Environmentally sustainable practices and motivations of tourism small and medium enterprises (SMEs): an inquiry into accommodation and non-accommodation sectors in an Australian regional destination

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science

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Declaration for candidates submitting a thesis

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of my research project is to determine what are the current environmentally sustainable, or green, practices and motivations of tourism small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In order to fulfil this aim I draw some conclusions as to how practices and motivations have changed over approximately the last two decades by making a comparison with the literature focusing on a collection of six highly pertinent previous studies. This aim is motivated by wide acknowledgement that the tourism industry is not environmentally sustainable, and that a key outcome needed for addressing this problem is encouraging tourism SMEs to become greener. However, there is limited research into the subject of environmental sustainability within tourism SMEs, and even far less investigating a broad cross-section of industry sectors. Past research shows a concentration on accommodation enterprises, resulting in a dearth of studies encompassing a broad range of both accommodation and non-accommodation providers together. Consequently, this thesis is a timely update to the extant literature.

My project utilises a case study investigation into tourism SMEs within the Australian regional tourism destination of East Gippsland with data gathered from 16 semi-structured in-depth interviews. Participants are identified using purposive quota sampling methods guided by an objective framework refined from categories belonging to a government-based tourism industry award scheme.

A reasonable increase in the range of green practices undertaken has been found, as well as a very small increase in the range of motivations which are driving these practices.

Regarding environmentally sustainable practices, there is a general confirmation of past literature for highly adopted and mainstreamed practices such as those encompassing energy, waste, and water. It is recommended that future higher uptake of these in the shorter-term could potentially come about if greater engagement with existing website-based sustainability resources was seen. In the longer term however, growth is probably subject to wider consumer behavioural shifts as much as anything. Additionally, new understandings are uncovered for a number of important previously identified practices, such as environmental education, and accreditation and awards schemes amongst others. Greater in-depth engagement with these
is observed than evident in the past. Of interest also are a handful of practices that are revealed as being new to the key selected literature. Of these, local food tourism, which is under-recognised for its green attributes, and green boating, which is passionately supported by SMEs but reportedly far less so amongst the tourist boating fraternity, stand out as real opportunities to further advance green tourism. Local food tourism in particular may be a potentially very useful vehicle for further progress in SME sustainability if ways of convincing producers to support green aspects of this practice can be developed, together with delivering appropriate promotional messages for consumers.

And, regarding environmentally sustainable motivations, the somewhat greater impact some of these are having than in the past, including cost-benefits, customer demand, and belief and commitment amongst others, is observed. Notably, it is apparent that more enterprises are believing in the importance of environmental sustainability than evident from the previous selected literature. This trend appears to be materialising in a higher proportion of SMEs adopting greater numbers of practices, which is a positive sign. Put figuratively, this suggests that more tourism SMEs are “walking the talk” when it comes to environmental sustainability, although the actual sustainability impact of this in a wider industry sense is unknown. Notwithstanding these positive signs however, low concern over climate change is limiting industry capacity to respond to threats to the industry both in a wider sense as well as at the business level. Climate change could be called an industry blind spot and a clear need exists for policy makers to encourage greater SME understanding of climate change risks and help them adopt meaningful adaptation and mitigation strategies.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Structure of chapter
1.1 Introduction and research context
1.2 Research problem and motivation
1.3 Aim and scope
1.4 Objective and research questions
1.5 Research contribution
1.6 Definitions and clarifications
1.7 Overview of the thesis

1.1 Introduction and research context

This chapter presents the context to my thesis, the research problem and motivation, aims and scope, objectives and research questions, definitions, and finally, an overview of the project.

The existing literature clearly establishes that the tourism industry is currently not environmentally sustainable (Aall 2014; Coles, Zschiegner & Dinan 2014). In more common parlance, the industry is far from being green. It is well recognised that there is an imperative for greater tourism environmental sustainability. This is due to factors such as the industry’s current high consumption and degradation of ecological resources, as well as its greenhouse gas emissions and the impact this is having on climate change (Peters & Landre 2012). Furthermore, these processes are posing threats to the very future viability of the industry (Gosling & Peeters 2015). As Juvan et al. succinctly say ‘Tourism harms the environment and, in so doing, contributes to future problems for the tourism industry itself’ (2016, p. 1506).

