of qualitative data. It has adopted a phenomenological research approach employing in-depth, semi-structured interviewing. Such an approach has sought to find meaning in the words to determine the background experiences affecting behaviour including motivation, consumer decision making and travel preferences. Narratives have been collected from a purposive sample of Gen X participants in the cities of Sydney and Melbourne in Australia, and New York and Los Angeles in the United States. These cities and countries were selected due to their importance as source markets for the European river cruises.

Inductive data and thematic analyses have been employed from the transcripts to identify distinct meanings from memories of phenomena experienced in the formative years. These years relate specifically to the bases of Generational Theory. The analyses have also presented memories of contemporary phenomena to identify possible expectations, needs and motivations in this emerging generational cohort as tourists.

The findings of the thesis show that the Gen Xers and tourism operators will be affected by common issues in both countries as they emerge as the new 50+ travellers. These include their governments raising the retirement ages and access to pension entitlements, lower savings due to the combination of mortgage repayments on high real estate prices and repayments of tertiary study fees, need for care for their older parents and continuing to care for their own still young children at home in mature years.

In the thesis Gen Xers have been found to embrace independence and freedom and work/life balance but suffer from low savings. As travellers they are experienced, confident and adventurous due to significant travel opportunities in childhood and formative years. They are passionate about social and cultural interaction with local destination communities and they embrace the tourist region of Europe, but have spatial, social, demographic and financial concerns in regard to river cruise experiences. Aware of and enthusiastic in acceptance of technological advances, they readily adopt the Internet and social networking opportunities for their travel information and booking processes and for constant connectedness with family and friends throughout vacation experiences.

This thesis has found that tourism organisations, marketers and operators cannot assume that Gen Xers will have the same consumer or tourist motivations as the current 50+ generational cohorts. The implications for industry practitioners relate to marketing, cruise content, river vessel configurations, costs, cruise durations, accommodations as well as on-board facilities. The thesis has provided a robust and contemporary understanding of the unique consumer and tourism behaviour of Gen Xers as they move into mature years.

Key river cruise routes in Europe



Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This thesis examines how the consumer and tourism behaviour of Generation Xers is likely to impact the demand for (current) organised package tourism products and services targeted at tourists aged 50+, specifically European river cruises.

The knowledge gained is important because over the next decades the emergent and now mature Generation X cohort (hereafter termed Gen X) will begin to form and then become the main target market segment for these European river cruise experiences. The research objective of this thesis is to develop a greater awareness of how Gen Xers, who are currently aged between 36 and 51 (in 2016) are likely to behave as older tourism consumers and examines what this means for European tourism providers and related organisations. What are the anticipated motivators that will drive Gen Xers towards these products and experiences currently targeted at 50+ mature/older tourists? The approaches taken by European tourism organisations and river cruise operators to marketing, sales, vessel design and most of all, cruise content may need to be reviewed. The topic is currently under-researched and so the thesis findings will fill the knowledge gap and therefore are of interest to the wider academic community. In addition, the findings will contribute to theory in this area and also provide practical insights for tourism industry stakeholders.

1.2 Introduction

Knowledge of future demand for products is vital for tourism planners and managers (Glover & Prideaux, 2008b; Hicks & Hicks, 1999). A driver of change and possibly demand for the mature or older age 50 + (refer Section 1.7, Definitions) organised package tourism market will be the emergence of Gen Xers, a distinct generational cohort, which will gradually replace the current main target market, the Baby Boomers. Understanding more about this process of change and the possible differences embedded in the Gen X cohort is vital for tourism organisations, operators and marketers looking at market preferences and expectations in the decades ahead.

The topic of generational change and its impact on future demand for tourism products is currently an under researched field (Gardiner, Grace, & King, 2015; Noble & Schewe, 2003; Schewe & Noble, 2000). Gen X has not received the same attention in the tourism literature as the cohort now aged between the early 50s and 70, the Baby Boomer generation (Delmont, 1991; Glusac, 2012; Hill, 2013) which has been the majority market segment for many of these organised package vacation experiences (such as European river cruises) over the last two decades.

To better understand the Gen X cohort and the concept of life paths as they relate directly to the research objective, this thesis draws from literature on Generational Theory (what makes generations different?) and Gen X (what are the unique features of this generational cohort?) also in a tourism context (what tourism studies have already been undertaken for this generational cohort?). It questions why current and past research has concentrated on other generational cohorts, for example Lehto, Jang, Achana, and O'Leary (2008) relating to Baby Boomers and Benckendorff, Moscardo, and Pendergast (2010) and Leask, Fyall, and Barron (2013, 2014) focussing on Generation Y, when Gen X represents the future for these types of organised vacations for 50+ tourists and has been overlooked.

It is apparent there is a paucity of recent research literature relating to Gen X and so empirical research is required to fill the knowledge gap and provide a needed understanding of this generational cohort and in so doing, offer vital information to the tourism industry. This thesis presents theoretical propositions on how tourism organisations and providers can and should adapt. In addition it provides a conceptual framework for future research.

Whilst the concept of identifying differences between generations through a sociological approach was pioneered by Mannheim (1952), it was the significant increase in birth rates in Western Europe, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand following World War Two (Project M, 2014) that alerted marketers to the value of targeting specific generations on the basis of this Generational Theory. In these same Western world regions and countries, Gen X currently represents a vast population segment of over 127 million individuals (Glover & Prideaux, 2009; Hennig, 2014; McCrindle Research, 2010; United States Census Bureau, 2010).

The focus of this thesis is on Australia and the United States, both countries with large Gen X cohorts and therefore potential 50+ tourist markets of nearly five million individuals in Australia (Glover & Prideaux, 2009; McCrindle Research, 2014) and over 63 million in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2010). These countries have been selected due to their importance as source markets for organised package tourism since the introduction of mass medium and long haul air travel in the 1960s and 70s and now in 2016, particularly important source markets for European river cruise vacation experiences. In addition, and further demonstrating these countries' importance, Australia is an expanding travel market, with most recent available figures showing outbound holiday travel increasing by 1.039 % in 2015, compared with the previous year (Australian Government. Austrade, 2016). The United States market to Europe grew by 8% in 2014 (ITA. Office of Travel & Tourism Industries, 2015).

River cruises (a form of organised package tourism) have been chosen as the specific context for this generational change thesis as they have been and remain a popular vacation choice now and over the last two decades for medium and long haul travellers to Europe. In 2016 the region is home to 12 cruise lines, offering 185 vessels which predominantly cater for Australian and American customers (full details relating to this important cruise industry sector are presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3). Latest available figures show annual passenger numbers of 79,530 from Australia and 453,000 from the US (CLIA, 2014b, 2015b; River Cruises Europe, 2015; Seatrade Europe, 2015). These tourism experiences have been particularly sought after by those falling into the older or mature traveller (50+) market, currently the Baby Boomer and the older Silent Generation.

In this thesis, the previously mentioned sociological perspective is employed and a qualitative, phenomenological study design is used. Such a design is appropriate as the thesis aims to determine the background experiences behind the participants' motivation, purchasing decisions and travel preferences. In-depth questioning is employed and searches for individual and shared phenomena are undertaken, focussing on formative years of general and travel experiences (Jennings, 2010). Full details are presented in Chapter 4. This approach has been seen as the most

appropriate to answer the research questions (hereafter termed Research Questions) outlined in Section 1.4.

1.3 Research background

Studies relating to Gen X in the general and tourism contexts were prominent in the 1990s and early 2000s when this generational cohort was in their young adult phase. Latterly there has been a dearth of studies relating solely to Gen X, resulting in research gaps. Some contemporary researchers have undertaken comparative studies of different generations, most often quantitative or mixed methods in approach. Pennington-Gray, Fridgen, and Stynes (2003) have recorded that these studies have not been specific to one generational cohort in the findings. Examples of studies are the Australian research undertaken and documented by Gardiner et al. (2015), Glover and Prideaux (2009) and Singer and Prideaux (2006). In other countries, various studies such as Lehto et al. (2008), Li, Li, and Hudson (2013) and Pennington-Gray et al. (2003), Schewe and Meredith (2004) Schewe and Noble (2000) have been broad in context and, again, not focussing specifically on Gen X.

In these studies, some predictions are made for consumer and tourism behaviour and the subsequent implications for destinations and organisations, but not specifically to any one generational cohort and without data collected from in-depth questioning of Gen Xers. In many cases, tourism generational study scholars have advocated future generational tourism research be undertaken employing such in-depth studies, for example Gardiner et al. (2015), Gardiner, King, and Grace (2013), Lehto et al. (2008) and Singer and Prideaux (2006). Supporting the call, Li et al. (2013) have emphasised that there is a need for more generational analysis as a common sense segmentation criterion in travel market research. This thesis seeks to fill the research gaps employing such a study design.

The research gaps apparent in the extant literature are as follows. Firstly, there is currently no qualitative in-depth published research into the travel motivations or the unique tourism needs of mature adult Gen Xers, necessary to assist in determining future tourism demand. Secondly, extant contemporary Generational Theory focussing on this generational cohort is limited in terms of Gen X in the general and tourism contexts, and this thesis extends this theory. Whilst comparatively plentiful

research has been undertaken detailing the unique features of the Baby Boomer generation, little exists for Gen X, particularly in the last decade. Finally, whilst in-depth *narrative-based* research has been encouraged as a way of examining this generational cohort and Generational Theory in the tourism context more thoroughly, studies to date have been too broadly based. These studies ask very general questions, survey large numbers of participants and employ random face to face or web based questionnaires. They cannot provide the richness of data necessary to understand the unique characteristics of Gen X in the tourism context.

1.4 Research Questions

Reiterating the aim, this thesis asks how generational change will impact on future demand for tourism experiences using the case of Gen X and European river cruises. To answer such a question, it is crucial for the academic community and tourism practitioners to incorporate the seminal Generational Theory studies of Mannheim (1952) which emphasise how formative influences affect subsequent beliefs, values, attitudes and interests of this generational cohort. This will result in greater understanding of Gen X's consumer decision making and motivation for choosing to purchase European river cruises and then tourism behaviour whilst experiencing these types of vacations.

Extending Mannheim's theory, Cooper and Hall (2008) observe that each generation has particular values and beliefs that influence tourism demand. Glover and Prideaux (2008a, p. 2) add, "in addition to age, the tourism demand pattern of specific generations is likely to depend on that generation's particular beliefs and values as well as factors such as past travel opportunities or travel experience."

In this exploratory thesis four specific Research Questions are investigated,

1. What does the concept of generational change signify in the context of the tourism industry?
2. What formative experiences have shaped Gen X's beliefs, values, attitudes and interests?
3. How have previous travel experiences affected Gen X's tourism preferences?
4. What are the push/pull factors which would motivate Gen Xers towards European river cruise vacations?

1.5 Research strategy

At the outset of this thesis, when the concept was in its embryonic stage, it was considered that the first step was to gain an understanding of the backgrounds, past tourism experiences and current tourism needs and expectations of Gen Xers. Thus it was decided that a qualitative, semi-structured interview regime be employed as the most effective method to obtain this new data.

In prior generational studies the research approach has tended to be quantitative, focussing on generational comparisons of both current tourism behaviour but also predictions of the tourism world and tourism consumer of the future, such as those suggested by Yeoman, Tan Li Yu, Mars, and Wouters (2012). These have included topics such as sustainability of tourism resources, transport, accommodation, food resources, technology and others.

In this thesis, employing a qualitative approach, in-depth data is collected through semi-structured interviews with Gen Xers in Australia and the United States. These two countries being major source markets for European long and medium haul inbound mature age travel experiences. Thirty nine Gen Xers were interviewed in the cities of Sydney and Melbourne, New York and Los Angeles. Participants were aged between 35 and 50 in 2015 (refer Section 1.7, Definitions) and meeting the criteria for selection by having previous travel experience and a desire to travel in the future (full details of this data collection are contained in Chapter 4). In addition, European river cruise operator head office executives were interviewed in both Los Angeles and Sydney due to the lack of material on the topic of river cruises and specifically European river cruises. As mentioned in Section 1.3, the findings fill the current gaps in knowledge on this topic and should be of interest to the wider academic community but also provide practical insights for tourism industry stakeholders.

1.6 Research significance

This thesis is significant because the outcomes contribute to an understanding or provide an expanded understanding of the impacts of transition from one generation to another when related to a particular market segment of long and medium haul (Australia and the United States) inbound tourism to Europe. It is significant for the following reasons,

1. In the theoretical context, it develops a more socially oriented body of knowledge of how generational change impacts on specific tourism markets, through close analysis of rich in-depth data collected from selected and qualified participants from the Gen X cohort.
2. The methodology utilised, employing a phenomenological research design, is a novel approach in this context and extends extant theory in an interview environment with research participants having the opportunity to tell their story of social phenomena experienced in formative years, these affecting lifetime decision making, beliefs, values, attitudes and interests.
3. It is specific in that it focusses on a particular generational cohort (Gen X) which is under-researched generally and specifically in the tourism context.
4. In practical terms it has application for tourism organisations, operators and marketers who seek to focus on medium to long haul planning, cognisant of the needs of an increasingly important and growing demographics.
5. This thesis ultimately demonstrates how generational change can influence the demand for tourism products (and consequently have an influence on product marketing) and importantly, product content.
6. It assists in identifying potential preferences discovered through a comprehensive analysis of the Gen X cohort.

1.7 Definitions

Generational Theory

This theory asserts that a generational cohort member's formative beliefs, values, attitudes and interests are maintained during the life journey (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Mackay, 1997; Mannheim, 1952). Shown below are definitions relating to Gen X and mature or older (50+) tourists, in addition to beliefs, values, attitudes and interests, generations and formative.

Gen X

Gen X has been described as a distinct generational cohort by many sociologists, demographers and market researchers (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Mackay, 1997). Here, the birth years 1965 to 1980 have been chosen as the generational break years based upon the average of research study/literature dates and the popular sociological

perspective of 15 years (Glover & Prideaux, 2009; Healy, 2011; Hicks & Hicks, 1999; Klie, 2012; McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009; Ritchie, 1992; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

50+ tourists, sometimes referred to as mature or older tourists

These terms are used in the extant literature relating to the main markets for river cruise package vacations by researchers who note the age 50 and above or 50+ (Delmont, 1991; Glusac, 2012; Hill, 2013; Reimer, 2012). In addition, according to L. Sharp, Managing Director Australia, Insight Vacations (Interview, June 8, 2012) industry practitioners, whilst not using the terms, nominate the same 50+ age group as being the target market for their tourism experiences.

Beliefs, values, attitudes and interests

Beliefs, values and attitudes are the principles which bind groups together in formative years and become the basis of “continuing practice” (Mannheim, 1952, p. 305) through life’s path. These, together with interests, have an effect on the collective behaviour of individuals within a particular generational cohort.

Individually they have been acknowledged as follows (Little, 2013; Queensland Studies Authority, 2008; O’Donnell, 1997):

Beliefs

A belief is a feeling within us that a reality or truth exists, even though that belief may not have been proven or have no basis for truth.

Values

A value is something we attach to something or someone-it measures worth. Values often reflect the way we prioritise and order aspects of our lives.

Attitudes

Attitudes can be the way we express ourselves to others in our words or behaviour or presentation.

Interests

These are activities a person may undertake personally or in a group situation. There a multitude of possibilities and can range from individual or collective exercise oriented activities to individual hobbies to social but low activity undertakings.

Generations

A generation is a combination of six components. These are a traumatic or formative collectively experienced event, a demographic shift which has an effect on distribution of resources, some event which causes the generation to experience success or failure, a positive event which remains in the cohort's memory, mentor influences and technical innovation. (Arsenault, 2004).

“A generation forms a persona from these factors that include attitudes, values and beliefs about family life, religion, gender roles, lifestyles, and more that does not change as a function of age.” (Arsenault, 2004, p. 124).

Formative

“.....late adolescent/early adult years..... (approximately 17-23 years of age).” (Schewe & Meredith, 2014, p. 51).

1.8 Thesis structure

The following is a brief description of each of the thesis chapters. Chapter 2 seeks to review the extant literature relating to previous research on generations, Generational Theory, Gen X (in the general and tourism context), tourism motivation, consumer and tourism behaviour and European river cruises. Chapter 3 presents the contextual analysis, including an extensive review of the worldwide cruising industry, a history of and recent details relating to the European river cruising segment and information regarding the rivers of operation.

In Chapter 4, the methodological strategy is presented including the research design and details of data collection. In Chapter 5, details of the ideas generation, manual and electronic analysis of the data and thematic analysis are shown, with pertinent participant comments grouped under headings of themes and sub-themes.

Chapter 6 discusses and interprets the results comparing extant literature with contemporary data from the field. Finally, in Chapter 7, contributions to theory, methodology and practice are presented and conclusions, limitations and directions for future research are considered. So the key findings and implications of the thesis are documented as well as the thesis' limitations and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 has introduced the notion that understanding more about what makes generations different, the possible unique characteristics of Gen X and expanding upon the limited tourism context literature relating to this generational cohort and their motivations and expectations (based on life experiences) were the central elements of this thesis. Coupled with this understanding were the specific research aims which focus on Gen X in the tourism context, and the impact that generational change will have on demand for a popular vacation experience, European river cruises.

This chapter details extant research relating to Generational Theory, as well as noting other theories relating to stages in the life path of a generational cohort. In addition, the chapter presents a summary of the literature relating specifically to Gen X, which was prevalent in their formative years, but more limited in contemporary times. This summary is documented together with details relating to recent inter-generational studies which include Gen X, followed by a section relating to consumer and tourism behaviour. Finally, literature relating to tourism context studies including Gen X, tourism in Europe and an overview of the world-wide cruising industry and European river cruising is critically examined.

2.2 Generational Theory

Contemporary Generational Theory is based on the concept that generations or cohorts (Noble & Schewe, 2003) can be termed a social phenomenon and are different from each other due to their formative experiences, resulting in a markedly different world view (Singer & Prideaux, 2006). Such theory emanates from research by Mannheim (1952) which suggests that any differences between generational cohorts come from significant economic, political or societal events which have occurred during formative years. Indeed Mannheim's seminal Generational Theory holds that what makes generations unique is that the particular members of the cohort have experienced the same events in their time in history. He talks of members of the same generation "participating in the same historical and social circumstances" (1952, p. 298).

Later research studies have suggested that the individual generational cohort members, or the concrete social group, are shaped by these events (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014; Strauss & Howe, 1991). For example, the members of the generational cohort who in their formative years, fought for their country in World War Two (and survived) shared the experiences of war including violence, possible injury, grief, travel, cross cultural communication and camaraderie. Such experiences shaped or influenced their lives.

Still other studies support the concept of generational change and express it in terms of similar historical events influencing individuals of a certain age (Noble & Schewe, 2003) or unique values and behaviours being produced by shared histories at the macro level (Meredith & Schewe, 1994; Schewe & Meredith, 2004). This term *macro level* is referred to as external environment in some studies and again, the point is made that a particular generational cohort exhibits a uniqueness as each cohort's external environment has distinct differences (Pennington-Gray et al., 2003).

The theory notes that the guidelines or tenets established in formative years, that is, beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours remain influential for the individual's lifetime (Eyerman & Turner, 1998; Gardiner et al., 2013; Ryan, 1992; Schewe & Meredith, 2004; Tsui & Hughes, 2001). In support of Generational Theory, Howe and Strauss (2007) have popularised this idea that people in a particular age group tend to share a distinct set of beliefs, values, attitudes, interests and behaviours because they all grow up and come of age during a particular period in history.

The relationship between formative years and significant economic, political or societal common events occurring during formative years has been investigated in some later studies (Kupperschmidt, 2000; McMullin, Comeau, & Jovic, 2007). This mention of common events recurs in the literature. It is a salient term as significant events such as wars, economic highs and lows, natural disasters, election of great leaders and technological breakthroughs can have a substantial impact on a person, particularly if encountered in formative years (Gardiner et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2013; Glover & Prideaux, 2009; Hicks & Hicks, 1999; Mackay, 1997; Meredith & Schewe, 1994). Some studies have also considered influences such as the environment and societal norms in the context of tourism in these formative years (Li et al., 2013; Pennington-Gray et al., 2003) and the consequent effects on behaviour, particularly

through socialization (Noble & Schewe, 2003) in day to day life and also when related to tourism expectations and motivation. Of importance for this thesis, studying the impacts of generational change in the tourism context is that this Generational Theory has noted that each unique generation has individual characteristics, distinguishing it from others (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014; Mannheim, 1952).

Table 2-1 shows some examples of political, social, environmental and technological events together with some iconic figures from the late 1970s, 1980s and 90s. The table illustrates the kind of events or people that Generation Theory indicates will create the shared cohort experience.

Table 2-1 Significant events and people in Australia and the USA during Gen-X formative years

AUSTRALIA	USA	GENERIC
PMs Bob Hawke and Paul Keating (Labor)	Ronald Reagan and George H Bush as Presidents (Republican)	Personal computers
Elle MacPherson	Video games introduced	Sesame Street and The Muppets
Ian “Molly” Meldrum and Countdown	Internet (later generic)	Stock Market crash of 1987
Fashion icons such as Princess Diana, Cher and Madonna	War on drugs	Berlin Wall down in 1989
Higher divorce rates/Family Court (first introduced in 1975)	Iran hostage crisis	Mass marketing
Dramatic increases in housing prices	Gulf War (1) Later including Australia	First test tube baby 1978
Both parents working becomes commonplace	Dot.com bubble	AIDS
Higher education standards	Watergate	Emergence of alternative rock music
Multiculturalism	End of Vietnam War (affected United States more than Australia)	MTV
	Falling educational standards	Chernobyl (Russian nuclear plant)
		Workaholic parents and higher divorce rates

Sources: (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Data analysis by scholars (Schewe & Meredith, 2004; Schewe & Noble, 2000) emphasises that created values from events in formative years produce common bonds for life. Such conclusions once again support Generational Theory relating to the uniqueness or differences between generations and influence of formative years (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). As an example of the variances that can be seen in travel preferences by discrete generations, research has highlighted many differences between Baby Boomers and their predecessors, the Silent Generation. Lehto et al. (2008) suggest that the attitudes and lifestyles of the former seem to differ substantially from those of the older Silent Generation with regard to leisure travel. Other studies note that Gen Y has been singled out by scholars for their apparently dramatic differences from previous generational cohorts (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011; Leask et al., 2013, 2014; Martins, Yusuf, & Swanson, 2012; Sun & Wang, 2010).

A limited number of scholars argue a different point of view and have employed alternative theories, particularly in the context of marketing. Marconi, for example, suggests that over-arching categories such as Baby Boomers and Gen Xers are eye catching, appear well in the media, and may help to narrow the focus, but in target marketing, they can easily underestimate the scope and diversity of the market (Marconi, 2001). Marconi is alluding to the fact that within a generational cohort such as Gen X, there can be a second tier of individual needs and wants which should be taken into account and recognised, possibly alluding to the matter of individual personality.

Alternative theories are the Life Cycle Theory, which has originated in the field of psychology. Researchers adhering to this theory suggest a life cycle of eight stages, infant, toddler, pre-schooler, school-age, adolescent, young adult, middle-aged adult, and older adult (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014). One scholar (Erikson, 1959) condenses this to four stages, childhood, young adulthood, mid-adulthood, and elder adulthood. This Life Cycle Theory has been employed in the context of leisure and tourism in studies in the 1970s (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975) and subsequently in a 1990s research project based on the travel patterns of German tourists (Oppermann, 1995b) and a contemporary 21st century research project in the United States (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014). The studies combine this theory with the Continuity Theory, one

linked to Generational Theory and one which holds that older adults demonstrate a consistency of psychological characteristics (Atchley, 1989; Oppermann, 1995a, 1995b).

A 2003 study (Portolese Dias, 2003) makes the point that age is a leveller of generational cohort characteristics (Portolese Dias, 2003). Dias argues that people grow up and then want similar things such as cars, baby products and new homes, depending on their stage in the life cycle, rather than through generational uniqueness. This is a minority view although Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu, Kara, and Dalgic (1996) acknowledge that personality, lifestyle and social situation play a role but agree with many researchers that past shared life experiences (as espoused by Generational Theory) are important. A more recent study observes that searching for patterns of human behaviour in societies or in an historical context is legitimate (Alsted, 2012).

Frequent citing and use of Generational Theory in the literature suggests that it presents as a credible and frequently utilized theory which can be employed in future research studies. Generational cohort segmentation has been widely adopted in sociological studies and marketing research as it examines historical and environmental influences on consumer psychology, and importantly in a tourism context (Huang & Petrick, 2010). A contextual definition has been provided by the Travel Industry Association (TIA). It points out that a useful way to classify any population is by the ages of the individuals who comprise it or, more broadly, by generational groups that are distinct not only in terms of their ages, but by common events that helped shape their lives (TIA. Travel Industry Association, 2006).

It is evident from the literature reviewed that the overwhelming body of research has supported the notion that the Generational Theory is legitimate. It has been widely adopted in sociological studies and marketing research which view historical and environmental influences on consumer psychology (Benckendorff et al., 2010). In tourism literature, there are limited studies of generational cohorts, but the majority of these travel and tourism studies (which are shown in Section 2.5) have utilized and advocated this Generational Theory.

2.3 Biological versus sociological definitions of generations

An early standard approach to establishing date range for a generation was the birth date of the female and then the span to the birth of her first child . It has been suggested that this is a biological approach equating to the term of years, roughly 30, being the average period between the birth of the parents and the birth of the offspring (Mackay, 1997). Contemporary research has taken the sociological approach rather than the (arbitrary) biological approach to these date ranges and as a result the date range has reduced. A sociologically defined generation refers to a cohort of people born within a similar span of time who have shared a comparable age and life stage and who were shaped by a particular span of time (McCrinkle & Wolfinger, 2009; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

These criteria are the bases of defining generations and birth date range in both the biological and, most importantly, sociological sense. The latter is the most widely used and the best choice for tourism marketers, sellers and operators (McCrinkle & Wolfinger, 2009) for a number of reasons as detailed later on in Section 2.5. Supporting this argument for the use of the sociological approach, in contemporary Western society many women are choosing to have children much later in life, which would mean a generational span of over 40 years which, it can be suggested is far too many years for a generational break due to rapid environmental, technological and social changes. Also, travel and tourism is a dynamic industry and needs to adapt to societal and technological change which in the opinion of many scholars (Lohmann & Danielsson, 2001; Pennington-Gray et al., 2003; Prideaux, 2007) is far more rapid than even 30 years ago.

The sociological viewpoint expressed by Mackay (1997) and McCrinkle and Wolfinger (2009) is the most appropriate for this thesis due to these rapidly changing influences (particularly technological) affecting this generational cohort in their formative years. Australian tourism sociologists have observed that demographic change is slow and barely recognisable from one year to the next, but over the course of a 15 year period, changes in the age structure and composition of the population can make a significant difference to consumption patterns (Glover & Prideaux, 2009). The next section nominates a birth date range for this thesis and critically evaluates the extant literature specifically relating to Gen X.

2.4 About Gen X

Gen X has been described as a distinct generational cohort by many sociologists, demographers and market researchers, including Mackay (1997) in Australia and Howe and Strauss (2007) in the United States. There are diverse definitions and date ranges (refer Table 2-2) from a variety of scholars from Australia, the United States and Canada (Gelston, 2008; Glover & Prideaux, 2009; Healy, 2011; Hicks & Hicks, 1999; Klie, 2012; Krywulak & Roberts, 2009; Mackay, 1997; McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009; Ritchie, 1992; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

For the purpose of this research, the years 1965 to 1980 have been chosen as the generational break or birth years for Gen Xers based on an average of research study/literature which is shown in Table 2-2, and also the previously mentioned popular sociological perspective of 15 years (Dotson, Clark, & Dave, 2008; Hicks & Hicks, 1999; Klie, 2012; McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009; Ritchie, 1992; Strauss & Howe, 1991). The period between 1965 and 1980 has seen dramatic societal change in many areas, including the previously mentioned obvious one of technology, but also (and importantly) greater availability of travel experience and destination opportunities for Australians and Americans.

Table 2-2 Summary of birth date ranges for Gen X

Author(s) and year	Dates	Research commentary
Klie, L. (2012) United States	1965-1976	“This is the same generation, born between 1965 and 1976 that is now referred to as Generation X.” (p. 24)
Healy, M. (2011) United States	1961-1981	
McCrindle, M. and Wolfinger, E. (2009) Australia	1964-1979	“...today’s generations are defined sociologically rather than biologically. A generation refers to a cohort of people born within a similar span of time (fifteen years at the upper end) who share comparable age and life stage and who are shaped by a particular span of time.” (p.10)

Author(s) and year	Dates	Research commentary
Dotson et al. (2008) United States	1961-about 1980	“Most of the studies have the generation break occurring about the year 1980: suggesting that those individuals born before 1980 as being the X generation...for the purpose of this study, the year 1980 was chosen as the “generational break.” (p.666-7)
Gelston, S. (2008) United States	1961-1981	
Prideaux, B., and Glover, P. (citing Marconi and Tapscott, 1998) (2008) Australia	1966-1977	“This is the same generation, born between 1965 and 1976 that is now referred to as Generation X.” (p.24)
Hicks, R. and Hicks, K. (1999) United States	1966-1977	
MacKay, H. (1997) Australia	Born in the 1970s	“children of the Boomers, born in the 1970s.” (p.3) “we tend to speak of generations in terms of a group or individuals who were born at about the same time, or in the same era, and who have been subject to common social, cultural and economic influences.” (p.10)
Ritchie, K. (1995) United States	1961-1981	“are defined as born between 1961 and 1981.” (p.16)
Strauss, W. and Howe, N. (1991) United States	1961-1981	

Extant (but not recent) literature identifies a number of generic traits which distinguish Gen X from other generations. These include fierce independence, a false sense of cultural awareness and adaptability to rapid change, relaxed social values, the need to be valued, highly developed learning capabilities, self-assuredness, self-sufficiency, and personal vulnerability (Barrow, 1994; Beaudoin, 1998; De Lollis, 2005; Healy, 2011; Klie, 2012; Lee & Gates, 1992; Levine, 1994; Losyk, 1997; Ritchie, 1992; Tulgan, 1996). Gen X has been identified as being entrepreneurial, as having experienced a working mother, negative economic conditions, high divorce

rates between their parents, all the while looking for balance in life (Allen, 2003). In several studies in the United States researching the wants of Gen X, it has been found that their seeming desire for entertainment can influence the cohort's needs when vacationing (Beirne, 2005; Li et al., 2013; Ritchie, 1995; Wilson, 1998; Wolf, Carpenter, & Qenani-Petrela, 2005).

Many general defining features, situations and events for Gen X are common to both Australia and the United States, due to the blending of cultures, mainly brought about through shared on-line access and experiences via the Internet and the television/movie industries. In addition, shared experiences have been fostered through international travel, which saw a dramatic increase in popularity from the 1970s, due to the introduction of wide-bodied jets, which led to greater affordability of air travel and the mobile nature of societies through work and study opportunities. Others are unique defining features particular to each country, as generational cohorts in different geographical locations within the same country will experience some differences in formative events. An extreme example of this latter would be two children of the same sociological generation in about the year 1800, one growing up in China and the other in Germany (Mannheim, 1952).

In Australia it has been argued that Gen X can be referred to as “digital adaptives” (McCrimble & Wolfinger, 2009, p. 52) in that they took on board the technological changes that they could see taking place around the home, the school, the university and the workplace. They experienced their parents' (Baby Boomers) long working hours when families were young. This has resulted in a strong desire to create more equitable work-life balances in their own lives. These findings reflect the results of research in the United States (Strauss & Howe, 1991) and later affiliated studies (Williams, Coupland, Folwell, & Sparks, 1997). Again in the United States, research has detected themes such as concerns about the economy and unemployment, worries about divorce and family break ups, liberal acceptance of diversity and promotion of traditional family values (Strauss & Howe, 1999).

Once again in Australia, a research study based on similar samples by Mackay (1997) reports results consistent with the United States studies. For Gen Xers, the work-life balance is important as well as the importance of the family and also, independence and technological adeptness. In addition, this generation faces

contemporary issues such as a changing economic landscape, prosperity of source countries, affordability of tourist destinations and products (Block, 2006; Gallagher, 2011; Gerson, 2009; Han, 2015; Maserjian-Shan, 2011; Nimrod, 2008) and financing retirement years (Bass, 2013; Campbell, 2004; Gladych, 2013; Panaritis, 2012; U.S. Newswire, 2013). They face issues such as delayed retirement (Ghilarducci, 2015; Power, 2016; SSA, 2016), possible declining health issues (Nimrod, 2008), more dependent older parents (Anonymous, 2010; Gallagher, 2011) and younger children in older age due to deferred child birth (Gerson, 2007; Korabik, Lero, & Whitehead, 2008; Stephenson, 1996; Tamborini & Iams, 2011; Wyn, 2012). They also face issues such as possible lack of any inheritance (Block, 2006; Keane, 2015; Satter, 2015) and tourism restrictions due to safety and security concerns (Bowen, Fidgeon, & Page, 2014; Law, 2006; Seabra, Abrantes, & Kastenholz, 2014).

The implications relating to consumer and travel behaviour (Barrow, 1994; Beaudoin, 1998; De Lollis, 2005; Healy, 2011; Hung & Petrick, 2011; Klie, 2012; Littrell, Paige, & Song, 2004; Losyk, 1997; Ritchie, 1992; Tulgan, 1996) include technology based information gathering and booking (Bruce, 2015; Poon, 1993; Prebensen, Woo, Chen, & Uysal, 2013), the possibility of lower priced river cruise options (combined with lower cost air travel options, shorter vacation durations and more family inclusive vacation possibilities). This generational cohort is the first to grow up with computer technology learnt first in their late primary or early high school days. Whilst savvy, they have issues with the credibility of advertising in general (Benckendorff et al., 2010) and digital advertising and marketing, an important observation for this thesis' tourism context in a data driven marketing world. The next section presents the current literature relating to Gen X in the tourism context.

2.5 Travel, tourism and Gen X

Whilst Gen X has received some academic attention from scholars in the areas of spending power, materialistic goals, influence, economic circumstances, attitudes and values (Klie, 2012; Losyk, 1997; Mackay, 1997; Ritchie, 1992; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Tulgan, 1996) there has been limited application in the tourism context and specifically, very little in the areas of travel motivation, tourism preferences and travel behaviour. As Glover and Prideaux (2008a, p. 2) have pointed out “there is

still a considerable lack of information on the impacts of generational change from Baby Boomers to Gen X over the next 25 years.”

A few studies do exist which are detailed here, for example Pennington-Gray et al. (2003) using a case study methodology identifying tourism preferences relating to generational cohort membership.

Although the limited extant literature is informative, it does highlight key gaps. These are chiefly in the lack of in-depth investigation of this generational cohort's formative years and discovering more about specific generational influences in people's lives and current world views, which could be detected through their narratives. In addition, details relating to specific tourist experiences in particular tourism regions at various times of life can be gleaned through in-depth questioning. In so doing, experiential profiles can be developed.

These limited previous generational studies including the Gen X cohort in the tourism context have been undertaken in various countries. Summarised below are some details of the few contemporary tourism studies involving Gen X relating to Australian domestic product and United States/Canadian domestic and international travel (Glover & Prideaux, 2009; Li et al., 2013; Pennington-Gray et al., 2003) as well as a study of Japanese outbound tourists and German regional tourists.

Glover and Prideaux (2008a) in their conference paper *Identifying tourism demand: The Gold Coast and Cairns 2020* refer to an airport exit (departure) survey conducted at Cairns and Gold Coast (Coolangatta) airports in eastern Australia. A total of 656 domestic tourists framed using three generations (Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y) were each briefly surveyed in a short questionnaire to explore possible differing demand patterns, their general life expectations and tourism expectations in 2020. The study employs as a base the Theory of Generations as applied to the tourism industry. This study was conducted some years ago and was across three generations, Baby Boomers, X and Y. The study found each of the generations expected to have more money for “tourism purpose in the future” (2008a, p. 11) and “expressed strong interest in travelling overseas more often in the future” (2008a, p. 12). The study has also found that regardless of the price of vacations in the future, value was a very important component when choosing the destination/product. Finally, it found that

there was strong interest in travelling to new destinations. This study uses a comparative generational approach to the research question, framed as discussed, across three generations.

An interesting study by Glover and Prideaux (2009) shows Australian tourism demand patterns and preferences amongst Baby Boomers utilizing 2 case study methodology featuring firstly, caravanning and secondly, tourism in Norfolk Island. This study demonstrates the possible impacts of an ageing population on tourism demand and implications for future product and destination development, as does the study of future travel demand based on population projections (Glover & Prideaux, 2008b). The latter study also employs a case study but relating to two generational cohorts (Baby Boomers and Gen Ys) and incorporating a Delphi study and focus group interviews. These are again, comparative studies and focus on comparisons between younger and older tourists and modelling population projections. In Australia, the works of Glover and Prideaux (2009) have been cited frequently and provide useful information about generational travel patterns, although they do not focus on Gen X specifically, or the destination of Europe.

A research study from the year 2000 addresses generational cohort effects on travel behaviour and travel philosophies focusing on older Japanese tourists and “addressed the issue of whether travelers’[Sic.] behaviour changes over time” (You & O’Leary, 2000, p. 21). The study employs two cross sectional data sets and utilises interviews conducted in homes in 1986 and 1995. The scholars have been able to reinforce the theory that changes in travel behaviour and philosophy occur over an individual’s lifetime. A German study (mentioned briefly in Section 2.2) has found differences in selecting travel destinations by older and younger German residents (Oppermann, 1995b). The study utilizes the previously mentioned Life Cycle Theory and employs methodology based on examining holiday data and questionnaires. It finds that choice of destination region (in Central Europe) to be dependent upon generational cohort membership, “A cohort analysis disclosed that successive destinations have different travel patterns.” (1995b, p. 548). As mentioned previously, research conducted by Pennington-Gray et al. (2003) has been based on a case study specifically relating to senior tourism. This is an applied tourism analysis of cohort segmentation of Canadians based on Generational Theory. It examines changes in preferences for travel

over time and has been analysed by viewing patterns in the data. Data were generated from surveys of Canadians conducted 12 years apart. The results conclude that travel preference variables are largely related to generational cohort membership but also stage in life. For example, one finding is that younger aged generations were more interested in visiting national and provincial parks than the older generations. Another finding is that interest in shopping had increased across the generations between 1983 and 1995.

Li et al. (2013) employ a quantitative study examining the attitudes and behaviours of American international travellers using this same Generational Theory analysis, and grounded in the Theory of Tourism Consumption Systems. Their methodology utilises an on-line panel survey of adult American leisure travellers aged 18 or over, who had taken at least one vacation in the previous year. These adults were classified into four categories from Silent Generation to Gen Y. The study employs Chi-square and ANOVA tests to detect statistically significant differences amongst generations, as well as two perceptual mapping techniques to graphically distinguish between the variables of interest and relationship between generations. In their conclusion, Li et al. (2013) acknowledge that academics and tourism organisations agree that the use of generational analysis to study generations is valid.

Another study (Lehto et al., 2008) compares tourism experiences being sought by United States and Canadian senior tourists. This study focusses on Baby Boomers and investigates the needs and wants of this generational cohort. The scholars employ a Travel Activities and Motivation Survey (telephone survey conducted in the United States and Canada in 2000) to compare tourism experiences sought by Silent Generation and Baby Boomer consumers and also actual vacation activities. The findings show that the generations are not necessarily homogeneous, but that there are differences between generations in cohort-induced lifestyle and values which permeated the vacation experience. Overall, this study supports the applicability of Generational Theory.

Other studies relating to generational change and the tourism needs and wants of generations have been undertaken including Javalgi, Thomas, and Rao (1992) examining European destination choices of United States pleasure travellers. The study offers suggestions relating to marketing of destinations. The study of Singer and

Prideaux (2006) examines possible patterns of tourism demand by three generational cohorts in the future. The study employs focus group interviews “to identify possible impacts of socio-demographic change, such as population ageing, population growth and changing family structures.” (p. 338). The conclusion is that there are differences between generations and that demand patterns will differ in the future. Muller and Cleaver (2000) examine the Baby Boomer generational cohort across four countries, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States in the context of product development and marketing strategies. Their methodology consists of the use of in-home interviewing. Analysis of results has led to documentation of ten life-style segments. These have resulted in suggestions of marketing strategies for the tourism industry.

Gardiner et al. (2015) and Gardiner et al. (2013) are two studies relating to the perceptions of generational differences and their generational cohort analysis. The 2015 study identifies “significant differences between generational cohort’s value perceptions, attitude and intention.” (p. 336). It employs almost 1,000 questionnaires relating to value, attitude and intention across generations. The 2013 study verifies the validity of Generational Theory in travel decision-making. It utilizes a mixed methods approach.

Previously described research by Glover and Prideaux (2008a) in Australia shows that different expectations of the tourism experience exist between generational cohorts. In both Australia and the United States, Gen X tourism demand patterns demonstrate varying interest in shopping, first class accommodation and visiting national parks between generational cohorts (Glover & Prideaux, 2008b; Pennington-Gray et al., 2003). These findings come from comparative generational studies with a domestic tourism focus. Other studies conclude that different social, political and economic environments, together with different or greater opportunities for travel and tourism can have a distinct bearing on travel motivation and travel enjoyment of the Gen X cohort (Glover & Prideaux, 2009; Muller & Cleaver, 2000).

Some generational cohort analysis has been adopted by marketing authorities in Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe (Gardiner et al., 2013). Examples are Tourism Research Australia, a consumer research study which is statistical in nature and involves online research panels in eleven countries (Tourism Research Australia, 2015). Another is Visit Britain, a general consumer analysis of

by source market country (Visit Britain, 2015) and the United Nations World Tourism Organization, also statistical in nature and based on large-scale visitor surveys (UNWTO, 2014). These studies provide important background knowledge, but do not provide sufficient *in-depth* data necessary to assist in answering the Research Questions of this thesis. The European Travel Commission in its report *Demographic Change and Tourism* (ETC European Travel Commission, 2014) whilst highlighting such important demographic issues as increased life expectancy, prosperity and travel party composition, does not specifically discuss the impacts of generational change.

In summary, existing research;

- Does not focus on one particular generational cohort, such as Gen X.
- Does not utilise Generational Theory specifically in relation to Gen X.
- Does not focus on one particular international tourism destination/region and experience or product.
- Uses methodology employing mixed methods, large group analysis, comparative study or case study rather than individual face to face in-depth interview situations, which would result in more narrative based data. This latter methodology is often employed in generational studies in other disciplines (Clark, Bush, & Martin, 2003; Yan, Ogle, & Hyllegard, 2010).

Various studies include in their summaries, comments that more in-depth narrative based research is required in the field of Generational Theory in the tourism context. In particular the following scholars, Gardiner et al. (2015), Gardiner et al. (2013), Lehto et al. (2008), Li et al. (2013), Pennington-Gray et al. (2003) and Singer and Prideaux (2006) have agreed that a good, in-depth knowledge of a specific generation can assist in understanding the needs of that generational cohort when participating in leisure travel. As Sedgley, Pritchard, and Morgan (2011) argue, a humanist (narrative based) approach to studying this Gen X (rather than the often utilized quantitative approach) can benefit tourism organisations by providing greater insight into the tourism needs and motivation of this generational cohort.

By contrast to this demonstrated limited tourism related research specific to Gen X, academic research relating to the Baby Boomer generation abounds (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014; Cleaver, Green, & Muller, 2000; Coleman, Hladikova, & Savelyeva, 2006; Littrell et al., 2004; Muller, Chalip, Faulkner, & Green, 1998; Muller & Cleaver, 2000; Patterson, 2007a, 2007b; Salt, 2003; Shoemaker, 1989; Turner, 1987; Weiss, 2015) suggesting that this generation has been recognised as an important cohort and hence a priority for researchers, organisations and marketers, possibly for the following reasons,

- Its sheer size in relation to previous generations-a total of 81 million when Australia and the United States are combined (Cleaver et al., 2000).
- This generation reached maturity in the 1970s at the time of the previously mentioned rise in mass travel opportunities.
- Socio economically, this cohort is well off. Previous studies have reported that 44 per cent of United States Baby Boomers have an income of US\$75,000 or more (Li et al., 2013).
- Good health and longer life expectancy (Muller & Cleaver, 2000).