However, a notable challenge for tourism to overcome if it is to become greener, is how to encourage the sector’s small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to improve their contribution to environmental sustainability. This is particularly important as SMEs are seen as the key actors in delivery of sustainable tourism development (Roberts & Tribe 2009; Dewhurst & Thomas 2003). My thesis is a response to this challenge.
1.2 Research problem and motivation

Efforts to confront this specific challenge of increasing the environmental sustainability of tourism SMEs are, however, hampered by a number of limitations in the literature.

One of these limitations is that studies into smaller tourism enterprises has been less than that into larger enterprises (Thomas, Shaw & Page 2011; van Haastert & de Grobois 2010; Hall 2006). This is of concern given three things: (1) the predominance of small operators in the industry, (2) the high contribution made by them to the sector’s negative environmental impacts (Alonso & Ogle 2011) and, (3) the difficulties faced in influencing this group of stakeholders to making positive change in their green practices (Brambell & Lane 2011). A second of these limitations is that previous research into the green practices and motivations of tourism SMEs concentrates mainly on the industry’s accommodation sector. Consequently, research that investigates a range of tourism SMEs that are not only accommodation providers but also belong to industry sectors such as restaurants, cafes, attractions, tours and retail operations, amongst others, whilst certainly existing, is largely overlooked (Roberts & Tribe 2009). This thesis, by looking at environmental sustainability within tourism SMEs, and also investigating a broad range of small and medium enterprises from both the accommodation and non-accommodation sectors together, helps to address these more general limitations in the literature.

However, of even more specific interest to my project is in questioning to what degree the extant and small body of research that does inquire into tourism SMEs comprising both the accommodation and non-accommodation sectors does adequately reflect the present status of how green these enterprises are currently. A key reason for this question has to do with the passage of time. To be more specific, key within this small body of work are six important papers spanning the period between 2010 and 1996. These works comprises Alonso and Ogle (2010); Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee (2007); Schaper and Carlsen (2004); Vernon et al. (2003); Dewhurst and Thomas (2003) and Horobin and Long (1996). But, it is reasonable to expect that since 2010 when the last of these papers was written, let alone since the dates of earlier papers, highly relevant new information is now available which is likely to deepen the understanding of the issue of tourism SME sustainability. This is worthy of doing not only in principle, but also as previous studies have established that, while there is certainly a reasonable level of acceptance of the importance of environmental sustainability by tourism SMEs, this has not in the past been necessarily backed up with the actual demonstration of sustainable practices. This is a situation Schaper and Carlsen call a ‘gap between environmental goals and performance’ (2004, p. 204).
Consequently, the prime motivation for this project is responding to the research problem. This problem is that it is not known what actually is the present day status of environmental sustainability amongst tourism SMEs across both accommodation and non-accommodation sectors together. It is important to question as far as possible within the limited scope of this project what changes have occurred regarding the green practices and motivations of tourism SMEs since the publication of earlier research. It is logical to conclude that an update to this specific body of literature will lead to more effective sustainability outcomes in the future.

There is also a further motivation for this project. This motivation is a personal one and relates to both my own lifelong commitment to environmental sustainability as well as having had a professional interest in the tourism industry in both a government and private context.

1.3 Aim and scope

In order to investigate the research problem my project aims to determine what are the current environmentally sustainable practices and motivations of tourism small and medium enterprises, and in so doing references the findings of some important earlier studies. Knowing this is very likely to provide new clues as to how improved policy and practice may lead to a greener tourism industry. And in turn, a greener tourism industry will likely contribute significantly to the wider societal efforts to become more environmentally sustainable.

With respect to scope, this project is limited to presenting findings and discussion of practices and motivations only, and does not encompass the subject of barriers to environmental sustainability. Whilst barriers are dealt with in much of the previous literature, addressing this issue lies outside the scope of my thesis, although it should be an important consideration for future research.

1.4 Objective and research questions

In pursuing the aim of providing enhanced understanding of environmentally sustainable practices and motivations of tourism SMEs, my project’s objective is to undertake an investigation into the practices and motivations of tourism SMEs within the Australian regional tourism destination of East Gippsland. The East Gippsland tourism industry comprises a wide range of SMEs offering both accommodation and non-accommodation services. This renders
it feasible to gather data from a genuine cross-section of industry sectors and avoid concentration on the accommodation sector characteristic of much past research. A constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology is used to guide semi-structured in-depth interviews with 16 tourism SMEs in the case study region.