Although Gen X is a smaller generational cohort in volume, its importance as a tourism consumer group cannot be ignored. For Australia and the United States combined, it numbers 68.45 million (Glover & Prideaux, 2009; United States Census Bureau, 2010). It is evident that in the tourism sector, this topic of the impacts of generational change specifically relating to Gen X is significant, important and emergent.

2.6 Possible impacts on tourism of generational change to Gen X

As stated in the previous section, Gen X represent a large generational cohort in the two countries being researched, Australia and the United States. Their importance to the tourism industry in the decades ahead necessitates an emphasis on research into their particular consumer behaviour.

Extant Generational Theory research by Mannheim (1952) referred to in Section 1.7 indicated a link between generational characteristics referred to in Section 2.4 and behaviour. Mannheim (1952) suggested that the principles learnt in formative years

stay with us for life and affect our behaviours. The relationship between these beliefs, values, attitudes and interests and distinct *consumer* behaviour is documented by Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2006) and Pizam and Mansfeld (2000). This relationship can provide clues to understanding the potential for such principals to relate to current and future distinct generational cohort tourism motivations.

An awareness of the nature of such behaviour in mature Gen Xers will provide European river cruise operators with awareness of this cohort's buying stimulants. These are derived through gaining a knowledge of their decision-making processes, motivations, the participants involved, influences and their distinct buying behaviour (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2000). Thus product content, marketing and booking processes can be customised to specific cohort needs.

Based on consumer research relating to this cohort (Klie, 2012) this thesis suggests that opportunities for Gen X, or for tourism organisations hoping to attract Gen X customers, could include for example, better value air fares (as more budget airlines emerge). Also, more user-friendly and efficient automated booking systems, interactive digital marketing and information gathering systems, customised or personalised tourism products could be utilized. In addition, the possibility of greater social interaction such as networking through social media is a distinct possibility as this form of communication becomes more valued and widespread (Bruce, 2015). It can be anticipated that a greater choice of destinations and activities for Gen Xers will become available as more countries and cities embrace the economic benefits that tourism can bring (Singer & Prideaux, 2006; Urry, 1990).

Such opportunities for tourism organisations would benefit Gen Xers as they are directly affected by current and future political, economic and social environments. These could include a reduction in their ability for or frequency of travelling to Europe. For example the possibility exists that vacations could be shorter, particularly as this generation finds the retirement age is increased to late 60s or even 70 (Ghilarducci, 2015; Power, 2016; Yeoman et al., 2012). In addition, it could well be that this generation demands a more customised experience (Shepherd, 2002; Vainikka, 2013; Williams et al., 1997; Williams & Page, 2011) based on individual requirements (Poon, 1993; Shaw & William, 2004). As a result tourism organisations may need to recognise possible changes in demand patterns (Glover & Prideaux,

2008b). Additionally, they may need to offer choices, such as the information gathering and booking stages being delivered, for example, via digital presentation of dynamic packaging of the European river cruise vacation experiences. In summary, tourism organisations will need to fully understand this generational cohort's consumer and tourism behaviour, their motivators and detractors for their destinations and products.

2.7 Tourism motivation, perceptions and expectations

Generic sociological motivation studies have been undertaken by Alsted (2012) and generational cohort analysis by Schewe and Meredith (2004) detailing buyer motivation and segmentation in the context of non-tourism products. They have demonstrated the importance of emotions as well as the clear distinction between needs and wants in the motivation, purchase and experience stages. The tourism context seminal works of the 1970s and 80s (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Krippendorf, 1987) study motivational factors in tourism consumer decision making although none relate specifically to Gen X. Dann (1977) proposes seven categories of tourism motivation and Crompton later increases these to nine (Chon, Pizam, & Mansfield, 2012).

All such studies have highlighted the push-pull elements, knowledge of which can assist tourism marketers (Boyce, 2005; Chon et al., 2012; Gnoth, 1997; Goossens, 2000; Hsu, Killon, Brown, Gross, & Huang, 2008; Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2006; Kozak, 2002; McCabe, 2014; Prebensen et al., 2013; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Crompton (1979) considers the push (internal) factors to be socio-psychological, this term implying that consumers are inspired or pushed to make buying decisions (in this case travel and tourism) by internal or emotive motivators such as desire, prestige or health. The pull factors are external, supply-related attributes aroused by the destination and of promised experiences (Bansal & Eiselt, 2004; Klenosky, 2002; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In Crompton's study these elements of push and pull are included to understand the tourism enablers (such as time and income) or motivators.

Whilst Dann and Cohen (1991) and subsequently other tourism and leisure consumer behaviour studies have considered motivation, later studies have developed theory relating to leisure detractors, constraints, barriers or limitations (Crawford &

Godbey, 1987; Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991) which could be translated as possible negative impacts for tourism operators in this thesis, focussing as it does on Gen X and European river cruises. These leisure constraints have been defined as “any factor that comes between the preference for a product or an activity, and the purchase or participation.” (Chon et al., 2012, p. 29)

Within these constraints three constructs have been identified, intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural (Godbey, Crawford, & Shen, 2010). Examples of intrapersonal constraints could be stress or depression or anxiety or, importantly for this thesis, evaluations of desirability of a particular leisure activity. Examples of interpersonal constraints could be the results of interactions with others culminating in possible disagreement relating to the buying decision. In the case of Gen X these disagreements could take on different forms due to the differences in familial or relationship structures within this generational cohort. Structural constraints could be “intervening factors between leisure preference and participation.” (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 124) such as financial situation, vacation time available, weather at destination or time of life (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). This last constraint is influenced by often noted environmental, political, social and technical factors (Brooks, 2011; Clark et al., 2003; Hall, 2005; Yan et al., 2010).

Whilst there is a paucity of specific travel based motivational research relating solely to Gen X (Elliot & Choi, 2011; Li et al., 2013; Prebensen et al., 2013) there is a suggestion that particular motivators such as the need to relax, status, interest in a destination, socialisation possibilities, emotion, perceived value, reminiscence and learning potential, can be viewed in the context of generational cohort differentiation. To these motivators, in this thesis should be added travel determinants, such as freedom, health, income, time availability, commitments and cultural attitudes or bias (Decrop, 1999; L. Jennings, 2012; Kaynak et al., 1996; Krahn & Galambos, 2014; Macky et al., 2008; Mansson, 2009; McAuley, 2011; O'Regan, 2014; Riquier, 2015).

Understanding consumer perceptions or expectations of a particular tourism experience or destination is a crucial factor in the product development and subsequent marketing processes. Again, Mannheim (1952) suggests that these

perceptions and expectations can be analysed in a generational cohort or social group environment.

Such factors as perceived image (of a tourism destination or experience), cost, comfort level, distance and effort affect the motivation to buy. These factors fall under the heading of the “pull” elements referred to previously and noted by Pizam and Mansfeld (2000). How operators appeal to these elements form the basis of their marketing plans. In the context of European river cruises these are currently focussed heavily on traditional media and prioritising the life on board the cruise vessel. In the case of the Gen X cohort, their distinct expectations and prior tourism experiences referred to in Section 2.7 will influence their perceptions and so subsequent tourism purchase decisions and, eventually, satisfaction (Kotler et al., 2006; Javalgi et al., 1992).

2.8 Tourism to Europe

The UNWTO (2014) has reported that over the last 60 years, tourism has experienced ongoing expansion to the point where it has become one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world, and the industry continues to grow year by year. Within this buoyant environment Europe is the world’s top tourism region, welcoming 607.7 million visitors in 2015. In that year visitor arrivals in Europe were up five per cent on 2014 numbers (UNWTO, 2016). These latest available figures demonstrate the popularity and importance of tourism to European governments, regional authorities, local communities, tourism organisations and operators.

Australia and the United States have been important long and medium haul source markets for European package tourism since the commencement of turbo-jet powered aircraft in the 1960s, introducing dramatically reduced flight times and cheaper air fares. These two source markets for Europe grew again in the 1970s, with the arrival of the large and (for the era) fuel efficient Boeing 747 aircraft. This major advance in commercial aviation enabled the seat per mile cost to be lowered by 30 per cent from the previous Boeing 707 jets (Doganis, 1987). Thus, advancements in commercial aviation technology led to the commencement of mass air travel on the back of more affordable air fares (Votolato, 2007). With the lower air fares came a

strong demand for package tours combining air and touring content from medium and then long haul markets and these became significant contributors to expanding international tourism in Europe (Burkart, 1971; Pearce, 1987).

Evidence suggests that over these last 45 years, Europe has remained a popular destination with the Australian and United States Baby Boomer generation tourists and their predecessors, the Silent Generation. Countries in high demand (apart from the United Kingdom) have been Ireland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg and Portugal (ITA. Office of Travel & Tourism Industries, 2015; White, 1985).

Previous research has indicated that the Baby Boomers in particular have enlarged the travel and leisure market (Mackay, 1997) as they have been and still are a more affluent generational cohort than the previous generation, the Silent Generation, with more leisure time due (particularly in recent years) to earlier retirement (predominantly in Australia). Some research has concluded that this generation is also generally fitter and healthier than the previous Silent Generation (Malley, 1998; Patterson, 2002). Clearly, these two medium and long haul source markets have become vital market segments within the European tourism sector. It is therefore surprising that there is little in the way of generational cohort studies (particularly in the 50+ tourism demographic) in the academic tourism literature (Pennington-Gray et al., 2003), even though (as previously noted) general literature relating to the Baby Boomer generational cohort is abundant.

North America for example, is the largest medium/long haul market for Europe (Rodrigues, 2012) and Australia, whilst not a big market in comparable visitor numbers, is an affluent one in terms of spending, ranked ninth in the world by the UNWTO (2015). Australia is an expanding travel market, with most recent figures showing trips abroad (as previously noted) increasing by 1.039 per cent in the year to June 2015 (Australian Government. Austrade, 2016). Over the past five years, trips by Australians to Europe have been growing by about five per cent each year with important destinations (apart from the UK) being France, Italy, Austria, Greece, Ireland and Switzerland (ETC European Travel Commission, 2014). The Office of Tourism Industries' most recent statistics record United States visitors to Europe for the purpose of vacation increased by 2.2% in 2013 against the previous year and the

United States is second in terms of spending in Europe (ITA. Office of Travel & Tourism Industries, 2015).

The significance of Australia and the United States as long and medium haul source markets for Europe is highlighted in the previously noted tourism study of Muller and Cleaver (2000) which reports that these two countries are important contributors to tourism as they are the major markets within what they term CANZUS (Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States).

Within this overall context of two important source markets for Europe, according to L. Sharp, Managing Director of Insight Vacations Australia (Interview June 8, 2012) a popular form of tourism, particularly for mature travellers over 50 is the previously mentioned package or inclusive tour (conducted in an organised manner). Such tours feature a pre-arranged combination of transport, accommodation and tourist services and are offered for sale at an inclusive price (Burkart, 1971; Medlik, 2009). They include European river cruises, sometimes referred to as a “roundtrip” (Steinbach, 1995, p. 443), a form of organised package tourism which has been growing in popularity and does not show any signs of slowing in demand (Erfurt-Cooper, 2009; Glusac, 2012; Hill, 2013). These tourism experiences are a fast growing segment of the world-wide cruising industry.

2.9 The global cruise industry

2.9.1 Introduction

Cruising is an important sector of the tourism industry and blue water ocean cruising makes up the majority of the experiences of the expected 22.9 million passengers forecast to travel on cruises world-wide in 2016 (CLIA, 2016). There has been impressive growth of 68 per cent in this form of vacation in the last 10 years with ever more and bigger ships planned for construction (CLIA, 2016). What follows is a brief summary of the various cruising industry segments.

2.9.2 Blue water ocean cruising

The main cruising segment is blue water ocean cruising, dominated by the Carnival Group, RCI-Royal Caribbean International and NCL-Norwegian Cruise Line (Dowling, 2006). The cruise liners have emerged as (in the majority of cases) low

fare floating hotels or resorts, offering secure and relaxed transport and entertainment facilities to various destinations without the need to change hotels and featuring the benefit of no frequent packing or unpacking. Cruise ships either operating or planned, such as Harmony of the Seas carry up to 5,479 passengers (Cruise Critic, 2016) and are marketed as destinations in that they provide a huge range of on-board facilities and restaurants (many of offering cuisines from all over the world). Cruise ships can have swimming pools, cinemas, theatres (featuring spectacular shows), shops, casinos, beauty and fitness services and many other attractions such as, ice skating, surfing, golf and abseiling (Kester, 2003). With all these on board dining and recreational options, coupled with affordable pricing, it is no wonder that cruising has become such a popular vacation choice with broad generational cohorts and tourism market segments internationally (CLIA, 2015a; Elliot & Choi, 2011; Hung & Petrick, 2011).

In Europe, the blue water ocean cruise lines operate in the Baltic Sea, the northern Atlantic Ocean and around the British Isles in the summer months and in the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Isles all year round. Cruise ships have the advantage of being able to be repositioned to more clement environments depending on the season. Thus, in the winter months, cruises tend to visit North African and Atlantic Isles ports with milder climates than mainland Europe. Similarly, United States based cruise ships head for the Caribbean, Australian cruise ships head for Asia.

2.9.3 Coastal cruising

Coastal cruising is most popular in Europe (particularly in the semi-protected waters of the Mediterranean including ports in Italy, Spain, France, Croatia, Greece and Turkey) as well as Norway, the North West coast of Australia, Alaska, Canada and east coast of the United States. Whilst most often these coastal cruising vessels are small, carrying in the vicinity of about 40 passengers, such as True North Cruises in Australia, the exception is Hurtigruten of Norway, which has a fleet of 14 large ships (carrying up to 1,000 passengers). As well as offering a tourist cruise service, these Hurtigruten cruise ships also support local coastal communities with mail, freight and passenger services (Hurtigruten, 2016).

2.9.4 Barge cruising

This (predominantly) canal cruising is most prevalent in Europe, particularly France, the United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland), the Republic of Ireland and The Netherlands and Belgium. Sparse data on volume of passengers and vessels exist and by virtue of the width of these canals and height of bridges, vessels are very small, with capacity for up to seven passengers (Steinbach, 1995). This form of water-based tourism (which is most often self-drive) is limited to the months from late April until early November.

2.9.5 Adventure or expedition ship cruising

As the concept of cruising continues to be embraced by tourism consumers world-wide, entrepreneurs continually strive to introduce alternative cruising opportunities for past passengers on their data bases, or new cruisers with a passion for a more individual or different type of cruising experience. Such opportunities are adventure or expedition cruises, which generally offer smaller vessels, ranging from the spartan to the ultra-luxurious such as Linblad-National Geographic and Silver Seas Expeditions. The ships carry up to 148 passengers to little visited (by sea) areas of the world, such as Antarctica, the Galapagos Islands, the Arctic, Alaska and the islands of the Indonesian Archipelago and various other remote destinations (National Geographic Expeditions, 2015; Silver Sea Cruises, 2015).

2.9.6 River cruising (in various regions)

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent opening of borders to what had been the Eastern Bloc, including countries such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, together with the opening of the Main-Danube Canal in 1992 (more details in Chapter 3) European river cruising, initially aimed at American tourists, began to develop. A contemporary study has indicated that river cruising is the fastest growing segment of the world-wide cruising industry with reported 10 percent annual passenger growth over the past few years and most operators adding to their fleets yearly and in some cases doubling their fleets (CLIA, 2014a). A recent announcement from the Torstein Hagan, the Chairman of Viking River Cruises states that “River cruising remains one of the fastest growing segments of travel.....”(Viking River Cruises, 2016b). Following on

from European successes and the popularity of this cruising experience, operators have sought to emulate the success by cross selling across a range of world regions to retain customer loyalty and interest (Baran, 2016).

Important cruising opportunities are now available, or are programmed, in the following country's rivers. Vietnam (the Mekong), China (the Yangtze), United States (the Mississippi and Ohio), India (the Ganges), Myanmar (the Ayeyarwady), Australia (the Murray), Brazil (the Amazon), Russia (the Neva, Svir and Volga), southern Africa (the Zambezi) and Indonesia (the Kapuas) as well as historically famous journeys such as cruising the Nile in Egypt (Abercrombie and Kent, 2015; American Cruise Lines, 2015; Uniworld, 2013a). Despite these opportunistic expansions, Europe remains the most popular region.

2.9.7 European river cruising

As previously noted, extant literature relating to this important and growing segment of the cruising industry is extremely limited. This is surprising as reports in 2016 have suggested that 18 new river cruise vessels have been introduced for the 2016 European season (CLIA, 2016) demonstrating confidence and continuing growth in this regional cruising product (river cruise operator details together with fleet sizes are shown in Table 2-3). The Chairman and Chief Executive of Viking River Cruises claims his company has grown 30 to 35 per cent annually in the last two to three years (Glusac, 2012).

Australia and the United States are the biggest source markets outside Europe for these types of river cruise vacations. River cruise operators catering for these two source markets are shown in Table 2-3. Latest available figures show European river cruises have attracted 41,800 Australians in 2013 (ICCA International Cruise Council of Australia, 2014; Kurosawa, 2014) and have grown by 62 per cent to 79,530 in 2014 (CLIA, 2015a). Passenger numbers from the United States are difficult to obtain but industry evidence suggests passenger numbers in 2014 of about 453,000 (CLIA, 2015b). Within generational cohorts, it has been suggested that those aged between 50 and 65 (Delmont, 1991; Glusac, 2012; Hill, 2013; Reimer, 2012) are the majority markets for these cruising experiences. Industry evidence reports about 82% of guests being 50 and older (more details are shown in Chapter 3). This

European cruise market is largely made up of the previously mentioned Baby Boomers but it will transition to Gen Xers in the years ahead.

These river cruises offer a range of tourism opportunities, such as scenery viewing, interacting with local cultures and heritage (Erfurt-Cooper, 2009) together with social interaction, shared personal experiences, perceived safety, security and value (Holloway, 1981; Schmidt, 1979). During the cruises there exist opportunities to visit many of Europe's architecturally and historically significant buildings, monuments, villages and structures in a leisurely but structured way, together with time to enjoy the facilities of the cruise vessel (Glusac, 2012). For example rivers such as the Rhine, featuring views of impressive architecture (including magnificent castles) together with outstanding natural scenery, can be inspirational and educational (Marx, 2004).

In addition, in France, the Rhone and Saone rivers offer spectacular landscapes together with a wealth of history as well as fascinating architecture and geography. For operators (and potential river cruise experience seekers) the negatives of operation tend to be at the whim of nature in that the rivers can be subject to flooding due to heavy rainfalls and excessive melting ice (this means the vessels cannot navigate under low bridges). In addition, extreme heat in summer can lead to droughts and low water levels and in some cases, there can be silting of rivers which affect safe navigation (Erfurt-Cooper, 2009).

A study has found that the actual act of cruising along a picturesque river at a slow speed is a very enjoyable part of the river cruise experience (Steinbach, 1995). In addition to the beauty and history of the towns and cities visited along the way (Hill, 2013) there are other contributors which are popular with the *current* cruise demographic, such as the intimacy of the vessels, the ability to step on and off frequently during the cruise and, because the ships can be along-side at night, the opportunity to spend *some* evenings ashore. There are comfortable accommodations, guided walks, on board entertainment usually provided by a small band, plus guest lecturers, tours in many cases and all-inclusive meals including wines and beers (River Boat Ratings, 2014).

The 2016 brochures of a number of the cruise lines (Uniworld, Scenic and Viking) have stressed the various inclusions and value of that particular river cruise experience (further details are provided in Chapter 3, Contextual analysis). Whilst all meals are included on board in the fare, some operators include organised dining and wine tasting experiences unique to that company such as hosted tours of vineyards or farms (to differentiate from competitors), the actual standard or features of the accommodation and the service level promise.

Interestingly, Baran (2014) reporting in the United States travel trade press, has made the point that river cruise operators have difficulty differentiating their product from each other in a way that blue water ocean cruise operators do not. It may well be that differentiation on the basis of a greater knowledge of a particular generational (Gen X) cohort provides a key. A current attempt at differentiation articulated by G. Young, President, Uniworld (Interview, May 16, 2016) sees Uniworld positioning itself as the best choice for the luxury or six star markets. Other examples include Ama Waterways for the food and wine lovers, Avalon for those wanting a customized experience and, as identified by G. Hunter, CEO, CMV Australia (Interview, April 27, 2016) CMV for the three star plus market. These differentiation examples can be compared with the blue water ocean cruise lines. For example, Carnival positions distinctly to the young family and party crowd with its various ship features, whereas Cunard positions to the older, more formal and experienced cruiser. Their differentiation is undertaken on the basis of price and made possible as there are few restrictions on ship size and therefore facilities and, in some cases, length of cruise and ports of call (Dowling, 2006).

Due to seasonal air/river temperatures and in many cases, fluctuating river depths, European river cruise operators generally only offer these vacation experiences from the end of March through to the beginning of November, although in some cases, only from late May through to mid-October. Some offer especially themed *Christmas Markets* and *Christmas Wonderland* in December, featuring the markets and traditions of Christmas in European river cities (Scenic Tours, 2016, p. 40).

River cruise operators have highlighted in their publicity not only the fact their vessels are small enough to allow passengers to interact in intimate settings, but also that their vessels travel through the heart of Europe. For example, “a deeper

understanding of the heart and soul of each region and its people.” (Uniworld, 2013a, p. 14). They provide opportunities to spend time right in cities and towns along the way without the need for packing or unpacking.

Table 2-3 River cruise operators offering product in Europe specifically for the Australian and United States markets in 2016

River cruise operator	Vessels/ Av. pax number per vessel (2016)	Web address	Ownership	Year inaugurated
Viking River Cruises	52/190	vikingrivercruises.com	Public	1997
Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection	13/155	uniworld.com	Family	1976/bought by present owner 2006
AmaWaterways (APT)	18/164	amawaterways.com apt.com.au	Family	2002
Tauck	9/130	tauck.com	Family	1882/cruise division 1992
Scenic Cruises	11/170	sceniccruises.com	Family	1986/cruise division 2008
Emerald/Evergreen Waterways	4/182	emeraldwaterways.com evergreentours.com.au	Family (division of Scenic)	1986/cruise division 2014
Avalon Waterways	17/138	avalonwaterways.com	Family	Cruise division formed 2004
CroisiEurope River Cruises	30/176	croisieurope rivercruises .com	Family	1976/Cruise division 1982
Amadeus by Lueftner	13/156	lueftner-cruises.com	Family	More than 30 years ago
Cruise and Maritime Voyages	3/150-180	cmvaustralia.com	Private	2010

River cruise operator	Vessels/ Av. pax number per vessel (2016)	Web address	Ownership	Year inaugurated
Crystal River Cruises	1/70- From 2016. Eventually 5 vessels	crystalcruiselines.com	Public- Crystal Cruises is a division of Genting Hong Kong Ltd.	2015 (river cruise division)
Vantage Deluxe World Travel	7/176	vantagetravel.com	Privately owned	1983. European river cruises from 1999

(In addition, some travel agencies charter vessels)

The key rivers of operation in Europe are the Loire, Seine, Saone, Rhone, Main, Moselle, Rhine, Danube, Po, and (Erfurt-Cooper, 2009). Durations of cruises vary, but are generally from a minimum of eight days up to 27 days. The shorter duration cruises being popular with the United States market whilst longer cruises are attractive to those from Australia, according to G. Young, President, Uniworld (Interview May 16, 2016). The difference being for a number of reasons,

- Australians have long holidays including generally four weeks' annual leave, three months' long service leave (Allen, 2003) after seven or ten years continuous service with one organisation (Australian Government. Fairwork Ombudsman, 2016).
- Australian Baby Boomers (Power, 2016) are presently retiring between ages 55 and 65 whereas in the United States retirement age is from 65 years (Ghilarducci, 2015).
- For Australians, the distance to Europe is great (much greater than Americans) and so there is less opportunity for frequency of vacations to Europe (due to cost and distance) compared with travellers from the United States, but the duration is generally longer say G. Hunter, CEO, CMV Australia (Interview April 27, 2016) and G. Young, President, Uniworld (Interview May 16, 2016). Itineraries are many and varied, but the most popular routes are along the Rhine (Amsterdam to

Budapest), Moselle (to Basel), Main (en route from Amsterdam) and Danube (en route from Amsterdam), Rhone (from Lyon to Arles), Saone (from Paris to Rouen).

G. Hunter, CEO, CMV Australia (Interview April 27, 2016) advises that with the Australians, the Amsterdam/Budapest and vice versa cruise is the most popular. In some cases the cruises are little more than water-based static hotel experiences such as the Po River cruises (which spend most of the time tied up in Venice and offer day river excursions from there) but such is the popularity of river cruising that even these maritime experiences are sought after.

2.10 Generational change and river cruising.

Within the generational cohorts and as previously realised, research has found that those aged between 50 and 65 (Delmont, 1991; Glusac, 2012; Hill, 2013) have been the main markets for European river cruise package vacations, but the youngest Baby Boomers are now aged in their early 50s. This suggests that European tourism entrepreneurs and destination marketing organisations need to be aware of the demographic change taking place from their traditional passenger generational base to the next generation, Gen X. Gen Xers (those now aged between late 30s and early 50s) will soon begin a progression to becoming the main target market for these European river cruise vacations. This reinforces the theoretical framework of this thesis, that is generational change as it relates to the tourism sector using the case of European river cruising and specifically, the particular travel motivators, needs, desires and interests of this Gen X cohort when travelling in Europe.

2.11 Chapter summary

The literature has revealed that there has been limited research undertaken to understand the motivations, needs and desires and actual tourism consumer behavioural patterns of generational cohorts, particularly Gen X (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). As part of the theoretical framework for this thesis involves understanding the motivators, such as relaxation, socialisation and status (Crompton, 1979) for selecting and purchasing European river cruise products (a very different decision to that involved in mundane consumer activities such as supermarket

shopping and featuring different determinants due to high cost and intangibility) more in-depth knowledge is required.

Gen X will become a major tourism market for some decades to come, there is a need for research to be undertaken to fill the knowledge gaps relating to generational cohorts, specific destinations and vacation opportunities such as river cruising in Europe. These are reiterated as follows;

- Lack of focus on one particular generational cohort, in this thesis, Gen X.
- Generational Theory not utilised specifically in relation to Gen X.
- Focus not on one particular international tourism destination/region and experience or product.
- Methodology employing mixed methods, large group analysis, comparative study or case study rather than individual face to face in-depth interview situations, which would result in more narrative based data.

To satisfy these tourism consumers the application by tourism operators (practitioners) and destination tourism marketing organisations could be that at the very least, product content changes will need to be applied to adjust for possibly unique needs of this important upcoming new generation market segment.

Further extant literature (Veal, 2006) points out that much of the limited research carried out on this topic has been promoted by private industry demands (as previously noted). Veal suggests that much of this tourism research features economic, marketing and related psychological research instead of sociological research. The latter will allow a better understanding of the influences behind the travel purchase decision and the beliefs, values and attitudes based on Generational Theory, in addition to the experiential values that could emerge as a function of the attraction to different products or destinations (Prebensen et al., 2013).

Chapter 3 Contextual analysis

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 presented an overview of the world-wide cruising industry and its various segments, as shown in Figure 3-1.

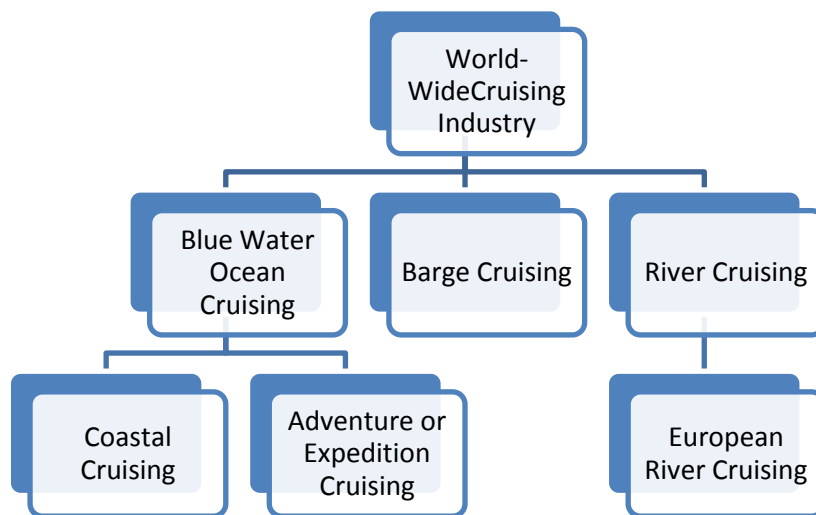


Figure 3-1 Cruise industry segments

Chapters 1 and 2 outlined the European river cruise experiences available to medium and long haul English speaking travel markets. As discussed, these cruises are extremely popular with 50+ Australian and United States customers and represent “an important sector of rapid growth within the worldwide cruising industry.” (CLIA, 2014a, p. 10).

This chapter provides greater contextual underpinning detail relating to the recent history of these European river cruise vacation opportunities. It offers some explanations as to the possible reasons for the popularity of this cruise industry segment and a contemporary view of river cruising in Europe. The chapter details the marketing of these experiences in this thesis’ two sampled countries, Australia and the United States. In addition, data taken from cruise line collateral, interviews with industry senior management and relevant articles appearing in travel industry publications are presented and discussed. How river cruising operators are currently attempting to enhance and diversify their range of experiences to differentiate their products and possibly appeal to alternative demographic vacationers is demonstrated. As this thesis is concerned with Gen X and the impacts of generational change on

this important segment of the European tourism industry, it is vital to understand what tactics the river cruise operators are currently employing (if any) to motivate this generation towards this type of vacation experience in the years ahead.

3.2 The recent history of river cruising in Europe

River cruising in Europe has long been a popular leisure experience (Prideaux & Cooper, 2009) and nowhere more so than on the Rhine River between Cologne and Koblenz, an especially beautiful section known as the Rhine Gorge featuring spectacular mountain scenery, rich wine growing terrain, quaint villages and historic and beautiful architecture, including castles (Erfurt-Cooper, 2009).

This section of the river is ever popular with day cruisers, but is also a vital component, forming the basis for experiential fairy-tale images, for longer multi-night cruises which have sailed through the area for many decades. Such cruises, mostly originating or terminating in Amsterdam, were promoted to medium and long haul source markets during those early days of mass air travel in the 1970s by KD Rhine Line, the then market leader. The principal market for these cruises, in those years was European short haul passengers as the product was not geared towards non-European (principally American) vacationers (KD Rhine Line, 2015; Riley, 1986).

A pioneer of river cruising in Europe, KD River Cruises (KD Rhine Line, 2015) was founded in 1827. This company was the leader in European river cruise experiences with eight vessels in the 1980s. Popular itineraries were from Rotterdam to Basel in Switzerland with durations of four days (Riley, 1986) and also to Cochem, Remich and Mainz in Germany, along the Rhine and Moselle rivers. These cruises grew in popularity with chiefly European passengers to the point where the number of river cruise vessels had doubled in Europe in the years between 1970 to 1990 from 30 to 60 (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2007). In 1992 the opening of the 106 mile Main-Danube Canal proved to be a significant component of a breakthrough in the potential for offering longer river cruise itineraries, chief amongst them being between Amsterdam and Budapest, now offered as a 15 day cruise. Originally built in 1846 and partially destroyed by allied bombing in World War Two, the original canal was closed down in 1950 (River Cruise Advisor, 2015).

This newer rebuilt canal connects the cities of Bamberg and Kelheim and the main two rivers of Europe, the Rhine and Danube, and crosses the Swabian Alb, south of Nuremberg in Germany (River Cruise Advisor, 2015).

Completing the breakthrough, which enabled longer river cruise itineraries as far as Budapest, was the introduction of the politics of reform by Mikhail Gorbachev, described by Attard (1997), resulting in the demise of the USSR in 1991 and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent Republics, in January 1992. Subsequently, borders were opened in (particularly) Hungary and the then Czechoslovakia (Attard, 1997) to Western tourists. In addition, after the conclusion of the long Serbian/Croatian war (1991-1995) a further extension of river cruise itineraries on the Danube was made possible. Cruise extensions from Budapest to Rouse in Bulgaria via Belgrade are now a frequent offering.

In 1994, a travel industry entrepreneur, Serba Ilich, with his company, Uniworld (Saunders, 2012) pioneered a hybrid European river cruising opportunity geared to the North American market. Whilst initially some of the vessels were chartered from European operators, some new-builds were gradually introduced. On the charter vessels accommodation was upgraded, but they still featured quite narrow staterooms which were unable to accommodate bigger Queen sized beds required for the new market. For his new vacation river cruises, menus were geared towards American tastes, but options were few and special dietary considerations difficult to cater for (Saunders, 2012). Facilities were fairly basic in line with European tastes of the time and service levels limited. Nevertheless, a breakthrough had been achieved in that dining options, facilities and tours were geared towards the potentially large United States market of medium haul passengers as noted by G. Young, President, Uniworld (Interview, May 16, 2016). Importantly, English language was employed on board. Other river cruise operators followed, including Ama Waterways/APT, Avalon and Scenic.

The previously mentioned KD Rhine Line sold its multi-night river cruise division (together with many of the dedicated and prized cruise vessel piers and moorings along the rivers) in 2000 to Viking River Cruising. This latter company is now the

market leader in the industry in terms of fleet size, range of departure dates and berths available (Baran, 2015g).

The general increase in the popularity of European river cruises with regional customers and then with American customers in the late 1990s was in part a result of improvements in comfort, service and facilities akin to the changes taking place in the blue water ocean cruising segment. These changes were being implemented by these cruise lines to satisfy demand for luxury, particularly from the Baby Boomer generation passengers (Dowling, 2006). As the blue water ocean cruise lines became aware of and then adapted to the comfort and service levels desired by passengers, this lead was taken up by river cruise operators and has been reflected in the growth of lavish additional features in vessel rebuilds and new buildings all with the ability to enhance experiences and meet Baby Boomer and Silent Generation customer expectations.

There was a steady increase in international travel to Europe, particularly from the United States in the years after the New York World Trade Center bombings (ITA. Office of Travel & Tourism Industries, 2015). European river cruising became more popular and more competitive and so the steadily growing number of river cruise operators catering for the English speaking clientele continued to introduce added design and service features to improve their passenger experiences (Saunders, 2012). Simultaneously, as a consequence of the introduction of greater efficiency in aircraft operations, airlines had been able to pass flight ticket savings (referred to in Chapter 2) on to passengers resulting in reductions in air fares. In addition, the introduction of on-line booking capabilities began to reduce the tourism organisations' distribution costs as a small number of customers commenced using the on-line booking technology thus by-passing traditional call centres and bricks and mortar travel agencies (Bruce, 2015). It should be noted that river cruise operators did not and do not offer this on-line booking option.

Latest available total numbers of European river cruise passengers are difficult to establish as most operators are family or private companies (as shown in Table 2-3). The most recent indication is a 2014 figure of 1.13 million (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2016). It is most likely that the figure in 2016 would be higher. All recent trade articles as well as anecdotal comments from senior industry

personal sources are positive in regard to growth. Table 3-1 shows the most recent available figures, highlighting the four main source market countries for these types of vacation experiences (in 2014).

Table 3-1 Passenger numbers from important source markets

Source Market country	Passenger Numbers 2014
United States of America	453,000
Germany	416,000
United Kingdom	80,000
Australia	79,530

Sources: (CLIA, 2014b, 2015b; River Cruises Europe, 2015; Seatrade Europe, 2015)

It is clear that the principal source market for these cruises has been the United States with the most recent research available, indicating this market has formed 32 per cent of the total (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2016) and the table above demonstrating that the 2014 passengers exceeded those of Germany, traditionally the biggest market for these cruise experiences. Australia, one of the top four source markets is, of course a long haul market. The country exhibits very strong numbers when one considers the small population (compared with the United States) and the cost and time involved in travelling to and from Europe.

3.3 Development since the 1990s

The world cruise market grew at the rate of 8.4 per cent per annum between 1980 and 2003 (CLIA, 2005). This figure indicates a strong demand for this type of vacation experience. To manage supply there has been significant investment in new cruise vessels during this period. In 2007 it was recorded that the European river cruise segment of this industry was growing at between five to seven per cent annually (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2007) however, more recent statistics indicate a growth rate, for example in Australia, of around 65 per cent from 2013 to 2014 (CLIA Australia, 2015). In Europe, demand has also been extreme, to the point where between 1990 and 2007, the number of river cruise vessels grew from 60 to 195 (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2007). This number continues to rise with most river cruise operators introducing new vessels in 2016 and planning more for 2017 (Baran, 2016).

Clearly, this cruising industry segment is proving to be experiencing high demand and great popularity. The willingness of operators to risk the large capital costs in building additional tonnage implies great confidence in the future (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2010). The segment must return profitability and value, not only for the operators but for local, national and regional economies in Europe. As an example of the benefits to local economies, the city of Amsterdam welcomed about 170,000 river cruise visitors in 2007 and it is estimated that every time a river cruise vessel moors at a town in Europe, each passenger spends about 32 euros (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2007).

3.4 European river cruise lines catering to medium and long haul English speaking markets

A table (Table 2.3) showing the river cruise operators marketing their European experiences to Australian and United States customers, has been presented in Chapter 2. In many cases, these river cruise operators have grown out of existing international travel businesses catering to the 50+ tourist. They have been aware of the success of Serba Ilich's Uniworld and wish to tap in to the foreseen potential. For instance, Avalon is owned by the well-known and experienced Globus coach touring company. Uniworld is now owned by the equally experienced Travel Corporation, which owns iconic coach touring brands such as Trafalgar Tours and Insight Vacations. The Scenic European river cruise product range was developed by an Australian family coach touring company. These existing businesses have offered structured product appealing to Baby Boomer and Silent Generation consumers for decades.

Viking River Cruising is a Scandinavian and Dutch consortium and rare in this cruising segment in that it is a public company. Its chairman, Torstein Hagen has been closely associated with the cruising industry over some decades and was CEO of the very successful (with the 50+ tourists) Royal Viking Line, a three luxury ship blue water ocean cruising company which operated between 1972 and 1993 (Grizzle, 2015). Hence, he has brought a great deal of experience relating to passenger needs in the older (Baby Boomer and Silent Generation) demographic to Viking River Cruising.

Following the success (particularly in the United States market) of the river cruises between Amsterdam and Budapest (referred to in Chapter 2) operators looked for other rivers in Europe to enlarge and enhance their product experience range. Thus, rivers in France, Portugal, Italy and Germany have been added over the years.

Figure 3-2 Key rivers of operation in Europe

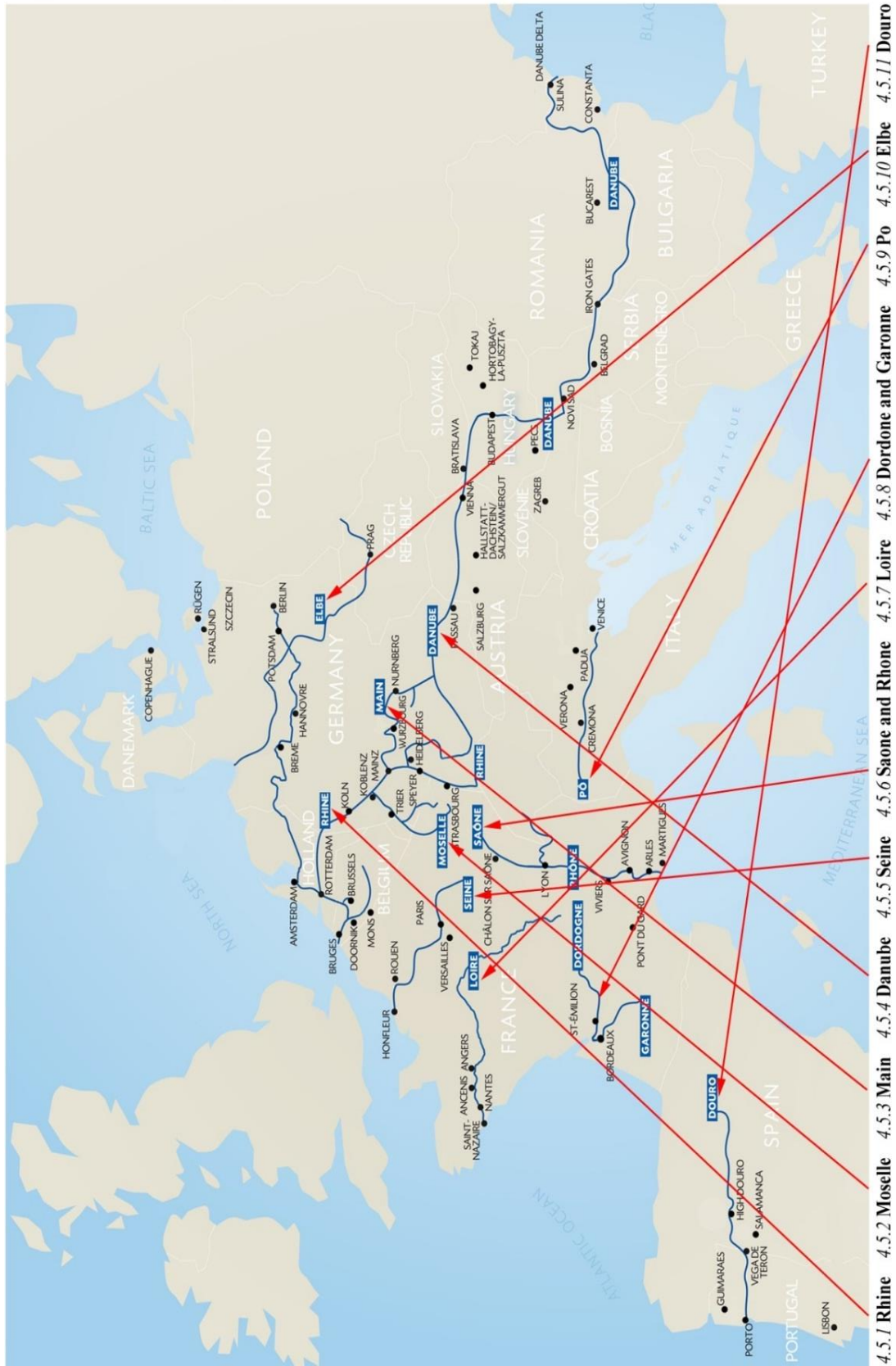


Figure 3-2 shows that the key rivers of operation in Europe are the Loire, Seine, Saone, Rhone, Main, Moselle, Rhine, Danube, Po and Elbe (Erfurt-Cooper, 2009; Reimer, 2012). Approximately 96 per cent of cruise vessels are found on the Danube, Rhine, Moselle, Elbe and the Rhone (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2010).

3.5 Key river cruise routes

3.5.1 Rhine

The Rhine is the main river transport artery of Europe and the most popular for multi night river cruise itineraries. Cruises depart and return from/to Amsterdam. These cruises can be either the long voyages (15 days or longer) to Budapest and beyond and also the shorter cruises terminating in Basel, Switzerland (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2010). All cruises feature the picturesque Rhine Gorge as well as stops along the way in small towns and cities such as Rudesheim, Miltenberg, Rothenburg, Regensburg and Nuremburg in Germany. Linz and Vienna are visited in Austria, before entering Hungary and the capital city of Budapest.

3.5.2 Moselle

These cruises operate between Amsterdam and Cochem to Trier and Konz in Luxembourg. The cruises feature the famous and pretty Moselle River, known for its wine production and postcard riverside towns. Such cruises enable passengers to visit Luxembourg from Remich.

3.5.3 Main

On cruises between Amsterdam and Budapest and beyond, the link river between the Rhine and the Danube is the Main River and Main-Danube Canal. Sometimes known as the Romantic Road, this is essentially a marketing term to promote this historic area of the river (Romantic Road Germany, 2015). Along the way the river features imposing churches and magnificent castles.

3.5.4 Danube

Cruises from the Rhine and Main rivers enter the Danube from the canal at Regensburg and most continue on to terminate in Budapest in Hungary. An extension

is possible taking guests from Hungary, via Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria and terminating in Rouse or Silistra. The Danube is an extremely important trade and tourist route in Europe, flowing from Germany's Black Forest through various countries to the Black Sea via the Danube Delta. Austrian towns and the magnificent capital of Vienna are highlights on this river, as is the Hungarian capital, Budapest.

In addition to the popular cruises between Amsterdam and Budapest, passengers can also travel on the Danube between Budapest and the Danube Delta on the Black Sea, a local highlight being the Iron Gates, a series of magnificent gorges in a narrow section of the river between Serbia and Romania. These cruises follow the lower Danube which flows as the border between Romania and Bulgaria terminating or commencing in the Bulgarian cities of Rouse or Silistra.

3.5.5 Seine

Cruises depart and arrive from/in Paris and include visits to Giverny (Monet's house), Vernon, Les Andelys and the city of Rouen (famous for its cathedral), from where coaches take passengers to the famous beach battlefields of Normandy or the Somme.

3.5.6 Saone and Rhone

These cruises depart and arrive from/in Chalon-Sur-Saone and cruise via Lyon to Vienne, Tournon, Viviers and the wine growing areas, Avignon, once an important centre for the Roman Catholic Church and Arles, home for many of his later years of Vincent Van Gogh.

3.5.7 Loire

CroisiEurope exclusively operate cruises on this French river between Nantes to St Nazaire and then up stream to Angers (Gilchrist, 2015). These cruises visit Ancenis and Bouchemaine but on most days, organised excursions take passengers to various towns and villages featuring quite spectacular architecture, including some world heritage castles and chateaux. The region is popular with tourists for its wine growing.

3.5.8 Dordogne and Garonne

On Bordeaux cruises to/from Libourne, Pauillac and Cadillac, roman and medieval villages featuring historical buildings and vineyards are highlights. This Aquitaine region of France and its wonderful capital, Bordeaux, is a recent European river cruise opportunity introduced by some operators. The area is, of course, famous for its wines as well as wonderful architectural and natural scenery, most of which is accessible from the cruise vessel on organised excursions.

3.5.9 Po

These experiences, exclusive to Uniworld and CroisiEurope make Venice their base with coach tours operating from the vessels which act as stationary hotels for much of the duration. The actual cruise component proceeds along the Po River between Venice and Poleselle and for the rest of the promoted experience the vessel is docked in Venice or takes short day trips through the lagoon, including one cruise to Burano.

3.5.10 Elbe

These cruises are operated by Viking River Cruising and advertised as being between Berlin and Prague. The cruising component is between Magdeburg (Germany) and Melnik (in the Czech Republic) and the rest conducted by coach. The river is difficult to navigate and only suitable for smaller specialised river cruise vessels with a lower passenger capacity, thus making it a higher cost per passenger operation. In early 2016, Viking is the only line promoting this river to the medium to long haul English speaking markets. However CroisiEurope will introduce their new vessel, Elbe Princesse on this same itinerary in the summer of 2016.

3.5.11 Douro

Portuguese cruises operate along the Douro in the north of the country, between Portugal's second largest city, Porto, and Barca d'Alva, just near the Spanish border. They are of about seven days' duration. Most cruise lines feature this river which traverses the northern Portuguese region from the Spanish border to the sea. Passengers enjoy spectacular scenery including famous wine producing areas, as well as coach excursions from the vessel to various historical cities and towns.

3.6 Current passenger demographics

To appreciate the popularity of these experiences amongst particular demographic groups, it is essential to demonstrate what product is offered (Baran, 2015a). Here, it is necessary to generalise as each cruise operator has a few, although not many, points of difference. For example, some cruise operators such as Ama Waterways/APT add pre and post cruise tours and hotel/city stays to create longer and more varied itineraries.

One of the most popular overall features of these cruises is the benefit of unpacking just once (in the same way that this feature is popular on blue water ocean cruises). In this respect, the cruise vessels are akin to hotels except that they represent a mode of transport as well. Some tourist trains such as the Orient Express in Europe (Belmond, 2015) and the Blue Train (The Blue Train, 2015) in South Africa promote themselves in the same fashion.

The cruise vessels are small by necessity, taking into account the width of rivers and length and widths of locks as well as the low level bridges along the routes. On the vessel they offer increasingly comfortable, if sometimes cramped, accommodation and a range of on-board facilities, including bars and restaurants. Many are *fully* inclusive and all offer *all* meals as part of the cruise fare. They dock frequently and provide passengers with opportunities to sight-see in a structured but secure environment. There is little need for strenuous exercise and for the most part, the experience, although highly organised, is leisurely and unhurried. The concept of remaining static whilst the scenery passes by appears to appeal to the older age demographic, the majority of which are Baby Boomer and Silent Generation passengers (as Table 3-2 shows). A travel writer captures this concept when describing a river cruise in France,

Most importantly, they also not only have floor-to-ceiling windows and doors, with a panel that slides downwards electronically to let the outside in, but the bed is set crossways-across the ship-so I can lie on it and watch Europe pass by my feet.

(Scourfield, 2015, p. 24)

These structured experiences are particularly popular with the current mature 50+ tourists, and it is easy to see why, given the nature of the experiences noted above. Details received through personal communication from one cruise operator demonstrate their current passenger demographic in 2015,

Table 3-2 European river cruise passenger demographics from United States source market

Age Group	Percentage
0-20	2%
21-30	3%
31-40	5%
41-50	8%
51-60	27%
61-70	40%
71+	15%

Source: Personal communication with senior industry executive, May 20, 2015, United States.

From these statistics shown in Table 3-2, it can be seen that the European river cruise experience is most popular with those aged above 51 (82% of the total passengers in this example), representing a largely homogeneous cruise age group of Baby Boomers (and some older Silent Generation). Their main interests, apart from the facilities, service and comfort of the vessel (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2007) are the cultural aspects as well as the scenery and nature along the way. It has been reported that these Baby Boomers have been targeted due to their above-average income, few time constraints and an interest in leisure and culture. They are apparently well off and well educated couples over the age of 50 (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2010), as previously noted. As an aside, this demographic group were previously the main market for European coach tours (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2010) which Section 3.4 records have also offered structured tourism experiences.

3.7 Current European river cruise experiences being promoted/the product

In the early 2000s, in the formative days of these cruises being offered in the United States, Uniworld and its subsequent rivals offered a selection of on-board and land-

based experiences which seem extremely limited in comparison with today's offerings. The emphasis was on the value of these vacations with the destinations prominent in promotional material rather than the features of the vessels, which included a single lounge with bar, a small fitness centre and single sitting dining room. The highlighted feature of the cabins (staterooms) was the hotel-style beds (Uniworld, 2006).

From the Uniworld 2006 brochure, it can be observed that the destination offerings were limited. Four itineraries were offered on two vessels featuring nine day cruises along the Rhine, Moselle and Danube rivers as well as Dutch and Belgian waterways.

As passenger numbers grew and competition increased, a greater awareness of this 50+ demographics' needs, motivators and desires for European river cruise experiences was realised and cruise operators increased their offerings. This was mainly driven by the increasing awareness of better health being enjoyed by mature travellers together with a longer life expectancy, improved financial situation and sheer numbers of Baby Boomer retirees entering the vacation market (Muller & Cleaver, 2000).

River cruise operators in recent years have promoted their on-board experiences (rather than the destinations) as the principal motivator for attracting clients (Young, 2014). A principal reason for this must be that these operators have much more control over the on-board experiences and can maintain service and quality standards (Baran, 2015c), but also they are mimicking the blue water ocean cruise line approach. These experiences include,

- Dining choices in more than one restaurant often including all beverages as well as the potential to upgrade to accommodation with room service dining
- Complimentary internet access
- Lectures and themed musical performances
- Comfortable accommodation with potential to upgrade to deluxe suite accommodation and butler services
- Spa or wellness centres
- Small swimming pools
- Libraries

In the Section 3.8, some information is given relating to the marketing of these on-board experiences.

The river cruise operators also, but as secondary attractions, feature the destinations and experiences ashore available to passengers on the cruise. These have tended to be confined to short organised coach tours or group walking tours accompanied by guides. Most operators are now beginning to offer greater variety in experiences ashore, such as musical performances and themed meals in castles or local farms, and also featuring special and exclusive events. In so doing, they are attempting differentiation between brands as well as offering greater variety in on-board and shore-based activities. It should be noted that most of these opportunities are still highly organised and controlled in a group environment, ensuring a high degree of personal safety and security which would appeal to Baby Boomer (and older) customers (Kazeminia, Del Chiappa, & Jafari, 2015). In this respect, and importantly, the cruise becomes a far more standardised experience than would be the case if more true independence were to be promoted. Of course *some* independence can be achieved but with the realisation that *most* if not *all* the organised activities have been included in the cruise fare. Here are some examples of named shore experiences by various river cruise operators,

- *Scenic Free Choice*-hosted shopping with the ship's chef or visiting a former coal mine (Scenic).
- *Limited Edition Tours*-specially designed small group experiences such as cooking classes as well as bratwurst and beer tastings (Ama Waterways/APT).
- *Immersive Experiences-Do as the Locals Do and Village Day* (Uniworld).
- *Exclusive Excursions*-for example a special evening opening of St Mark's Basilica in Venice (Uniworld).
- *Little Tauck Touches*-uncommon access to exclusive cultural experiences on hosted excursions ashore (Tauck).
- *Emerald Active*-a range of outdoor activities to suit more active guests (Emerald/Evergreen).
- *You're Invited*-learning what it's like to be a Slovak or Italian with an exclusive program of special hosted events (Emerald/Evergreen).
- *Freedom to personalize the holiday with choices of preferred pace and type of sightseeing* (Avalon).

In most cases, the vessels carry bicycles for the more active passengers to enjoy, in limited cases, independently. This opportunity represents one of the few options for independence unless passengers wish to forfeit inclusive fares paid and undertake shore excursions by themselves. Scenic is unique in offering *GPS-guided independent discoveries*. So the appearance of independence is offered but Scenic are able to track guests using GPS technology; “the time to explore over 116 locations in Europe and enjoy the ambience, history, architecture culture and cuisine on their own, without leaders or guides” (Scenic Tours, 2016, p. 25).

As observed in Chapter 2, European river cruise experiences have become extremely popular vacation choices over the years since 1995. 2014 saw 453,000 passengers from the United States (CLIA, 2015b) and 79,530 from Australia partake (CLIA, 2015a). In an effort to retain past passenger loyalty and increase overall passenger numbers, river cruise operators have expanded their operations to include a greater number of European rivers (details in Section 3.4) but also in other areas of the world. Again, they are hoping to use their data bases to introduce repeat and presumably satisfied European river cruise passengers to their own successful formula products in other parts of the world (Baran, 2016).

The countries and rivers of operation in 2016 are Vietnam (Mekong), China (Yangtze), USA (Mississippi and Ohio), India (Ganges), Myanmar (Ayeyarwady), Australia (Murray), Brazil (Amazon), and Russia (Neva, Svir and Volga) as well as historically famous journeys such as cruising the Nile in Egypt (Abercrombie and Kent, 2015; American Cruise Lines, 2015; Uniworld, 2013b). Viking River Cruises have gone one step further and in 2014 introduced a division known as Viking Ocean Cruises, initially with one blue water ocean cruise ship, Viking Star (maiden voyage in 2015) and followed by three more vessels. This represents a very bold and expensive move into an extremely competitive industry segment dominated by Carnival Corporation, Royal Caribbean International and NCL together with their subsidiary brands (Dowling, 2006). It demonstrates a very clear business strategy of a cross selling opportunity from their own river cruises data base to an extensive range of blue water ocean cruises. These latter cruises feature a range of experiences known (through internal marketing processes of river cruise surveys and evaluation

of experiences) to be popular with this Baby Boomer and Silent Generation demographic (Steighorst, 2015).

Coming from another polar position, luxury blue water ocean cruise line Crystal Cruises has entered the European river cruising market in the summer of 2016 with (eventually) five well-appointed vessels with maximum capacities of 70 passengers as against the industry's norm of between 130 and 190 passengers (Baran, 2015e). Again, Crystal is cross selling alternative cruising itineraries and experiences to its data base of existing blue water ocean cruise customers. G. Hunter, CEO Australia CMV (Interview, April 27, 2016) advises that UK cruise operator Cruise and Maritime Voyages (CMV) has developed a similar cross selling opportunity in 2016 but for a different, three star market.

3.8 Marketing

A great deal of effort is undertaken in marketing these European river cruise experiences to motivate potential audiences in Australia and the United States. Cruise operators employ a variety of approaches and it is apparent that the marketing budgets are large, with a limited trend towards greater use of on-line promotion and advertising as well as use of social media. Of course, in this regard, they are in line with (but not as advanced as) many other tourism organisations world-wide as they embrace the potential for collaboration and engagement with customers via new and emerging technology (McCabe, 2014).

European river cruise operators continue to produce lavish brochures, which must imply that they are important motivators for the current older demographic of potential customers. For example Scenic's 2016 Australian brochure features 259 pages (Scenic Tours, 2015). In the United States, Ama Waterways has a 2016 brochure featuring 149 pages (Ama Waterways, 2016). In some cases, the brochures include quite elaborate pre and post cruise options for touring and hotel stays. In all cases, the cruise operators highlight the features of the vessel and the outstanding on-board experiences immediately after the preamble but before any information is presented about the places the vessel will visit, as shown in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3 Examples from European river cruise operators' brochures

River cruise line	Pages in brochures devoted to on board experience
Scenic (2015)	After preamble, first 28 pages prior to destination information
Ama/APT (2016)	After preamble, first 23 pages prior to destination information
Uniwold (2016a)	After preamble, first 16 pages prior to destination information
Avalon (2016)	After preamble, first 16 pages prior to destination information
Evergreen/Emerald (2016)	After preamble, first 20 pages prior to destination information

It is apparent that they are emulating the approach taken by the blue water ocean cruise lines, examples being Seabourn or Oceania. Seabourn's 2016-2017 brochure (Seabourn, 2016) after four pages of preamble, devotes 36 pages to on board experience before moving on to destinations. Similarly, Oceania Cruises in their 2016-17 Voyage Collection brochure (Oceania Cruises, 2016) feature 10 pages of on-board experience information after four pages of preamble and before the pages relating to destinations. This practice of placing the on board experience prominently in the early pages of brochures was pioneered by Carnival Cruises in the 1970s, in the early days of high passenger volume Caribbean cruising. This was their way of highlighting their on board experience as a point of difference in a cruise market in which all the various cruise lines operated to the same destinations featuring the same on-shore experiences (Garin, 2005).

So the river cruise operators are mimicking the blue water ocean cruise lines in their emphasis of the on board experiences rather than the destinations. In most cases, the former have adopted this strategy as a promotional device to delight potential passengers with the number and quality of their on board experiences such as sporting, dining, gambling, drinking, learning and cultural delights, the majority of which come at an additional cost and form a very large component of the cruise lines' income (Garin, 2005; Vogel, 2009). The exceptions to this strategy are the higher end cruise lines such as Silver Seas and Regent Seven Seas. The important difference with river cruises is that they do not have this opportunity to supplement income with upselling on board due to space and subsequent facility limitations, hence a price differential.

The most obvious difference facing the potential consumer choosing between the European river cruise and the majority of blue water ocean cruise is the initial price. Whereas a typical eight day Amsterdam to Basel cruise in July on mid-range Viking River Cruises in 2016 was advertised in May 2016 at AUD3495 per person for a price leader stateroom (Viking River Cruises, 2016a). A ten night cruise on similarly mid-range cruise line Princess Cruise has an introductory stateroom with window selling price of AUD1899 per person, for ten days ex Sydney, Australia in June, 2016 (Princess Cruises, 2016).

All European river cruise brochures feature rich imagery, photography and extravagant copy. Examples highlighting the ease and comfort of river cruising, include the following,

- “Our GPS locator effortlessly guides you through your own personal excursion” (Scenic Tours, 2016, p. 25).
- “Every morning of your journey, the wonders of Europe await right outside your window” (Uniworld, 2016a, p. 10).
- “When you find yourself standing at your French balcony in a soft robe and comfy slippers, watching the sun rise over a medieval castle, you will know you are in the right place” (Uniworld, 2013b, p. 10).
- “Special touches that make you feel like you’re getting the royal treatment” (Ama Waterways, 2016, p. 12).

In addition, river cruise operators employ the following (mostly traditional) marketing methods,

- DVDs. Operators such as APT River Cruises provide a DVD in the back of every 2016 Europe River Cruising brochure.
- Massive television ad campaigns, such as Viking River Cruises in the United States with saturation advertising on the television series, Downton Abbey on Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Others such as Australia Pacific Touring (APT River Cruises) for the same show and Scenic on Getaway on the Nine network in Australia. Commercial share and audience figures for Sydney and Melbourne show that 216,319 and 202,796 watched Downton Abbey in 2015. In the same cities, 73,000 and 81,000 viewers over 50 watch the Getaway travel program each week (OzTAM, 2015).

- Editorial-see an example from the Sydney Sun Herald. Shown in Appendix 6.
- Information days/evenings and participation in travel shows/expos in major cities (refer to advertisement for such events in Appendix 7).
- Traditional print (newspaper) advertising (refer to examples in Appendix 8).
- Digital-introduced by river cruise operators in 2015 featuring particularly the rich media ads such as leader boards constantly seen on news organisation home pages (refer to Appendix 9). Li et al. (2013, p. 161) make the point that “the effectiveness of traditional advertising is weakened in today’s digital world.”

In addition to the marketing methods noted above, the operators feature Impressive web sites. Whilst one United States river cruise operator, G. Young, President, Uniworld (Interview June 8, 2015) advises that 95% of their bookings are via travel agents, the company has clearly gone to great lengths to present a luxurious web site (www.uniworld.com), perhaps acknowledging trends amongst younger consumers for on-line information access. Certainly, the trend in the travel industry in Australia and the United States is for many more consumers to purchase on-line (Freed, 2015). As an indicator, in Australia, an on-line listed company, Webjet continues to grow as a result of the shift in international bookings to on-line (FNARENA, 2015b). This counters an apparent weaker outlook or downgrade in earnings for bricks and mortar travel agencies such as Flight Centre Travel Group and Helloworld Ltd as reported by J P Morgan and Macquarie Wealth Management (FNARENA, 2015a; Macquarie Wealth Management, 2015). Indeed anecdotal evidence obtained through personal communication from a travel agency manager in NSW, Australia emphasised that her agency had no clients under the age of 40.

The clear implication being that those under that age were all booking direct (either on-line or via call centres). River cruise operators must be aware of this trend and so they appear to be positioning themselves towards future on-line bookings from a younger generational cohort, ensuring their web sites are of a similar high standard to the print brochures. It should be noted however that the web sites currently do *not* permit on-line bookings but instead direct customers to a call centre or to travel agents. Some operators feature on-line electronic brochures, but a search has revealed that they are not yet following some international airlines’ distribution models by offering cheaper fares on-line than via travel agents. For example, www.uniworld.com and www.amawaterways.com

3.9 Differentiation methods

Facing all European river cruise operators is the problem of not being able to differentiate their hardware in the same way blue water ocean cruise lines can. Vessels operating on European rivers must not be over a certain height (due to low bridges), draught (due to shallow rivers particularly in times of low rainfall and low levels of melting snow) or width (narrow sections of rivers and locks) and must be built to satisfy docking considerations (Erfurt-Cooper, 2009). With these restrictions, the only differentiation possible is in internal decoration, service levels, cuisine and inclusions (most included in the fare). Promotional material highlights many features of individual cruise operator's products but there still appears to be confusion within the travel industry as to how to sell one over another (Turen, 2014).

Some examples of differentiation include firstly, the promotion of inter-generational opportunities (particularly targeting Gen Y families with young children and possibly grandparents). Ama Waterways, for example, in their 2016 Europe, Asia and Africa brochure, highlight the connecting cabin doors on their two new ships, "making it easier for group and family travel"(Ama Waterways, 2016, p. 9). Uniworld in their 2016 Generations Family River Cruise Collection brochure suggest "There's no better way to introduce young people to Europe's most spectacular cities, where the memories you'll make will be shared for generations" (Uniworld, 2016b, p. 6).

Secondly, by offering opportunities to the family market. Ama Waterways and Adventures by Disney, a partnership introduced in 2015, has aimed to attract a new family market to the European river cruises by way of Disney's experience in promoting and organising family vacations for over the last decade (Baran, 2015d). Ama Waterways operate cruises with special facilities and active pursuits for younger passengers at certain times of the year.

Thirdly by offering special features on board vessels such as balconies, loft cabins, swimming pools, spas, restaurants and all-inclusive pricing. As examples, Uniworld has added more butler service to its suite accommodation in 2015 (Baran, 2015i), Evergreen/Emerald Waterways' new vessel in 2016 features a retractable glass roof over a heated swimming pool with provision to morph into a theatre at night (Baran, 2015b) and Tauck have introduced loft cabins on two 2016 vessels (Baran, 2015f).

Finally, through the introduction of special themed cruises such as wine and food or beer festivals. As an example Ama Waterways have introduced dedicated Wine Cruises through Europe in their 2015-2016 brochure. Uniworld offer Monarch Collection and Connoisseur Collection cruises for those prospective passengers interested in heritage and the aristocracy as well as French cuisine (Baran, 2016). Some cruise operators (for example Uniworld, Scenic, Ama Waterways) offer Christmas or Holiday Markets Cruises on the Rhine and Danube rivers and others feature particular cruises for certain festivals in Europe (Ama Waterways, 2016; Scenic Tours, 2015; Uniworld, 2016a).

3.10 Operational issues

Always at the mercy of naturally occurring phenomena, river cruise operators in Europe need to contend with the issues of weather and subsequent effect on water levels on the rivers they sail. In past years, they have endured low river levels (which can interrupt operations due to draught issues) as well as high river levels (caused by heavy rains or excessive snow melting) which affect the vessels' ability to navigate low bridges. Also, the possibility of strikes, such as that experienced in 2013 with a week-long stoppage by lock workers and economic, such as a 12 per cent increase in value added tax since 2012 (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2010). Cruise operators have devised various methods of dealing with the natural climate induced problems including transferring passengers from one vessel to another mid-cruise (only possible with the larger cruise operators), or using coach travel for some parts of the cruise. Clearly the method used is dictated by the size of the cruise fleet and experience of the river cruise operator (Baran, 2015a; Erfurt-Cooper, 2009).

Of course, as previously mentioned, rivers are not navigable all year round. Unlike blue water ocean cruising, seasons are restricted to the months of March to October, which allows about 240 days of (Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, 2007) potential sales opportunities.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has offered a contextual background to this thesis by providing historical details and a contemporary view of this important travel industry cruise segment. As observed, the segment has experienced significant growth over the last decade and to date, industry sources advise that the popularity of these types of vacation experiences continues (CLIA, 2015a). River cruise operators have demonstrated through their product enhancements and attempts at differentiation that they are aware of possible changes in passenger needs and desires. To maintain the popularity of their river cruises, remembering that the vast majority of their customers are still 50+, they no doubt take some of their direction from internal marketing, on board passenger comments, customer and travel agent feedback.

This thesis is concerned with the impact of a new generation, Gen X, maturing to the point where in 2016 the oldest are 51, meaning that they are now entering the traditional age group for these types of vacation experiences. River cruise operators, town and city, regional and national marketing organisations should not assume that the same motivation drivers for participating in these types of cruises will continue as for the current passengers, the Baby Boomers.

Whilst not as large a group as Baby Boomers, 68.7 million against 81 million in the United States and Australia (Cleaver et al., 2000; Glover & Prideaux, 2009; United States Census Bureau, 2010), Gen X is a significant population that may have particular needs and also possible travel constraints and inhibitors.

The next chapter identifies and thoroughly presents the methodology and research design employed in this thesis.

Chapter 4 Methodology and research design

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 has introduced the thesis aim, to examine how the consumer and tourism behaviour of Gen Xers is likely to impact the demand for (current) organised package tourism products and services targeted at 50+ tourists, specifically European river cruises. In addition, the four thesis Research Questions have been presented. Chapter 2 has highlighted the gaps in the current knowledge and limited extant contemporary literature relating to Gen X in the general and tourism contexts. Chapters 1 and 2 have introduced Generational Theory as most appropriate for this exploratory in-depth thesis, a view supported by nominated tourism research scholars. Chapter 3 has provided a contextual analysis. This chapter details the methodology and research design of the thesis, and the formation of the framework of this research problem investigation.

To answer the Research Questions it is crucial to gain awareness of the formative influences and experiences which may form subsequent adult beliefs, values, attitudes and interests of this new generation market segment. A greater understanding of Gen X's consumer motivation for choosing to purchase European river cruises and then tourism behaviour whilst possibly experiencing these types of vacations is also necessary. In Chapter 2 extant literature and contemporary studies have been critically analysed and further research suggestions from scholars noted. For example, Cooper and Hall (2008) observe that each generation has particular values and beliefs which influence tourism demand. Glover and Prideaux (2008a, p. 2) add, "In addition to age, the tourism demand pattern of specific generations is likely to depend on that generation's particular beliefs and values as well as factors such as past travel opportunities or travel experience."

In support of these views Li et al. (2013) emphasise that there is a need for more generational analysis as a common sense segmentation criterion in travel market research. In addition, other scholars argue that the impact of generational change as applied to tourism is under-researched (Gardiner et al., 2015; Mayo & Jarvis, 1982).

The Research Questions are restated;

1. What does the concept of generational change signify in the context of the tourism industry?
2. What formative experiences have shaped Gen X's beliefs, values, attitudes and interests?
3. How have previous travel experiences affected Gen X's tourism preferences?
4. What are the push/pull factors which would motivate Gen Xers towards European river cruise vacations?

This chapter provides details of the methodology employed to investigate the research problem, introducing the techniques and procedures used to undertake the research and collect the data.

Firstly the research paradigm is outlined, noting the interpretive approach philosophy adopted in this thesis. The ontological, epistemological and axiological positions used in the thesis are then explained. These are followed by a section presenting the overall research approach, in this case, utilising the interpretive paradigm through the analysis of qualitative data. The research strategy of using phenomenology as the most suitable design featuring semi-structured interviews is then introduced after which the research choices are presented.

In this thesis the purposive sample (Cresswell, 2007; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009) is Gen Xers domiciled in Australia and the United States living in the cities of Sydney, Melbourne, Los Angeles and New York. These are the primary source market cities in Australia and the United States for European river cruises according to G. Young, President, Uniworld (Interview June 8, 2015). In addition, exploratory expert interviews with industry leaders in Sydney and Los Angeles (refer back to Chapter 2, Section 2.9.7) are necessary due to the lack of material available on the topic of river cruises. Such interviews have ethical clearance as part of the background phase (refer to this chapter's Section 4.9).

The data collection process is presented, again including details relating to the sample and the instruments employed to obtain the data. The sections that follow include information relating to the quality of the data, ethical issues and reflexivity.

4.2 Research philosophy

Underpinning this thesis is the development of knowledge in relation to a particular generational cohort, Gen X. A philosophical approach has been adopted which addresses the research problem and answers the Research Questions appropriately. The choice of the particular branch of philosophy implies a certain world view (Saunders et al., 2009) and assumptions forming the basis of that view. This section offers details of the research paradigm adopted for this thesis, interpretivism.

4.2.1 Interpretive research philosophy/the research paradigm

The interpretive paradigm (world view) is most appropriate for this thesis, concerned as it is, with gaining an understanding of the social phenomena surrounding this particular generation (Jennings, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). The thesis uses the interpretive paradigm, or philosophical assumption (Cresswell, 2007) to understand Gen Xers' life experiences from their own perspective. It places the emphasis on the generational cohort being studied and aims to understand their explanations of behaviours (Veal, 2006). The Gen X participants are described as social actors and the researcher has entered their social world (Jennings, 2010) enabling interactions with them. An interpretation is made of the meaning of their lived experiences (Cresswell, 2007; Veal, 2006). The theory is characterised by the underlying factors such as shared or individual formative experiences and events that motivate (or constrain) the Gen X participants to possibly consider undertaking river cruising experiences in Europe. In addition, the personal background including culture, race, gender and social class are important components and perspectives and these are addressed in Section 4.2.3 (Denzin & Yvonna, 2005).

4.2.2 Ontology

The four Research Questions are investigated by adopting an ontological position based on phenomenology, "...a research philosophy that sees social phenomena as socially constructed." (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 597)

Under the interpretivist paradigm, this thesis takes a subjective position in the worldview in which individuals look for a greater understanding of the world in which they live and work (Cresswell, 2007). This position has been adopted rather than objectivism as the thesis seeks to gain understanding through interpretation of

meanings as seen by the Gen X participants, looking behind the realities which are presented as givens in their environments.

The ontological position requires the researcher to consider how the world is perceived. The ontological belief is that there is no single reality and so the researcher must decide what is true, what exists and what is real, based on recollections of the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). So what is reality and how can it be viewed? As discussed, the thesis has adopted the subjective aspect within ontology, which has the view that social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of the participants, or Gen X participants or social actors (Saunders et al., 2009).

An inductive approach has been adopted (which is discussed later in Section 4.3) selecting the phenomenological research design to seek to develop explanations of certain phenomena relating to the lives of the Gen X participants. Implicit in the ontological position is the understanding that these social phenomena are presented to the researcher by the participant or social actor, from their own perspective and their view of reality at the time. There should be an awareness therefore, that these realities are constantly being revised by the participants, particularly in such a thesis as this, which views the world of the participants over a 30 to 40 year period. It aims to understand the form and nature of the formative and present reality and what can be learnt about it (Punch, 2005). In summary, this approach explores the underlying factors which have made Gen Xers the way they are and as a result, what the impact there will be on their future choices of tourism experiences. Further, it addresses the issue of their tourism motivation or constraints, and explores whether this is based on evolving realities and their life path or life experience.

4.2.3 Epistemology

In the epistemological branch of interpretivist philosophy, the emphasis is on the lived experience. That is, trying to get close to the lives of the participants, attempting to create a close relationship between the researcher and the participant. So the researcher is again adopting a subjective view, entering the world of the participant, their environment or their natural setting. It could be their workplace, their living place or somewhere near both (Denzin & Yvonna, 2005). These are places where the Gen X participants carry out their day to day activities and live their

lives, interact with friends, shop, undertake their work, think and plan, and enjoy leisure activities. The researcher aims to attempt to try and be a part of their life for only a short period due to time constraints, to interpret their words, actions, body language as well as their feelings and attitudes and to attempt to give meanings to these and then make decisions about them (Cassell & Symon, 2004).

The participants or social actors in this thesis are tourists at certain times in their lives, and so this generational cohort researcher in the context of tourism is wishing to extract knowledge of life experience (in particular, vacation tourism experience), situations, impressions, motivations and perceptions from the actors. All this knowledge is interpreted and becomes part of the relationship that develops between the researcher and that knowledge (Jennings, 2010).

A *relationship* was entered into with the participants in the four cities in Australia and the United States. Initially, introduction and rapport have been developed through an exchange of emails, phone messages and information material relating to the nature of the research. The researcher has established some concept of the participant's life, for example, nature of work, family make up, home environment, and tourism experience. Further, prior to the actual interview, which takes place either at the participant's workplace, home or near home/office location, a short period of about 15 minutes has been used to establish good communication levels and a relaxed atmosphere.

Prior to the interview, the researcher has studied the environment. This includes details of the city, the history, so as to be able to converse with the participant as much as possible in local, familiar terms to assist in quickly building rapport. In Manhattan, the researcher already has some familiarity with the Washington Square area (where most of the New York interviews took place) and its history and close relationship with New York University, where some of the participants have studied and worked and near where they now live. This familiarity also applies to the other three cities.

To be able to say *I believe*, the researcher has been able to justify the experience of entering the world of the Gen X participant or social actor. Finally, and importantly, it should be re-emphasised that this epistemology is subjective (as with the ontology, mentioned earlier in this section), in that the researcher is subjectively involved in knowledge making (Denzin & Yvonna, 2005).

4.2.4 Axiology

This branch of philosophy prioritises values in this thesis. It is concerned with how the knowledge generated is valued by the researcher and how the values of the researcher influence the research process (Jennings, 2010). It must be assumed that the research being undertaken is underpinned by the researcher's value systems as well as social and cultural norms (Cresswell, 2007). These are summarised below.

The researcher's values play a part in this relationship with the participants in this knowledge generating thesis and cannot be separated out. These underlying values then give more credence or validity to the adoption of the subjective nature of the research (mentioned previously). The very fact that this researcher has chosen to study this problem (and noting the choice and justification for the philosophical approach and data collection techniques) gives the reader some idea of his values or even bias or prejudices, in that the knowledge being produced is deemed as being important in his eyes (Rabionet, 2011). By choosing to obtain the data through interviewing qualified Gen Xers, the researcher is demonstrating the placing of great value on the personal interactive situation taking place in the field rather than, for example, a more anonymous approach such as questionnaires, which may have been considered (Saunders et al., 2009).

Here are some important points relating to personal values of the researcher being brought to this thesis;

- As an Australian, the researcher's life values may be different to those of the United States participants.
- Initially, the researcher may not be aware of differences in participant values between the four field study cities, Sydney, Melbourne, Los Angeles and New York or within the same countries.
- Being from another generational cohort, the researcher may be adopting existing alternative values to the participants' Gen X values.
- The researcher's tourism industry experience and knowledge of both Australian and the United States tourism markets (and possible resultant perceptions) could equate to a different set of attitudes or values towards tourism experiences undertaken or proposed by the participants.

Finally, the researcher is always aware of the need to avoid value judgements, especially in possible cross cultural aspects as this is an international study. In this thesis the researcher has consciously put aside preconceived knowledge or bias in the project area, understanding that in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of the data collection (Whiteley, 2012). The researcher is also aware of possible unintentional bias (Saunders et al., 2009) and the need to consciously attempt to avoid this (referred to in Section 4.10).

4.3 The research approach

Section 4.2.1 introduced the overall research approach utilising the interpretive paradigm (interpreting a world view) through the analysis of qualitative data gathered using interviews as a means to ensure an in-depth enquiry (Cassell & Symon, 2004; Jennings, 2012; Patton, 1990; Saunders et al., 2009; Whiteley, 2012). The research approach is inductive, as acknowledged in Section 4.2.2. This approach is employed to formulate a theory or extension of theory, based on data collected. Thus the data comes before the theory or extension of theory (Veal, 2006) rather than deductive, which tests existing theoretical propositions (Saunders et al., 2009).

Chapters 1 and 2 identified significant gaps in the current literature, which are reiterated here and addressed throughout the thesis. Currently there exists no qualitative, specific in-depth research into the travel motivations or the unique tourism needs of Gen X. Secondly, extant research based on Generational Theory is limited and this thesis extends and expands this theory. Thirdly, whilst plentiful research has been undertaken detailing the unique features of the Baby Boomer generation, little exists for Gen X, particularly in the last ten years. Finally, whilst in-depth narrative-based research has been encouraged as a way of examining this generation and the Generational Theory in the tourism context more thoroughly, to date none has been documented.

In Chapter 2 extant research relating to the impacts of generational change in the context of tourism was analysed. This thesis includes the studies of Glover and Prideaux (2008b) and Gardiner et al. (2013). These studies employed quantitative approaches (Gardiner et al., 2015; Glover & Prideaux, 2008a; Li et al., 2013) and qualitative (Glover & Prideaux, 2009) as well as a mixed methods study (Gardiner et

al., 2013). Chapter 2, Section 2.5 introduced several suggestions that were made by these scholars, advocating more in-depth qualitative study for future generational change tourism focussed research.

4.3.1 Rationale for using a qualitative study approach

The qualitative approach in this context is seen as being the most appropriate for gaining an understanding of the future tourism needs of Gen Xers. Patton suggests (1990, p. 14) that a quantitative approach would constrain this research in that it would “require the use of standardized measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of peoplefit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned.”

Instead of understanding phenomena expressed by Gen Xers and therefore having the ability to obtain meaning from the words, a quantitative study would use figures, mathematical models, statistical tables, measurements, and graphs. In other words expressing findings in numbers rather than words (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Szarycz, 2008). A further note promoting the value of a qualitative study is expressed by Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 15),

Rapid social change and the resulting diversification of life worlds are increasingly confronting social researchers with new social contexts and perspectives...traditional deductive methodologies...are failing...thus research is increasingly forced to make use of inductive strategies

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in three significant ways. Firstly, it captures the individual’s point of view in that the qualitative investigation gets closer than quantitative investigators to the participant’s (or actor’s) perspective through detailed interviewing and observation (Saunders et al., 2009). Secondly, as it examines the constraints of everyday life, qualitative research is more likely to come up against the constraints of the everyday social world, enabling this world to be seen in action and findings can be embedded in it. Thirdly, qualitative research can reveal rich descriptions. Such descriptions of the social world are valuable, whereas quantitative research, with formulaic and statistical commitments, is less concerned with such narrative detail (Denzin & Yvonna, 2005).

Another reason this thesis employs a qualitative approach is that it permits focus on the immediate and in-depth environment, both past and present, of the participants, all of whom can express their memories, realities and created social experiences in possibly rich descriptive ways. They can achieve this in their own words and largely on their own terms. All this is possible in a reasonably familiar relationship with the researcher, thus enabling optimum opportunity for fruitful explanations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Denzin & Yvonna, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). In the world of tourism (being very much a customer service industry) the interactions are most often face to face and involve individual's body language and physical nuances and this qualitative research also adopts such a face to face approach which is appropriate to such an investigation (Veal, 2006).

4.4 The research strategy-phenomenology/research design

Phenomenology is most suitable for this in-depth research which aims to investigate Gen Xer's life experiences particularly within the context of tourism. The thesis participants share an interest in and experience of tourism, as well as a shared experience of childhood and formative years at a similar time in history. They have experienced the phenomena of tourism and events in formative years universally. As previously discussed, the thesis is interested in obtaining meanings and insights into those past phenomena (Cresswell, 2007; Saunders et al., 2009) and views on possible future phenomena, detecting what they think the experience will be like (Szarycz, 2008). This research strategy is most effective and is detailed below.

4.4.1 Phenomenological research design

The phenomenological research design is unique and appropriate. It offers the opportunity to obtain meaning from the words of the sample group participants (Cresswell, 2007) focussing on what they have in common through understanding of the bases for their world view. Phenomenology, as seen through the shared experiences which shape the beliefs, values, attitudes and interests of this generational cohort, form the basis of the following methods employed in this thesis. These include determining the background knowledge and experiences behind the Gen X participants' motivation, purchasing and subsequent travel preferences based on individual and shared phenomena, including details of their formative years and as travellers, a point observed by Jennings (2010). Phenomenology seeks to find

meaning and gain insight into formative experiential phenomena of this generational cohort (Jennings, 2010; Veal, 2006). It focuses on ways to listen to the participants' views as shaped by events, experiences and situations, involving knowledge of their interaction with others such as family, associates and peers. Phenomenology has previously been employed in many examples in the tourism literature (Cohen, 1979; Curtin, 2006; Dann & Cohen, 1991; Uriely, 2005).

In this phenomenological research, findings from the analysis of the data provide clues to motivation or stimuli, decision making and European tourism experience expectations. Such a design has been advocated by a number of tourism researchers over the last eleven years (Littrell et al., 2004; Nimrod, 2008; Pennington-Gray et al., 2003; Sedgley et al., 2011). Tourism generational researchers advocate the uniqueness of the design which aims to uncover the participants' biographical narrative (Gardiner et al., 2013; Li et al., 2013; Nimrod, 2008; Pennington-Gray et al., 2003; Sedgley et al., 2011). Alternatives are narrative studies, which examine lives of single individuals, grounded theory (seeking to generate new theory), ethnography (studying meaning and behaviour, the observation as part of a study of shared patterns) and case studies, in which an issue is studied through cases in a particular context (Cresswell, 2007).

Phenomenology uses a semi-structured interview approach as the most effective method to obtain this new data due to the opportunity that becomes available to the researcher for in-depth information from Gen X participants in face-to-face situations (Cohen, 1979). The next section provides greater background to the rationale for employing semi-structured interviews. It also provides details of the actual interview design employed in this thesis.

4.5 The research choices

The overall research design and approach have been discussed above. What follows is a description of the actual research tools employed in this thesis.

4.5.1 Semi structured interviews and the interview design

Section 4.4.1 reported that in this phenomenological research, semi-structured in-depth interviews are utilized to obtain the data (Dann & Cohen, 1991). In such interviews, whilst there is an overall theme and some predetermined structure of questions relating to the Research Questions, there is some flexibility to pursue matters that may be of associated interest and may lead to emerging themes.

It has been determined that conducting semi-structured interviews, which feature only limited constraint, provides the opportunity to gather rich and full data in as real a manner as possible (Robson, 2002). Research data is obtained using these semi-structured interviews, as noted above (Saunders et al., 2009) with the Gen Xers tapping into their personal experiences (Whiteley et al., 1998). These interviews are more appropriate to the stated aim of seeking understanding and extracting meaning from the words of the participants than questionnaires or focus groups (Cassell & Symon, 2004). Phenomenological research requires that the researcher obtains in-depth knowledge of and from the participants in real time resulting in rich and descriptive data (Jennings, 2010; Saunders et al., 2009), typically using these in-depth interviews.

In Chapters 1 and 2, the point was made that this thesis has sought to determine the motivations behind the participants' experiences and particularly, shared phenomena of Gen Xers (focused on their formative years and as travellers). The researcher has sought to determine the resultant impacts on beliefs, values, attitudes and interests which in turn may influence motivation and expectations of current and potential tourism experiences. There is great interest in uncovering depth of detail regarding Gen Xers' experiences (including tourism experiences), about their lives and perceptions (giving possible causality with the latter) in the context of tourism, and hearing it in their own words.

The interview design has been a multi stage process, consisting of,

- Composition of interview question categories directly relating to the four Research Questions.
- Composition (within each category) of sub-questions which enable more detail and depth in interviewing.

- Noting that the opportunity exists in semi-structured interviews to deviate from the set questions or re-order the set questions in an actual interview situation if there is a chance of establishing more meaning or understanding from the particular participant.
- Mapping of Research Questions to interview questions as detailed in the next section.
- Identifying locations for interviews with the objective of the comfort and ease of the participants being a priority.

4.5.2 The interview questions and relationship to Research Questions

To specifically address the Research Questions, the interviews have identified significant and pertinent details from informants' life experiences, perceptions of travel and then, particularly, river cruising in Europe. Examples of interview questions are;

- Can you describe a most significant event from your late teens/early 20s?

This question is specifically focussing on discovering details of the participants' formative years and gaining understanding of phenomena experienced at that time.

- Can you tell me a story about your earliest vacation experiences as a child?

Once again, the question focuses on memories of the past, in this case childhood travel memories. The interviewer is attempting to build a picture of the participants' early life memories, in this case in the tourism context.

- How would you describe your dream vacation?

This question is an example of the interviewer attempting to understanding tourism aspirations of the participants. It leads on to concepts of tourism motivation and expectations.

The complete list of questions (within categories) is shown in Appendix 1.

The structured component of the interview has been created employing five basic question categories, aligned with the Research Questions. Each participant was asked

the same structured questions, but with sequence varying according to the flow of the interview conversation, enabling inductive probing in key response areas.

Appendix 2 maps cross referenced interview questions to the Research Questions.

Category 1 questions relate to travel history. This category was designed to reveal information relating to childhood, formative and adult vacation/travel experiences. The questions relate to Research Question Three.

The questions in Category 2, perceptions of European vacations, attempt to gain some insight into motivations or inhibitors for particularly European vacation experiences. The researcher is attempting to gain information through the thoughts and vacation ideals of Gen Xers. These questions relate to Research Questions Three and Four.

Category 3 questions introduce a particular vacation category, cruising. It asks questions relating to cruising generally and then specifically, relating to European river cruising. The researcher is interested in perceptions of the Gen Xers relating to this enormous and popular segment of the tourism industry, either through personal experience of friends or family, hopefully within the same generational cohort. The conversation then moves on to European river cruises, specifically, and the perception of these being seen as a desirable vacation experiences for Gen Xers. The likelihood being, from the researcher's experience and also knowledge gained during the development of the Literature Review (Chapter 2) that very few members of this generational cohort would have yet experienced this type of vacation. These questions relate to Research Questions One, Two, Three and Four.

Questions in Categories 4 and 5 become more personal, it being considered that at this stage of the interview, participants would be relaxed and a rapport with the researcher would have been established. Thus, participants would be willing to discuss their childhood, with details of their family background, and formative experiences, as well as the world as it impacted on them in their formative years. This information is seen as being important to this thesis which extends extant Generational Theory as well as developing underpinning knowledge specifically relating to adult views of the European tourism world. These questions relate to Research Questions One and Two.