In order to achieve this objective this project examines the following two research questions:

- What are the current environmentally sustainable practices of tourism SMEs, and how might these have changed compared to those previously seen?
- What are the current environmentally sustainable motivations of tourism SMEs, and how might these have changed compared to those previously seen?

1.5 Research contribution

The intended outcome of my thesis is to provide a timely update to the literature regarding green practices and motivations of tourism SMEs. It can be anticipated that the uncovering of interesting new insights could well enhance the capacity of stakeholders to enact strategies and actions that lead to more meaningful environmental sustainability in the industry.

1.6 Definitions and clarifications

This section presents the definition of tourism, as well as clarifications regarding the parameters of “environmentally sustainable tourism”, and “small and medium enterprises”, together with the interchangeability of the following 3 terms: “sustainability”; “sustainable development”; and, “green”.

1.6.1 Definition of tourism

In terms of definition, tourism, sometimes referred to as “travel and tourism” (Manganari, Dimara & Theotokis 2016), or “hospitality and tourism” (Alonso & Ogle 2010) can be broadly described as referring to that range of human activities involving travel that includes staying away from home ‘for leisure, business or other purposes’ (World Tourism Organisation in Richardson & Fluker 2008, p. 7) and encompassing goods and services produced by the travel, hospitality, attractions/activities and retail sectors (ibid., p. 15). Tourism comprises businesses from a wide range of service industries and is widely considered to have a
multifarious nature (Morrison & Pickering 2013; Pechlaner & Volgger 2013). For example, in the jurisdiction of Australia, this highly diverse nature of tourism is clearly illustrated by 12 individual industries making up tourism as a so-called distinct larger industry (TRA 2017). This existence of industries within an industry can be confusing semantically when discussing tourism. Consequently, for the purposes of clarity, in this thesis each of the individual smaller industries within tourism will be referred to as a “sector”, not as an industry.

1.6.2 Environmentally Sustainable Tourism (EST) as a parameter

This project is encompassed within several parameters. The first of these is that it lies within the specific field of “environmentally sustainable tourism” (EST) which itself exists within the wider field of “sustainable tourism” (ST). Sustainable tourism has evolved from the founding subject of “sustainability” and “sustainable development” (SD) (Aall 2014; Beeton, Bergin-Seers & Lee 2007; Weaver & Lawton 1999). As Aall points out, sustainable tourism is an inextricable part of sustainable development. When one talks of the former one is inevitably talking about the latter as well (ibid.).

1.6.3 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as a parameter

The second parameter encompassing this project is that it concerns small and medium enterprises (SMEs), a term which for the purposes of this study is taken to also include microbusinesses. As identified by Dewhurst and Thomas, the high proportion of tourism businesses can in round terms be called “small” irrespective of the actual definition of “smallness” that is used variously in the literature (2003). Additionally, whilst various writers have used terms such as “small tourism enterprise” or STE (Hall 2014; Bergin-Seers & Jago 2007), “small tourism firms” (Dewhurst 2003), and “small and medium tourism enterprises” or SMTEs (Coles et al 2017; Coles, Zscheigner & Dinan 2014; Roberts & Tribe 2008), and have applied a range of definitions to these, the term “small and medium enterprises”, or SMEs, will be employed in this thesis. This is done on the basis that it is used in much tourism literature (Font, Garay & Jones 2014; Thomas, Shaw & Page 2011; Kasim 2009) and has commonly been used within Australian jurisdictions (ABS 2017; State Government of Victoria 2017). For the purposes of this thesis the term “small and medium enterprises” is taken to include both non-employing businesses and employing micro-, small- and medium-sized businesses. Definitions for employing businesses are taken as those used by Tourism Research Australia which defines micro businesses has having fewer than 5 employees, small businesses as
having between 5-19 employees, and medium business as having 20-199 employees (TRA 2017).