Whilst the interview questions employed have been devised to relate directly to this thesis' overall Research Questions, they also reflect the need for appropriateness and also potential credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (as detailed in Section 4.8). Thus, the questions have been developed to be straightforward with little possibility of ambiguity. They avoid any overtly tourism, marketing or sociology jargon and ensure that both the interviewer and the researcher have the same understanding and do not approach subjects in an abstract fashion, but rather relate to real-life experiences (Saunders et al., 2009). The questions can possibly be open to different interpretations related to the participant's beliefs, values, attitudes and interests. Anticipating this, the researcher has prepared definitions (refer to Chapter 1, Section 1.7) and examples (Cohen, 1972; Kelly, 1955) to share with some participants if necessary.

4.5.3 Interview locations

Extensive thought was given to the interview locations as these could have some effect on the quality of the data (Saunders et al., 2009). A priority was that the locations suited the participants in that they were convenient, safe, accessible and appropriate for them. For example, were they near the homes or work places? Were they easy to get to, open and public and in secure areas? It was important that the participants were comfortable in the locations and so felt at ease as this affects their responses and so as noted above, the eventual data quality. It was important for the quality of the recording that the location is quiet.

To further place the participant at ease, the interviewer should be dressed appropriately and as much as possible, in keeping with the style of the participant and the location setting, again to put them at ease and suggested by Robson (2002). It has been assumed that for interviews conducted on weekends less formal clothing be deemed acceptable.

4.5.4 The purposive sample

To expand extant research detailed in Chapter 2 and also develop Generational Theory in the tourism context as discussed by various scholars in the field, the researcher wanted to obtain data from a sample of socio-economically qualified participants of the Gen X cohort, asking questions relating to their life experiences, perceptions,

opinions, attitudes, feelings and knowledge, mostly in the context of tourism. This then enables this thesis to have the opportunity to capture direct quotations in an iterative process (Patton, 1990) and assist in collecting, analysing and presenting valuable data to be used in extending existing theory (Generational Theory).

The sample is the 35 to 50 year old generational cohort in 2015 (Gen Xers), with some past travel experiences (and so displaying a general interest in the travel experience) living in the cities of Australia (Sydney and Melbourne) and the United States (New York and Los Angeles). The two countries chosen from potential English-speaking medium to long haul traveller generating regions of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the United States and Canada due to their large market share of such travellers to Europe. The cities have been chosen as they are also important city source markets for European river cruise vacations as previously reported by G. Young, President, Uniworld (Interview May 16, 2016). In addition, it has been seen as vital to engage a robust sample (Curtin, 2006) of residents in a range of locations within these cities to achieve a more meaningful range of results. Heterogeneity within the sampling frame, gives more credibility to the findings (Saunders et al., 2009).

The predetermined criteria were narrowed to Gen Xers aged between 35 and 50 (in 2015), adopting the sociological 15 year cycle birth date range created in Chapter 2, who had made at least one international trip outside of their home country in the last decade (preferably Europe as this would indicate an interest in the region) in addition to other domestic trips. Clearly, the participants would have required a level of funding to have embarked on such trips and so by specifying in the criteria that they were required to have travelled internationally previously, it implies that they fell into a socio-economic group which could be in a potential target group for possible travel to Europe in the future. In each case they were to be employed, implying an apparently sufficient disposable income to be able to contemplate regular holiday/vacation travel. Such criteria then placed them in a position of potential affordability for and interest in river cruise experiences in Europe, always aware of the current majority market for these tourism experiences is 50+.

In this qualitative thesis, whilst the intention has been to gain in-depth data from a sample of qualified participants, the researcher is aware that any results cannot be generalised but relate to this sample only. This group size is smaller than a

quantitative study, but as it is in many ways a heterogeneous sample, perhaps larger than a homogeneous group (Kuzel, 1992). In the planning stage for this thesis, experience of previous business and tourism scholars has been noted (Cresswell, 2007; Jennings, 2010; Saunders et al., 2009) and an interview sample of about 40 participants (as acknowledged) was anticipated in order to reach theoretical saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Saunders et al., 2009).

Initially it was thought that the ideal sourcing participants could be through the researcher's travel industry contacts in both countries would be possible. Travel retailers could search their data bases for suitable clients and after qualifying, place the researcher in direct contact with them. The next section offers details on the eventual sourcing of participants.

4.6 Data collection (participants and instruments)

This section provides information relating to how the participants were sourced in Australia and the United States as well as the processes involved in testing the interview questions and then actually organising and undertaking the field work interviews.

4.6.1 Actual sourcing of participants for purposive sample

The reality was that it was not possible to obtain more than a few potential participants entirely through industry contacts. So over the period October 2014 to April 2015, the participants were sourced firstly, through the kindness of family and friends (and a few from industry contacts) in both countries. Secondly, participants were sourced from advertisements placed in website classified services, such as Gumtree in Australia and Craigslist in the United States, both popular ways of sourcing participants for research purposes, with strict adherence to the research/participant criteria detailed earlier. These potential participants were vetted according to the thesis criteria. Their places of domicile were noted to ensure that firstly, the previously reported desire for heterogeneity was upheld and that their home locations were seen as being sufficiently affluent (to be possible future customers for European river cruises) once again looking towards affordability for possible future European river cruise experiences.

In Sydney, participants from a range of suburbs, northern, eastern and inner western were selected and the same applied in Melbourne (some inner city dwellers and some from bay suburbs) although one interview was conducted over the phone due to participant time constraints. In New York, there were participants from Manhattan, from New Jersey, a few from Brooklyn and one from the Bronx (not an affluent area but the participant had inherited an apartment there). In Los Angeles, participants from the western area, Santa Monica, Marina Del Rey, from North Hollywood, Hollywood and also the inner San Fernando Valley (in the area of the Valley closest to downtown Los Angeles). In all cases, the areas of domicile were known to the researcher and deemed appropriate in accordance with the predetermined criteria.

It was considered important to hear narratives from a wide range of these qualified social actors as this would mimic the potential audience for tourism experiences in Europe. Whilst this was never going to be easy, by vetting the applicants, it was possible to achieve a range of backgrounds, family makeups and current occupations, to achieve the previously noted heterogeneous mix and therefore achieve a high level of credibility (refer to Section 4.8).

In the end, all but one of the participants had travelled internationally and all had travelled extensively at least within their own country. Hence, they were seen as being experienced travellers, financially secure with adequate discretionary spending funds available and also motivated towards the idea of traveling internationally in the future. The fact that they had travelled internationally and/or domestically meant that they had some interest in travel and this was important, of course, to this thesis. Clearly there are those in our societies who have no interest at all in travel, domestic or international, much to the regret of the travel entrepreneurs and marketers!

If they had not previously travelled to Europe, this was seen as possibly useful to the thesis as it was felt that it may be possible to extract the rationale from those who had not travelled to the region as to why this was so. Were there inhibitors or perceived negatives in the prospect? A participant from Melbourne was not at all interested in Europe (although he had travelled to the region previously) and from the nature of the interview and information gleaned about his occupation, he could certainly afford such a trip, but he was far more interested in travel to Asia, Japan or the United States. It was possible to interview up to an optimum ten participants in each city

(Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006) ten each in Sydney, Melbourne, New York and nine in Los Angeles at which point after interviewing 39 participants, it was felt that theoretical saturation had been achieved with no new information being gained from further interviews (Guest et al., 2006).

This sourcing process became very time consuming however it was found to be extremely worthwhile as heterogeneity was achieved within the sampling frame. They were heterogeneous in terms of backgrounds, experiences, family makeup and occupations. This was ideal for the requirements of this thesis. In particular, there were participants with quite different family backgrounds and life experiences to those anticipated by the researcher, thus improving the richness of the data collected.

Most interviews were conducted in public spaces such as parks, coffee shops, participant's work places and in some cases, in the lobbies of hotels and a hospital. Some participants offered meeting rooms in their offices and a few (with small children) asked the researcher to conduct the interviews in their homes. As has been stated in Section 4.5.4, the intention was to make it as easy as possible for the participants to meet with the interviewer. In every case, the participants were asked to choose a location, a day and a time. It was seen as vital that the participants be relaxed, safe and comfortable in whatever environment they chose, to create an atmosphere conducive to thoughtful responses.

It was proposed that each interview would be of about 60 minutes. This time period was considered the optimum for obtaining rich data whilst cognisant of the participants' schedules and time constraints. A complete list of participants (with pseudonyms chosen by themselves) in the four locations can be seen in Appendix 3.

4.6.2 Pilot study

A pilot study is an important exercise and takes place during the last stages of preparation for the field work component of the thesis. It is basically a test run to ensure the participants will fully understand the questions and that the recording of the data contained in the interview has credibility (Saunders et al., 2009).

The purpose of pilot studies may be to refine and develop interviewing skills, test the questionnaire wording, test the sequence of questions, test the fieldwork recording

device, estimate the optimal interview time and test the software for storing interview voice recordings (Veal, 2006).

A pilot study interview for this thesis was held in Perth, Western Australia in February, 2015 with a Gen X cohort member, a 38 year old female with extensive travel experience internationally and domestically gained through her work and also vacation activities. She was purposively recruited through personal contacts and was interviewed for a period of an hour and a half. The interview was recorded using a Sony hand held voice recorder. As this was a pilot, test volume levels were checked as well as playback clarity, to ensure correct settings were in place for the actual field work commencing a few weeks later.

Immediately following this interview, a short debriefing session was held with this pilot study participant whilst details were fresh in our minds. It was decided that to gain the required information in the actual field data collection phase, the interview could be made shorter, to about one hour, as this interview (by necessity as it was a pilot) had experienced some stop/start moments due to note taking and some minor interruptions.

The interview questions proved to be appropriate to the Research Questions and so only minor alterations were necessary. For example, rewriting some questions to ensure specificity and reordering some others to improve the flow.

The interview recording was downloaded, transcribed and stored on the laptop (and backed up) as would be the case in the field and in accordance with Curtin University's Human Research Ethics Committee guidelines.

4.6.3 The actual interviews

All communication prior to the interviews was conducted by email and text message/phone. The participants were asked to create a pseudonym for their interview to ensure anonymity. Rabionet (2011) suggests that a most challenging component of interview protocol is creating rapport with the participants. For these interviews rapport was established with an ice-breaking introduction, to create a comfortable and trusting environment and elicit truthful comments from the participants. Before activating the voice recorder, there was a greeting period and

introduction with a few very general questions relating to the local environment. After the recorder was activated, the first questions related to recent vacation experiences. These early questions were designed to create a relaxed interview atmosphere as people generally have pleasant memories of past vacations and are willing to talk about them (Fontana & Frey, 2008).

In the first few interviews, some unstructured (and therefore unscripted) questions were included as practice when opportunities arose. Such questions grew in number as new ideas emerged and confidence grew between the interviewer and participant (Rabionet, 2011). For example, as the interviews progressed, questions were added relating to participants' views on their potential retirement age, the need for them to possibly care for elderly parents in the future, Gen X cohort females choosing to have children later in life and their attitudes towards people of a different generation.

It became apparent, that the majority of participants had grown up in middle class situations (it is noted that this is a subjective term) although a few did talk of poor and deprived childhoods. Many had spent their younger years in cities, whilst a few had come from rural areas to live in cities during late teens or early 20s years. As one example of differences between the two countries, in the United States, many young folk travel away from home after senior high school to attend colleges. This means a separation from home and family life in formative late teen years and inevitably creates different formative experiences through interaction with peers and adults in a new environment.

Occupations varied enormously and included a bookkeeper, executive recruiter, marketing manager, real estate agent, mine safety manager, librarian, arts management executive, psychotherapist, coffee franchisee, owner/driver, school teacher, lawyer, translator, city paralegal officer and environmental researcher as shown in Appendix 3.

The participants offered narratives relating to backgrounds/experiences of travel experiences in childhood/teenage years and also the actual origins of initial interest in travel per se. Of current family makeup again, there was wide variety with participants categorising themselves as single, no kids, divorced with kids, divorced, divorcing, partnered, married with no kids, married with kids and separated (again, documented in Appendix 3).

During the interview, notes were taken for future reference relating to reliability and suitability of the questions, ease of understanding and depth of responses. Responses to these questions were seen as having a direct relationship to the thesis (Saunders et al., 2009). In addition, some questions arose that were particular to a certain interview, due to a particular direction of the conversation or a subject that was seen as interesting to the researcher and again, pertinent to the thesis.

The interview questioning schedule was used as a guide. As acknowledged in Section 4.5.2 the actual numerical order was not always followed. The researcher needed to gauge the situation and adjust where necessary, based on the flow of conversation. Adopting this approach led to greater insights of life experiences in many cases. Additionally, rapport between the researcher and participant in some cases dictated the direction of conversation and also the order of questions.

Following the interview a de-briefing session was conducted for about 10 to 15 minutes, during which time the participant could ask questions of the researcher and the latter could notate any additional findings or details, such as clarification of place names, individual's names or dates from the interview. Each of the participants in all four cities happily answered all questions. In fact in some cases, being mindful of time restrictions answers by necessity needed to be contained. Some participants expressed interest in the thesis at this stage and the concept of Generational Theory. One participant in Los Angeles expressed negativity towards Generational Theory. In all cases, participants were generous in their support for the thesis. Almost all were happy to conclude the interview meeting with little additional communication due to their other commitments.

A journal was maintained throughout the interviewing field work period. An entry was made for each participant and notes made where time permitted during the interview and, most importantly, immediately after each interview. Information on the interview environment, the disposition of the participant, perception of how successful the interview had been and any preliminary thoughts on emerging themes or items of interest were recorded. In this way a feel for the participant, the relationship with the participant and the participant's working or living environment, was created (Cresswell, 2007; Moran, 2008).

In the end, the average length of interview was 50 minutes and 48 seconds. Interview notes were made and all interviews recorded via hand held voice recorder and then transcribed on an on-going basis rather than at the conclusion. The rationale for this was that by listening to interviews soon after the meeting, hints for possible improvement of future interviews would become clear as well as initial ideas for data analysis. In addition, it was found that it was sensible to undertake transcription whilst the interviews were still fresh in the mind (Rabionet, 2011).

The data were then transcribed for analysis (Cassell & Symon, 2004; Cresswell, 2007). After transcription, the relationship with the participants continued as each was sent a verbatim copy of the interview transcript with a request that they read through and advise of any errors by a certain date. Some errors were duly noted and the transcriptions updated to ensure a final correct record. Most errors related to place names or states, particularly in the North America, due to the interviewer's unfamiliarity with the greater environment, for example *Rosarito Beach* in Mexico and *Poconos* in Pennsylvania. One related to a participant reflecting on her use of the word "yeah" in the interview. In no cases did participants relate any negative feedback to the transcriptions. More details are documented in Chapter 5.

4.7 Data analysis

This important process, which is presented in detail in Chapter 5, commenced with a list of potential ideas and categories derived from the interviews being undertaken and updated during the course of the field work. It was thought that many ideas would be detected as interview recollections were written in the journal and later, as transcripts were read and reread and this was the case and results are shown in Chapter 5. Such practice gives an impression of the quality of the data and provides clues as to whether this data will add meaning and value, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). As far as possible, interviews were transcribed in an ongoing manner, rather than undertaking all transcriptions at the end, to ensure any new ideas for questioning of participants could be included in future interviews. In this way it was possible to collect a body of first analysis observations, which would form a conceptual framework from the Australian and then two months later, the United States interviews.

Manual coding or categorizing followed. Codes are the sections of the transcripts of interviews that are highlighted (manually). It was at this stage that as Flick (2009) describes, the transcribed interview data were uploaded into computer aided qualitative data analysis or CAQDAS software, NVivo. Finally, a thematic analysis was undertaken and the data were summarised.

4.8 Quality of data

During the data collection period, it was important to undertake self-analysis. Whilst it has been noted that a journal was kept throughout the period before, during and after field work, recording informally many ideas and observations, it was also necessary to ensure research measurements and protocols were in place.

4.8.1 Credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity

The trustworthiness of the entire qualitative research process is vital in ensuring rigour. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four criteria must be satisfied, credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity (Saunders et al., 2009). Credibility is evaluative in that the quality of the research is based on the documented quality of time spent undertaking the field work (Flick, 2008). It represents participants' socially-constructed realities. In this thesis this is achieved by sending interview transcripts to participants and also discussing ideas emanating from interviews with a Supervisor. In terms of transferability, it is important to realise that a full description has been provided of the Research Questions, design, context, findings and interpretation. The findings could be transferred to other contexts. Dependability implies the extent to which data collection technique or techniques (processes) will yield consistent findings. Authenticity relates to the data collected being that of the participant and not the interviewee or researcher as well as how valid the conclusions are from the data presented (Shenton, 2004). In this thesis a range of voices are heard and explanations explored, including any anomalies.

Each of these self-analysis constructs is detailed below.

Credibility, as noted by Shenton (2004) in the process of data gathering can be aided through reference to successful research designs, procedures and questioning from past studies. For the planning stage of this thesis, previous qualitative

phenomenological tourism context studies have been investigated and procedures noted. Two recent studies (Abodeeb, Wilson, & Moyle, 2014; Gnoth & Matteucci, 2014) emphasise the importance in data collection of “exploring and seeking to understand” (Gnoth and Matteucci, 2014, p. 6). The former study (which used mixed methods) included in-depth semi-structured interviews. Results of the interviews indicated that due to their nature and the consequent opportunity for the researcher to deviate and slot in some appropriate but unscripted questions, realisations were made by participant and interviewer alike relating to the research topic of Arab tourism to the Gold Coast region of Australia.

In the construction of the interviews, truthfulness of responses is considered vital. Section 4.6.1 noted that frequent communication was undertaken with each participant prior to the interview. In addition, following the interviews participants were asked to confirm the transcriptions for correctness. In the interviews themselves, the researcher probed in certain instances, if any trace of contradiction occurred. Reference to past studies together with these tactics and familiarity (refer to Section 4.2.3) relating to the environment and culture of the participants ensured credibility in this thesis data collection stage.

In such a semi-structured interview, most of the questions follow a similar format and can be repeated at another time, although the setting, the interviewer and the participant could be different, therefore changing the dynamic. The nature of the interview approach (semi-structured) means that some questions are not scripted and come as a result of the responses of the participant to structured questions or the particular relationship that has developed.

Transferability involves the development of theory that can be transferred to other settings would not be possible due to the particular time and place that this research was being undertaken and also the choices of physical setting nominated by the participants (Saunders et al., 2009). Given this, in a situation in the future where such authenticity was desired, it must be assumed that the responses given by participants could vary (even if they were the same participants) as the age of the participants would differ and also their life situations could have altered. The responses could also be affected by the moods as well as the cultural background of the participant and researcher on the day, the nature of the conversation between them, which is

dependent on the particular rapport which exists in the particular interview environment.

The strategy used by this researcher to source participants could, almost entirely, be applied to another research study. As previously noted in Section 3.6.1 many participants were sourced through family and friends and industry colleagues. It may be that future researchers could source participants this way, but if not, it would definitely be possible to source a significant sample from website classifieds with the proviso that strict qualifications (as utilized in this thesis) would apply to ensure validity.

Dependability suggests that similar observations would be made or conclusions reached by other scholars in the field, under similar conditions, or that there is transparency in the researcher's methodology which demonstrates how sense was made from the raw data. In this respect, dependability aligns closely with credibility (Shenton, 2004). Thus, the research tools employed in this thesis are assumed to be predictable and accurate as well as being consistent and stable (Bryman, 2008; Kumar, 2005). This chapter's Section 4.5 gives a description of the research tools used in this thesis and Chapter 5 details the actual data collection, involving semi-structured interviews in the four cities and subsequent analysis.

This researcher makes the point that the research has been undertaken over a certain time period in history and the part played by the researcher and the participants (all social actors at the particular time in history) obviously cannot be replicated exactly. The methodology employed and the rationales used, however, are sound and reliable and have been accurately detailed in this chapter.

To ensure authenticity, the researcher, having instigated the particular approaches, has ensured an audit trail or journal was maintained (referred to in Section 4.6.1). In this were recorded the insights, creative thoughts and impressions of the researcher together with personal learning details to address possible biases, decisions and dilemmas as suggested by Whiteley (2012). These are detailed in Section 4.10. Finally, confirmation by the researcher of validity of the conclusions made from the data collected and analysed.

The practice of putting aside pre-conceived knowledge and beliefs, known as bracketing (Pollio, Henly, & Thompson, 1997) has been supported by the researcher. It is important to understand the motivation for undertaking the research and then to be “the first person interviewed on the subject” (Pollio et al. 1997, p. 48) to sensitise the researcher to their own attitudes and beliefs.

4.8.2 Rigour and protocol

An essential characteristic of the philosophy, strategy, design, data collection and analysis in this qualitative thesis is absolute adherence to accuracy (Guba and Lincoln, 1988). Thus, part of the protocol for this thesis was the employment of strict rigour throughout the project, specifically entailing thoughtful and objective development of the research questions appropriate to the thesis topic (Whiteley, 2012). The researcher constantly self-questioned regarding the appropriateness of the research method’s suitability to the research questions. In addition, there was frequent reference to existing knowledge and theories (Whiteley, 2012) as well as previously discussed adherence to principles of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. Finally, ensuring that each stage of the thesis development complied with ethical standards, as documented in the next section.

4.9 Ethical issues

The researcher has been conscious of the need for a code of ethics to protect the rights of individuals as derived from the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHRMC) guidelines. Such important considerations, such as harm to the researcher and participants during the course of the interview process, have needed to be evaluated prior to the commencement of field work (Jennings, 2010). Ethics approval was sought and given by Curtin University and the documentation is shown in Appendix 4. This approval meets the requirements of the NHRMC.

Each participant was contacted by email and an information sheet describing the thesis together with a formal invitation attached. Prior to the interviews participants were emailed a Curtin University informed consent form (shown in Appendix 5) and this was completed, signed and handed to the interviewer prior to commencement of the actual interview as noted in Section 4.6.

Participants were informed about confidentiality prior to the commencement of the interview, their consent was recorded, options to withdraw and use and scope of research findings explained. At the interview, participants signed informed consent forms (see above) to demonstrate their wish to proceed. The interviews were conducted with an ethos of equality and reciprocal respect.

Hard data, consisting of notes and documents, have been securely stored in the researcher's locked cabinet at the Curtin University's HDR facility. Soft data, in the form of electronic documents are kept in dedicated files on lap top and personal computers, back-up copies on an external drive and are accessible by the researcher and Supervisors by unique password. Data is stored for a minimum of seven years from the date of publication, in accordance with the Australian Government's Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Curtin University guidelines and will be stored at the completion of the thesis on the University's dedicated research drive.

4.10 Reflexivity

It is critical to revisit the interview experiences on an ongoing basis from the point of reviewing of results but also the format and then acknowledge and possibly make adjustments as the field work is an integral part of the entire research process. Given that in this thesis the narratives of the participants are of vital importance, the researcher must reflect critically on their place and position (Cassell & Symon, 2004).

Reviewing the first few interviews in Sydney, the researcher found that the interview style was cautious (timid?) and whilst valuable information was collected, and there was adherence to the structured questioning, very few unscripted/unstructured questions were asked. As previously suggested, the researcher must gain the confidence and experience to be able to probe. As the interviews went on, confidence grew and so the last seven Sydney interviews reflect this, as do subsequent interviews in Melbourne, New York and Los Angeles.

This was not just increased confidence, but time and opportunity as well. As the researcher proceeds along the path of qualitative research using semi structured interviews, and particularly as the researcher records notes after each interview and

listens to transcripts, more possible questions associated with the particular research emerge. Examples have been given previously, but in this thesis included possible retirement considerations or financial planning issues. Also, querying any provisions participants may have made for caring for elderly parents and asking opinions on the trend for Gen Xers to have children later than the previous generation. Finally querying any perceived differences between generations noted by the participant.

Throughout the research period, the researcher has been aware of bringing biases, values and experiences to this project. As a result there has been an ongoing acknowledgement of these and effort has been made to ensure their existence is recognised from the outset, being noted in the journal during the interview field studies and then again when listening to interview voice recordings (Cassell & Symon, 2004). There has been an ongoing consciousness of the active role being played in the natural environment of the participants and the need to be aware of any evidence of judgements or presuppositions.

Sourcing participants was a time consuming exercise and could be frustrating. The researcher was intent upon organising interview participants, dates and times well in advance of the actual interview. This was in some cases two months prior to the meeting. The rationale for this was purely practical, because of the diverse cities chosen for the research, the researcher had to make flight and accommodation bookings well in advance for reasons of time and cost constraints. In retrospect and with experience, asking participants to commit so far in advance was ambitious in many instances. It was found that it would have been possible and even easier, to source qualified participants at a time much closer to the meeting, a few weeks before arriving in the particular city.

Sections 4.6 and 4.7 record that all through the various stages of producing this thesis, the researcher has noted in the journal any particularly significant aspects of the relationship between the researcher and the focus of the research (Saunders et al., 2009). The term refers to “the recognition that the involvement of the researcher as an active participant in the research process shapes the nature of the process and the knowledge produced through it.” (Cassell & Symon, 2004, p. 20)

Moustakas (1994) observes that this reflexivity or method of reflection, offers the researcher a chance to make descriptions of the qualitative research experience by providing the needed analysis and synthesis through logic, systems and coherence.

The researcher has placed himself in the world of Gen Xers in the various cities. As such the researcher lives in the world of the participants (refer to Section 4.2.3) even though he is aware that he belongs to a different generation, a different natural (living and working) environment and another world of experiences.

Presuppositions noted by this researcher are;

- He possesses at least as much tourism experience as any of the participants and so is familiar with most of the destinations and tourism experiences they describe.
- He has experience from having actually lived in both countries and in particular in three of the four cities, Sydney, Melbourne and Los Angeles and so possibly shared a similar world view, although at a different time and even if this was restricted to immediate environment alone.

In addition, this researcher had;

- Spent his childhood and formative years in a very mono-cultural situation in a suburban location in Sydney.
- Experienced possibly different interests, attitudes, beliefs and values to these participants due to growing up in a different time in history.
- Possibly held some bias in that previous work experience had taken place in tourism industry sectors including European river cruises.
- Previously experienced river cruises in Europe as a social actor or cruise participant.

Reflexivity has taken place throughout this field work in the data collection and later, in the data analysis stages. Examples include the nature of the interview questions, the control of the actual interviews (which improved with experience) and the timing and settings of the interview. From maintenance of extensive notes, various ideas for future research studies were conceptualised.

Considerations have been made for various thesis constraints. In this thesis, there is a time constraint and so in this case a certain amount of time was allocated to planning the field work and then undertaking the interviews in the four cities. Five or six days was allowed in each city. Naturally cost was a big consideration when air fares, accommodation and numerous other travelling costs are factored in. Finally, the planning, execution and follow up were undertaken by the researcher and so organisational management constraints applied.

4.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has described the qualitative research approach employed in this thesis, based on face to face semi-structured interviews. This approach has been seen as most appropriate to the Research Questions which seek an understanding of the tourism motivations and expectations of a new generation of 50+ vacationers, Gen X. By adopting a phenomenological research design, this thesis is able to present meaning behind the words of participants recounting formative and contemporary phenomena.

The chapter has detailed the planning behind the data collection approach together with the actual realisation of that data collection, including the design of the interview schedules and description and rationale behind the actual questions cross referenced to the Research Questions. Section 4.7 has introduced and described the data analysis process which will be detailed in Chapter 5. Finally, information has been given of the rationale underpinning the Research Questions and notation relating to ethics, protocol and rigour as well as information relating to replicability and then reflexivity.

The next chapter provides details of the data analysis of the sample Gen X participants interviewed in Australia and the United States as a major focus of this thesis. The results of this fieldwork build on the extant but limited research previously undertaken into this generation and provide important information for European government marketers, river cruise operators, associated travel organisations and academics for the coming decades.

Chapter 5 Data analysis

5.1 Introduction

The data collection discussed in Chapter 4 generated almost 35 hours of interview recordings from participant interviews in Sydney, Melbourne, New York and Los Angeles. These recordings form the basis of the in-depth phenomenological research design employed in this thesis. This chapter follows on from the data collection and documents the next stage, the data analysis, and the results gleaned from the semi-structured interviews. The approach taken was outlined in Chapter 4, Section 4.7, and is described here in detail.

The data analysis has involved initially summarising the information relating to the field notes and documenting ideas generated during and immediately after the interviews. Following this a detailed process ensued, featuring a more formal analysis of the data using both manual and electronic means, culminating in the coding or categorisation of the data, leading to the thematic analysis stage. In this thesis, ten themes have been identified and are discussed in depth in this chapter with sub-themes and supported by references to the participants' interview responses. A final step in the data analysis has involved summarising the data, culminating in units of meaning emerging which, coupled with the themes, are used to enhance and extend theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As this research design has been concerned with obtaining rich narrative data of participants' formative experiences as well as contemporary views, data analysis has required an engagement in thoughtful analysis, with particular emphasis on the meanings expressed in the words. It was seen as important to the phenomenological research design to "also generate a description of the setting or the people as well as evolving themes or patterns" (Cresswell, 2007, p. 51). These settings and people were acknowledged in Chapter 4 and are represented again in this chapter.

As described in Chapter 4, this thesis uses the interpretive paradigm to understand Gen X participants' formative and contemporary experiences from their own perspectives and seeks to discover how these affect their tourism motivations and impact on their expectations of future tourism experiences. The researcher is

interpreting meaning and it is acknowledged that this approach is subjective. To achieve this understanding and discovery, the researcher has sought to capture the participants' point of view, examined the constraints of their everyday lives and aimed to secure rich data relating to their social world and world view (Saunders et al., 2009).

5.2 Interview approach

The data have been derived from a series of semi-structured interviews with appropriately qualified Gen Xers in Australia and the United States. Using this approach has enabled the researcher to spend time with participants and explore various thoughts expressed by them and so have the opportunity to obtain previously unconsidered information, useful to the thesis' aim.

5.3 Interview details, field notes and observations

All interview appointment details were transferred from a field work notebook on to a spreadsheet showing details of the participants' name (pseudonym chosen by them), status, gender, occupation, interview date, time and location (shown in Appendix 3). This approach is sometimes referred to as Attribute Coding (Saldana, 2010) and it provides basic descriptive information such as the setting, characteristics of the participant, the time frame and any other variables of interest.

Whilst each interview was in progress, an occasional comment was made in the field work note book, recording any utterance of particular interest, or observations, thoughts and new ideas that had come from the participant's responses, including notes relating to aspects of the interview setting. As a result, the researcher was continually adapting and adjusting and was then able to adjust by continually refining the choice of location for future interviews thus ensuring the participants were at ease and voice recording results satisfactory. A typical field note is this comment relating to the interview with participant Kylie in Melbourne,

“A noisy coffee shop in Yarraville.”

Or this one relating to participant Stephanie, also in Melbourne,

“Stephanie was interviewed in her home in Heathmont, Melbourne, whilst juggling afternoon nap time for her two small children.”

With Fernando in New York,

“A few problems with the Café interview location-background recorded music and the barman was particularly unhelpful when I requested he turn the volume down.”

Here is a comment relating to the observation of the demeanour of a participant, Mandy in Melbourne. She had come to the interview from a long day of teaching at a Melbourne girl’s school,

“...she was a little guarded and perhaps holding back...”

At the conclusion of each interview and after the participants had departed, more observations and responses were added to the field note book providing some reflexion on the interview, including more comments on the location, the nature of the conversation, the success or otherwise of the interview, such as with participant Toby in New York,

“At times I lost control of the interview. He was a good talker but frequently got off the track of the interview and on to his own agenda.”

Whilst Toby’s was a difficult interview in terms of keeping to the prescribed questioning, the researcher’s response in future interviews was to be alert to any deviations by participants and revert more quickly to the structured questions when considered necessary.

Finally, a notebook comment relating to the interview with Albert in Los Angeles,

“...an interesting guy with fixed, definite opinions, he does *not* subscribe to Generational Theory!”

These comments gave the researcher some ideas for contemplation of performance as an interviewer and also the ease or otherwise with which it was felt the participant responded to the interview. It is these raw field notes that became invaluable as prompts for changes in approach or greater depth in questioning as the interview schedule progressed (Flick, 2009).

When comparing all interview transcriptions later in the analysis process, it could be seen that the confidence of the researcher grew. There was greater freedom to ask more probing questions, adding some unstructured questions to the structured when appropriate, and then seeking greater depth.

For example, the interview with Corky, in Sydney, interview notes reveal,

“I was more relaxed and felt more confident probing and asking more unstructured questions.”

As the researcher became more experienced, some experimenting with interview locations ensued. Whilst the locations needed to be convenient for participants, they also needed to be quiet (for the voice recorder) and free of distractions for both the researcher and the participant and thus conducive to the gathering of rich data. For example, the interview with Bob in Sydney was conducted in the same park as that used for Dutch (the first participant in Sydney) but in a different and quieter section and so the audio results were greatly improved and participant and researcher more relaxed as there was less distraction. Similarly, the interview with Tony (in Los Angeles) was to have taken place in a coffee shop on a Sunday morning. Arriving there early, the researcher considered it to be too noisy and so an unused public car park in the next block was judged as being more suitable from the point of view of noise level and lack of distraction.

All of the participants were happy to talk freely and no objections to the questions were encountered. Field notes show that three participants (one each in Sydney, Melbourne and Los Angeles) were either nervous or shy at the commencement of the interview, but soon relaxed. A few participants were very talkative and happy to give lengthy responses to questions, not always on-track; an extreme case being the previously mentioned Toby.

For example, during Bath's interview in New York, she sometimes deviated from the subject at hand and only by being quite forceful in questioning and frequently referring the participant back to the particular question was it possible to solve the problem. It should be noted again that participants often had time constraints necessitating adherence to the prescribed lines of questioning to ensure adequate data were collected, in the time. With the previously mentioned Toby in New York, the researcher had some doubts about the quality of the data in one part, necessitating a response to be designated unusable. The particular part related to a derogatory remark relating to an alternative religion to his. This was not considered as relevant to the Research Questions.

Another observation from the transcriptions was that the researcher occasionally interrupted a participant's response. This action was generally taken to direct them back on track whilst also being mindful of the limited interview time frame. In so doing, some information in a few interviews potentially may have been missed, but again, time constraints had to be considered.

It was occasionally necessary to seek explanations from participants (particularly in the United States) as some expressions used, place names, people's names or institution names were not known to the researcher, for example,

Toby: "I went to UNH and then I transferred to SUB."

Researcher: "Where's that?"

Toby: "It's about two miles from UNH. UNH is a private university and my grades weren't great so my parents didn't want to pay, because UNH is a very expensive school."

Researcher: "So what does UNH stand for?"

Toby: "University of New Haven and then I transferred to Southern Connecticut." (Toby, New York, April 10, 2015)

In summary, it was felt that the whole process of data collection proceeded in a satisfactory manner and resulted in the collection of rich data. Choices of venue (in the main) and rapport with participants were successful in terms of obtaining generous responses to the Research Questions. Lessons were learnt along the way and the researcher kept extensive notes for use in the thesis as well as for personal reflexion for future research work.

5.4 Emergence of ideas

Some initial ideas generation was undertaken immediately after each interview and also at the transcription stage, as some transcriptions occurred during the field work interview stage. Collecting the data along the way can introduce ideas, in this case issues relating to retirement, which can be tested on subsequent participants and also can potentially extend theory (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Such an on-going analysis can test the researcher's and potentially, the participant's biases or possible judgements. For example, an instance arose when the researcher

considered a detrimental comment was being used relating to an image of cruise passengers by a participant in Melbourne who had never experienced such a vacation. Interestingly, such biases or judgements occasionally became apparent in the cross cultural elements of this particular research, spanning as it has sample populations from two countries. An example is a derogatory term relating to African Americans made by a participant in Los Angeles, a term which is not used in Australia.

As previously noted, for the researcher reflexion is on-going during and after the interviews, and relates to the quality of the data collected, how appropriate it is and whether new questions need to be introduced (Whiteley, 2012). On the basis of some comments made by participants in Sydney, new questions relating to retirement issues for this generational cohort were introduced in Melbourne and in subsequent interviews in the United States. In addition, questions relating to the topic of Gen Xers having children later in life and general life expectancy matters were introduced during the data collection period. These additional questions were all considered to be pertinent to this research as they related to emerging themes. Here is an example of a question relating to retirement,

“So when it comes to your turn...do you ever think about retirement?”

(Researcher to Anna, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

On the matter of Gen Xers having children later in life,

“Do you think women, let’s say in your generation, do you think they’re having children...those that are having children are having them later?”

(Researcher to Ariadne, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

A list of potential ideas generated from the interviews was maintained and updated during the course of the field work and is shown in Appendix 10. As new ideas emerged, these were added to the list and sometimes added to the interview questions. Over many hours and weeks of painstaking reading and note taking, a total of 17 initial ideas were identified. Such a list gives an impression of the quality of the data, as it comes from verbatim transcriptions, and provides clues as to whether this data will add meaning and value (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In the weeks and months after the interviews, completed transcriptions were sent to each of the participants with the request that they read them and advise the researcher of any errors or adjustments thought necessary, whilst ensuring the fundamental integrity of the transcribed conversations. Not all participants responded but some did and typical comments are as follows,

“All good.” This from DJB74 in Sydney email dated March 30, 2015,

“...that all looks fine.” Adam in Sydney email dated March 18, 2015, and

“Looks okay to me! I may have to focus on cutting back the use of the word ‘yeah’ in my vocab”. Sarah in Melbourne in her email dated March 30, 2015.

5.5 Coding and categorising data

Following Miles and Huberman’s suggestions (1984) a Contact Summary Form was prepared for each interview transcription (shown in Appendix 11). Such a form offers the researcher an opportunity to record salient points from the interview, ideally while the actual experience is fresh in the mind. It provides a simple and recent summary of the distinct points raised and observations made and can be referred to later. This is a “rapid, practical way to do the first run data reduction-without losing any of the basic information (the write-ups) to which it refers” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 51). The initial coding and categorizing commenced with a thorough reading of each of the interview hard copy transcriptions, with pertinent comments being placed in the margins. Notes were handwritten and completed with one for each of the 39 interviews. Slowly, researcher observations and comments were grouped together and in this way categories evolved. In addition, emerging concepts and issues were documented.

5.5.1 Data analysis

The researcher re-read each interview transcription and made notes either related to the Research Questions (which included Generational Theory) or emerging ideas. These notes are descriptive codes in that they have not yet been interpreted, they appear as an observation of a phenomena which is linked to the Research Questions (Miles & Huberman, 1984). They are the sections of the transcripts of interviews that are highlighted (manually).

Some examples are as follows,

“This participant has her own attitudes which she notes are different from her father’s.” (Interview with Kylie in Melbourne, February 23, 2015)

or

“Rosa is describing the catalyst for her interest for travel.” (Interview with Rosa in Los Angeles, April 20, 2015)

Having worked through all the interview transcriptions in this way, as well as referring to the raw field notes, more categories began to form. More evidence appeared relating to emerging themes. These were noted and when the second stage coding was commenced, they formed the basis of more explanatory notes, as discussed by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Flick (2009).

5.5.2 Second stage coding or categorising (NVivo)

Following the manual coding, all the transcribed interview data were uploaded into computer aided qualitative data analysis or CAQDAS software (Flick, 2009), in this thesis, NVivo. When used systematically, CAQDAS can aid continuity and increase both transparency and methodological rigour (Saunders et al., 2009). The process of using NVivo involved analysing the transcribed interviews once again but this time creating *nodes* or categories and then dragging hundreds of pertinent transcribed sections of text into appropriate *nodes*. These *nodes* became an exhaustive summary and differed in some cases from the 17 initial ideas described earlier, due to the very thorough analysis of the data. In this electronic coding stage, 43 *nodes* were devised, some of which evolved into *sub-nodes* as greater richness of data became more apparent.

5.5.3 Thematic analysis

Those 43 *nodes* or categories were eventually grouped under headings of 10 themes (In NVivo these are referred to as *child nodes* and *adult nodes* respectively) in preparation for the thematic analysis. An example of coding related to text appears below;

Transcription (Sarah, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

Coding (highlighted) using NVivo software (included from the transcription above) relating to the node "Childhood Vacations"

No. So Dad was working, he's a doctor, and Mum hasn't worked our whole lives. And in terms of when I refer to the travel when we were much younger, that was when Dad did a swap, so we were actually overseas for four years. And he did a swap with a doctor over in Canada.

And what age were you then?

Four years old, very young.

What, four to eight or zero to four?

No. Actually maybe I was, say ... I'm making this up a little bit, let's say two to six, yeah. So young, very young.

So very young, yeah.

Put it this way, I, sort of, learnt to talk over in Canada. I came back with a little Canadian accent.

Where were you in Canada?

We were in a very small town called Gilaneh which is outside of ... I think it's outside of Manitoba. I don't think anyone really knows where it is. But, yeah, so Dad ... we lived in this other ... these people house, and Mum and Dad absolutely loved it. They just thought they met the most delightful people over there.

And was he a GP?

Yeah.

Yeah. What a wonderful experience.

Yeah. So we were going to go to America actually but then he decided to take up this position, this opportunity in Gilaneh which was a tiny little town, and they absolutely loved it, and they're still in touch with some of the people there to this day. And then after that they went travelling, and they were total hippies. You look at photos of them and ...

With you?

Yeah.

You all went together.

They bundled us all into a campervan and went travelling through Europe, driving through Europe in a campervan. So, yeah, it was amazing. They're really quite extraordinary.

But that was a wonderful experience for you all to share.

Yeah. And I've, sort of, got really little potted memories and we'll be talking about something and I'll go, "Were we somewhere where, you know," ... blah, blah, blah. And Mum will say, "Yeah, that was at the Colosseum," or, "We were staying with some nuns in a." All these amazing just ... and I'll just have this tiny little memory of something where I've got no context to it and I don't know what it is. That was at a camp ground in Berlin or ...

It must be in there somewhere, must be in ...

Yeah. Yeah. But because I was so little and you just have these little flashes. But we literally travelled ... we've travelled all over ...

Over what period was this?

We were over for four years.

No, no. The actual travelling around Europe and so on, was it ...

I think it was a couple of years. Yeah, it was a long time. And the only reason why they ... we were meant to be away ...

Fantastic.

Yeah. It was amazing. So we were meant to be away for longer but mum actually got word through a telegram ... by telegram in those days ... that her dad had passed away. Which is really just ... you know, obviously at the time we had no concept of it because we were too little. But it was quite tragic, he'd actually been dead for six months and because there was only designated check in points and so the trip got cut short very abruptly. So one of the memories that I have of ... where were we when this ... the three of us in a room playing with London buses on the ground and Dad with us. I've got no memory of Mum being there. When we've, sort of, talked about it in later years and I'm, like, "What was happening? We were in somewhere, we were playing with buses." We were staying at an airport hotel waiting to get a flight back, and Mum was in the next room kind of comatose.

During this process, reference was made again to the Research Questions and the mapping of those questions to the research analysis themes, as shown in Figure 6-1.

5.6 Themes or data analysis results

In this section, the details of the ten themes, with sub-themes (*sub-nodes*) together with supporting participant statements are presented. The ten themes are summarised in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1 Summary of themes

Number	Theme Title
1	Do generational differences exist?
2	How does the future look for Gen Xers?
3	Tourism consumers
4	Memories of formative influences
5	Memories of formative travel experiences
6	Memories of formative awareness of Europe
7	A lifelong interest in Europe
8	Motivators for vacation
9	Vacation inhibitors
10	The concept of a cruising vacation

5.6.1 Theme One: Do generational differences exist?

5.6.1.1 Generational differences

Are Gen Xers conscious of any generational differences between their generational cohort and Baby Boomers on the one hand and Gen Ys on the other?

How do Gen Xers see themselves? Do they feel there are differences between them and the previous or next generation? Do they subscribe to the Theory of Generations? Socially, are there differences between the generations? Many of the Gen X participants had experienced family breakups, a result of higher divorce rates amongst their Baby Boomer parents than the previous Silent Generation parents. They see their social world as being more complicated than previous generations,

“I think back in Mum and Dad’s day it was they’d meet someone, they’d start dating them and they’d just settle down. Whereas these days I think relationships are a lot more disposable...” (Mandy, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

There were various comments from participants from broken homes presenting specific and related views, such as,

Ariadne: “Yes, my father left for a while in our teens and went off with his mistress. But we just stayed in the home that we were living at the time. And then he came back from the mistress and we moved to some place for my last two years. It was horrific because I had to move to Iowa.”

Researcher: “Did you, without getting too personal, did that have any sort of effect on you, him going away?”

Ariadne: “Probably because it was horrific...” (Ariadne, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

To the matter of social structures, Gen X has been presented with many choices in opportunities to live singly or in multiple varieties of relationships (Mackay, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1999). The result may be that they feel as though the structure their parents experienced has not been as clear cut for them. Appendix 3 demonstrates the variety of relationships currently enjoyed by these thesis participants under the heading *Status*. The following participant comment is typical of the general agreement among participants and implies again, that the adult societal structures they are experiencing are more complex, different and diverse to those of their parents, the Baby Boomers. The comment comes from an Australian participant,

“But I’ve got to take into account the changes in society.” (DJB74, Sydney, February 11, 2015)

5.6.1.2 Are there generational differences?

As the interviews progressed, the researcher questioned the participants’ views on the matter of perceived unique features of their generational cohort. The objective being to understand whether in fact, these Gen Xers actually believed that there were significant differences between generations. The great majority of participants felt that there were. Their comments ranged from the very general to more specific differences. Views were expressed that some of these differences had been caused by

environmental factors such as technological developments, but also general social, economic, political or geographical factors,

“I think Generation X I think happened...I don't know what it is but I think we're totally different.” (Sally, New York, April 9, 2015)

Despite this and assumptions relating to Baby Boomers, the majority of participants felt that they had an affinity and understanding with the older generation which they did not enjoy with the next, Gen Y. This was again seen by them as being heavily associated with situational factors but in this case, was heavily ascribed to dramatic changes in communication, such as the introduction of the Internet, mobile devices and social networking, which Gen X have adapted to but Gen Y have grown up with. Here is a participant comment comparing Gen X and Gen Y in the context of rapid changes in the area of technology,

“You think about the time I was 12 to now, you know, or whatever. Just the way...at school when they had a projector...the reel thing, you know. Now it's digital streaming stuff.” (Juan, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

This participant is suggesting that his generation has lived through and absorbed tremendous technological changes.

5.6.1.3 What is Generational Theory?

The majority of participants were of the opinion that that individuals within a generational cohort *are* shaped by formative experiences. The participants expressed the view that their beliefs, values, attitudes and interests were formed by their immediate environments rather than what they see as external or far away events and people. Participants were asked about formative local, national or world events they felt may have shaped their lives. Most found it quite difficult to respond but then a few recollections came from the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. These are summarised in Appendix 12. More detail is contained in sub-theme 5.6.4.1.

The following statement is typical of the view amongst participants that in their formative years, the immediate environment (technological, geographical and social) shaped beliefs, values, attitudes and interests,

“Yeah. Yeah. You are shaped by your own cohort. I think you are shaped by the people that are around you...” (John, Melbourne, February 26, 2015)

John is commenting that the social environment one experiences in formative years, including influential family, friends, school teachers, sporting coaches contributes strongly to an individual’s mature age world view and behaviour.

In support of Generational Theory, here is a typical participant comment,

“I think a lot of it has to do with the surroundings and the environment and the experiences they live through.” (Franklin, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

Interestingly, one participant in Los Angeles felt that Generational Theory was too broad in its view of generational differences,

“Maybe when you look at it from a big, broad perspective you can see some big trends in general things...” (Albert, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

Here Albert is taking the view that Generational Theory should be looked at broadly whilst making the point that he is a little sceptical of overstating differences between generations,

“I feel like it’s a very easy way to simplify things...” (Albert, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

5.6.1.4 Gen X characteristics

A few comments by participants relating to themselves as individuals within a unique generational cohort suggested that the idea of labelling an entire generation in similar terms may need some more nuanced theoretical adjustment. It may be the case that again, differences (whether they are geographical or environmental, cultural or social leading to some heterogeneity) may need to be taken into account. The comments below provide a range of individual views. Anna and Jessica describe formative years of compliance with parental instruction, but observe that their recollection was of relaxed discipline,

“We were so compliant as kids, we weren’t rebellious...” (Anna, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

John and Sally felt that Gen Xers in mature adulthood experience self-pity and perhaps disillusionment,

“Xers are a bit more self-pity kind of.” (John, Melbourne, February 26, 2015)

and

“...we’re all kind of a mess.” (Sally, New York, April 9, 2015)

Their comments (noting that a similar opinion is expressed by participants in both Australia and the United States) are interesting in that they give the impression that this generation has been overlooked in some way. Certainly this is true (as has been observed in Chapter 2) in relation to the lack of recent research, but perhaps after all the previously noted concentration on Baby Boomers by marketers and sociologists, Gen X are aware of receiving less media attention and being under researched.

The concept of Gen Xers wishing to achieve a work/life balance was generally accepted by participants as true and a majority response is shown below. This characteristic could present a dilemma for this generational cohort as to how to remain true to the work/life balance principal whilst still craving the disposable income and spending power of hard working Baby Boomers? This comment is typical of the majority of participants,

“Oh, nobody enjoys working. No, we’ve never been workaholic people. I’ve actually travelled a couple of times and thrown my job in a couple of times and gone on open-ended holidays.” (Steve, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

This suggests that Gen Xers are craving independence and freedom. Where does this characteristic come from? The overall and common feeling amongst the participants in both Australia and the United States was that they individually and collectively craved independence and freedom in their lives. This common thread had emerged in early childhood and had remained with them through their lives. The independence and freedom characteristics extend to vacation travel and so were seen as important factors in the context of this thesis. Many comments were made during interviews in both countries, supporting the notion of independence whilst travelling. The following quote sums up the range of comments received,

“...we tend to just take our own way around, if you know what I mean? Being able to do things for yourself, you know what I mean?” (Missy, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

5.6.1.5 Are Gen Xers adaptable?

In Chapter 2, McCrindle and Wolfinger (2009, p. 52) describe Gen Xers as “digital adaptives”. Data analysis has confirmed that this generation was introduced to computers in the main, during their high school years. For the majority of participants, this was during the mid-1980s when computers were really rudimentary word processors. Of course there has been rapid advancement in the intervening years, with computers now incorporating most forms of communication together with mobile aptitude. Gen Xers have had to adapt (as shown in sub-theme 5.6.4.5). Has this been straightforward and have they embraced the technology? This comment was typical of the statements received from participants,

“We transitioned. We were in the middle of...so we know what it was before the Internet world and now we know...but we also have to...we also like building our careers, we have to adapt to it too. So it’s like we’re kind of in the middle of that which I think we struggle with. I don’t know. It’s interesting.” (Sally, New York, April 9, 2015)

A later theme (Theme Six) explores this topic of adapting to technological change as there was general agreement amongst participants that most of their research, information gathering and travel bookings are undertaken on-line or following recommendations from family, or friends (refer to in sub-themes 5.6.3.3 and 5.6.4.5).

5.6.2 Theme Two: Contemporary issues facing Gen Xers as they mature

In the context of this thesis as it relates to the European river cruises, it was seen as important for the researcher to pinpoint potential issues in later life which could possibly affect the ability of this generational cohort to participate in such experiences. As has been discussed in Chapter 3, these European river cruises often require lengthy vacation durations, particularly from Australia due to the great distance, and are considered to be a high cost in relation to many other cruising or vacation experiences. The following is a summary of contemporary issues introduced during the interview field work sessions in Australia and the United States,

- **Caring for ageing parents.** It is important for this thesis to understand if Gen Xers anticipate that parental care responsibilities could impede future travel opportunities. Would such responsibilities impact on their ability to travel later in life? As Baby Boomers are living longer due to a healthy life style and improvements in medical care, will their children be required to provide funding and time support in their own retirement years?
- **Retirement.** Given the appreciation in both countries of economic constraints on early retirement in the decades ahead, how do Gen Xers view retirement? Do they see retirement ages increasing to the late 60s or 70? What are their expectations and are they even interested in the notion of retirement? Australian and United States participant feedback is important as the two countries currently have different approaches to pensions and the retirement age, but are moving in the same direction. Again, the extension of people's working lives and subsequent reduction in vacation time and funds available are seen as possible inhibitors in the context of this thesis relating to European river cruises.
- **Having children later.** With advances in medical science, it is possible for more women to have children later in life, either the late 30s or into their 40s. This may enable a trend to develop. The result of having children later in life is that children, and then young adults could be a financial cost to Gen X parents for longer, well into their 60s. Will this situation affect their ability to travel in terms of cost and time and vacation choice and what effect will it have on current retirement plans?
- **Safety and Security.** How secure does this generational cohort feel? Do they worry more about community and family security? Does this extend to their vacation experience and destination choices?
- **Financial Status.** The financial status of Gen Xers in their mature years is of great importance to this thesis. Will this generational cohort have the disposable income in middle to old age to be able to afford such European river cruise experiences? They (from qualified participant comments) are possibly higher earning in their current age range between 35 and 50 than the previous generation, but they are asset poor. In addition, Gen Xers have the burden of high home mortgages and large tertiary education loans to be repaid. At the same time, they have acquiesced to a much higher level of spending on perceived luxury items during their working life than the Baby Boomers.

These issues are detailed as follows;

5.6.2.1 Caring for ageing parents

In the interviews, the majority of participants had not considered that caring for parents later in life may hinder their time and financial freedoms, but most felt some responsibility towards one or both parents, as this comment suggests,

“I would say probably, yes. I’m very close to my mum, so, mind you her new husband is younger than her so whether he’ll take on that side of things I’m not sure. But if she was on her own I would feel very responsible for my mum. Yeah.” (Stephanie, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

5.6.2.2 The retirement age

Retirement is becoming a big issue for Gen Xers in both Australia and the United States. Firstly, the actual retirement age (the age at which mature adults can apply for pensions) is rising (Ghilarducci, 2015; Power, 2016) with the minimum age for access to their superannuation (Australia) or 401K pensions (United States) in both countries edging up (SSA, 2016). Secondly, the concern amongst Gen Xers is that they may not have enough savings to be able to retire, even at a higher age. In the interviews, the majority of participants expressed worries about their financial status in retirement. Thirdly, government pensions in the form of Aged Pension in Australia or Social Security in the United States are quite modest and definitely do not provide for the high cost of medium to long distance or lengthy duration international vacations.

In common with many developed countries, governments in Australia and the United States are increasingly recognising that they cannot afford the pension payments as the populations age (Power, 2016). Frequently it is possible to read newspaper or magazine articles relating to this issue and retirement age forecasts of 70 are now not uncommon (Power, 2016; Yeoman et al., 2012). Gen Xers interviewed in both countries were generally aware of such retirement age adjustments and so resigned to the fact that they will be working until a greater age. Here are some comments from participants (one from each country),

“And now it’s up to 70. Senior citizen is considered 70 now...and I don’t think I’ll be travelling when I’m retired...I just don’t know that I’ll be in a financial place.....you just don’t know, right, but I know I can do it now.” (Jessica, New York, April 8, 2015)

“When people say the retirement age is going to be 70, I’m like, of course it should be. If you’re going to live to 100 what are you going to do for, you know, 40 years or something.” (John, Melbourne, February 26, 2015)

In Australia and the United States (in common with the dialogue in most of the developed world) over the last decade or more, constant media reports have appeared relating to retirement and the need for mature folk to have funds to facilitate an enjoyable retirement. These seem to have resonated with Gen X participants who either have concerns regarding their financial security in their mature years or are just trying to ignore the situation as seems a long way off. Some are realistic, such as Jessica in New York,

“Pension plans don’t exist anymore, so it’s all about putting into your furrow and cave, but with the volatility of the market, like 2008 we saw a crash, so my parents lose a tonne of money, so I’m just nervous about what the right thing is to do to save so that I can live later on. So always at the back of my mind, am I doing the right thing for retirement?” (Jessica, New York, April 8, 2015)

Some have seen that it is impossible to maintain their current life style and acknowledge that Baby Boomers have been more prudent savers and spenders but have the impression that life was easier in some way for Baby Boomers, as this comment demonstrates,

“Yeah. I think people are just a lot more careless with their money and they don’t think about what’s going to happen. I think my parents’ generation were probably a lot more frugal with their spending, they probably didn’t travel as much, they didn’t have...the world was just a much simpler place, you know. So they don’t have the latest iPhone, they didn’t have the latest laptop, they didn’t have to, you know, brand new car and all of this.” (Sarah, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

Others acknowledge the situation and feel ashamed that they haven’t made any preparations,

Researcher: “Do you actively plan financially for your retirement?”

Fernando: “No, actually and that’s a terrible thing to admit.” (Fernando, New York, April 9, 2015)

As the interviewing field work progressed in Australia and then the United States, it became more apparent how important the matter of retirement was to this thesis. It has a direct bearing on the amount of time and financial independence Gen Xers will have for leisure/vacation activities in their older years and also whether they will be able to consider up-scale European holidays.

Again, it was found that some participants thought often about retirement and some worried constantly about it,

Researcher: “Do you ever think about retirement?”

Ariadne: “Oh my gosh I’m worried about it all the time. I worry that I won’t have sufficient funds because even though I’ve worked....” (Ariadne, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

For this research it is important to understand that the financial liabilities that these Gen Xers already have or are now incurring during their working lives are greater and more prevalent than for the previous generation, Baby Boomers. For example, the repayment of higher education loans is a major liability for Gen Xers in both countries. University degree costs can be expensive in Australia and the United States. This issue was raised in some interviews including this in Los Angeles,

“I stupidly went to a very expensive law school and I owed close to \$200,000 when I came out.” (Ariadne, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

5.6.2.3 Gen Xers having children later

As scientific or medical and economic advances and conditions have taken place, an opportunity has developed whereby many members of this generational cohort have been able to deliberately delay childbirth to mid to late 30s and early 40s due to career or lifestyle choices. Making this trend possible has been the IVF breakthrough, increasing the possibility of pregnancy in older years for many couples who otherwise may be unable to conceive. What are the implications as the cost and time involved in rearing children mean that Gen Xers must delay retirement and longer duration (and more costly) travel until later in life?

Researcher: “I’m just thinking your youngest will be 21 when you’re 56.”

Stephanie: “I’m terrible with numbers but that sounds about right.”
(Stephanie, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

Given the opportunities presented by medical science, is the fact that Gen Xers are able to postpone having children appealing to their need for perceived independence and freedom in 20s and 30s rather than being hindered by the responsibility of children in those years? This typical participant comment suggests that this is the case,

“I think specifically of this couple, they didn’t want to be bothered by the...you know, they wanted to have a little bit of freedom earlier on.”
(Chris, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

There is also the matter of a career as a priority for women. As many women in Australia and the United States are finally gaining some equality of employment and wages with men, motivation and opportunities are greater for females to seek higher education and build careers and so they are often loathe to give these up to have children at younger ages,

“...education thing, they want to get that, and then get everything established and set now, and then typically, I think they start the family afterwards...” (Tony, Los Angeles, April 19, 2015)

As an aside, it is noted that an understanding of whether Gen Xers will be inheriting from Baby Boomer parents is another factor relating to vacation affordability in their own older years. Are there implications? Whilst this issue was not discussed during interviews, it has been raised in an interesting newspaper article entitled “Ageing eats up estates” (Keane, 2015) which suggests that the Gen Xers will not be able to count on inheritances in their later years. The article maintains that this is because the Baby Boomers’ expectations of longer life have risen and also because they have encountered unanticipated rising costs as well as their desire to enjoy spending more in retirement than their parents (the Silent Generation) did. In addition, Baby Boomers can be supporting two and sometimes three families owing to less stringent divorce laws being introduced in the 1970s (Keane, 2015).

5.6.2.4 Community/personal/family safety (including independence and freedom)

How has the personal environment of Gen Xers been affected by perceived safety and security threats in their formative and adult lives? The majority of participants were very relaxed about this aspect of their travel arrangements however one participant was concerned for her daughter from a security point of view,

“So, there are a lot of eyes on her sometimes and I kind of worry a bit. She’s not a small child that I can really say, “Hold your hand.” She gets a bit antsy about that, you know what I mean. My husband and I are always keeping a close eye on her.” (Missy, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

This issue is also referred to in sub-theme 5. 6. 3. 4.

5.6.3 Theme Three: Tourism consumers

5.6.3.1 What is important on a vacation?

Participants expressed a desire to experience a high level of engagement with local host populations. In addition, they wish to experience the natural environment and participate in non-tourist or everyday activities, such as supermarket shopping or travelling on local public transport, when on vacation. All these priorities are in addition to strong interests in architecture, art and history in Europe. It became evident during the data collection and analysis periods, that this generational cohort is particularly interested in experiencing tourism in their own way and with frequent interaction with local communities.

As it became quite apparent that Gen X participants have had the opportunity to travel more frequently and at younger ages than the previous generation, they are now, in middle adult life craving more (to them) genuine or realistic experiences as they have already undertaken more mainstream and organised touring in the past. The majority participant view (coupled with the previously noted need for independence and freedom) was that any potential European experience be undertaken with direct interaction and in their own time, rather than employing the looking through glass model, that is, seeing the region through the windows of coaches, hotels or river vessels.

Here is a typical comment from a participant, indicating a desire to interact with local people and do so independently,

“I’m an explorer, I love to explore. If I’m in a country I don’t really do what the tourists...I go on the outskirts of town to talk to people and see what are the best places to go or not...” (Marco Solo, Los Angeles, April 18, 2015)

In addition, the participants felt that the genuine or real culture of the particular region, country or city could be experienced by veering away from traditional tourist areas,

“I would prefer to be more in the local culture.” (Anna, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

This next comment best sums up the attitude of these participants in both Australia and the United States,

“I don’t really enjoy the Disneyland type sightseeing...probably some of the more remote or out of the way type areas are more appealing than the ones where there’s thousands of people standing around looking at it. Just be I suppose, shorter amounts of time travelling and sort of more experiencing the local areas would be good.” (Bob, Sydney, February 14, 2015)

On organised tours in Europe by coach or river vessel, participants felt that on such a vacation, they would be seeing what the tour/cruise company wanted them to see and in the way in which the operator prescribed. This was not a popular option with them, as one put it when talking about a Contiki tour she had undertaken in formative years,

“I just sailed through Spain, didn’t experience it at all except looked at it through a window. Yeah. And that’s, yeah, that’s not experiencing where you are.” (Jane, Sydney, February 11, 2015)

To take this concept of genuine or realistic cultural experiences to another level, this comment (from a participant who had travelled extensively) was of interest. She wants to present on vacation as a local person and not as a tourist,

“I like to blend in and have nobody notice me. I don’t like to be identified as a tourist.” (Ariadne, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

In relation to organised tours, the word “vener” was used by another participant. This term implies that tourists are just witnessing a surface display and not necessarily experiencing reality of that place,

“But sometimes tours, if they’re too big, I just feel like you go into that area with a veneer of the place. It’s just for tourists and I hate that.”
(Bath, New York, April 8, 2015)

As a final word, this next participant talks of the “real deal”. It could be suggested that as well as having travelled more in their early years than the Baby Boomers (as noted above) and therefore desiring another level of tourist experience, this generational cohort have also been able to undertake deep and more meaningful research prior to travelling, due to their adapting to improved levels of communication, thus being well informed. As discussed in sub-theme 5.6.3.3, Gen Xers enjoy researching for vacations, either online or via social media and networking, or just through listening to recommendations from friends and family,

“I’m more in the experiences, like finding stuff, you know, like...like into finding what’s the real deal, you know.” (Damien, New York, April 13, 2015)

These activities become an enjoyable element of their total tourism experience.

5.6.3.2 Importance of keeping in touch with family and friends whilst on vacation

Are Gen Xers keen on using communication technology to remain in contact with family and friends whilst on vacation? Is there a point at which they are prepared to be separated or do they wish to be connected at all times? Is this a security issue or a social issue for them?

Quite possibly, this phenomenon is a product of technological change and subsequent opportunity which Gen Xers, with the digital savviness, have been quick to embrace. For them, there is now an important social need to present information or images frequently on social media sites such as Facebook or Instagram and not necessarily send individual or personal messages (as this first participant comment below demonstrates). The common thread is that the vacation experience is shared by many individuals in other places or countries and that they all remain connected,

“I guess Facebook is something that you do look through, I guess, you’re not directly contacting people but you’re commenting on what people are doing and vice versa and posting pictures of what you’re doing as well.....I use Facebook every day, probably.....” (Stephanie, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

5.6.3.3 The enjoyable pre-vacation elements

The data analysis revealed feedback on whether Gen Xers are keen to undertake all these research and booking tasks themselves, or consult with travel agents/counsellors or actually visit bricks and mortar agencies as previous generations have.

It became very apparent that these Gen Xers have embraced Internet use and also the concept of taking on the role of the travel agent. Not one participant in any of the interviews was a regular travel agent user. A couple of participants in Melbourne, Australia had discussed but not booked travel with an aunt/friend with her own bricks and mortar agency.

Participants expressed the view overwhelmingly that they were interested in undertaking their own research through social media/networking, online blogs and the Internet and from personal recommendations. Additionally, they were keen to undertake all the booking and organisation themselves, as this typical comment demonstrates,

“We used to do it through the travel agent, you know what I mean, but now as time has gone on we just do it ourselves, like, research a lot on different sites and things like that.” (Missy, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

In fact, they embraced the concept as this comment makes clear,

“...I like the research aspect of doing it myself...” (John, Melbourne, February 26, 2015)

Others wanted to customise the tourism experience exclusively for their family group,

“Yeah, on-line definitely. Yeah. To figure out what you want to do. More customised I guess, probably prefer.....” (Sally, New York, April 9, 2015)

Still others felt personal or independent travel writer recommendations were important to acquire knowledge of a particular place or tourism opportunity,

“...I guess by word-of-mouth, he told us of some places that he’d been to so we’d go to somewhere on verbal recommendations.” (Ralph, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

Perhaps the final word is this very relaxed attitude from a participant,

“I’ll just start Googling and see where it takes me.” (Jessica, New York, April 8, 2015)

5.6.3.4 Safety and security whilst on vacation

Are safety and security issues for Gen Xers? If so, should these issues be seen as inhibitors for vacation travel to Europe or travel generally? Is there a safety and security remnant from formative situations such as the fatal events in Port Arthur in Tasmania on April 28, 1996 or New York of September 11, 2001?

Participants were not overly concerned with personal safety when travelling, with a few exceptions. Perhaps, again, the fact that most have travelled frequently and to various areas of the world in the childhood or formative years and then later adult years, they feel experienced enough to handle these aspects of travel.

This comment from participant Juan, in Los Angeles related, not to his experienced and confident generational cohort, but to his impression of first time travellers and the need for them to feel secure. Here he was referring to Baby Boomers, who may possibly be in Europe for the first time,

“...maybe it’s their first time travelling and want a convenient, safe experience.” (Juan, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

For another point of view, participant Lisa is Jewish and made this comment in the context of reports of anti-Semitism (particularly in France) by the media at the time of the interviews (April 13, 2015). It should be noted that her comment was exceptional within this population sample,

“...my husband and I were like; we are never going anywhere where we can’t, like, leave.” (Lisa, New York, April 13, 2015)

5.6.3.5 Social or tourist behaviour

Do Gen Xers have issues with meeting or interacting with fellow tourists or local communities when on vacation? Are they anti-social? Is there any reluctance to travel in a group situation or, particularly, join organised tours or dining experiences?

The comments from the participants in both Australia and the United States noted very clearly that they did not want to interact with fellow tourists from theirs or similar English speaking countries. The common responses were that they did not go on vacation to discuss domestic issues with fellow countrymen, but rather (as has been demonstrated in sub-theme 5.6.3.1) wished to get to know their chosen vacation region through interaction with the local people of the host communities.

This phenomenon of Gen Xers actively and purposely keeping away from social encounters with fellow countrymen or tour participants would change the dynamic of organised tours for mature adults significantly. The topic is further discussed in Theme Ten relating to cruising, sub-theme 5.6.10.1,

“...it’s like wedding receptions, you know.....mainly sort of Anglo people it’s very monoculture. If there are obnoxious tourists or, you know, loud Americans or loud yobbo Australians, you know, you’re stuck with them for the duration.” (Anna, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

There is also this aspect of being happier in smaller groups rather than participating in large group experiences,

“I enjoy having companionship but I think just having that many people around I didn’t enjoy as much.” (Tony, Los Angeles, April 19, 2015)

There is almost a degree of claustrophobia expressed regarding this total unease in large group situations by this generational cohort,

“And I feel like not being able to get away from people.” (Fernando, New York, April 9, 2015)

Finally, here is an example of comments made by many participants when asked about the concept of being together with like tourists on a vacation tour/cruise,

“...rather than if you’re travelling to a destination with your friend or by yourself, if you’re on the boat you keep seeing the same people.” (Bob, Sydney, February 14, 2015)

The point being made by Bob, that the people are the previously mentioned fellow countrymen or similar English speaking tour or cruise participants. The participants were keen to travel with their own group-family or friends.

5.6.3.6 Spatial tourism issues

Do Gen Xers have issues with space restrictions when participating in vacation travel experiences? Are they inhibited by crowds, collective dining experiences and confined staterooms and potentially suffer from claustrophobia on river vessels?

It appeared that the participants did not wish to be confined when travelling on vacation. Thus, the limited spaces on a European river vessel may present a problem for this generational cohort. In part, this could be linked with the themes of independence and freedom, expressed so forcefully in this data analysis. Many participants spoke wistfully of vacation experiences in formative years which presented them with spatial freedom.

When asked about the concept of a group tour experiences, here is a typical response,

“Just because you sort of don’t have that same feeling of space around you...” (Sarah, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

Describing his enjoyment of the freedom of the outdoors, another responded,

“...there’s something about being outdoors that you can’t really put your finger on...” (Steve, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

Sally from New York also expressed a typical opinion relating to cruise ship accommodation,

“It’s just because you’re confined. And the cabins are really small. That’s the other thing so it was kind of claustrophobic...almost like I need to get off this thing...” (Sally, New York, April 9, 2015)

5.6.4 Theme Four: Memories of formative influences

5.6.4.1 Recollections of great formative events or people

Are there any world-wide, national or local events that have occurred in the childhood or formative years, which may have affected this generation's concepts or ideas or behaviour in adulthood? This theme relates directly to the subject of Generational Theory. As noted in previous chapters, particularly Chapter 2, the theory maintains that these memories of events or situations or important people from formative years can typify a generation as unique from others. It was of interest during this field work to detect any significant differences between Australian participants and those in the United States (refer to Appendix 12).

Here are some of the events or people from the 1980s, 90s and 2000s recalled by some participants from their formative years,

Princess Diana's death

“I didn't realise the importance of her. I guess you're so wrapped up in your own life when you're a teenager, so I didn't realise how loved and how admired she was until it happened....” (Stephanie, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

First Gulf War

“I was in high school and I remember that Iraqi business, yes. Like, compared to now, I just thought it's a long way-a-way and it's another country and I was at Bega at that time and thought, “It's a long way from here, kind of.” You know what I mean, but now I worry a bit, you know what I mean?” (Missy, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

World Trade Center 9/11

“I think it made me think about my mortality. Even though when it happened I was 23, I don't know, I was so young.....” (Monica, New York, April 9, 2015)

Fall of the Berlin Wall

Researcher: “So that equates to freedom?”

Jane: “Yeah.”

Researcher: “So you had the concept of...you’d probably taken freedom for granted.”

Jane: “Exactly, exactly. So that was, as far as a world event, that was pretty significant on my radar.” (Jane, Sydney, February 11, 2105)

AIDS

“Another thing that also shaped me...the first guy I ever worked with died of AIDS. That was my first job when I was in Atlanta and he was a good friend.” (Franklin, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

President Clinton

“...those were the Clinton years. Well in the nineties it was very positive and we were a little bit in love, you know. Particularly if you were a liberal and I was. It was a good time.” (Bath, New York, April 8, 2015)

Nelson Mandela

“Yeah, that was a good thing and change in South Africa, you know, and, you know, Nelson Mandela being freed and those things, those are the kind of global events that I recall.” (Albert, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

The researcher has been interested to detect whether the participants easily recollected events or outstanding people from their formative years. It may be a case where they have just accepted major events (good and bad) and acknowledged great people with possible indifference but just got on with their lives. It could be that a situation where through improved communications, there is an overload of information and so it is too hard to concentrate on one or two particular events or notable people. It is apparent that further research is needed, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The fact that most participants had trouble recalling major events or world or iconic individuals from their formative years is interesting. Their lives have been shaped more by the social milieu of their youth including role model figures from their local community, pop and television culture and the influence of improved communications and technology,

“Nothing stands out right away. I know there is [Sic.] probably a lot of things that happened, but nothing that kind of stuck in my mind, or caused me to remember it.” (Tony, Los Angeles, April 19, 2015)

“I feel really....I feel a bit insular because I sort of don't really take notice of what happened. And as time goes past, because I haven't really impacted on me directly, I don't really take them on board.” (Helen, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

Such statements provide an alternative view on extant Generational Theory research and extend this concept.

5.6.4.2 Pop Culture/Television

The thesis is interested in any link to formative beliefs, values, attitudes and interests and therefore influences of these in adulthood and possible consumer or tourist behaviour or motivation. From comments and recollections from participants, it is apparent that pop culture and television particularly, are readily recalled from formative years.

Television

In both countries, the stand out television shows for Gen Xers from the 1980s and 90s were Seinfeld and Friends. These extremely well viewed sitcoms popularised the notion of a group of friends living in close proximity, or together, rather than in a traditional family situation. The group was often dysfunctional which aligns with the comments these thesis participants have made about their own views of their generational cohort and the variations made possible to relationships and relationship structure during their formative years,

“I mean, TV, there was Seinfeld was a big thing....and Friends, were the big shows. Everyone talked about Seinfeld and Friends.” (Chris, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

and

“I'd say it was more the family drama, was like what was and all of a sudden there was this shift to Friends and single life.” (Jessica, New York, April 8, 2015)

Music

Overwhelmingly, the music of the Seattle band, Nirvana, was recalled by participants in both countries. This band epitomised the Gen X formative years, from the late 1980s up to the death of its leader, Kurt Cobain in 1994 (Boyd, 2014). A son of divorced parents, Cobain and his band's music and lyrics, together with membership of the grunge sound, look and anti-establishment movement offered resonance to the then young "self-pity" or "mess" generational cohort, as termed by participants in sub-theme 5.6.1.4.

“...Oh, I'd say a lot of the Seattle sound, so Nirvana.” (Kathryn, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

5.6.4.3 The ethical compass (beliefs and values) plus attitudes and interests

5.6.4.3.1 Beliefs

Beliefs have been interpreted by the participants as spiritual in nature. In the context of this thesis focussing on Australia and the United States, participants had coincidentally either been brought up in the Christian or Jewish faiths. Again, the question is whether these beliefs can be different for each generation according to awareness and social environment of the time? What role do parents or important family or friend figures play in this aspect of life? The majority of participants felt that they had gone through the motions of being educated in the Christian or Jewish faith as children or young adults but in time had made decisions for themselves, in most cases ignoring the faiths of their parents,

“So very early on, so my parents asked and we went to Sunday School... and then, so that was every Sunday, but even...I'm not a religious person at all now....And you know, I don't really believe in it, so I don't follow any religion.” (Ralph, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

Another comment supporting the notion that beliefs change in adulthood,

“I think my beliefs have changed a lot now, you know what I mean, as I've grown up.” (Missy, Sydney, February 18, 2015)

5.6.4.3.2 Values

From what sources have this generation acquired their values in life? Are these sources seen as being very different from the Baby Boomers? Have the values learnt during childhood and teen years changed over time?

All the participants acknowledged that their values had come from parents or close family and friends in their childhood and early formative years. In this respect, they are likely to have had similar experience to the previous generation, and those before.

For example,

“I think probably from my parents at an early stage, and then with their family friends I guess.” (Bob, Sydney, February 14, 2015)

Additionally, the majority were of the opinion that values remain consistent for a life time, as this typical comment demonstrates,

“I think once you, 98% of the time I would say your values are for ever.” (Chris, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

Of great interest was that in all cases, participants felt that values had not changed over their lifetimes. Those that they had learnt during their childhood and formative years had remained with them, as noted in this comment,

“..not the values, those values haven’t changed....” (John, Melbourne, February 26, 2015)

5.6.4.3.3 Attitudes

Again, are attitudes a product of the time in history in which this generation matured? Are attitudes a product of the surrounding environment of the formative time? Have they remained constant into mature adulthood? Unlike the values, it was felt by participants that attitudes could indeed change over time (as shown below) and were not necessarily those of the previous generation. Many participants criticised the attitudes of a parent but felt that their own attitudes were formed through the social mores of their time in history (which were different to their parents),

“.....attitudes can change.” (Franklin, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

Franklin is expressing a majority view amongst participants that attitudes of parents could be acknowledged but altered or adjusted by the child, particularly in formative or older years. The following comment supports this view,

“Because I think attitude is something that, again, it can come with experience or perspective, maturity and I think that....I think your attitude towards certain things or how you react to things is certainly something that, I know it for myself personally, I’m always trying to hone.” (Ralph, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

5.6.4.3.4 Interests

Are the formative interests of this generational cohort any different to those of the Baby Boomers? Have these formative interests remained in later adult life? Has the environment in which this generational cohort grew up affected their interests? Comments from the majority of participants gave the impression that their interests in formative years were little changed from those of the previous generation, with the exception of travel, which is discussed in sub-theme 5.6.5.

In some cases the formative interests extend through adulthood, for example a love of sport,

“...interests? Gymnastics was it for a massive part of it...I do yoga and I do trapeze classes when I’m not pregnant!” (Stephanie, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

In this comment, it is pointed out that interests can evolve with maturity and possibly affect travel preferences, particularly those of experienced travellers,

“I think that for people who are older, it would be a combination of culture, history and, you know, acquired over the years...definitely history for old, for older...because I’m only getting into history now.” (Kathryn, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

5.6.4.4 Disrupted formative years

Particular personal events such as breakdown of family unit, through divorce or sickness or death or particular hardship can happen in any period of history. Gen Xers though, have experienced disrupted formative years in greater numbers than Baby Boomers due in part to (certainly in Australia) relaxation of divorce laws in the 1970s (refer to Table 2-1). Has the experience of a disrupted early life had an effect

on the Gen Xers? What is their attitude towards relationship breakdown and do they see themselves as different as a result of such childhood or formative experiences?

Many of the participants in both countries had experienced family breakups in their formative years. They had taken a pragmatic and confident approach to the experience and whilst acknowledging the heartache at the time (or horror in one instance). They were very candid in adulthood in relating their recollections as this typical comment demonstrates,

“Well my parents split up when I was, like 13.....I remember being somewhat, you know, unhappy but after that I don’t remember it being particularly challenging.....I mean, you know, for holidays we’d still come over and we’d still go over his parent’s or his mother so.....So yeah, it wasn’t good....It’s not something we ever really talked about...No. I mean, I think it was probably the same thing where it’s like, you know, I wish it wasn’t this way but you have to move on.” (Albert, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

5.6.4.5 Introduction to computers

This sub-theme detects a link between the ease and familiarity with computers enjoyed by Gen Xers or “digital adaptives” (McCrinkle & Wolfinger, 2009, p. 52) and preference for information gathering, research and booking being made on-line rather than via the traditional bricks and mortar travel agency. Unlike the Baby Boomers, this generation was introduced to computers (in almost all cases) in their late primary and early secondary school years. They have definitely been digitally savvy from a young age and are now adept at adapting to modern digital technology and in fact embrace it. A recollection of the introduction to computers typical of most,

“It would have been in high school, so I think it was around grade eight and nine. So I would have been probably 13, 13 or 14.” (Bob, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

5.6.5 Theme Five: Memories of formative travel experiences

5.6.5.1 Childhood family vacations

In this sub-theme it is possible to gain an understanding of experiences the participants may have had of vacation travel during their childhood (this would most

often be with parents, siblings, relatives or close family friends). Were their childhood vacation experiences any different to those of the previous generation? Have childhood vacations give them an interest in travel throughout their lives?

In both countries, the majority of participants had experienced uniform vacation experiences as children. That is, most often driving with family to visit relatives or friends and also caravanning or camping holidays. In this respect, their experiences have been the same as those of the Baby Boomer (post World War Two) generation. It is interesting to note that such experiences in Australia or the United States were the same, as these comments demonstrate,

“We did have trips, like camping trips or trips down to Mexico which were always memorable....Yeah, we would drive...” (Juan, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

“.....yeah. Nan and Pop, they used to take the caravan and have good school holidays.” (Ant, Sydney, February 19, 2015)

5.6.5.2 Possible reasons for interest in travel during formative years

Statements from participants demonstrate that an interest in travel could have been generated by family travel school tours, pen pals, exchange students, parents travelling, relatives travelling, moving cities or countries with family, letters or cards sent from other countries, television and movies. Were the attractions of, particularly, international travel and travel to Europe more appealing and more available to this cohort than the Baby Boomers? Certainly, as previously discussed in Chapter 2, travel had become more affordable for Baby Boomers from the 1970s resulting in greater travel opportunities, which could include their Gen X children. In addition, communication was greatly improved during the formative years of Gen Xers. Was there more awareness by Gen Xers of other countries and travel opportunities overall, due to the greater opportunities for international travel and higher degree of visual awareness due to improvements in communication and visual technology? From the responses received, the majority answer would be in the affirmative,

“It’s that thing you see on TV. They always use images and it’s almost like a brain washing. I must see that.” (Mandy, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

There are other aspects as well, as this participant from Sydney comments,

“Another thing would be this huge, not just culture, but also in food influences here and people migrating to Australia, which in turn increases people’s interest to go on holiday.” (Kathryn, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

This is a demonstration of cultural influences affecting travel motivation (discussed in sub-theme 5.6.6.1).

As Gen Xers were growing up (the childhood and teenage years) what family or other influences introduced them to the idea of travelling themselves as they approached adulthood? Their parents travelled more, was the result of this a greater degree of tourism based information being available to their children, Gen Xers?

This comment did sum up the experiences of many participants in both countries,

“My parents travelled. So that’s...we’d always...an aspirational destination is how we say it....they would send home postcards always you know. We always had the postcards on the fridge. You know that sort ofand you’d always go and check to see when the first postcard would arrive, and all these exotic places, you know. So, yeah, you just sort of grew up with it. And then they’d come home and you’d sit through endless photos of...” (Anna, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

This participant’s parents travelled without their children, but there were other participants who travelled with their parents (mentioned in sub-theme 5.6.6.3).

This next comment suggests early influences on a participant from Los Angeles,

“My father was in service here in the United States and he spent time in Germany over in Frankfurt and those areas. And just the stories he would tell us about how green it was and the people and the food and the things that they did over there and the history.” (Marco Solo, Los Angeles, April 18, 2015)

5.6.5.3 Studying and abroad with vacations tacked on

If Gen Xers studied abroad in childhood or formative years (necessitating international travel) is there a link between the two which has impacted on adult year travel/study views or motivations? Through the introduction of more affordable

travel, Gen Xers were able to take advantage of study opportunities in Europe (this being particularly prevalent for United States citizens). How many of the participants combined travel and study in their formative years? Although more participants in the United States had experienced study abroad, it was not uncommon with Australian participants either. In both countries the young Gen Xers had been able to experience European travel combined with their study experiences, as this comment demonstrates,

“I’ve been a couple of times (to Europe). I did a semester run in college...” (Monica, New York, April 9, 2015)

(This is also discussed in sub-theme 5.6.8.3)

In adulthood, has work combined with vacation been possible, more prevalent or a priority with Gen Xers? Have work oriented meetings, conferences, transfers played a part in allowing Gen Xers to combine these working obligations with vacation windows in Europe? Has this phenomenon served to increase their knowledge and awareness of this region in a way not experienced by the Baby Boomers? Have their subsequent vacation travel plans been built around work travel?

Here is a comment from a participant in Australia who had travelled in his younger years and does so still, to law conventions in various parts of the world,

“In recent years, a lot of my travel, because I get to travel with work, I often tack on a bit, an extra few days or a holiday off the back of that, because often the destinations are quite far away, and so I don’t have to do a big, a big trip and come back very quickly.” (Bob, Sydney, February 14, 2015)

Here is another from a United States participant,

“No, it was the first time I’d been to Barcelona but not the first time I’d been to Europe. Yeah. So I’d been to Europe plenty of times typically for work was the reason why I went. And then I extended my trips outward.” (Juan, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

5.6.6 Theme Six: Memories of formative awareness of Europe

5.6.6.1 European family connections and ancestry (refer also to Theme Seven)

In this thesis as it relates specifically to the region of Europe, have there been familial connections enjoyed by Gen Xers which may be important motivators contributing to an interest in the region through VFR sub-vacation motivators? It is most unlikely that previous generational cohorts would have had such opportunities to visit family in Europe in formative years to the same extent as Gen Xers. Many participants talked of extended family in Europe, for example,

“Both my parents were born in Slovakia and there’d be huge families.”
(Jessica, New York, April 8, 2015)

As well as the possibility of visiting,

“...my parents have been in touch ...with family that they have over in the north of England as well, Scotland. I’d like to see them and take the opportunity to see them while I’m over there as well.” Adam, Sydney, February 19, 2015)

(Refer to sub-theme 5.6.7.2)

5.6.6.2 Other influences such as school/college study or pen pal/exchange student contacts or parents/family/friends’ travel to Europe

From what other sources did any interest in travel emanate? Is it the case that any interests in European tourism experiences this generational cohort holds would be similar to Baby Boomers? Is the difference just that communication and access to travel has been so much easier and more affordable for the Gen Xers?

A comment from a participant in Los Angeles suggests that the children from other countries at her school may have ignited her interest in a world outside the United States. So the immigration policies of the individual’s home country at the time of a generational cohort’s schooling could have played a part influencing later travel behaviour, as this comment intimates,

“Because when I was in school, I don’t know, I hung out with foreigners a lot.” (Ariadne, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

In this next statement it is seen that the introduction of rapid world-wide communication has assisted this participant gain more knowledge of other countries,

“I used to pay a lot of attention, especially, say, from the age of 16 onwards where I would always watch the news and the world news at night to see what was happening, and that’s where I gathered my intention to go travelling and to see more of the world.” (DJB74, Sydney, February 11, 2015)

One participant acknowledged that his interest in Europe stemmed from a “Danish connection” (possibly a pen pal) in his formative years,

“I had a Danish connection here during high school, and so I wanted to see that for myself. And we are no longer in touch, but it was just still, I’d read up and looked up about it quite a lot.” (Ralph, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

5.6.6.3 Travel to Europe as a young adult (also refer to Theme Seven)

Understanding what childhood European travel experiences were enjoyed by Gen Xers could give some idea as to possible motivators/inhibitors for subsequent or future travel to that region were experienced. Is it the case that due to childhood and formative travel opportunities Gen Xers are far more familiar with the region of Europe from personal experience (in some cases many experiences) than the Baby Boomers were at the same age?

Many of the participants had experienced European travel with parents and a comment below is typical,

“I was 17 actually....It was a Griswold family kind of thing. That was my sister’s....she’s been twice recently to Europe and my brother’s been lots. But that was her first trip. She was four or five.” (John, Melbourne, February 26, 2015)

And another,

“Yeah, to like Scotland and around Europe probably when I was about 12 or 13.” (Bob, Sydney, February 14, 2015)

5.6.7 Theme Seven: A lifelong interest in Europe

5.6.7.1 European tourism experiences valued by Gen Xers

This sub-theme emphasises general experiences and not just vacations. Food was seen to be of great interest in Europe,

“The first thing that comes to mind is food. A lot of our friends are real foodies you know, whether they have kids or not. Food’s been a really important part in cooking and going to places. Cooking and using local produce and Italy for example is amazing for that type of thing. ...to be able to go to a winery and get beautiful cheap wines and actual produce that’s grown there and to make amazing food from it.” (Stephanie, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

During the data collection, it was detected that this generational cohort has had the opportunity to travel to Europe for special interest reasons such as sporting events or on sporting oriented vacations,

“The cycling aspect, the relaxation aspect, the scenery side of it, food, you know? It’s the whole package, the total package.” (Mandy, Melbourne, February 25, 2015).

(This is also discussed in sub-theme 5.6.8.4)

5.6.7.2 European family connections/ancestry (refer also to Theme Seven)

In this thesis as it relates to Europe, are there family connections enjoyed by Gen Xers which may be important motivators as they may contribute to an interest in the region through VFR sub-vacation motivators,

“But midyear we’re going to Europe. So that’ll be exciting and different because my husband and I haven’t been to Europe together even though he’s of European descent. He’s of European descent. So he’s a German guy.” (Kylie, Melbourne, February 23, 2015)

(Refer to sub-theme 5.6.6.1)

5.6.8 Theme Eight: Motivators for vacations

5.6.8.1 Event and special interest travel

Travelling solely for the purpose of attending a birthdays or a marriage celebration, a gathering of folk with specific interests in common such as sporting or other

entertainment events was identified as a prevalent occurrence with these Gen X participants. Are these typical Gen X travel experiences? Due to their time in history and the advent of affordable travel, this generational cohort has taken for granted the ability to be able to travel for events such as weddings, birthdays and sporting events. Has this familiarity with travelling made them far more at ease and encouraged them to be more adventurous and prolific with their travel arrangements?

A typical comment,

“It was a 40th birthday present that I’d promised. We went to the Four Seasons in Hawaii.” (Franklin, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

Once again, in the interviewing, it was detected that this generational cohort has had the opportunity to travel domestically and internationally throughout their lives for special interest reasons such as sporting events or on sporting oriented vacations, differing from their predecessors, the Baby Boomers,

“I’m not a cyclist in the sense that I don’t ride to work, every day, I’m not that type of cyclist. I’ve always ridden as a child but I really love that type of holiday.” (Mandy, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

5.6.8.2 Family and friends adult travel experiences

With whom does this generational cohort typically travel? Who are they likely to travel with in the future? Do they travel in a small group or are they happier to travel alone? In this sample population, there were a number of participants who are either single, divorced or for various reasons, tend to travel alone or with friends. In fact, this is a typical participant response,

“I usually travel alone and then meet up with people...I prefer at least flying by myself and then meeting up and then, you know.” (Monica, New York, April 9, 2015)

Those with partners still travel together. This participant describes travel with her husband,

“I love travelling with him...” (Lisa, New York, April 13, 2015)

Many travel with groups of friends.

5.6.8.3 Study travel with vacations tacked on

As adults, are Gen Xers still involved with study in other places/countries and if so, do they combine study with a European vacation? In some participant responses, travel to Europe with the main objective being study was still occurring as the individuals approached their 50s. This was particularly evident with participants engaged in teaching, music or art and history careers, such as this,

“Yes. Well, I studying abroad in Spain and I had a friend living in Paris, so I’ve been to France. I studied in England for a while, so I’ve been to England.” (Jessica, New York, April 8, 2015)

(Refer to sub-theme 5. 6. 5. 3)

5.6.8.4 European tourism experiences valued by Gen Xers

The major draw cards for travel to Europe for these Gen Xers continue to be the history, the culture and the art and architecture. As travel to this region becomes more and more frequent and popular with this generational cohort, increasingly additional experiences are becoming motivators. Food (cuisine) has become a popular motivator for travel in general, is it the case with Europe as well? Time and cost can be inhibitors, but the region has widespread appeal amongst Gen Xers. Participants were asked about the experiences they valued and this is a typical response,

“I know certainly my group of friends are interested in travel but I mean a trip to Europe is a huge thing, you know. It’s expensive, it takes time. I think you’d be hard pressed to find someone who wouldn’t want to go to Europe, it’s just a case of can you take the time, can you afford it can you afford to do it properly. Because I mean, for me a trip overseas is at a minimum, sort of, two and a half weeks. I mean, that’s a minimum.” (Sarah, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

(Discussed in sub-theme 5.6.7.1)

5.6.9 Theme Nine: Vacation inhibitors

5.6.9.1 Vacation cost issues and perceived high cost of river cruises

Cost can be a significant inhibitor for European vacation travel (particularly from Australia) and so this collected data permits an understanding of whether there are significant differences in motivation between Australian and United States Gen Xers

or indeed any issues relating specifically to Gen Xers that cross the continent divides. In fact, the majority responses were the same in both countries and centred on the perceived cost of this type of vacation experience,

“So yeah, like I’ve never done it. Also, those cruises are really, really expensive.” (Lisa, New York, April 13, 2015)

5.6.9.2 Vacation time constraints (particularly for United States participants)

Are there time constraints which particularly apply to this generational cohort and so affect their ability to travel on these types of vacations and are these likely to continue for the next few decades? Recalling an earlier theme relating to retirement, it could well be that with Gen Xers working longer and retiring later, they will be limited by their vacation time should they wish to take advantage of these river cruise experiences prior to retirement (late 60s or 70). Current vacation opportunities whilst still working must be of limited duration (particularly in the United States),

“The holiday time, we usually get about two weeks.” (Marco Solo, Los Angeles, April 13, 2015)

5.6.9.3 Vacation inhibitors for Europe

Are there aspects of vacation experience opportunities that Gen Xers don’t like about Europe as a region? In fact, there were few inhibitors expressed but those shown below were typical (particularly amongst the Australians),

For Australians,

“...I think, once again, once you actually get there, you enjoy it. It’s just such a long way for us that, you know.” (Bob, Sydney, February 14, 2015)

For Americans,

“I’ve had some very bad experiences with German people...some very rude French people.”(Fernando, New York, April 9, 2015)

American/Jewish,

“Ok, because I’m Jewish, and given like what’s going on in terms of like ISIS, Moslem community, et cetera, there is a lot of people that don’t go feel safe in Europe anymore.” (Lisa, New York, April 13, 2015)

5.6.10 Theme Ten: The concept of a cruising (or European river cruising) vacation

5.6.10.1 Perception of cruising generally

River cruising is an important and fast growing segment of the world-wide cruising industry. In this sub-theme the question is what are participants' perceptions of this type of vacation experience? Perceptions either came from knowledge gained on a cruise themselves or from information gleaned from a friend, family, research or general media. Whilst only a few of the participants had experienced a cruise, their overall impressions were very similar and so this comment from one of the few who had cruised is typical of all participants,

“The thing was, it was fine but it didn't encourage me to go back and do another one. I think just having all the people around me. I enjoy companionship but I think just having that many people around I didn't enjoy as much....thousands and thousands they have on those....The best time I had was when we were able to get off the ship and go out and do stuff for the day...So I wouldn't mind cruising again if they give you more time to get out and go...maybe they do now maybe at the time I just didn't know.” (Tony, Los Angeles, April 19, 2015)

5.6.10.2 Perception of European river cruises

In this sub-theme, most participants were aware of this vacation experience and if not the researcher gave an outline of the experience and illustrated this with brochures and/or short movie on YouTube.

Whilst none of the participants had experienced this type of vacation experience, they were very clear that in their present form, these cruises would not appeal to them, as this comment, typical of the majority of participant comments demonstrates,

“It should be the other way around. Because if you're just....if it's just about the boat well you could be on the Yarra River, you know. No point in going to Europe, if it's just about the boat. So yeah, for me the purpose...If you're going to go all the way to Europe you need to see Europe. And if you're going to just be on a boat on the water...I mean, as a means of transport and it's a nice way of getting around and if the accommodation is lovely and, you know, that's good, that's positive. But for me it would need to be about the places that we're seeing....yeah.” (Sarah, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

This thesis seeks an understanding of any perceived negativity towards this type of vacation experience by Gen Xers. Does this generational cohort view this type of experience as suitable for old people only? The statement below is typical. In every case, the comments were based on remarks made by friends or relatives or a perception gained from social or other media. None of the participants had undertaken a multi night European river cruise,

“...too sanitised.... you know, you don’t...you are stuck with....it’s like going to wedding receptions, you know...that sort of generic cooking.... once again, generic sort of surroundings.” (Anna, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

5.6.10.3 Priorities for potential Gen X river cruisers

Which would this generational cohort see as being important activities or experiences on a European river cruise? Would this type of organised vacation be of interest to them? The independence and freedom characteristics together with the sought after relaxed travel manner were mentioned again and highlighted as a priority for these Gen X participants. This comment supports the majority view,

“Yes. No...it’s not.....not at this point in my life...I sort of....I still like travel being a little bit more under my control.” (Bath, New York, April 8, 2015)

5.6.10.4 Perception of older river cruise demographic

This sub-theme attempts to understand what perception Gen Xers have of the average age group on European river cruises? What is the principal demographic in their opinions?

“Right....and then the older people, older than me or heavier people who have a disability or people you can’t really move, they like the bus excursions where you go from bus, get off, take pictures, walk a little bit and then come back.” (Julius, New York, April, 13, 2015)

5.6.10.5 Specific views on the time allowed ashore versus the time spent on the cruise vessel

Are Gen Xers more interested in the activities ashore or on the vessel? The overwhelming majority of these Gen X participants expressed the view that the time ashore on a European river cruise would be of most value to them. Here is a typical comment from a participant in Australia,

“The on board stuff doesn’t appeal to me at all that much. I probably wouldn’t stay on board if I can nick off for the day I probably would.”
(Steve, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

Chapter 3 reported that European river cruise brochures were bulky, often with hundreds of pages and featuring up to 28 of the initial pages devoted to information and pictures of the facilities on board the vessel and not the region of Europe. It is apparent from the comments made by the Gen X participants in this thesis that their priorities lie *off* the vessel (not *on*) and so operators and marketers may have to adjust their marketing approaches to cater for this new generation of travel consumers.

5.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented detailed analysis of the data collection in Australia and the United States. It has offered the details of the interview approach, the interview environments, field notes and observations as well as some reflexion on the actual process. Evolving themes from participant interviews in both countries have been tabled and supported by statements displaying commentary on a range of matters relating to Generational Theory, this generation’s formative experiences, backgrounds, consumer motivation and travel expectations and travel behaviour.

Initially in the process, results have been documented, employing note taking leading to ideas generation. This has been followed by sorting the data into categories or codes and then themes, employing both manual and electronic methods. The analysis has sought to highlight the statements from participants relating to the interview questions and then cross referenced with themes and sub-themes. Within the parameters of a final ten themes, the researcher has been able to then summarise results.

In the next chapter, Discussion, these results are correlated and presented as key findings, appearing in a framework of the Research Questions and answers cross referenced with the themes. They are compared with the documented literature on Generational Theory, Gen X and specifically in the context of consumer and tourism behaviour, cruising and European river cruising where available and as detailed in previous chapters.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter details and discusses the key thesis findings. These are presented and interpreted, using the results tabled in the previous chapter in conjunction with the extant academic literature in the field of Generational Theory and generational change, Gen X in the general and tourism contexts, tourism motivation and tourism behaviour, as reviewed in Chapter 2.

The chapter documents any new challenges to previous research findings, the development in regard to extant theory and also new findings as well as the contributions to literature. It is structured using the framework of the four thesis Research Questions (Chapters 1 and 4) and begins with a brief review of Generational Theory and literature relating to Gen X, followed by a discussion of the results in the context of answers to these Research Questions. New knowledge, advances to existing knowledge and challenges to existing knowledge are recorded in each of the four Research Question sections and also at the chapter conclusion.

6.1.1 Generational Theory and Gen X's formative years

Chapter 2 recognised that the sociologist Mannheim (1952) and proponents of Generational Theory assert that each generation is distinguished from others by the formative environment, particular events and historical, social or economic circumstances of their teen and early adult years. Chapter 2 presented details of research undertaken into the topic of Generational Theory as well as the unique features of particular generations observed by sociologists since the middle of the last century. Such research literature has been presented in both general and tourism contexts. It has been emphasised in Chapters 1 and 2 that whilst Baby Boomers have been researched extensively there is a paucity of research relating to Gen X. This chapter documents the research findings specifically related to Gen X and compares them with the limited extant literature. Figure 6-1 presents the four Research Questions mapped to Chapter 5's themes and sub-themes.

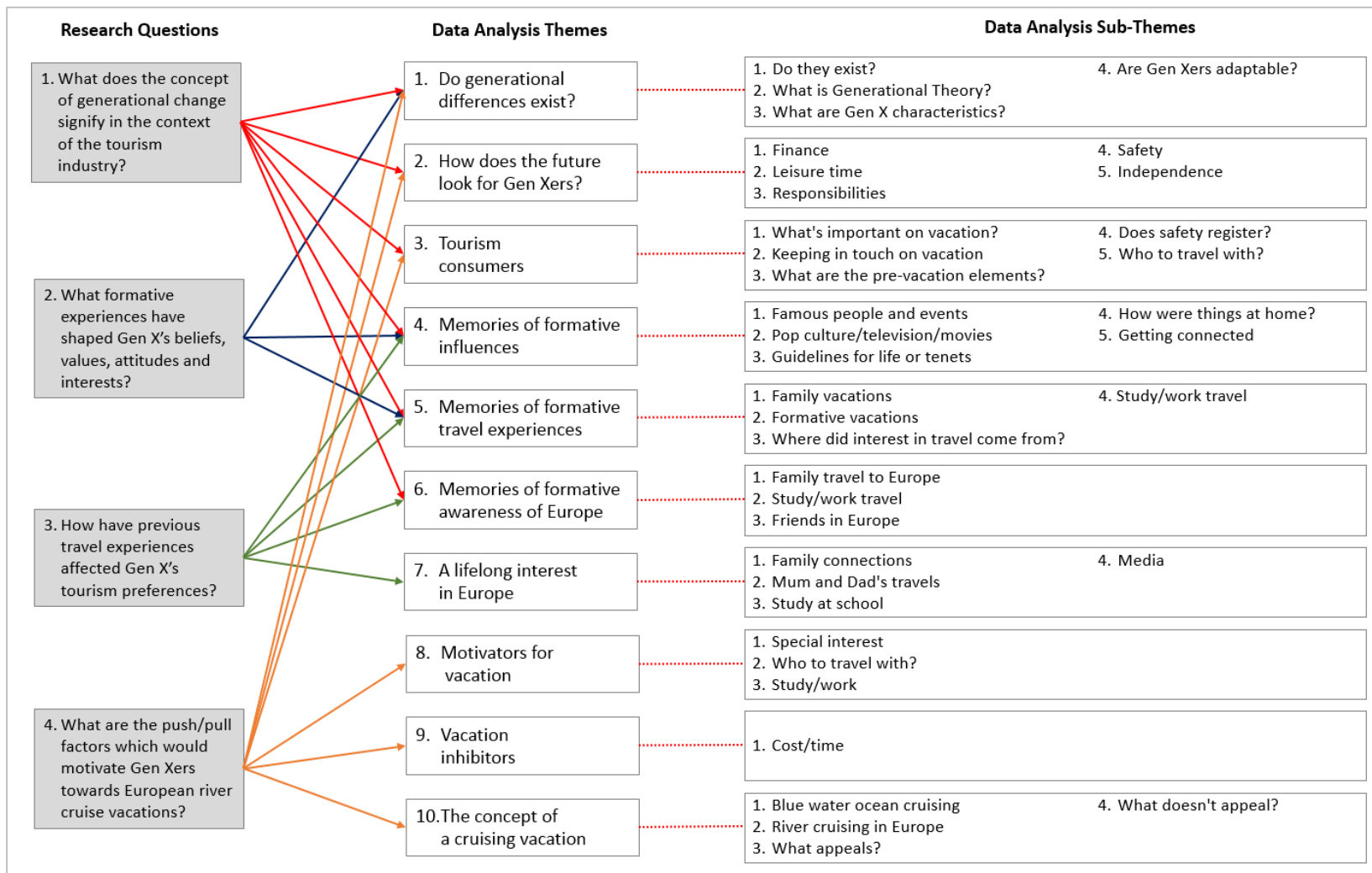


Figure 6-1 Research Questions mapped to themes and sub-themes

6.2 Interpretation of results in relation to the Research Questions and previous research

6.2.1 Research Question One: *What does the concept of generational change signify in the context of the tourism industry?*

Chapter 4 themes relevant to this Research Question are:

- Theme One: Do generational differences exist?
- Theme Two: How does the future look for Gen Xers?
- Theme Three: Tourism consumers.
- Theme Four: Memories of formative influences.
- Theme Five: Memories of formative travel experiences.
- Theme Six: Memories of awareness of Europe.

Generational Theory asserts that each generation is different for various reasons, and therefore the needs and expectations of the members are unique to that generational cohort.

Supporting the theory, Chapters 2 and 5 have shown that the world in which Gen Xers experienced their formative years featured significant differences to that experienced by Baby Boomers before them. Technological, social and economic environments in particular, were unique to their generational cohort in their formative time in history. Whilst Gen Xers' young adult years have been difficult in the context of tough economic times, lack of job security, taking on debt and alternative social and relationship mores, this generational cohort has enjoyed and come to value unprecedented independence and freedom in their lives. They have been able to access a high level of travel experiences, including some from childhood, which have made them in the mid-30s to 50s into experienced, confident and knowledgeable tourism destination and product researchers and then, tourism consumers.

The answers to Research Question One shown in this section add greater depth to the Generational Theory and generational change literature relating to this generation's childhood and formative experiences in the tourism context. These answers extend previous knowledge in relation to Gen Xers' particular characteristics and introduce

new knowledge showing this generational cohort as approaching their older travelling years as unique tourism consumers with particular needs and expectations. On the negative side, new knowledge revealed in Chapter 5 and in this section relating to generational change present this generational cohort as facing tourism limitations in older age not experienced by previous generations.

6.2.1.1 Generational change-from Baby Boomers to Gen X

This thesis observes that the oldest of the Gen Xers are now 51 in 2016 (Klie, 2012; Levine, 1994; Mackay, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Wilson, 1998),

“...and for me as a 50 year old...” (Lisa, New York, April 13, 2015)

Chapters 1, 2 and 5 have documented and discussed Generational Theory. Research has asserted that there are differences in beliefs, values, attitudes, interests and behaviours between generations (Eyerman & Turner, 1998; Macky et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2008; Yan et al., 2010). This thesis has generated evidence which supports the theory. Here is a typical participant comment referring to formative years,

“...you kind of take on your parent’s (values, attitudes, beliefs, interests)....but now you can sort of *think for yourself* and *make your own decisions*.” (Kathryn, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

These differences are brought about through the influences on and experiences of generation members from situations and events in their formative stage in life.

In support of Generational Theory and as a result of these formative influences, it is likely that there are differences in the way generational cohort members (compared to other generations) view the world and the expectations they hold as consumers and members of society. Li et al. (2013) observe that there are differences in their behaviour. A concept supported by many participants, for example,

“Yeah, definitely. I mean, yes.different attitudes about work and life in general...” (Fernando, New York, April 9, 2015)

Differences are evident in interactions with institutions, corporations, governments and fellow human beings created again, by their time in history; by social,

technological, environmental, political developments surrounding them in their formative years (Beirne, 2005) and acknowledged in this thesis' findings.

6.2.1.2 What it means in the tourism context

Tourism operators cannot present little changed formulaic, standardized experiences to Gen Xers (Vainikka, 2013) which have been aimed at and enjoyed by Baby Boomer and older Silent Generation tourists. Gen Xers have different needs and expectations. Why is this?

Lee and Gates (1992) argue that Gen X has enjoyed greater past tourism experience than the previous generation at the same age, which will affect their future preferences. These frequent tourism experiences in the childhood and formative years have given Gen Xers an attitude that travel for them is seen as a right or an easily attainable component of their leisure activities. Their travel decision making processes in mature adulthood take into account this depth of tourism experiences, thus aligning this generational cohort with the limited tourism motivation literature. McCabe (2000) suggests that the many previous travel experiences as well as destination knowledge enjoyed by Gen Xers will affect the decision making process.

They have evolving world views which are different from those of other generational cohorts and aspire to unstructured tourism experiences,

“I don't like the scheduling. I don't like being told when to be somewhere...” (Chris, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

Being aware of these differences and this generational cohort's view of travel and the world must be considered in the marketing and product development areas of tourism organisations (Javalgi et al., 1992; Portolese Dias, 2003; Turner, 1987; Williams & Page, 2011).

Past comparative tourism contextualised studies (Gardiner et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2013; Glover & Prideaux, 2008a; Li et al., 2013; Singer & Prideaux, 2006) offer various results, demonstrating vacation interests specific to particular generational cohorts. This thesis' examples with collected data, generating some distinct characteristics of Gen X, such as interest in local cultures and an unstructured approach to their tourism experiences.

To understand the implications of what generational change from Baby Boomers to Gen X will have on tourism organisations offering product to the mature demographic, it is necessary to discuss in the next section, aspects of the latter's childhood and formative years. Such discussion includes the extant tourism context literature and sample population data, presenting some new insight into those formative environments that created the unique characteristics of this generational cohort.

6.2.1.3 Formative influences-travel in the 1970s and the 1980s and 90s

In the case of Gen X in the tourism context, the environment they grew up in consisted of accessible and affordable air travel (Burkart, 1971; Doganis, 1987; Pearce & Butler, 1993; Votolato, 2007). In addition there was improved communication, greater availability of destination and travel product information and greater choices of destinations due to significant events in history, such as the collapse of the USSR, which introduced new travel opportunities throughout Russia and the former Eastern Bloc (Armstrong, Pitts, & Kamery, 2004). The extant literature of Hall (2005), Poon (1993) and Votolato (2007) is supported, relating to easier access to destinations (particularly the former Eastern bloc countries) and affordability of air travel during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. A typical participant statement demonstrates agreement,

“So I'd say the main thing I think about, definitely towards the end of the decade. You know, was just all followed the Soviet Union, you know the Solidarity movement and Poland, stuff like that...” (Albert, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

Many Gen Xers were able to travel internationally at a young age within their family units and a significant number from this thesis' sample population in Australia and the United States experienced travel to Europe as children and then again as teenagers and young adults, as this participant from Australia recalls,

“..some of the trips we did as a family when I was younger...Like Scotland and around Europe probably when I was about 12 or 13...but just good memories of locations that you've started looking at and maybe going back to do it in a bit more detail.” (Bob, Sydney, February 14, 2015)

Another from the United States remembers,

“I was in Europe three times before I was a teen.” (Lisa, New York, April 13, 2015)

The idea of air travel (and particularly for this thesis, international air travel) being accessible to large numbers within the population in developed countries of Australia and the United States is not unique to this generation, as it was their parents who first experienced this opportunity, but not until their 30s or 40s (Muller & Cleaver, 2000). As demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 5, Gen Xers were the first generation to experience such an opportunity in their childhood, formative and then in subsequent years.

This thesis supports and extends the observations and studies of De Lollis (2005) and Li et al. (2013) in the respect that these early tourism experiences shaped this generational cohort’s perception of travel. They have helped in defining their tourism environment. They now present as a generation approaching their 50+ years as confident tourists with extensive travel experience and knowledge (Woodside & Dubelaar, 2002). Such a phenomenon separates them from previous generations and determines their tourism motivation, expectations and needs.

They are familiar with various world and domestic regions and particularly, Europe,

“..they (her parents) would send home postcards...so yeah, you just sort of grow up with it. And then they’d come home (her parents from touring in Europe) and you’d sit through endless photos of...So, yeah, I mean, you just sort of grew up with those sorts of images. And, books as well, you know, a lot of English literature.” (Anna, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

Chapter 2 and this chapter’s Sections 6.2 and 6.2.1.2 show that this experience of international travel, but also domestic travel (in part made accessible by low cost carriers) in their youth and subsequent decades has emphasised the thesis findings of this generational cohort possessing a greater knowledge of travel and destinations than earlier generations. Whilst this knowledge has come about through their own travel experiences, it has also come from information gained from frequently travelling parents and other family members or friends. It has fostered development in many cases, of their early interest in travel and an ability to become more discerning in their travel preferences at earlier ages than the Baby Boomers (Woodside & Dubelaar, 2002). This important finding is referred to in Section 6.2.3.

This thesis has generated considerable evidence to support the view that due to the many travel experiences already undertaken and subsequent knowledge gained this generational cohort do not feel the need for organised formulaic tourism activities in their approaching mature travelling years. They feel self-assured in creating their own flexible and personal travel experiences (Poon, 1993) via their pre-travel research methods, which include extensive acceptance of on-line resources (Bruce, 2015). With their knowledge of destinations, they crave the concept of discovering on their own or with family and friends rather than with the traditional group and tour leader and pre-organised itineraries (Shaw & William, 2004).

This statement is typical,

“I suppose, as well, yeah, having the freedom of doing what you want to do when you want to do it, you know what I mean. Not being locked into, “At one o’clock we’re going to wherever.” (Missy, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

This comment supports the extension of theory expressed by Tulgan (1996) in relation to Gen Xers’ need for reduced levels of organisation and structure.

Thus, Gen Xers, whilst still extremely keen on travel to Europe have expressed a desire to undertake such travel in their own way. This is partly due to their innate desire for independence and freedom (referred to in Chapter 5) but also coupled with their broad background knowledge, confidence and travel experience and through pre-travel research.

This thesis advances the existing Generational Theory relating to Gen X in the tourism context suggested by Gardiner et al. (2015), Gardiner et al. (2013), Glover and Prideaux (2009) and Li et al. (2013) as it enables greater depth of understanding of the underpinning formative and contemporary experiences of this generational cohort due to the qualitative phenomenological methodology utilised. Recurring themes of the need for autonomy reported in Chapter 5, coupled with the desire for in-depth, local tourism experiences abound in the interview responses from the participants.

And also from Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.6.3.1,

“I’m an explorer, I love to explore. If I’m in a country I don’t really do what the tourists do...I go on the outskirts of town and talk to people and see what are the best places to go to...” (Marco Solo, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

Comments such as these support the view in the limited tourism literature that Gen Xers consider a more in-depth and uncontrived tourism experience important (Jennings, 2012). These desires are expressed often by the participants and in limited extant Gen X research (Elliot, 2011; Losyk, 1997; Mackay, 1997; Tulgan, 1996; Wilson, 1998) and so need to be understood by tourism organisations. The point has previously been made by tourism researchers that generations have different tourism needs and behaviours which must be acknowledged by tourism organisations (Woodside & Dubelaar, 2002).

6.2.1.4 Contemporary and future social issues affecting tourism opportunities

An essential component of this thesis is the need to identify social issues facing Gen Xers in the years ahead. Knowledge of such issues advance current tourism related generational studies by introducing either positive or negative components, which may affect this generational cohort’s ability to undertake mature tourism experiences in the decades ahead. This thesis’ results generate important contemporary knowledge relating to Gen Xers’ ability to undertake vacation travel to Europe in their senior years. Those important issues are detailed in this section.

Firstly, Chapters 2 and 5 reported that in both Australia and the United States, governments have proposed increasing the retirement age. Access to the Age Pension in Australia will be 70 in 2035, subject to legislation (Power, 2016) and Social Security in the United States, currently 67 (SSA, 2016), will be raised to 70 in a year yet to be announced (Ghilarducci, 2015). These adjustments upwards may have a negative effect on those Gen Xers who have been hopeful of gaining the opportunity in their early or mid-60s (current retirement ages) to enjoy longer vacations after concluding their working careers, as Baby Boomers have. Nimrod (2008) suggests that as we age we must face possible declining health and loss of partners as well as reduced incomes and these constraints could be exacerbated by raised retirement ages.

Secondly, evidence from the data acknowledges that the suggested reduced incomes pose a future threat to many of the participants. Declining health however cannot be foreseen by them at this stage. This participant suggests there are significant doubts within the cohort regarding availability of retirement finances,

“.....do I have enough money, what am I going to live off?” (In retirement). (Juan, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

Thirdly, though impediments to extended travel periods in the future such as financial and time constraints have been encountered, it was found (in Chapter 5) that possible future care considerations of their parents affecting Gen Xers' travel plans were of little concern to participants at this stage in their lives. This is their view in 2016, but some participants made the observation that it could become an issue for them later in life. It is a significant issue in the extant literature. Gallagher (2011) acknowledges that not only is the cost of caring for the elderly rising, but medical science is enabling people to live longer. A newspaper article (Anonymous, 2010) states that whilst there may be the inclination to assist older parents, costs will be enormous. Such caring responsibilities could affect Gen Xers' ability to travel on vacations, particularly longer and more expensive ones, in their mature years.

Fourthly, in Chapter 5, it was reported that many of the participants had agreed that within their generational cohort, women were definitely choosing to have children later in life as a result of advances in medical science as well as fulfilling career and tertiary education aspirations (Wyn, 2012). Gerson (2009) and Tamborini and Iams (2011) stress that this phenomenon can partly be explained by the fact that couples are marrying later and that women want to be more independent in family decision making. In addition, Gerson (2007) as well as Korabik et al. (2008) and Stephenson (1996) suggest that women have more control over reproduction than in previous generations.

Fifthly, the responsibilities of looking after teenage or early twenties offspring at home could undermine, or alter plans for longer and possibly more expensive vacations in 50+ years. Maserjian-Shan (2011) argues that older Gen X parents may need to delay their retirement and also observes that the combination of caring for children later in life as well as the role of parental caring noted in the previous section, could severely limit both time and financial resources. This thesis has

featured pertinent comments by participants in each country, demonstrating agreement and support for the limited literature relating to this situation in developed countries.

Sixthly, whilst of little concern to participants at this stage of life, anecdotally the popular conception is that Baby Boomers may not be in a position to offer inheritances to their Gen X children. This situation has developed firstly, because they have been enjoying their retirement years and spending what funds that could potentially be left to children in the future. Further, as documented in Australia by Keane (2015) they have been finding their retirement savings to be insufficient to fund retirement years and as a consequence have been spending above their anticipated levels.

This matter was not addressed with the participants but is certainly a topical discussion point in both countries in the media and amongst Baby Boomer parents. Lack of inheritances could affect Gen Xer's financial position in retirement. Block (2006) and Satter (2015) address this issue in the United States, making the point that Baby Boomer parents may need to fund additional health care requirements as they could possibly live longer. Just funding their day to day costs will be expensive, thus limiting their ability to pass on wealth. The issue naturally has implications for Gen Xers' ability to fund expensive vacations such as European river cruises in mature years.

Seventhly, participants were split in their thoughts on their capacity to finance their retirement years. Some expressed a desire to enjoy a luxury life-style in their mature retirement years, whenever those years may come,

Franklin: "Because I want to be able to walk away. I want to have freedom to walk away."

Researcher: So, without prying, you are planning financially to be able to do that?"

Franklin: "Absolutely." (Franklin, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

Others (and these were the majority) expressed the realisation that there would be no funds for travel during retirement,

“And I don’t think I’ll be travelling when I’m retired. I just don’t know that I’ll be in a financial place (position)...you just don’t know....”
(Jessica, New York April 8, 2015)

This latter observation was made a number of times during interviews in Australia and the United States, but is not addressed fully in the extant literature. As has been suggested in Chapter 5, the issue for many of the participants is lack of funds or reduced incomes in retirement, rendering their future tourism experience opportunities difficult to finance. In this respect the extant literature (Bass, 2013; Campbell, 2004; Gladych, 2013; Panaritis, 2012; U.S. Newswire, 2013) notes that the issue of lack of retirement funding is anticipated to be a concern for Gen Xers.

Finally, the issue of safety and security for vacationers was raised during interviews (discussed briefly in Chapter 5) with the Gen X participants, as it is increasingly a topical matter and one which is highly publicized and referred to in both general and tourism literature (News Reporter-Staff News Editor, 2015; Seabra et al., 2014). The point is made here that destinations and operators need to be able to reassure potential visitors of the level of tourism safety that they can offer.

With their previously mentioned travel experience to rely on, the overwhelming majority of the participants felt well able to manage these security and safety aspects of their tourism experiences, were not concerned and did not see them as tourism deterrents or inhibitors. This attitude can be attributed to their extensive travel experience and inherent confidence but also their previously mentioned interest in research and planning. Such results support specific extant research of Law (2006) who argues that such planning equates to managing risks. Bowen and Clarke (2009) observe that there is a high level of confidence relating to the threat of terrorism among experienced cruise ship passengers. In this thesis the exceptions to this confidence amongst participants were those few with religious affiliations, particularly the Jewish participants,

“In Europe....Okay, because I’m Jewish, and given like what’s going on in terms of like ISIS, Moslem community, et cetera, there is a lot of people that don’t feel safe in Europe anymore.” (Lisa, New York, April 13, 2015)

This comment is referred to in Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.6.9.3.

6.2.1.5 Gen X and their unique life path

Coupled with Generational Theory, generational change and the unique characteristics of Gen Xers are the previously mentioned (in Chapter 2) concepts of life paths or life courses of each generation (Schuman & Scott, 1989). Gen Xers have experienced a unique life path, that is, their journey through life from birth at a unique (to their particular generation) time in history. It has been dominated by economic, social and technical changes and has differed from the life path of the previous generation, as this typical quote records,

“I think the world that we live in has changed. You know (for example), I grew up in the Cold War, and you had like, the Berlin Wall, the unification of Germany, we just had a lot of things, and now we have, like, the differences....” (Spring Flower, New York, April 13, 2015)

For Gen Xers, this has led to a reduction in security in respect to career aspirations, career paths and availability of work as well as relationship choices (Strauss & Howe, 1999). Dreams of home ownership or increased leisure time have not come to fruition (McCrinkle & Wolfinger, 2009).

Gen Xers in both countries have incurred high tertiary study fees and consequent loans which must be repaid (Australian Government, 2016; Weiss, 2015) as this comment acknowledges,

“I stupidly went to a very expensive law school and I owed close to \$200,000 when I came out.”

(Ariadne, New York, April 16, 2015)

(Also referred to in Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.6.2.2)

Brooks (2011) and O'Regan (2014) agree that Gen Xers encountered significant costs in younger years. Their need to repay such large loans has diminished the ability to save during the early years of their working lives.

Gen Xers in their teenage and early 20s years entering the workforce in the early 1980s to 2000 (Riquier, 2015) experienced the global financial crisis in the late 1980s (Mackay, 1997; McCrinkle & Wolfinger, 2009), as this participant recalls,

“So yeah, my mum and dad were in business. Dad’s self-employed and they had a corker year in 1988 and then the crash in ’89. And that absolutely shaped that part of my childhood, I was 15, it shaped me.” (Kylie, Melbourne, February 23, 2015)

In addition, the ensuing downturn in the economies during those decades in Australia and the United States,

“I feel Baby Boomers have more security with jobs and everything like that. And I feel it was pretty easy to buy a house ...” (Sally, New York, April 9, 2015)

This last observation was typical of the general realisation by participants that Gen Xers may have less disposable income available than Baby Boomers had for home ownership or perceived luxury vacations such as European river cruises. As a complete contrast however, it has been made clear in 5, that most of the sample participants have already experienced travel (often to Europe) multiple times in their lives so far, for example, this participant from New York,

“I went to Europe three times on these amazing trips from like, the first one I think, I was nine, and then like eleven, and then I might have been thirteen.” (Lisa, New York, April 13, 2015)

Whilst they have incurred weak economic conditions and high debt, they either have been able to fund a few or, in many cases, multiple international vacations during their subsequent working lives, and in so doing may have limited their ability to take such trips in later, retirement years, due to a consequent lack of savings. This observation, supported by many of the participants, is in accord with the noted literature in this chapter and in this section and Chapter 5 relating to retirement and spending. It reiterates the important finding of this generational cohort having insufficient funds in retirement to travel, due to high spending patterns and high costs in their earlier adult years.

In the environment in which Gen Xers have grown into adulthood, it could be said that they have hindered their own dream of a life path by insisting that the work/life balance be of their choosing (Howe & Strauss, 2007). They have married later and importantly for this thesis, fulfilled travel desires early in adult life and over a period of decades thereafter (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Mackay, 1997).

Jennings (2012) comments that in addition, spending on entertainment and socialising have been a priorities against saving for the future, so whilst wages may be higher than those of Baby Boomers at a similar age, savings are actually lower (Riquier, 2015). Clearly, the implication is for reduced vacation funds being available in mature years,

“I mean, right now in New York, I mean I think that...it’s very expensive to live in New York...I’m coming from this arts background, you make very little money, and so you don’t have the opportunity to have these big chunks of, you know, \$1000 to go....for plane ticket and stay here, whatever.” (Lisa, New York, April 13, 2015)

Socially, there are differences between the two generations. Many of the Gen Xers experienced family breakups with higher divorce rates amongst their Baby Boomer parents (Stephenson, 1996), in fact, more so than the generation before them, as reported in the extant literature of Healy (2011), Klie (2012) and Tulgan (1996). Again, in their confident way, Gen Xers have been pragmatic in dealing with such matters, as this typical comment demonstrates,

“No, I mean, I think it was probably the same thing where it’s like, you know, I wish it wasn’t this way but you have to move on.” (Albert, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

They see their social world as more difficult but in their adaptable way, they manage it, thus supporting existing studies of MacKay (1997) in Australia and in the United States, Strauss and Howe (1991). Here is a comment from a participant suggesting that her parents had an easier time socially than she,

“...and it’s hard to meet someone that is you know, necessarily even willing to or wanting to be in a relationship. So you sort of, have these, you know, transients. (Sarah, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

Gen X has been presented with more choices in opportunities to live singly or in more varieties or dynamically flexible relationships (Gerson, 2009; Wyn, 2012). The result may be that they feel as though the social structure their parents experienced is more complex and not as clear cut for them.

The human relationships content of television programs such as Friends and Seinfeld mentioned in Chapter 5 mirrors their own perceptions of a more relaxed, but in some

respects confusing social structure, with greater available relationship or friendship choices. This suggests Gen Xers will be vacationing in their mature years in a range of relationship statuses and groupings (refer to the *Status* range of sample population participants in Appendix 3). The following participant comment implies again, that the adult society they are experiencing/living in is different to that of their Baby Boomer parents,

“Yeah, there’s certainly a different mentality....” (Franklin, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

And for an example of relationship variations from a participant in a same-sex relationship,

“Typically when I’ve been on, like, longer, international vacations I’ve been with my mum or my boyfriend, one more person, or a good friend.” (Juan, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

These issues are not addressed in the extant literature, but have implications, particularly in terms of vacation accommodation and activity requirements. They introduce a new concept into the Gen X tourism related literature.

6.2.2 Research Question Two: *What formative experiences have shaped Gen X’s beliefs, values, attitudes and interests?*

Chapter 5 themes relevant to this Research Question are:

- Theme One: Do generational differences exist?
- Theme Four: Memories of formative influences.
- Theme Five: Memories of formative travel experiences.

This thesis has found, from the majority of participant comments that their Baby Boomer parents’ liberal approaches towards many aspects of their children’s upbringing has developed in them the opportunity for independent and free thinking. Gen Xers’ behaviour, throughout their lives has been shaped by this. Their guidelines for life (beliefs, values and attitudes) have evolved from their immediate environment of family and community. Values (which are those their parents passed on) have remained constant since childhood. This generational cohort has been free to shape their own beliefs and attitudes in their formative years. These have stayed with them through their lives. Opportunities for new travel interests for Gen Xers

have presented themselves in many instances throughout their lives and reflect changes in their world, made possible by the availability to them of affordable and accessible travel.

6.2.2.1 Guidelines for life (or tenets)

These guidelines for life (or tenets) are important. Generational Theory asserts that development of these become powerful forces in the development of unique characteristics of generational cohorts. Gen Xers place great emphasis on values (in most cases those of their parents) which support their desire for factual, accurate and reliable marketing together with responsible travel pricing (refer to Section 6.2.4.1). They support liberal attitudes and these characteristics, coupled with their life time interest in travel supports their desire to interact socially and culturally with local communities when on vacation (refer to Sections 6.2.4.2 and 6.2.4.4.7).

6.2.2.1.1 Comparison with data

Previous research relating to Generational Theory has been undertaken through the second half of the 20th century and into the 21st. Scholars have variously added to the original theory of Mannheim (1952) and others have supported it (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Klie, 2012; Losyk, 1997; Mackay, 1997; Meredith & Schewe, 1994; Noble & Schewe, 2003; Ritchie, 1992; Strauss & Howe, 1991, 1999) predominantly citing the experiences and influences in formative years of *large* scale events or famous people.

In some studies, (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Meredith & Schewe, 1994; Noble & Schewe, 2003) behaviour was also included. As extant research has shown, all these were thought to be affected by significant events and famous people. They could include economic, political or societal events and these are grouped together by some researchers (including some tourism research scholars) and named common events, and suggested in many works (Benckendorff et al., 2010; Chen & Shoemaker, 2014; Gardiner et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2013; Glover & Prideaux, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Hicks & Hicks, 1999; Hung & Petrick, 2011; Li et al., 2013; Meredith & Schewe, 1994; Pennington-Gray et al., 2003; Singer & Prideaux, 2006), although Mannheim does include historical and social circumstances.

This thesis' participants shared consistent views or perceptions of how they had acquired their beliefs, values and attitudes and whether these had altered or influenced them during their lifetimes. The largely uniform opinions of participants in both countries support the theory that these tenets of life or guidelines for life are influenced by the environment of the formative years but, in this thesis, these were very much defined as *local environment* (in both countries, identified as their local community), rather than national or international or significant or major situations or people. In the participants' cases, these events, people and situations included a more relaxed way of viewing formal religion in societies (more liberal views on divorce and diversity) supporting some of the characteristics of this particular generational cohort presented in the extant literature of Howe and Strauss (2007), Mackay (1997), Strauss and Howe (1999) and Tulgan (1996).

6.2.2.1.2 Acquired guidelines for life or tenets

It may be a common thread with the Gen X participants that they have grown up in liberal homes (from the point of view of religion, faith and spirituality),

“We went through the motions of being Catholic to our convenience.”
(Juan, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

In only a few cases, the respondents had experienced a strict religious upbringing, such as this,

“They were Baptist and believe in God and Heaven and Hell and right and wrong. And my dad was a Baptist Minister. My brother is a Baptist Minister. So, there was a lot.” (Franklin, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

In all cases, the participants, who had come coincidentally from Christian or Jewish backgrounds, commented that they had participated in religious rituals as children and teenagers to varying extents. Here is a statement from a Sydney participant,

“I used to go to Sunday school and church and Holy Communion and confirmation.” (Ant, Sydney, February 19, 2015)

In teenage years many had been given the opportunity to feel free to take on or reject parents' beliefs. This could be either through a relaxed and liberal approach from parents or through an opportunity to engage in independent thinking, or as a result of the church's own negative issues, reported widely in the media and resulting in lower church attendances (Morton, 2003). This participant recalls,

“Yeah, I think when I was about maybe thirteen or so my mother had gone and said, ‘You can have a choice now, you’re old enough, you can decide whether you want to go to church on Sunday’.” (Albert, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

These comments support the extant Generational Theory and advance the knowledge in respect of the strong views expressed in regard to independence of thought.

The result for them has been a lack of interest in organised religion and a rejection of traditional faiths and creeds in adult life. Most expressed the view that organised religion was not for them, however some had dabbled in alternative spiritual approaches, such as,

“I guess if I lean anywhere, it’s more towards Asian kind of spirituality.”
(Sally, New York, April 9, 2015)

In the majority of cases, the theory is supported by the participants, demonstrating that significant decisions made during formative years relating to beliefs have remained constant through life, again, supporting the extant literature,

“I mean there was always kind of a lack of belief until I think probably in my ‘30s I kind of came to a belief that it’s okay to not have a belief and just to be good to other people.” (Fernando, New York, April 9, 2015)

For this generational cohort (from the comments of the participants) the overwhelming opinion has been that the values, which they acknowledge were acquired from parents, family and school or peers, but not from famous people or significant events (thus challenging much of the literature) have remained unchanged for life, supporting the main focus of the theory. The theory maintains that this is the case for each generation although the values taught may be different. Values were interpreted by the participants in this thesis to represent morality and ethics (as defined in Chapter 1). Here is a typical participant view on the meaning of values,

“I would interpret that as being their values would be that the rules they engage in life. So it might be....so for me my values are being honest, respectful, caring, compassionate and understanding and things like that.”
(Adam, Sydney, February 19, 2015)

These tenets developed in formative years demonstrate that Gen Xers place great emphasis on values (in most cases those of their parents) supporting their desire for

factual, accurate and reliable marketing together with responsible travel pricing (refer to Section 6.2.4.1).

The participants recalled that they had formed their own attitudes based on their time in history, the social, cultural and political environment. Their family home environments differed (in terms of location, family make-up, and so on), but the common thread was that the attitudes they had held for their adult lives had been created in their formative years. In many cases these were a *rejection* of the attitudes of parents or adult figures from their younger years, as in the case of this typical comment,

“My dad would be one of the most intolerant guys I know....So I suppose my attitude is that everyone’s got their own gig and....I think my attitude about people is that we’re mostly all good.....” (Kylie, Melbourne, February 23, 2015)

This demonstrates a strong support of the Generational Theory in that these Gen Xers are describing their uniqueness through an expression of their own life attitudes (Erikson, 1959; Eyerman & Turner, 1998) again providing strong theory progression for the previously mentioned independent thinking characteristics.

Some scholars have included interests and behaviours in this grouping of influences in formative years resulting in generational uniqueness, for example, in the studies of Krahn and Galambos (2014), Li et al. (2013), and Schewe and Meredith (2004). With the participants it was found that particular interests from childhood and formative years were not necessarily unique to this generation. For example, most of the Australian male participants had been interested in cricket in their younger years, as had generations before them. In fact, in both countries, traditional sporting activities were the same as previous generations, for example, baseball in the United States,

“I was always into sports, I always ran on the track and cross-country team. High school, I also did play baseball.” (Tony, Los Angeles, April 19, 2015)

Comments implied that other interests were also similar, for example, craft,

“I suppose I was more into craft and things like that....” (Missy, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

In the matter of general behaviour, and in the context of the interviews, uniformity was not obvious, as some formative experiences had varied. This may be a case of heterogeneity within homogeneity (referred to in Section 6.2.2.3) in the general context as alluded to by a few Generational Theory dissenters, for example Marconi (2001), but in later sections it is observed that a more uniform characteristic in relation to consumer and tourism behaviour has been detected in this thesis.

Importantly for this thesis, during the latter formative years and then adulthood, travel had become a vital interest for all participants. This fact is based on data evidence presented in Chapter 5 documenting the opportunities for and familiarity with the travel Gen Xers have enjoyed since their formative years. Such an interest differentiates them (as previously noted) from the Baby Boomers who did *not* have that same opportunity to undertake such extensive tourism experiences from their younger, formative years. The majority of the participant's comments show that travel was an integral part of their lives and became an interest for life, remembering that such an interest has been an important component of their membership of the sample. From this it can be concluded that here again these participants see travel as just a normal part of life and not a privilege, and have done so throughout their lives, a characteristic not researched in-depth in the extant tourism Generational Theory literature.

6.2.2.2 Recollections of events and famous role models from formative years

Of great interest in the thesis, was the development of the realisation during the data collection process that the importance placed on significant events or influential famous people in a generational cohort's formative years in the theory was lacking with this sample population, typified by this participant comment,

“...Nothing that stands out right away. I know there is [Sic] probably a lot of things that happened, but nothing that kind of stuck in my mind, or caused me to remember it.” (Tony, Los Angeles, April 19, 2015)

The data collected relating to formative events or experiences were more focussed on the *local* community shared social environmental experiences rather than national or world events referred to by Schewe and Meredith (2004). Chapter 5 and Appendix 12 record the formative events or people that were recalled by the sample population. It reveals that there were few recollections of large scale or world political,

economic, social or environmental events and only a handful of famous people were remembered.

Lack of recall of large scale events or great people from formative years featured with the overwhelming majority of participants. The abundance of information being received by this generational cohort over a great proportion of their lives (due to improved communication technology referred to in Chapter 5) has possibly resulted in an overload for individuals who can only focus on their local environment. These participants recall local and, to them, important issues,

“We were concerned about the petrol so we purchased a pushy.” (Corky, Sydney, February 13, 2015)

“..Yeah, my parents split when I was 18.....yes that was a difficult thing to come to terms with but ultimately I could see that my parents were happier apart then together.” (Stephanie, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

The following citation from literature from 2000 demonstrates a certain doubt in the results of prior research,

Generation X is taking longer to grow up, delaying marriage and careers. Does this mean that they are delaying their cohort-forming years? Are historical events less likely to influence this group if they are living at home and/or delaying their maturation process or are they just as susceptible to events and experiences as any other cohort? (Schewe & Noble, 2000, p. 139)

For each of the participants, their recollections emphasised influences of those close to them in their immediate environments of home, community, school, college, university and sporting club,

“And I remember eating cheap cuts of meat and I remember Mum and Dad cranky all the time, and our common theme in the house was money and her not to spend it.” (Kylie, Melbourne, February 23, 2015)

There are anomalies in the literature relating to this matter of impact during formative years. For example Noble and Schewe (2003) pose a scenario which relates again to the theory that it is significant national or world external events that influence generations in formative years, but they also note that environment plays a role. It is this latter point that aligns closely with participant comments in this thesis.

In this regard, the thesis is extending the theory through providing first hand in-depth and contemporary data from Gen Xers in the two developed countries.

6.2.2.3 Homogeneity versus heterogeneity

It has been suggested in some in the extant literature that beliefs, values, attitudes may not be uniform across all members of the generational cohort (Li et al., 2013; Marconi, 2001) and yet with these participants, comments relating to these tenets were remarkably similar, regardless of the city or the country. This suggests that at least on the basis of this thesis' results there is support for the original homogeneity aspect of the Generational Theory of Mannheim (1952). Again in the literature, the point is made that culture and nationality must be understood in the context of tourism studies, particularly suggested by Pennington-Gray et al. (2003). In this thesis across two English speaking countries responses were consistent, apart from a few differences, one being the American rite of passage for young people leaving home to attend College in another State or town/city, as was the case with this typical United States participant who grew up in a small town in Connecticut,

“I went to UNH and then I transferred to SUB.....University of New Haven ...And then I transferred to Southern Connecticut.” (Toby, New York, April 10, 2015)

Early childhood and formative experiences were remarkably similar, and of course (as noted) adult beliefs, values and attitudes, are also similar.

Behaviours were mixed but more aligned in relation to tourism behaviours. However there are the highlighted challenges to existing literature with participants recalling their local or community events and people from formative years with much greater clarity than major events or famous people or circumstances (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Schuman & Scott, 1989)

These answers to Research Question Two have advanced knowledge in relation to this generational cohort's way of acquiring formative guidelines for life- beliefs, values, attitudes and interests in two large cities each in Australia and the United States, presenting contextual differences in relation to influences. They have challenged previous research in relation to acquisition of formative and later adult interests and also overall consumer and tourism behaviour.

6.2.3 Research Question Three: *How have previous travel experiences affected Gen X's tourism preferences?*

Themes from Chapter 5 relevant to this Research Question are:

- Theme Four: Memories of formative influences.
- Theme Five: Memories of formative travel experiences
- Theme Six: Memories of formative awareness of Europe.
- Theme Seven: A lifelong interest in Europe.

Chapter 5 has found that travel has been and still is a normal part of life for this generational cohort. Gen Xers have been affected in their interest in travel and particularly Europe by family influences and their own participation in travel experiences to that region. In their student and now working lives, many participants have combined study and work with vacation opportunities. So now, in their late 30s, 40s and early 50s, their tourism preferences differ from Baby Boomers and they desire experiences which suit their more knowledgeable, confident and experienced tourist position. Their tourism expectations emphasise a desire for local host destination cultural and social interaction whilst on vacation combined with the opportunity to undertake tourism experiences in an unstructured free, independent and personal manner.

The answers to Research Question Three have revealed more detail in the lived histories of the participants. Greater knowledge of formative impacts, previous travel experiences and their impact on contemporary tourism needs and expectations have been revealed, thus advancing current research. New knowledge has been gained in relation to fundamental generational characteristics such as independence and freedom in the tourism context, tourism expectations and tourism behaviour.

6.2.3.1 Gen X-lifelong travellers

Chapters 2 and 5 have reported that this generational cohort has benefitted from access to affordable airfares. In many cases these have been available from childhood, creating many and varied travel opportunities. Past research has suggested that generational travel opportunities can create differences between generations, summed up by this salient quote, “As a result of increasing ability to travel, a growing range of tourism opportunities and greater choice of tourist destinations and

activities, the travel experiences of each generation are likely to be significantly different.” (Singer & Prideaux, 2006, p. 338)

This generational cohort was the first to have such an attainable opportunity available to them for their whole lives. This phenomenon has had great influence on them. Certainly for those in the sample population it has meant a lifelong access to affordable international and domestic vacation tourism, differentiating them from past generational cohorts and supporting the literature proposition that generations are unique for various reasons, amongst these being their time in history (Li et al., 2013). Here is one of many participant comments relating to formative European travel experiences,

“...with my parents in a campervan as a young child...we were actually overseas for four years, driving through Europe...” (Sarah, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

In the case of the vast majority of participants, this access to air travel was not the only travel influence experienced in formative years. Like the Baby Boomers before them, Gen Xers in both Australia and the United States experienced vacation road trips either to stay in holiday accommodation such as tents, caravans or motels or to stay with relatives.

Participants in this thesis shared common memories of such trips and expressed the independence and freedom themes repeatedly when discussing them. Comments related particularly to the desire to be surrounded by space and not confined. This characteristic is referred to later in this chapter in Section 6.2.4 in relation to potential river cruise vessel experiences and spatial issues.

This concept of viewing travel as a normal component of life rather than a privilege has been articulated frequently during the participant interviews. The ability to act on travel desires from a young age ensures Gen Xers have had tourism advantages and experiences which differ from those of the previous generational cohort at the same stage in life.

In addition to these travel opportunities came the aforementioned access to greater information relating to tourism in other countries between the 1970s to 1990s via

improved communication and media channels and feedback (for example) from travelling parents, extended family members and friends,

“Honestly, I think it’s just from what you see on television, it’s what you see in the movies...they’re images that you’ve grown up with, that you’ve always seen.” (Sarah, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

So it can once again be seen (also in Chapter 5) that as a result of extensive travel experience in childhood and formative years, coupled with access to greater information resources, Gen Xers possesses confidence and travel and destination knowledge, thus rendering them as informed potential 50+ tourism consumers. In this regard, this thesis has introduced significant new tourism behavioural knowledge to the current literature.

6.2.3.2 Gen X-formative influences relating to Europe

Most participants experienced travel to Europe and learnt about the region, as children and then again in years of late teens and early adulthood. Their formative world of accessible and affordable air travel, improved communications, political stability as observed by Mackay (1997) and Strauss and Howe (1999) during the years 1980 to 2000 enabled many of their parents to introduce them to domestic, international and particularly European travel, although literature relating to this phenomenon is lacking. Subsequently they travelled to Europe for study and then work purposes, adding a short vacation component, as this participant recalls,

“Yes. Well, I was studying abroad in Spain and I had a friend living in Paris, so I’ve been to France. I studied in England for a while, so I’ve been to England.” (Jessica, New York, April 8, 2015)

They were interested in the region, confident and experienced, and sought to understand and appreciate it more,

“I was based in London and so when I was there I went to Paris and then other friends and I went to Greece, like island hopping....” (Monica, New York, April 9, 2015)

As children and then young adults, they had been more aware of Europe through frequency of travel by family and friends and greater connection through opportunities at school than any generational cohort before them,

Researcher: “Where have you got your ideas from?”

Corky: “From being in schools, through watching docos.” (Corky, Sydney, February 13, 2015)

These statements reinforce the common generational characteristic introduced in this thesis of experience in their tourism behaviour, in this case, relating to Europe.

Their formative environment encouraged greater participation in travel and new opportunities were frequently presented to them for growing their tourism knowledge. These included extended School/College/University tours to Europe (such as this participant’s experience),

“Just London...yeah...basically, yeah, about three weeks. I was going to art school you see.” (Sunday Mission, Melbourne, March 17, 2015)

They travelled for cultural activities such as musical performance and appreciation. They also gained insight of Europe through family ancestral connections,

“I have a European background, my mum’s from Holland and my dad’s third generation of the senior Irish.” (John, Melbourne, February 26, 2015)

These were in addition to parental European sabbaticals and short to medium term contract work. Influences in this context were family links and a familial interest in art and culture. The region being seen as a rite of passage type of destination for many,

“Yeah, well, when I was 21, I went across to Europe on exchange for uni....” (Stephanie, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

So this data contributes to the extant tourism literature, revealing (as previously noted) an under researched characteristic of Gen X has been introduced in this thesis, that of the well-travelled, self-assured and informed tourism consumer. The revelation offers new insight into the current and potential tourism behaviour of this generational cohort.

6.2.3.3 Gen Xers’ interest in Europe as adults

Due to the formative influences as well as particular interests, later study and work opportunities, the Gen X participants have been able to maintain their enjoyment of travel in the region. They are certainly well versed in European culture and history and

appear, from participants' comments, to share a deep interest in aspects of European culture and society and in particular the cuisine, as demonstrated by this Australian participant,

“Oh, the food....the first thing that comes to mind is food. Food's been a really important part in cooking and going to places. Cooking and using local produce and Italy for example.....” (Stephanie, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

Whilst this association between the food and tourism in Europe is not evident in the extant literature, the positive influence and awareness for Gen Xers was brought about through a greater awareness of regional cooking. This was made available primarily via the many television shows in their formative years and starting (in the United States) with popular personalities such as Julia Child (Fitch, 1997) and later, in Australia through international cooking programmes on SBS television.

In the United States, mass emigration to the New World from Europe had taken place in the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries and is described by Castles, deHaas, and Miller (2014). In Australia, large scale immigration from Europe in the post Second World War years saw the gradual introduction of European culture, particularly through cuisine which was certainly appreciated by Baby Boomers but became more pronounced with Gen Xers,

“....so I was living in Sydney then. It was the first time I think I had anything other than Australian food....pasta....pizza.....my parents didn't cook those sorts of foods.” (Kathryn, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

A limited number of the participants in this thesis are currently engaged in their working lives in education or museum or gallery curator work and so have had an interest in the region, as this Director of Public Programs for the New York Hall of Science notes,

“The social history.....and a lot of what.....a lot of the reasons I've gone over is for work and different festivals and art projects and research related to work.” (Bath, New York, April 8, 2015)

Others are employed by companies with offices in Europe and regularly travel to the region, such as this Australian participant,

“I went to Berlin and that was about a five day trip, and that was great as well just to get a sense of Germany, because I hadn’t been there before.”
(Bob, Sydney, February 14, 2015)

A significant number of participants reported that their work had often taken them to Europe for festival or conference attendance. As Chapter 5 has revealed, pre or post opportunities had been available for short or medium length stays and visits,

“So I’d been to Europe plenty of times typically for work was the reason why I went. And then I extended my trips outward.” (Juan, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

Thus, it can be seen, once again, that these participants come to their contemporary tourism experiences, and particularly those in Europe, from an informed, familiar, well-travelled and mature base. From the comments of these sample population participants in Australia and the United States, it is clear they have a shared powerful connection with the region.

6.2.4 Research Question Four: *What are the push/pull factors which would motivate Gen Xers towards European river cruise vacations?*

Themes from Chapter 5 relevant to this Research Question are:

- Theme One: Do generational differences exist?
- Theme Two: How does the future look for Gen Xers?
- Theme Three: Tourism consumers.
- Theme Eight: Vacation motivators.
- Theme Nine: Vacation inhibitors.
- Theme Ten. The concept of a cruising vacation.

The majority of the participants expressed a negative perception of cruising in general. For them, and against the marketing direction of the cruise lines, the destination was very definitely the *ports* rather than the cruise ship. In the same way, in the context of European river cruises, the motivational pull was this *destination*, not the vessel. The push factor was this deep seated desire to envelop themselves in the European culture and society in an unstructured way and employing their confidence, experience and knowledge rather than guides, leaders or joining in with groups of fellow tourists. The cruise vessel motivates them only in that it is a

comfortable means of transport. It is nothing more. They have spatial, social, financial and demographic concerns with European river cruises.

The answers to the question demonstrate that in the realm of cruising research, contemporary views expressed by participants in two developed English speaking countries challenge current general cruising literature. At the same time, as shown in these participant comments, they offer some *new* knowledge to the area of study in relation to tourism generational motivation, needs and expectations. In relation to European river cruising, the data presents new findings demonstrating Gen Xers' view of this type of tourism experience.

The limited extant literature demonstrates that Gen X has not received the high degree of attention from scholars as have the Baby Boomers. This could be possible (refer to Chapter 1) because Gen X is a smaller generational cohort than Baby Boomers, although it is still significant. In Australia there are 4.75 million Gen Xers (McCrindle Research, 2014) and in the United States there are over 63 million (United States Census Bureau, 2010). It is clear that these Gen X populations still represent sizeable numbers for marketers and operators, in great part due to their propensity through their lives to spend more than their parent's generation. Also and importantly, they have connections with Europe and the documented trait of wishing to maintain strong social links through a range of family and friends travel groupings. Here is a typical comment from a participant,

“Most of my travel has been with family. So that's actually one of the few holidays that I had been on with friends.” (Sarah, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

as well as keeping in touch with family and friends during their vacation using social media or other electronic forms of communication,

“Typically, yes. I would say there's a point for disconnection but it doesn't go beyond half a day at most. I like to feel connected.” (Juan, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

They are a sizeable, socially unique, experienced, travel and technology savvy generational cohort.

6.2.4.1 Gen X Consumer behaviour-general

Available research relating to consumer behaviour in the tourism context does not relate specifically to Gen X. It is more prolific in the retail and hospitality areas, (Portolese Dias, 2003). From such research, five characteristics are highlighted. Firstly, that this generation is financially stable. Whilst this is the case, their incomes are high (in comparison to their parents' incomes at the same stage of life) but their savings are low (Riquier, 2015). Secondly, Tulgan (1996) reports that they are often living in two income households and thirdly, they have high levels of discretionary income (Jin & Niehm, 2006). Fourthly, De Lollis (2005) observes that they are free spending in contrast to the Baby Boomers and finally, Jennings (2012) and Martins et al. (2012) suggest that they love socialising with friends and family, often at restaurants and cafes as this participant attests,

“I had a night out with a friend and I'd spend \$150 or something....it was on cabs and dinner and a few drinks.” (Sarah, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

These consistent comments were received supporting the current and past literature.

The extant research suggests that this generational cohort is desirous of truth (refer to Section 6.2.2.1) in marketing, advertising and promotion with a directness of attitude,

“Yeah, I'm not a big fan of liars-not at all. And I don't live my life that way.” (Rosa, Los Angeles, April 20, 2015)

Thus, Gen Xers' needs attitudes and marketing and advertising awareness (Portolese Dias, 2003; Roberts & Manolis, 2000; Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999) must be considered in a concentrated, focussed approach (refer to Chapter 2, Sections 2.6 and 2.7). Also required is an understanding that they (through advances in technology and communication) are marketing and advertising savvy, particularly when it comes to digital media.

Extant research demonstrates that Gen Xers possess the consumer traits of desire for straightforward as well as direct advertising messages (Huang & Petrick, 2010; Roberts & Manolis, 2000). In addition, they want quality in services and products purchased as well as reliability. These characteristics could emanate from the

previously addressed observations (in Chapter 5) of their aspirations for individuality and unstructured personal tourism experiences as well as the characteristics expressed in their guidelines for life components of confidence and experience and a desire for truth (Losyk, 1997).

This thesis' results (and extant literature noted in Chapter 2) suggest that this generational cohort has exhibited its own unique consumer behaviour and responds to direct advertising and marketing messages (Freeman, 1995; Roberts & Manolis, 2000) which require tourism marketers and operators to present their products and subsequent experience offerings in appropriate ways. Pertinent literature maintains that Gen X is interested in premium brands (Wolf et al., 2005). Chapter 3 reported that in the European river cruise sector, examples of premium brands include Crystal and Uniworld (Baran, 2015e, 2015h). Participants were aware of this market positioning, as this typical response notes,

“They’re pretty premium in the way of accommodation and style....”
(Dutch, Sydney, February 11, 2015)

Yet the majority of comments from participants suggest that the premium aspect to vacation experiences, interpreted by them as a luxurious experience, particularly on board the river cruise vessel, is not a priority. So the results are inconsistent with those espoused in the literature of Wolf et al. (2005) supporting their attitude towards high cost and high comfort experiences. Demonstrating this inconsistency, and focussing on value rather than the premium aspect, here is a typical participant comment,

“...trying to find the cheapest deal, so I think going online you can find really good deals. You know, on those sites, especially for accommodation....” (Missy, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

In the limited contemporary research relating to this topic, Gen Xers are shown to be, in comparison to Baby Boomers, more media aware and, in particular, are suspicious of the practice of marketing. They have a good understanding of advertising but need assurances that products and services are dependable, safe, secure and of high quality (Benckendorff et al., 2010).

Participants agree with these character analyses and expressed similar observations about themselves, such as,

“I used to use Trip Advisor but now I find it’s.....I don’t trust any of the reviews because I assume they’re plants, just like Yelp. I don’t trust....”
(Ariadne, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

From this comment, typical amongst the participants, it can be seen that the previous research outcome of an understanding of advertising, could be seen by them as a distrust of advertising and so it could be included with the research in the area of distrust in marketing. In this respect, there is consistency with the research findings of Benckendorff et al. (2010).

6.2.4.2 Gen X vacation stimuli

Literature relating to travel stimuli or motivation tends to consist of comparative studies and those based on choice of destination, such as Crompton (1979), Dotson et al. (2008), Goossens (2000), Prebensen et al. (2013), Schewe and Meredith (2004), Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) and Wong et al. (2008). From these, and the knowledge gained from the data in this thesis, four main motivators can be detected. Firstly, the need to maintain work/life balance creates a priority for vacation time as a component of that balance. Secondly, an innate enjoyment of travel is a great interest for Gen Xers, perceived as a right from childhood and formative years. Thirdly, through their time in history, and the technological, communication, economic and political environments, many more choices have become available to them. Finally, the need to travel for special events and occasions, once again, a right that has been with them since formative years, suggesting confirmation of current research, as the results of this thesis agree with those noted in contemporary studies (Elliot & Choi, 2011; Goossens, 2000; Hung & Petrick, 2011; Prebensen et al., 2013; Singer & Prideaux, 2006). This participant confirms the view of the importance of travel in her life,

“...for me, I know travel has been a massive thing and hopefully going forward we can sort of continue.” (Helen, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

Again, the point is being made that Gen Xers have the experience, confidence and interest to undertake significant research and bookings (this latter electronically) and then travel Europe in a way that relates to their particular needs and expectations.

The push/pull factors have been studied by tourism researchers from the last century, such as Crompton (1979) and Lundberg (1976). These form the bases of why tourists travel or what motivates them to consider travel. The push factors being identified as psychographic and relating to the motivations or the desire for going on vacation (Prayag & Ryan, 2011). Examples of push factors are prestige or social interaction, although in the case of sample population Gen Xers, the latter would be based on meeting host community members. The pull factors, those that are triggered by the destination or the experience or the cruise or resort (Kotler et al., 2006; Arsenault, 2004)

In many cases, the push elements identified in this thesis are all about the participants' need for the previously documented independence and freedom. In addition they frequently express their need to be adventurous, their interest in what they term social and cultural reality in tourism experiences and their desire to socialise when on vacation with family or friends or local host communities,

“I don't like people handholding me and telling me I have to go to this restaurant or somebody'd be waiting for you...I've been on that kind of stuff before and I just don't feel it's authentic. At one point it was authentic and now it's so over commercialised that it's not really authentic anymore because they're just kind of playing into what you like.” (Juan, Los Angeles. April 17, 2015)

Here is a typical statement from an Australian participant,

“It's more about going to a local café and having a coffee and just experience, wandering down a street that's not really well-trodden by Australians.” (Helen, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

These participant statements introduce new and important knowledge in this area of research of specific generational characteristics of Gen X.

They have stressed that they do not want to socialise with fellow Americans or Australians, apart from their own family or friends travelling group. Indeed, not with tour or group participants, as in this typical comment,

“...mainly sort of Anglo people. It’s very sort of monoculture...” (Anna, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

For the participants the pull elements are definitely all about the destination of Europe, *not* the cruise vessel. With, in most cases, much experience of Europe as a vacation or study or work destination in their formative and/or younger years as well as in recent years, they, and their generational cohort, continue to be enraptured by the region.

Crompton’s salient research (1979) still resonates in terms of why potential tourists (in this case Gen Xers) experience motivation or stimuli to book a vacation. But unlike Crompton’s in-depth study (referred to in Chapter 2) no deeper psychographic reasons have been articulated in this thesis. For Gen Xers, these motivators have been demonstrated earlier in this Section 6.2.4.2 and a pattern is apparent between the extant literature and participant comments.

The overwhelming conclusion from interview participants is that they are fascinated by the destination of Europe and keen to visit again, but with the given characteristic previously described; their knowledge, level of experience, confidence, needs and various likes and dislikes, they require particular, and possibly more personal or customised product content. There is resonance here with the extant travel context cohort segmentation research of Glover and Prideaux (2008b) and Javalgi et al. (1992).

6.2.4.3 Gen X vacation constraints

Once again, limited research exists relating to Gen X vacation constraints or inhibitors. In this thesis, three constraint constructs have been detected, which were identified in Chapter 2 (Section 2.7) under the headings of intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural. In this thesis, four articulated inhibitors fall under the structural constraint heading. The first is the potentially negative attitude of a host population towards visiting tourists This was not a major inhibitor and the comment

was made by only a small number of participants, but here is an observation made in Los Angeles,

“...sometimes places are not as friendly or accessible. I mean, I’d say Paris is not the friendliest place.” (Juan, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

Secondly, cost is identified as a potential inhibitor, particularly for Australians, with the higher cost of the air fare to Europe,

“It’s expensive, it takes time.” (Sarah, Melbourne, February 24, 2015)

Whilst it has been documented by Han (2015) and Bruce (2015) that Gen Xers spend more freely than the previous generation, they are also discerning and so interested in spending prudently and wisely on vacation travel.

Thirdly, time is a concern, particularly for United States participants due to the short vacation period permitted in many organisations and jobs,

“Two to three weeks is usually the norm.” (Franklin, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

Finally, safety and security are inhibitors for just a few participants, generally on religious grounds (referred to in Section 6.2.1.4).

Examples in this thesis of intrapersonal constraints could also be the above mentioned safety and security issues, based on religious grounds or the spatial or social concerns identified in Chapter 5’s sub-themes 5.6.3.5 and 5.6.3.6. In regard to the interpersonal constraints, the previously noted (in Chapter 5, sub-theme 5.6.1.1) Gen X familial or relationship structures could present issues relating to (particularly) accommodation requirements and have impact on buying decisions. In addition, it has been noted (in Chapter 5, Section 5.6.3.5 and in this chapter’s Section 6.2.4.4.5) that Gen Xers have concerns relating to spending time on vacation with fellow Australian or American tourists. This phenomenon could be an example of a *potential* interpersonal constraint.

6.2.4.4 Gen X-Consumer behaviour- travel and cruising/river cruising

The aspect of socialising (which serves as a link to vacation travel motivation and is addressed in this section) as applied specifically to cruising and river cruising

motivation highlights the push/pull elements of consumer motivation in tourism referred to in Chapter 2, Section 2.7.

6.2.4.4.1 Cruise vacation stimuli and constraints for Gen Xers

Whilst there is extant research relating to general travel motivation, little relates to the topic of cruise vacation motivation specifically for Gen Xers. Hung and Petrick (2011) suggest across all generations, that tourists enjoy the idea of a vacation destination because their own environment cannot provide them with such experiences. Does this same basis for motivation apply specifically to a cruising vacation for Gen Xers?

Extant cruising motivation research is comparative across generations or general in nature. Previous studies note desire for vacation being the chief motivator, and in their study of motivations for taking cruise vacations Hung and Petrick (2011, p. 387), suggest “loyalty, familiarity, and social influences” as being major factors. In another study, relating in this rare instance to Gen X, it is identified that they see people focussed benefits such as those associated with family and renewed connections (Elliot & Choi, 2011).

With these studies in mind, it is of interest that with thesis Gen Xers in Australia and the United States, the overwhelming feeling amongst participants is that cruising is not for them. Thus the results, which relate solely to this sample population of Gen Xers in four cities in two countries, deliver challenges to the more generic cruising research (Hung & Petrick, 2011) and typical comments are offered here.

Most of the participants are not interested in the pampering aspect of cruising,

“There’s a huge amount of sit there, eat and drink....” (Anna, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

For participants (as has been detected) the most important aspect of a vacation and a principal motivator is the destination, in this case being the *ports* and not the cruise ship. And so again the outcome does not support the previous research,

“The boat would be okay if...again, you’re going from point A to Point B but the real exploring is if you can get on the land and talk to the people and walk around and just get the ambience of everything....” (Marco Solo, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

Whilst two of the participants had experienced this type of vacation (one each in Australia and the United States) and enjoyed it, most had not cruised before and felt no desire to cruise for the reasons given in this typical comment,

“Yeah, people, I guess that don’t have the physical ability to, or don’t want the responsibility of having to figure out how to get a place and how to see things when you’re there. They kind of, like the idea of someone pulls into a port, they’ve transported them there, they’ve organised for them all to go off and do a certain tour and they just get to go along with the flow and don’t have to think about it really.”
(Stephanie, Melbourne, February 22, 2015)

Once again, this typical view of a Gen Xer challenges the Hung and Petrick (2011) research study of blue water ocean cruising which suggests that cruising has great universal appeal.

Literature relating to the popularity of cruising in general is prolific, for example (Bowen et al., 2014; Dowling, 2006; Duman & Mattila, 2005; Elliot & Choi, 2011; Garin, 2005; Gross, 2010; Hung & Petrick, 2011; Kester, 2003; Peisley, 2004). Extant literature has been cited many times in the thesis (CLIA, 2014b; Elliot & Choi, 2011; Hung & Petrick, 2011) reporting that the industry has enjoyed significant growth since its pioneering days, in the modern era, in the 1970s.

The interesting point about blue water ocean cruising is that since the 1970s, the cruising industry has made a point of promoting the cruise ship rather than the destination (Elliot & Choi, 2011). This marketing initiative is derived from their business model (referred to in Chapter 3) and this is partly why the blue water ocean cruise ships keep getting larger, enabling more facilities and novelties to keep passengers amused (and spending money on board). Again, it must be emphasised that vessel facilities are low priorities for these Gen Xers, who are more motivated by the geographical destinations.

6.2.4.4.2 River cruise vacation motivators and inhibitors and tourism behaviour

With the underpinning thesis knowledge gained of the disinterest in cruising for these Gen X participants, it is no surprise that they have not been enthusiastic about the industry segment of European river cruising. Chapter 5 revealed that none of the

participants had experienced multi night river cruises in Europe however, many had observed them, travelled on European rivers on day trips, and had seen advertising in their own countries or had listened to experiences of family or friends.

There is a gap in previous sociological and tourism research, as this particular segment of the cruising industry has not been researched specifically in relation to Gen X. As a result, references in this section of the thesis relate solely to the results of the Gen X participant interviews as shown hereunder.

Participant comments are arranged under the following seven headings,

6.2.4.4.3 Focus is all about the cruise vessel and not about the destination

“I would rather see cities and history and monuments and art, than floating around” (Chris, Los Angeles, April 17, 2015)

It can be recalled from Chapter 3 that river cruise operators consistently place the on board features of their cruise vessels in the first, primary sections of their brochures, followed by the destinations. In fact, the latter pages of the brochures, describing the destinations can be seen, from the typical participant comment above, as of far more interest to Gen Xers.

6.2.4.4.4 An organised and controlled environment

“I wouldn’t want to do with a group of people. I just don’t like the group thing....” (Mandy, Melbourne, February 25, 2015)

This typical comment reinforces the often expressed contribution to the existing literature of Gen Xers rejecting an organised approach to their travels. It mirrors many comments from the participants relating to tourism experiences. Again demonstrating that due to their experience, knowledge and confidence, they are unwilling to participate in standardized, controlled, organised or formulaic experiences, as are currently offered on European river cruises. They require unstructured and free personal experiences (a hallmark characteristic of this generational cohort) whilst on vacation, as in their everyday lives (Barrow, 1994; Beaudoin, 1998; De Lollis, 2005; Healy, 2011; Klie, 2012; Losyk, 1997; Ritchie, 1992; Tulgan, 1996).

6.2.4.4.5 A limited spatial environment

“Cabin fever....” (Ralph, Melbourne, February 22, 2015) and

“It’s just because you’re confined...” (Sally, New York, April 9, 2015)

A generally expressed concern by participants has been that the space is limited on the European river cruise vessels. This issue has been addressed in Chapter 3, with the comment that the river vessels cannot be over a certain size due to restrictions on the particular rivers. The spatial phobia could have its foundation in the early childhood and formative vacation experiences of Gen Xers in Australia and the United States which emphasised the free and open holiday environments detailed in Section 6.2.3.

6.2.4.4.6 Social concerns

“Having to sit with six people you don’t like or something....” (Missy, Sydney, February 16, 2015)

This is a comment on the desire by Gen Xers to travel in their own unique way. This thesis’ detected an under researched component that this generational cohort of vacationers is far more interested in interaction with local people and subsequent social experiences rather than being restricted to social experiences, predominantly with fellow travellers from their own or similar English speaking developed Western nations. In this regard, the research participant consensus relates to and supports an aspect of the theory reported by Littrell et al. (2004),

Socially engaged tourists immersed themselves in the social and cultural contexts of tourist destinations, by making connections with the people they meet when travelling. In contrast, spectator and recreational tourists were more involved in activities that required observing, listening and self-entertaining. (p. 349).

6.2.4.4.7 Limited opportunities to enjoy local cuisine or in depth social and cultural tourist experiences

Here, more negativity is expressed towards the prospect of spending vacation time in the river vessel environment with little opportunity to partake in enjoyment of local cuisine in situ.

It is a major point of negativity for these participants and here is expressed more broadly to encompass local culture (reinforcing the new insights to existing knowledge expressed previously),

“...for me it would be more about the stopping off at the places along the way to go and explore the towns themselves. So that has much more interest to me. Anything from, you know, getting out and wandering the streets and finding the local market and, you know.....” (Jane, Sydney, February 11, 2015)

6.2.4.4.8 Perception that the cost is high

The majority of the participants feel that the cost of these experiences would be high. They have gained this impression from information received from previous river cruise participants or from advertising. The extant theory portrays Gen X as free spending but with clear focus on dependability, safety, security and high quality also refers to value and, in particular, honesty (Morton, 2003; Ritchie, 1995),

“But no, they’re not cheap....” (Ariadne, Los Angeles, April 16, 2015)

6.2.4.4.9 A vacation experience targeted at old people

The overall impression amongst the participants in the four cities in two countries was that European river cruises were appropriate tourism experiences for much older vacationers (than them). The oldest members of this generational cohort are now 51 years, and across ages from 35 to 50 in this thesis, feel that they are far too young to enjoy such an experience, as this typical comment notes,

“Yeah, maybe for my partner and I as we enter our twilight years.”
(Sunday Mission, Melbourne, March 17, 2015)

6.3 Chapter summary

This chapter has compared the data analysed in Chapter 5 with the conceptual framework of the thesis, outlined in Chapter 2, Literature review and Chapter 4, Methodology and research design, as well as contextual details as documented in Chapter 3.

Gen Xers, who as a generational cohort have been under researched in a general and tourism context in particular, were found in this thesis to be greatly interested and active participants in vacation travel. They are, however, a unique generation with

their own guidelines for life and these were found to be remarkably similar across country divides whether the cohort member was in the Australian cities of Melbourne or Sydney or the United States cities of New York or Los Angeles. Their motivation for vacation travel, particularly to Europe was found to be very strong, but with certain inhibitors relating to their own financial positions and issues placed upon them by government and society relating to their time in the world or their life path position.

In regards to cruising in general and European river cruising in particular, they were quite negative and had a long list of inhibitors to participating in such vacation experiences. Overall, it can be concluded on the basis of the views expressed by these participants, the suggestion that there will be an impact caused by the gradual generational change to Gen Xers in the context of European river cruising has been found to be credible and relevant.

The findings of this thesis are, in many cases, consistent with extant theory and research. New contributions or advances to current knowledge relating to Gen X, as well as some challenges, in the tourism context, are summarised in the context of the Research Questions below. This thesis;

1. Introduces a greater knowledge of Gen X's childhood and formative tourism experiences. These have created informed tourism researchers and consumers, now in their midlife (RQ One and Three).
2. Advances existing Gen X studies through the in-depth questioning methodology which has generated a greater awareness of this generation's desire for independence and freedom (RQ One and Three).
3. Has contributed new knowledge relating to contemporary issues facing Gen Xers in older age (RQ One).
4. Has introduced new knowledge in relation to the flexible makeup of Gen X travelling companions and implications for tourism accommodation and activities (RQ One).
5. Has identified inconsistencies with previous research in relation to Gen Xers' interests and also perception of the cruising experience (RQ Two and Four).

6. Has expanded existing tourism behavioural knowledge of Gen X by acknowledging their desire to obtain socially and culturally engaging experiences whilst vacationing in Europe (RQ Three).
7. Has identified that Gen Xers perceive tourism as a right which has been affordable and available to them throughout their lives (RQ One and RQ Three).
8. Has supported the theory relating to higher levels of spending in earlier stages of life by this generational cohort and therefore inadequacy of savings to support higher levels of vacationing in older years (RQ One).

In the next chapter a number of implications for European government tourism marketing organisations and river cruise operators as result of generational change will be suggested. The thesis results suggest that the current cruise content, cruise vessel design and cruise and destination marketing will require modification (in some cases quite significant) to cater for the needs and expectations of this important new generational cohort of mature vacationers. These implications will be addressed in detail in Chapter 7, which encompasses this thesis' contributions and offers directions for future research.

Chapter 7 Conclusions, limitations and future research

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has set out to explore the concept of generational change, closely studying the tourism motivations, needs and expectations of an emergent generational cohort, Gen Xers. It is presented in the context of an extremely popular tourism experience with 50+ vacationers, river cruising in Europe. Research focusses on the formative experiences of this generational cohort as important contributors to their unique characteristics.

The in-depth qualitative thesis has sought to advance the current literature on the topic which up until now, has been quantitative or mixed methods in approach, mainly inter-generational (Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y) and comparative in the general and tourism contexts. No studies have specifically examined the impacts of generational change (to Gen X) on demand for these 50+ tourism experiences. This thesis is designed to bridge this gap in the literature. It introduces new research demonstrating the importance of anticipating the needs and expectations of new generational cohort markets and understanding their consumer and tourism behaviour. The thesis has sought to answer four key questions as shown in Section 7.2.

The exploratory research contributes to current Generational Theory research through collection and analysis of in-depth data from a purposive sample population. This chapter offers a summary of the thesis as well as suggestions relating to the theoretical, methodological and tourism context research contributions and potential industry applications. The chapter concludes by noting the limitations of the thesis together with suggestions for future research.

7.2 Overview of study

To examine the potential impacts on demand for mature Gen X tourism experiences, four Research Questions were devised, focussing on the tourism context of the thesis. Chapter 1 introduced the Research Questions and then the context, background,

proposed methodology, significance and framework together with definitions of some terms to be utilised.

The four Research Questions addressed in this thesis (and introduced in Chapter 1) are,

1. What does the concept of generational change signify in the context of the tourism industry?
2. What formative experiences have shaped Generation X's beliefs, values, attitudes and interests?
3. How have previous travel experiences affected Generation X's tourism preferences?
4. What are the push/pull factors which would motivate Generation Xers towards European river cruise vacations?

A comprehensive literature review was presented in Chapter 2. The review enabled knowledge of the extant literature to be gleaned in relation to Generational Theory, Gen X in general and in the tourism context in particular. Specific areas of review were: firstly an examination of demand and indicators for the future in relation to European tourism. Secondly, an acknowledgement that Generational Theory suggests that the characteristics of each generation are different depending on their life paths, their time in history and specific events or people of importance from their formative years. Thirdly, a thorough review of what is known about Gen Xers in the general context in their younger years and more recently, as they approach 50+ years was prepared. Fourthly, an area of review involved detecting any extant literature relating to this generational cohort as vacationers, either in Europe or elsewhere in formative or latter years.

Fifthly, consumer behaviour, tourism motivation and travel behaviour literature and current research focussing on trends for international tourists travelling to Europe from Australia and the United States were analysed. Finally, an evaluation of the research relating to the cruising industry in general and the river cruise segment particularly was undertaken, together with a secondary analysis of existing literature relating to this industry focussing on the biggest segment of growth, European river cruising.

Chapter 3 was dedicated to the context of the thesis, the river cruise industry in Europe. This important cruising segment (refer to Section 3.3) was chosen as the focus for this thesis as it is a particularly popular cruising vacation experience with mature travellers from Australia and the United States. Aspects presented related to the recent history and development of the river cruise industry, particularly in relation to landmark milestones, such as the demise of the Eastern bloc and the opening of the Main-Danube canal, the combination of these two elements enabling the introduction of the current large product destination range. Also noted were the contemporary cruise vessel modifications which have taken place, geared towards English speaking and particularly American markets, but also other important medium to long haul markets over the last decade. Details of the current river cruise content, marketing and product differentiation were highlighted. Finally, current passenger demographics were identified.

The methodology and the research design were detailed in Chapter 4. The methodology was discussed and justified in terms of the interpretive research paradigm, in-depth semi structured interview methodology and design. This was a qualitative phenomenological approach, appropriate for answering the Research Questions as it enabled meaning to be obtained relating to formative and later general and tourism experiences. The research was exploratory in nature, seeking to gain understanding of experiences and also views on possible future expectations. Data were collected from interviews conducted in Sydney and Melbourne in Australia and New York and Los Angeles in the United States.

The data collection process was explained in detail, commencing with the construction of the interview questions and relationship with the four Research Questions (given that semi structured questioning was employed), rationale for selecting the data collection cities and countries, the pilot study and the qualification and sourcing of the participants in Australia and the United States as well as the timing and locations for interviews.

Chapter 5 provided specifics of the data analysis process, involving details of the transcription, ideas generation, manual and electronic (NVivo) content analysis and thematic components. Participant statements (expressing memories, ideas, and

thoughts and offering information) were grouped into ten themes, with pertinent sub-themes.

Chapter 6 presented discussion and interpretation of the results related to the four Research Questions. The chapter drew heavily from verbatim comments from sample population interview participants. New knowledge, advances to existing knowledge and challenges to existing knowledge were reported within the framework of the general and specific contextual components. Chapter 6 compared the results of the sample population interviews with extant theory detailed in Chapter 2, Literature review. In many cases, where previous research had not been undertaken in the context of tourism/hospitality research from other relevant industries were cited. In some cases, little existing theory/research has been available, for example, in the case of contemporary European river cruises. The framework of this chapter centred on the four Research Questions and in each case, pertinent examples of data were presented alongside relevant extant literature from tourism research where available and from other sources or industries where appropriate. In some cases where no previous published research material was available, new propositions have been made as a result of this thesis.

7.3 Contribution

7.3.1 Theoretical contribution

This thesis offers new observations, interpretations and insights relating to Gen X in the general and tourism contexts in particular. It makes several contributions to the existing literature in the areas of Generational Theory, Gen X and Gen X in the tourism context, consumer and tourism behaviour and cruising. It introduces new knowledge relating to the European river cruise industry.

In summary, the findings have extended knowledge relating to Generational Theory in the tourism context, including the concept of life path and understanding the importance of the various formative environments of this particular generational cohort. This thesis has found that across cultural and geographical borders, cohort members are significantly influenced by their immediate environments and the experiences of their formative years, but appear little affected by major national or world events or by famous identities, findings which contrast with some previous

Generational Theory research (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Mannheim, 1952; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Gen Xers have grown up at a unique time in history which presents them with different social, political, economic, environmental and technical opportunities or hindrances to other generations (Beaudoin, 1998; Healy, 2011; Klie, 2012; Losyk, 1997; Tulgan, 1996). The thesis has advanced current understanding of the generational cohort by presenting data showing them as informed, experienced and confident tourism researchers and consumers. These findings are a major contribution to theory and relate to Research Questions One and Three.

This thesis has identified that this particular generational cohort defines itself as different from the Baby Boomers in many ways. Primarily, they feel they that have been overlooked and in many cases, they feel they have in their own words, “lost their way”. This pertinent statement can be interpreted as their impression of how they see themselves compared to the previous Baby Boomer generational cohort (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Mackay, 1997). They have striven for independence and freedom and sought to experience greater travel and other discretionary luxuries in their adult lives, but in so doing, have overlooked some basic foundations of life such as strong financial plans for their later retirement years (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009). They argue that their generational cohort has incurred greater costs (such as tertiary education loans and high house prices) which have affected their savings potential. In addition, they hold strong views and feel the need to maintain their principles, some made in formative years (Keister & Deeb-Sossa, 2001). In the case of Gen X, their formative world environment has been dominated by technological and social change (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009; Strauss & Howe, 1999; Williams et al., 1997) and, importantly for this thesis, dramatic improvements in the accessibility of travel.

In general terms, in their time in history, Gen Xers have significant challenges as they move into their 50s and 60s in terms of affordability and time constraints for these types of vacation experiences (Block, 2006; Gallagher, 2011; Gerson, 2009; Maserjian-Shan, 2011; Nimrod, 2008). Generating these constraints for them are evolving retirement conditions, availability of pensions, caring for elderly parents, younger children to look after, inheritance issues and some safety and security issues.

The majority of these constraints are unique to this generational cohort and separate them from previous generations due to their unique time in history (Mannheim, 1952). These findings relate to Research Questions One and Three.

Due to their travelling opportunities at young ages (younger and more frequent than the previous generation) in both Australia and the United States, they are far more experienced travellers and very confident in a general sense but also in their travel motivators, needs and expectations. Not only have they been able to travel in their youth with their parents and siblings (Lee & Gates, 1992), they have continued to travel for a variety of special interest reasons, including sport, study, work and personal events such as weddings and birthdays. Travel for them is a *given* rather than a privilege or a luxury or a *once in a lifetime opportunity*. Again, it should be restated that tourism involving air travel has been affordable and accessible throughout their lives and that they are the first generation to experience this. These findings relate to Research Questions One and Three.

Gen Xers are very confident and knowledgeable in their use of technology (Prebensen et al., 2013) and social networking and prefer to undertake all their research and bookings themselves, independently through on-line sources or from personal recommendations, rather than via the traditional travel agent approach.

They possess definite views on their travel needs and expectations, to the point that they seek individual or customised approaches to travel. For example, as reported in Chapters 5 and 6, they crave independence and freedom (Healy, 2011; Klie, 2012; Losyk, 1997; Tulgan, 1996) and in addition, seek what they see as tourism experiences relating to local contemporary culture and off the beaten track locales.

They enjoy very strong motivation for travel to Europe. This has been derived in part by familiarity with the destination through the previously noted travel experience of the region at early stages of life and embracing modern communication resulting from technological advancements. Motivation in the sample population was found in many cases to have been encouraged by a strong interest in art, history and culture, to say nothing of the knowledge and popularity of the cuisine and the perceived attractive way of life and unique scenery. This thesis has found that Gen Xers view

travel and Europe in their own way, based on their time and experience in history. They also choose to experience it differently and far more independently to previous generational cohorts. These findings relate to Research Questions Three and Four.

On the topic of cruising and, in particular, river cruising in Europe, this thesis presents new findings of its participants holding strong and consistent views. In a few cases, these views have been based on personal experience of one or more ocean cruises. In most cases, this sample population had not personally experienced any form of cruising, due to a dislike of the prospect or based on negative feedback from trusted sources such as family or friends. They find the concept (as promoted by the blue water ocean cruise lines) of cruising in general to be very restrictive and do not subscribe to the concept of the cruise ship being the destination. They crave the possibility of extended time ashore in ports and emphasise that the shipboard experience is not the drawcard for them.

They dislike the thought of crowded cruise ships and find the prospect of being forced to meet and dine with strangers from their own or similar western English speaking countries unappealing, and yet whilst on vacation, socialising in a different sense is important. From the research, it has been found that they crave meeting local people at destinations and must keep in touch and connected, in most cases on a daily basis with their family and friends not travelling with them, via social media such as Facebook or Instagram. These general findings relating to cruising experiences relate to Research Question Four.

To the topic of river cruising in Europe, the sample population regard this region well and have, in most cases, visited once or multiple times. In the majority of instances they have travelled in the region as children on family vacations and/or as young adults. Whilst they and their generation delight in travel to Europe, they have little motivation for a river cruise. The participants presented issues relating to the high cost, the perceived age of the fellow passengers, the social aspect on board, organisational issues, spatial issues, the limited opportunities for independence and freedom and lack of opportunity for their sought after local cultural and social tourism experiences and finally, the lack of time ashore versus time on the cruise vessel. These findings relate to Research Question Four.

Gen Xers have grown up in a liberal social environment (Strauss & Howe, 1999) which has redefined the nature of family, relationships and friendships. As noted in this thesis, this change has come about as a result of socially relaxed views of Baby Boomer parents, significant familial or relationship structural variations (referred to in Chapter 2, Section 2.7 and Chapter 6, Section 6.2.4.3) on the part of this generational cohort and a free thinking social view by contemporary societies in the two highlighted countries over the last decades (Klie, 2012; Mackay, 1997). In many instances the participants have articulated the possibilities and opportunities amongst Gen Xers for many and varied combinations of travelling companions. Such demonstrations have introduced new knowledge in relation to Gen X in the tourism context. These findings relate to Research Questions One, Three and Four.

Childhood and formative years for Gen Xers in both Australia and the United States have been heavily influenced by the previously mentioned liberal views of parents and social progressiveness of societies and governments (Strauss & Howe, 1999; Tamborini & Iams, 2011). Chapters 5 and 6 reported sample population participants comments that values learnt early in their lives have remained consistent and that the beliefs and attitudes they have chosen in formative years have remained constant throughout their lives, thus, for the most part supporting the existing theory (Mannheim, 1952). Amongst participants, childhood and formative interests bore great similarity to those of the previous generational cohort but have been dominated by travel opportunities and these have had a significant effect on tourism behaviour, thus presenting some challenges to existing inter-generational research findings (Krahn & Galambos, 2014; Li et al., 2013; Meredith & Schewe, 1994; Schewe & Meredith, 2004). The findings relate to Research Question Two.

Figure 7-1 demonstrates tourism characteristics of sample population Gen Xers. The figure depicts a Gen X tourist and river cruiser. The speech bubbles summarise the generational cohort characteristics detailed in this thesis and derived from the majority of the comments made by the sample population in interviews in Australia and the United States.



Figure 7-1 The Gen X tourist and European river cruiser

7.3.2 Methodological contribution

This thesis has adopted a qualitative research approach designed to gain an in-depth understanding of childhood, formative and contemporary experiences and, particularly tourism experiences of a sample population of Gen Xers in important

source markets for European river cruises, currently extremely popular tourism products with older/mature tourists.

Chapter 2 reported that previous generational studies in the tourism context have been large, comparative quantitative surveys, or in a minority of studies, mixed methods (Gardiner et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2013; Glover & Prideaux, 2009; Lehto et al., 2008; Li et al., 2013; Pennington-Gray et al., 2003). Such approaches can constrain the research study through the use of statistics or graphs, rather than engaging with and making meaning of the actual words that the participants used to describe events, situations, experiences and other phenomena. This thesis has focussed on uncovering meanings from the participants' words rather than statistical measurement (Szarycz, 2008).

Also, Chapter 2 reported that researchers in the field have advocated the more in-depth approach in future generational tourism contextualised studies (Gardiner et al., 2015; Gardiner et al., 2013; Mayo & Jarvis, 1982). This research has employed such an approach and has been focussed on understanding how phenomena experienced in formative years explain older adult consumer motivation and tourism behaviour. It has developed a greater understanding of Gen Xs' tourism needs and expectations in the coming decades. This use of phenomenology has been found to be an effective method to gain meaning from the sample population relating to their lived experiences of specific phenomena (Cresswell, 2007).

As detailed in Chapter 4, an ontological position has been adopted, the aim being to understand these phenomena recalled by participants as realities in their world over a 30 or 40 year period. The in-depth research approach has enabled a valuable perspective of the problem relating to this particular generational cohort to be presented. This has not been apparent in the limited previous studies. The thesis is a forerunner for future research adopting the same or a similar approach.

7.4 Implications for practitioners

This section reviews the key findings from the collected and analysed data as they relate to the practical application for those tourism organisations featuring tourism experiences aimed at 50+ travellers, and in particular river cruise vacations in Europe. It documents the implications for the industry and makes suggestions as to

adjustments which could be adopted to anticipate the needs and expectations of what will become the main target market for these experiences in the future.

European river cruise experiences targeted at Gen X 50+ vacationers, which currently feature particular design and organised content, will need to be adapted. Current highly organised formulaic tourism experiences will need to be re-worked to provide content that appears to be far more unstructured and carefree. Operators must give the impression of independence, such as seen in some contemporary ecotourism or adventure experiences (Shepherd, 2002; Vainikka, 2013) to the Gen Xers and promote the concept of freedom in content and marketing. For river cruise companies who must, for operational reasons (such as lock and pier bookings and weather considerations), present quite structured experiences, this will prove a challenge.

Tourism operators, government agencies and marketing organisations should focus on Gen Xers particular motivations, needs and expectations as in many ways they differ from those of the existing Baby Boomer (and Silent Generation) consumer demographic. Such focus will ensure the tourism experiences on offer in the decades to come will cater well for this particular (and important) generational cohort and could present great appeal and aid the motivation towards European river cruises.

Differences between generational cohorts can be evident in interactions with institutions, corporations, governments and socially. This thesis' results demonstrate that Gen Xers' differences are created by the unique time in history; by social, technological, environmental and political developments surrounding them in their formative and then influencing their contemporary years (Beirne, 2005). All these can create opportunities for astute tourism entrepreneurs who can identify and then market to these unique generational cohort characteristics.

Appropriate new ways to present tourism experiences for Gen Xers and then motivate them to participate will be of vital importance in the years ahead. Tourism organisations will need to communicate to Gen Xers' expectations and perception of value that content has been tailored or individualised to the needs of this particular generational cohort (Poon, 1993; Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). An example is presented by Beirne (2005) featuring Holiday Inn Select's recent installation of state

of the art gym equipment and specific toiletries and specialised coffee in guest rooms as a result of researching Gen X male businessmen's specific needs.

Such personal, targeted, specific generational approaches appear in other industries. For example, comparisons of model ranges by car companies over the last decade show that they are increasingly manufacturing and marketing a much greater range of models to appeal to generational market segments (Armstrong et al., 2004). Take BMW, offering a *Build your car* option across their range in Australia of thirty three models (BMW, 2016). This customised approach is also noted as a *personal* approach by another car company, Fiat (Fiat Australia, 2016) appealing to the consumer need for greater individuality, thus supporting the Armstrong et al theory (2004).

Contemporary and future issues facing Gen Xers present concerns for river cruise operators. If this sample population was an indicator, many of this generational cohort will not be able to afford such tourism experiences in their present form in their older years due to lack of retirement savings and inheritances as well as responsibilities for children and parents. In addition, with rising retirement ages, they may not have the physical capacity to consider longer vacations such as these.

To enable financially challenged Gen Xers to participate in these vacation experiences, operators will need to reduce costly on board cruise content and shorten itineraries and so introduce cheaper and shorter vacation opportunities to take into account previously described restrictions on travel in mature age for Gen Xers. For example, river cruise operators could follow the example of Scenic and introduce another (more economical) brand such as Emerald/Evergreen (Baran, 2015b). Such product differentiation methods offering the consumer pricing alternatives have been practised by other tourism organisations for many years, the most obvious example in the general cruise sector being the Carnival Group with its plethora of brands for a range of market segments and budgets (Carnival Corporation, 2016).

They could further adopt alternative itineraries featuring a more *do it yourself* and *pay as you go* approach to sightseeing and on board dining and recreation such as the now defunct hybrid Easycruise model employed in the Mediterranean during the years 2005 to 2010 (Gross, 2010). The Easycruise ship operated on a continuous and same port circuit. This cruise model also featured the opportunity to cruise for a few

days, spend time ashore and then pick up the next cruise ship to continue the experience. The model of the Baltic ferry companies such as Tallink (Tallink, 2016) offering a fare covering accommodation only is another alternative. Using this model, on board costs (such as dining) would be paid as an additional charge. As an important by-product, such an approach could also satisfy the Gen Xer's desire to undertake travel in their own unique way, giving them the opportunity to dine ashore whenever the vessel was in port. In addition, and following on from this thesis' findings, participants expressed interest in more time ashore along with the well noted feature of an independent and un-structured sightseeing approach which would negate the need for local guides.

To cater for these Gen Xers' needs, as gleaned from the sample population, a product innovation for river cruise operators could be that greater opportunities for independent dining ashore are offered. This would satisfy the often iterated desire of participants to dine within their own travelling group or alone, rather than with other cruise passengers. In addition, as was suggested many times in this thesis, the sample population collectively was anxious to enjoy local social and cultural interaction and partake of local cuisine.

Alternatively, and through reconstruction of on board spaces, smaller boutique style dining venues could be offered rather than a single dining room, such as those now appearing in 2016 on Scenic river vessels (referred to in Chapter 3). This would counter the social issues nominated by this sample population and, possibly provide opportunities to enjoy the local quality of cuisine, served on the vessel by specialist local chefs.

Changes in the river vessel design or cruise content, through dining ashore options could lead to a reduction in the costing structures of cruise line operations (for example, fewer food and beverage staff could be required) but also to a reconfiguring of the general layout of the cruise vessels (taking into account their height, width and length restrictions). By way of comparison, it is interesting to note that some European coach tour companies currently offer alternative dining options for their passengers, such as Insight Vacations with their *Signature Dining* options. Whilst these opportunities to dine in local restaurants are still highly organised, they do give tour participants the opportunity to "dine as the locals do" and choose "from a

selection of local restaurants” (Insight Vacations, 2016). Of note also is the matter that the sample population participants were interested in value but not necessarily the luxury offered and promoted by so many European river cruise operators (noted in Chapter 3).

Varying travel group relationship and structure requirements previously mentioned suggest that the river cruise experiences catering, for example, for family groups with older children as a new market segment could be attractive to Gen Xers in the decades to come if time and financial resources allowed. This thesis’ data indicates that a focus on the mature demographic parents and with possibly teenage children is warranted. In addition, given the variety of relationships and travelling group makeup previously noted in Chapters 5 and 6, convertible cabins for one passenger travelling alone as well as those for three or four could be considered, in a more flexible accommodation arrangement. Currently (2016), three companies, Ama Waterways (with Adventures by Disney), Tauck and Uniworld have introduced some family friendly cruises (referred to in Chapter 3) into their itineraries although these are aimed at younger parents (Gen Y) with younger children.

Previously reported prior generic research and data collected in this thesis have revealed that Gen Xers have their own views on marketing and advertising. They are motivated by clear messages and seek value and honesty. In addition, they have been introduced to computers at young ages and are comfortable using on-line sites for their consumer information gathering, research and tourism bookings.

With this knowledge in mind, tourism organisations could note this salient quote from Schewe and Noble (2000) p.29,

...marketing managers need to fully understand age-related changes and identify effective ways to target these changing age segments. Simply assuming, for example, that tomorrow’s seniors will respond to marketing activities in similar ways as today’s seniors could lead to disastrous results....

Realising the importance of this quote and placing it in the context of this thesis relating to the impacts of generational change, this sample population unanimously reported that their travel bookings are all made online and so travel agents do not feature. River cruise operators (in Chapter 3) presently claim a high percentage of

bookings via such travel agents, but it would seem that this cannot continue and that marketing, advertising and booking opportunities must be digital to engage with this generational cohort.

The sample population has strongly expressed their primary interest in the destinations (ports) rather than the cruise vessel. Cruise operators should take note and tailor their marketing and advertising approach more towards the expectations of Gen Xers by reducing the prominence of shipboard promotion and concentrating instead on the land based attractions. In addition, the promotional language should be changed, from the current model of extremely opulent imagery being employed (particularly when describing on board facilities) to more straightforward, clear and (to Gen Xers) honest language.

7.5 Limitations

This thesis has presented an in-depth approach to the problem of the impact of generational change in the tourism industry, specifically focussing on Gen Xers in the context of an important experience for 50+ tourists, European river cruising. As a result of the methodology employed, some limitations encountered are presented below.

Firstly, was the need for caution to generalise results based on the findings of this thesis. Clearly the findings are based on in-depth questioning of a purposive sample population and the results relate to their backgrounds, current social and economic circumstances and life experiences. The sample population participants were a relatively affluent and educated group of Gen Xers. They all had previous travel experience, in most cases including Europe, and possess good knowledge of the region. These qualifications were sought for this particular thesis as it was desirous of engaging participants who have previously travelled, have potential to fund such vacation experiences in the future and have some interest in the tourism region of Europe.

For other similar studies examining generational change, the sample population qualifications could be different. For example, a study of the impacts of generational change on the style and makeup of walking tours in a city closely located to participants would require them to be qualified differently. They may (in this case)

belong to an alternative socioeconomic group and, naturally, no need for previous travel experience in general or knowledge or experience of Europe or travel to Europe would be required.

Of concern in a qualitative in-depth thesis such as this is that there may be bias or prejudice in relation to responses or views expressed. In this thesis, the focus was the interest in the participants' social experiences and views, relating to past phenomena, particularly in regard to those gained in formative years and contemporary views towards tourism and travel. Careful probing was employed in all interviews in an attempt to obtain greater meaning in verbatim accounts of past experiences and current opinions.

In this thesis, an overall biased outcome was avoided through the employment of a mixed study sample population drawn from various backgrounds and sourced through various means, friends, industry contacts and social media in four cities in two countries. Whilst the subject matter was not seen as controversial, anonymity was ensured for participants through the use of their chosen pseudonym/alias.

Secondly, another limitation is that the data collection took place at a particular time, in this case in February and April 2015. The research was undertaken at a certain time in history and whilst the methodology can be replicated, the time or people at that stage of their lives, cannot.

The explanations and conclusions drawn from such data, which was analysed through the rest of 2015 and then 2016, relate to the economic, political and social environment of the time. In the ensuing time gap since then, in Australia and the United States there has been little economic and political change (apart from Federal government leadership changes and elections in Australia and the United States presidential campaign). In and near Europe there have been the Paris, Brussels, Istanbul and Nice terrorist attacks of November 2015, March, June and July 2016, a significant nightclub shooting in the United States in June, 2016 with further shootings in July and economic and, particularly social issues caused by mass migration to the Europe from Africa and the Middle East. It could be imagined that this latter (particularly) could have impacts for future tourism in the European region.

There has been no notable change (apart from those recorded in this thesis) in the experiences offered by river cruise operators in Europe. The research was limited to four cities in two countries and, as previously suggested, and with the time available, these were chosen on the basis of being strong source markets for these tourism experiences in Europe. If time and financial constraints were not an issue, more cities in these two countries could have been considered to give more depth however in studies such as these a determination must be made as to the number of participants and validity. The data collection and analysis methods worked well to provide focus and strengthen results.

7.6 Directions for future research

With rapid growth in popularity over the last decade, the European river cruises are still in demand, but up until now, there has been no formal research of the medium to long haul potential Gen X market for these vacation experiences. This thesis has made significant contribution to the fields of the impacts of generational change and Generation Theory. There is now a greater understanding of the European river cruise experience in the overall context of tourism sociology, marketing and product development. Operators will need to have more understanding of their future Gen X clients, what their expectations are and what the inhibitors are for this generation's desire and ability to undertake these experiences in the decades ahead. In addition, operators may be able to use the results of this thesis to provide appropriate content and meaning for these potential clients of the future.

This thesis has generated a need for further research into these generational source markets' motives, needs and expectations for these tourism experiences. Such research could continue this thesis' in-depth approach focussing on Gen X and the region of Europe, broadening the sample populations to include other English speaking medium and long haul markets such as Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. In addition, totally different short haul and important river cruise source markets such as the United Kingdom or Germany could be studied. It would be interesting to investigate whether such issues as time or cost would be inhibitors for these countries' Gen Xers. In addition, river cruises in other world regions could be researched to compare Gen X attitudes such as freedom and independence in different destination contexts.

The same methodology could be applied for other tourism products/experiences or through the use of a phenomenological approach with other generational cohorts and in other industries. Whilst this thesis has cited studies in the retail fashion and food and beverage industries, in-depth studies relating to the impact of generational change (to Gen X) could be employed across many other consumer driven industries such as motor vehicles or home construction and renovations as well as home DIY. Within the tourism realm, for example accommodation and other specific cruising segments such as expedition cruising and river cruising in other regions could be studied. Finally, quantitative surveys could be devised to confirm the findings. These could expand this thesis' study of four cities and survey a larger sample of Gen Xers. As well as looking at larger populations of this thesis' sourced and qualified Gen Xers, the study could be expanded beyond this current socio-economic cohort.

7.7 Thesis conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has presented an in-depth understanding of an important generational cohort and the impact of its gradual progression to become the main target market for a popular and growing segment of the enormous worldwide cruising industry. It not only contributes to the extant Generational Theory literature but also to literature particularly focussed on the prediction of consumer and tourism behaviour in the decades to come and offers new knowledge relating to European river cruises.

For practitioners, it offers insights into the views (needs and expectations) of Gen Xers, a generational cohort that will be the main market demographic for river cruise experiences in Europe in the decades to come.

Overall, the findings have contributed to the extant research relating to Generational Theory, generational change, Gen X in the general and tourism contexts and lastly the needs, expectations and motivations for mature aged 50+ Gen Xers' tourism experiences in the coming decades. These findings have established the foundations for future generational enquiry specifically relating to Gen X and also the impacts of generational change on (particularly) tourism practitioners but also potentially in other industries.

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Appendix 1 Interview questions

Category 1: Travel history (Research Question 3)

- Did you go on vacation in the last year? If yes, where did you go? Did you enjoy it? Can you describe the most memorable experience? Why do you think that was the most memorable experience? Who did you go with-people about the same age?
- What were your last few vacations like? Where did you go?
- Can you describe some experiences you a) particularly enjoyed and b) disliked on vacations in the last 5 years?
- When on vacation, do you communicate with family or friends not travelling with you? Yes/No
- If “yes”, how do you undertake this communication?
- On vacations, who do you like to travel with?

Category 2: Perceptions of European vacations (Research Questions 3 and 4)

- Have you ever been to Europe? Yes/No
- If “Yes”, what was that like for you?
- If “No”, are there any reasons why you would NOT choose Europe for a vacation?
- How would you describe your dream European vacation?
- What do you think attracts Australian/American tourists of your age group (35-50) to Europe? What experiences would be interesting for you?

Category 3: Cruising (Research Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4)

- Have you ever been on a cruise? Yes/No
- If “Yes”, what was it like for you?
- If “No”, what is your perception of cruising?
- Have you ever heard of the river cruises operating in Europe? Yes/No
- If “Yes”, what do you think they are like?
- If “No”, DC to give participant a quick update!
- Do you think these river cruises might be different for you compared with ocean cruises?

- What sort of people do you think travel on these river cruises? Age group?
- What factors would motivate you to book and then experience one of these river cruises?
- What inhibitors would stop you from booking?
- If you were to travel on a river cruise, what sort of activities do you think you would enjoy?

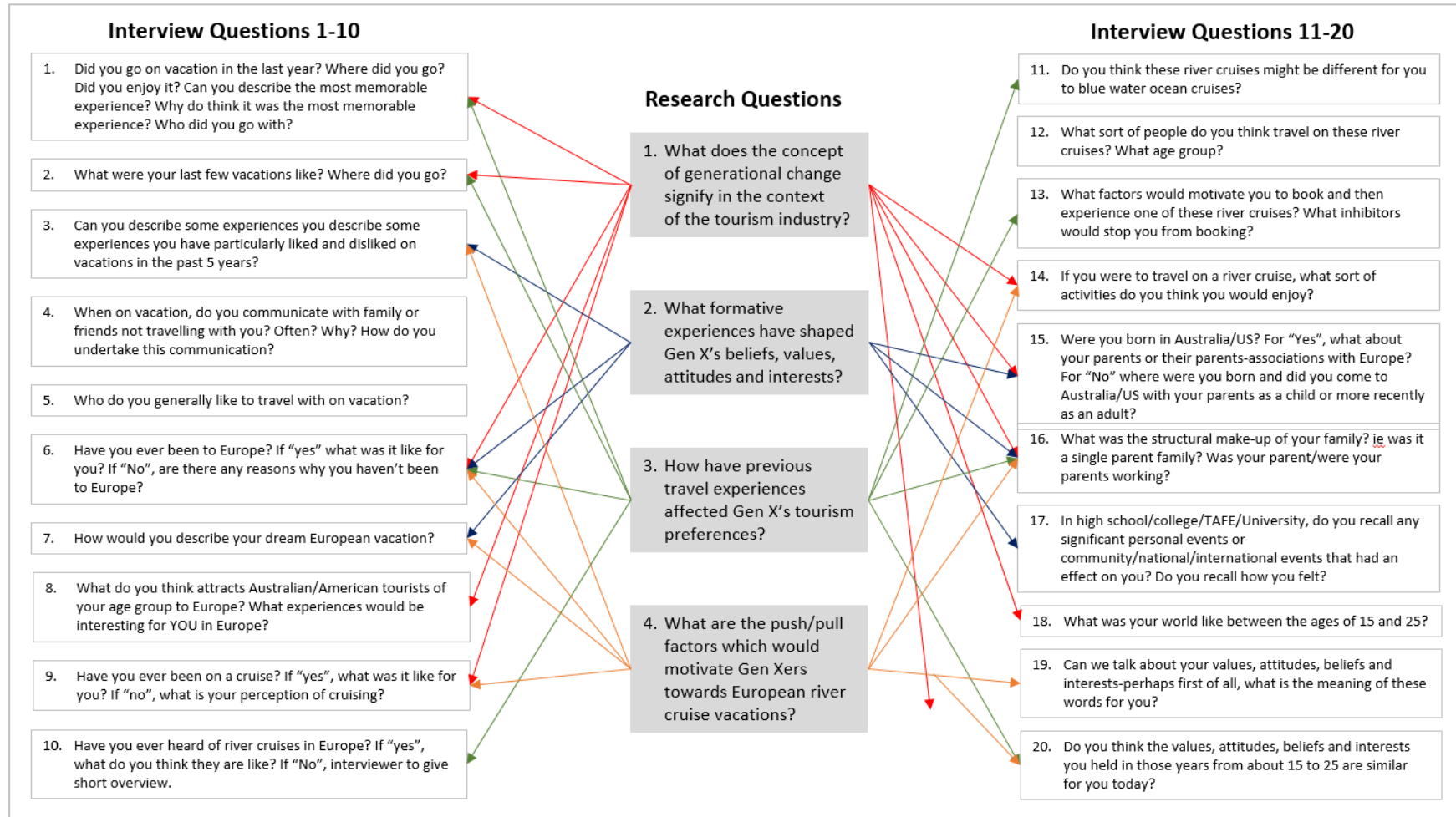
Category 4: Family background (Research Question 1)

- Were you born in Australia/US? Yes/No
- If “Yes”, were your parents Australian/American or did they come from another country? What about their parents?
- If “No”, where were you born and did you come to Australia/US with you parents as a child or more recently as an adult?
- What was the structural make-up of your family? ie was it a single parent family?
- Was your parent/were your parents working?

Category 5: Significant events in formative years (Research Questions 1 and 2)

- In high school/college/TAFE/university, do you recall any significant personal events or community/national/international events?
- Do you remember how you felt when these events occurred?
- What was your world like between the ages of 15 and 25?
- Can we talk about your values, attitudes, beliefs and interests-perhaps first of all, what is the meaning of these words for you? How do you think these were formed?
- Do you think the values, attitudes, beliefs and interests you had in these years between 15 and 25 are the same for you today?

Appendix 2 Mapping Research Questions to interview questions



Appendix 3 Interview participant details

City	Name (alias / pseudonym)	Age	Status*	Occupation	Gender	Interview location area	Interview location
Sydney	Dutch	39	Single	Owner/Driver	Male	Elizabeth Bay, NSW	Park
Sydney	Adam	39	Divorced	Mine Safety Manager	Male	Maitland, NSW	Office
Sydney	Ant	38	Partnered with children	Machine operator/house husband	Male	Maitland, NSW	Office
Sydney	Bob	38	Partnered	Lawyer	Male	Elizabeth Bay, NSW	Home
Sydney	Corky	49	Single	Research Assistant	Female	Chippendale, NSW	Curtin campus
Sydney	DJB74	40	Married with children	Coffee franchisee	Male	Pymble, NSW	Home
Sydney	Jane	41	Married with children	Project Director (contaminated sites)	Female	Pymble, NSW	Home
Sydney	Kathryn	35	Single	Various/clerical	Female	Chippendale, NSW	Curtin campus
Sydney	Missy	39	Partnered with 1 child	Pre-school teacher	Female	Haymarket, NSW	Shopping Mall
Sydney	Vanda Miss Joaquim	43	Married	Librarian	Female	Chippendale, NSW	Curtin campus

City	Name (alias / pseudonym)	Age	Status*	Occupation	Gender	Interview location area	Interview location
Melbourne	Anna	50	Single	High School teacher	Female	Melbourne CBD, Vic.	State Library
Melbourne	Helen	41	Married with 1 child	Accounts Clerk	Female	Heathmont, Vic.	Home
Melbourne	John	37	Single	HR Executive Research Director	Male	Melbourne, CBD, Vic.	Office
Melbourne	Kylie	40	Partnered with 1 child	Real Estate Buyer's Advocate	Female	Yarraville, Vic.	Coffee Shop
Melbourne	Mandy	50	Single	EA to CEO (Executive Recruitment)	Female	Melbourne CBD, Vic.	Office
Melbourne	Ralph	42	Partnered with children	Aerospace engineer (Defence)	Male	Heathmont, Vic.	Home
Melbourne	Sarah	43	Single	EA to CEO Fed. Square	Female	Melbourne CBD, Vic.	Office
Melbourne	Stephanie	35	Married	Textile designer	Female	Heathmont, Vic.	Home
Melbourne	Steve	37	Partnered with 1 child	Software developer	Male	Heathmont, Vic.	Home
Melbourne	Sunday Mission	49	Partnered with children	Ad Agency Creative Director	Male	Melbourne, Vic.	Phone interview

City	Name (alias / pseudonym)	Age	Status*	Occupation	Gender	Interview location area	Interview location
New York	Spring Flower	42	Single	Para legal officer-City of NY	Female	Manhattan, NY	Park
New York	Monica	38	Single	HR Office organiser	Female	Manhattan, NY	Coffee Shop
New York	Bath	40	Partnered	Director Public Programs (NY Hall of Science)	Female	Manhattan, NY	Hotel
New York	Fernando	44	Partnered	Design Manager	Male	Manhattan, NY	Hotel
New York	Julius	48	Single	Book Keeper	Male	Manhattan, NY	Hotel
New York	Damien	48	Divorced with 1 child	Fine art printer/ESL teacher	Female	Manhattan, NY	Hotel
New York	Jessica	36	Single	Media partnership exec. NBC News	Female	Manhattan, NY	Hotel
New York	Lisa	49	Partnered with children	Educator-NYU	Female	Manhattan, NY	Hotel
New York	Sally	35	Single	Sales Rep.	Female	Manhattan, NY	Hotel
New York	Toby	37	Divorced	Film producer	Male	Manhattan, NY	Hotel
Los Angeles	Marco Solo	50	Single	Pharmacy technician	Male	Westwood, LA	Hospital Foyer
Los Angeles	Chris	45	Partnered	Psychotherapist	Male	Hollywood, LA	Home

City	Name (alias / pseudonym)	Age	Status*	Occupation	Gender	Interview location area	Interview location
Los Angeles	Franklin	43	Partnered	Vice Pres. IT Company	Male	Hollywood, LA	Home
Los Angeles	Juan	35	Partnered	Marketing and Communications Exec.	Male	Beverly Hills, LA	Office
Los Angeles	Tony	37	Single	LA Courts translator	Male	Sherman Oaks, LA	Coffee Shop
Los Angeles	Ariadne	49	Divorcing	Lawyer	Female	Santa Monica, LA	Golf Club
Los Angeles	Albert	49	Partnered	Writer	Male	Santa Monica, LA	Coffee Shop
Los Angeles	Rod	40	Partnered	Risk Manager	Male	Century City, LA	Shopping Mall
Los Angeles	Rita	40	Partnered	Media buyer	Female	Century City, LA	Shopping Mall

Appendix 4 Ethics approval



Memorandum

To	«Donald Cooper», «School of Marketing»
From	Dr Isaac Cheah
Subject	Protocol Approval «SOM2014070»
Date	7 July 2016
Copy	«Assoc. Prof. Kirsten Holmes», «School of Marketing»

Office of Research and Development
Human Research Ethics Committee
Telephone 9266 2784
Facsimile 9266 3793
Email hrec@curtin.edu.au

I

Thank you for your "Form C Application for Approval of Research with Low Risk (Ethical Requirements)" for the project titled "«*The impact of generational change on future demand for tourism experiences: the case of Generation X and European river cruises*»". On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I am authorised to inform you that the project is approved.

Approval of this project is for a period of 1 year «28/11/2014» to «28/11/2015».

Your approval has the following conditions:

- (i) Annual progress reports on the project must be submitted to the Ethics Office.
- (ii) **It is your responsibility, as the researcher, to meet the conditions outlined above and to retain the necessary records demonstrating that these have been completed.**
- (iii) All research involving Curtin staff and students also needs approval from the Office of Strategy and Planning. Requests will need to be sent through to Curtin Survey Approvals CurtinSurveyApprovals@curtin.edu.au quoting the School of Marketing Form C approval reference number at the top of this memorandum. PLEASE NOTE: If your research involves collecting data from Curtin staff or students it is **your responsibility** (as principal investigator or supervisor) to obtain approval from the Office of Strategy and Planning. Data collection must **NOT** commence until you have necessary clearance.

The approval number for your project is «SOM2014070». Please quote this number in any future correspondence. If at any time during the approval term changes/amendments occur, or if a serious or unexpected adverse event occurs, please advise me immediately.

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Please Note: The following standard statement must be included in the information sheet to participants:
This study has been approved under Curtin University's process for lower-risk Studies (Approval Number xxxx). This process complies with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (Chapter 5.1.7 and Chapters 5.1.18-5.1.21), or further information on this study contact the researchers named above or the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee. c/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth 6845 or by telephoning 9266 9223 or by emailing hrec@curtin.edu.au.

Appendix 5 Participant information sheet



Curtin University

Curtin Business School

Topic:

**The impact of generational change on future demand for tourism experiences:
the case of Generation X and European river cruises.**

Participant information sheet

Principal Researcher: Donald Cooper, PhD Candidate

Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information and please take time to consider whether you wish to take part in the study.

Dear interview participant:

You are invited to participate in this research study which aims to explore how generational change from Baby Boomers to the next generation (Generation X), will impact on motivations for and expectations of river cruise experiences in Europe. The resulting information will provide in-depth data of the future needs of a new generation of vacationers. This research is part of a PhD study at the Curtin University, Perth, Australia, under the supervision of Associate Professor Kirsten Holmes, Associate Professor Christof Pforr and Dr Tekle Shanka from the School of Marketing.

The aim of the project is to develop an understanding of:

- Tourism experiences enjoyed by Generation Xers and preferences for future travel
- Motivating factors for choosing European river cruise vacations
- How formative experiences have shaped beliefs, values and attitudes for life in the context of tourism interests.

Interviews with complete anonymity will be audio recorded in addition to note taking with your permission. The interview session may require 60 minutes of your time. A set of semi-structured interview questions relating to your formative experiences (in your teens and early 20s), travel experiences, motivations for or against future vacation travel destinations and experiences will form the basis of the interview session. Information about the nature of this face-to-face interview will be provided in advance and you will not be taken by surprise or experience any form of discomfort during the interviewing process.

All documentary records will be collected with your permission.

This research study will not pose any risk to you. Confidentiality will always be respected. The outcome of this research will be published in the form of a thesis and academic papers. The interviewees will not be identified in the respective publications. The principal researcher (Donald Cooper) and his supervisors (Associate Professor Kirsten Holmes, Associate Professor Christof Pforr and Dr Tekle Shanka) are the only people who have access to the data.

Please be advised that participating in this research is completely voluntary and that you have the right to withdraw at any time without any prejudice or negative consequences. Please sign the attached consent form which provides your permission to participate in face-to-face interviews and have them recorded and transcribed. Interviewee participants will be given the right to review the transcripts of their interviews.

This study has been approved under Curtin University's process for lower risk Studies (Approval Number SOM2014070). This process complies with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (Chapter 5.1.7 and Chapters 5.1.18-5.1.21).

For further information on this study contact the researchers named above or the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee. c/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth 6845 or by telephoning 9266 9223 or by emailing hrec@curtin.edu.au.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Contact details:

If you need any further information, please contact:

Donald Cooper

Tel: (+61) 402144900

Email: donald.cooper@postgrad.curtin.edu.au

You can also contact the principal supervisor of this research:

Asse. Prof. Kirsten Holmes

Email: K.Holmes@cbs.curtin.edu.au

Appendix 6 European river cruise editorial

Link:

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/life/travel/sailing-on-the-rhines-most-scenic-stretch-castles-in-the-mist/news-story/a819a82f457602f1cf02e21a69deff4c>

Appendix 7 Example of information days newspaper advertisement



EVER WONDERED?

INFO SESSIONS



YOU'RE INVITED
TO DISCOVER
THE SCENIC DIFFERENCE

We'd love you to join us at our free Ever Wondered Sessions to reveal the extraordinary in travel.

Covering Europe and South East Asia River Cruising, South America, Canada, Alaska and the USA plus The World's First Discovery Yacht, Scenic Eclipse, let us introduce you to the Scenic difference.

BONUS OFFERS
when booking on the day*

PERTH
Tuesday 7 June
Convention Centre
21 Mounts Bay Road

- Europe River Cruising**
9:30am & 6:15pm
- Canada Alaska & USA**
9:30am & 5:15pm
- France River Cruising**
10:45am 1:15pm & 7:15pm
- South East Asia River Cruising**
10:45am & 5:15pm
- Portugal & Russia River Cruising**
12:00pm
- South America**
12:00pm & 6:15pm
- Eclipse**
1:15pm & 7:15pm

To RSVP
visit SCENIC.COM.AU/RSVP
or call 138 128

SCENIC®

Places are limited and will book out quickly,
please register early to secure your seats.

Conditions apply

Appendix 8 Example of European river cruise newspaper advertising

Election Winning Offers

Voted "Best Value" River Cruising

2015 EDITORS' PICKS
BEST RIVER LINE FOR VALUE
CRUISE CRITIC

2014 EDITORS' PICKS
BEST NEW RIVER SHIPS
CRUISE CRITIC

15 day European cruise in 2017 from

\$3,995pp*

Save up to \$4,780 per couple*

INCLUDED

- Newest award-winning ships on the rivers
- Daily guided tours in 15 cities, towns & villages
- Onboard pool, cinema & complimentary bikes
- Unique 'You're Invited' events like a home-hosted afternoon tea with a Slovakian family
- 41 delicious meals
- Beer, wine & soft drinks with lunch and dinner
- All gratuities, tipping, airport transfers, port charges & taxes*

CAST YOUR VOTE, BOOK BY 2 JULY 2016!

Call 1300 383 747 visit evergreentours.com.au
or contact your Evergreen Expert Travel Agency

EvergreenTours
A World of Discovery

Bilton Travel 08 9339 9277
 Melbourne/Mandurah 08 9535 5144

Italktravel North Perth 08 9228 8633
 Kings Tours & Travel, West Leederville 08 9380 8656

Travel Focus, Myanma 08 9317 4455

Appendix 9 Example of leader board digital advertising

Traveller f t p i g v

Destinations Experiences Planning Reviews Deals Cruises Video



APT
UNFORGETTABLE

MYANMAR RIVER CRUISING 2017/18
Fly for \$795* when you book any APT Myanmar holiday of 15 days or longer.

Book now

Advertisements Remove all

Home > Cruises > River Cruises

River Cruises



TRAVEL TIP
Don't blame the US for tipping culture
Many travellers aren't happy about the culture of tipping, but don't blame America for it.



CRUISING
Cruising a great Australian landmark
Geeg Clarke explores the mouth of the Murray River.



TRAVEL TIP
The world's greatest floating city in floating luxury
If you're visiting the world's greatest floating city, you may as well float through in incredible luxury.



TRAVEL TIP
The San Francisco you've never heard of
The 'other' San Francisco, population 450, is a little more wild in nature.



APT
UNFORGETTABLE

MYANMAR RIVER CRUISING 2017/18
Fly for \$795* when you book any APT Myanmar holiday of 15 days or longer.
All-inclusive / Luxurious / Award-Winning

Book now

— Most Popular Articles —

Appendix 10 Ideas generation 2015

(From Australian and United States interviews)

Development of conceptual framework

Generation X has:

- Had greater access to information due to parents, family parents' friends (Baby Boomers) travelling more than their parents did. In the 1970s older Gen Xers were aged between 5 and 15 whereas the older Gen Xers hadn't been born. Many of the Baby Boomers who WERE their parents or to become their parents, were taking advantage of the benefits brought about by the introduction of mass air travel to take holidays internationally rather than in Australia. Thus, a greater awareness of other countries was gleaned and this passed on to Gen Xers in their formative years. Due to this opportunity to travel internationally (including Europe) at younger ages than the previous generation, does Europe have the same drawing power for them in later years (ie 65+)?
- Displayed a desire for FREEDOM when on holidays-independence is important to them and in their holiday choices.
- Greater access to travel for the purpose of celebration of events such as weddings/birthdays/anniversaries.
- In many cases Gen Xers have travelled from Sydney to Europe in their formative years, either with parents, school or as young graduates. So Europe is NOT an unknown to them.
- In the case of two of my participants (the only two with children),they had children later in life (eg aged 40) and so holidays involving large expenditure will need to be delayed until much later than Baby Boomers....note kids staying at home longer/older parents/later retirement age etc..
- More opportunity to enjoy special interest travel such as abseiling, cycling, music.

- Greater interest in the “off the boat” experience than “on the boat” experiences on river cruises. NB this is NOT reflected in the river cruise brochures which feature many pages of on-board photography BEFORE showing images of ports of call!
- The general feeling is that river cruises are for older people, such as 70s up....this is due to the perception that the passengers have limited mobility and therefore feel comfortable and secure in the small river cruise vessel environments where there is not a lot of exercise required either on board or in the ports of call.
- Gen Xers want involvement with the local communities. They want to be part of the European milieu.
- Gen Xers are seeking a realistic tourism experience.
- Gen Xers interviewed displayed little knowledge of world/national/local events from their formative years.
- I will need to amend the thesis scope to incorporate MEDIUM to long haul international markets to Europe as Gen Xers living in New York talk about flights of 7 and 8 hours (a bit like PER/HKG or SYD/SIN).
- Great similarities between United States and Australian participants in relation to formative years, PARTICULARLY in childhood holiday recollections.
- In the United States, huge doubts with participants over what the retirement age will be by the time these guys get to their 60s.....awareness that the country can no longer afford generous pensions.
- Little awareness in the United States of the concept of longer life spans so heavily reported and discussed in Australia.
- Spatial issues-the idea of being in a restricted space for a length of time is not attractive.
- Social issues-many participants were negative to the concept of spending between 7 and 15 days with many strangers-particularly at meal times.

Appendix 11 Contact summary form

Contact Summary Form

Name of contact

Date of interview

1. What were the main themes that struck me in this interview?

2. Summarize the information I got (or failed to get) for each of the target questions:

1. To examine the concept of generational change in the context of the tourism industry.
2. To investigate what formative experiences have shaped Generation X's values, attitudes and beliefs.
3. To investigate how previous travel experiences have affected Generation X's tourism preferences.
4. To examine the push/pull factors which would motivate western Generation Xers towards European river cruise vacations.

3. Anything else that struck me as salient, interesting, illuminating or important in this interview?

5. What new (or remaining) target questions do I have for the next interview?

Appendix 12 Recollections of notable people & events for SOME Gen X participants

Recollections of famous people by some Gen X participants

Person	Number of Participants	
	Australia	USA
President Reagan	nil	4
President Clinton	4	5
Prime Minister Keating	5	nil
Prime Minister Hawke	5	nil
Princess Diana	3	1
Nelson Mandela	2	1
Prime Minister Thatcher	1	nil
Pope John Paul 2	nil	1
Mikhail Gorbachev	nil	1

Recollections of famous events by some Gen X participants

Event	Number of Participants	
	Australia	USA
Bosnia War	nil	1
Tiananmen Square	nil	1
End of USSR	2	1
9/11	3	5
Oklahoma bombing	nil	1
Chernobyl	2	nil
Berlin Wall down	3	1
APEC 1994	1	nil
1989 financial crisis	1	nil
Y2K bug	1	1
Apartheid	1	nil
Columbine massacre US	1	nil
Falklands War	1	nil
AIDS	1	2
First Gulf War	6	2