1.6.4 Interchangeability of key terms

Commonly, the terms “sustainability” and “sustainable development” are often used interchangeably by writers within the tourism field, yet they arguably have essentially distinct meanings both historically and conceptually (Wass et al 2011; McManus 1996). Whilst acknowledging the meaningful difference, for the purpose of practicality both these terms will be used interchangeably in this thesis as is commonly done in the tourism literature (Liu 2003). In addition, the term “green” is used interchangeably with the term “environmentally sustainable”. Indeed, the former has sometimes been used in preference to the latter in tourism literature over time, such as in Law et al. (2016) and Vernon et al. (2003).

1.7 Overview of the thesis

This thesis comprises seven chapters, as well as appendices.

Chapter 1, this introduction chapter, has provided the thesis context, research problem, aim and scope, objective and research questions, and research contribution. It also comprises definitions and clarifications surrounding key terms and concepts, and a snapshot of the full thesis.

Chapter 2 situates the study in the literature and presents four literature themes. These themes cover, firstly, the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development, secondly, the more specific notions of sustainable tourism and environmentally sustainable tourism, thirdly, stakeholders and change-agents in the tourism sector and, finally, the attitudes and practices of tourism SMEs regarding environmental sustainability. Chapter 2 further identifies gaps in the literature supporting the value in my thesis investigating the current status of practices and motivations of tourism SMEs in a broad-based regional tourism destination.

Chapter 3 covers methodology including the theoretical approach taken, an explanation of my standpoint as the researcher, and the case study rationale and location. Furthermore, the methods employed are presented and it is shown how interview participants are carefully selected using a series of frameworks designed to ensure maximum objectivity and comprehensiveness.
Chapter 4 comprises the findings on environmentally sustainable practices and motivations.

Chapter 5 covers the discussion around practices and motivations of SMEs.

Chapter 7 presents the conclusion and implications. It establishes the relationship between the study’s aim and findings, and summarises the key contributions made by my thesis. This chapter also proposes an agenda for useful further research.

The 4 appendices contain the interview questions, the ethics approval document for the project, the formal RMIT participation invitation for interviewees, and the websites used as references to select prospective interviewees.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Structure of chapter
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Literature Theme 1: Sustainability and sustainable development
2.3 Literature Theme 2: Sustainable tourism and environmentally sustainable tourism
2.4 Literature Theme 3: Transitioning to tourism sustainability through the business sector and SMEs
2.5 Literature Theme 4: Environmentally sustainable practices and motivations within tourism SMEs
2.6 Literature summary and project implications

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the relevant literature to form a strong foundation for the achieving of this project’s aim of uncovering environmentally sustainable practices and motivations of tourism SMEs. In order to do this four key literature themes are presented. The first literature theme focuses on the broader concepts of sustainability and sustainable development. The second literature theme focuses on the more specific notions of sustainable tourism and its sub-set, environmentally sustainable tourism, which this thesis in particular relates to. The third literature theme deals with actors and change-agents in the tourism sector. Lastly, the fourth theme covers key studies into green practices and motivations of tourism SMEs from across accommodation and non-accommodation industry sectors. Interrogation of this key literature enables the identification of knowledge gaps. It also leads to the development of appropriate research design and identifies crucial outcomes from previous studies which form an essential context around which findings in this thesis can be discussed.

2.2 Literature Theme 1: Sustainability and sustainable development

This section discusses the literature regarding the broader concepts of sustainability and sustainable development. It seeks to identify the strong link between these universally important concepts and the purpose of this project.
2.2.1 Sustainability and sustainable development: the historical perspective

Sustainability as a social process, in particular with respect to its environmental context, is not new. The subject has been critically pertinent to numerous past civilisations stretching back millennia, civilisations which in their own ways faced challenges due to anthropogenic environmental degradation (Waas et al. 2011). Earlier linkages to principles espoused in the modern interpretations of sustainability and sustainable development are also found in the 1600s, 1700s and 1800s (Warde 2011; Wass et al. 2011). In addition, Mulligan and Buxton points to the influence of prominent writers, thinkers and scientists such as Johanne Goethe, the English Romantic poets, Henry David Thoreau and Charles Darwin as all helping to prepare humanity for its eventual engagement with sustainability and the later emerging concept “sustainable development” (2015).

In the modern era significant milestones in the history of sustainability and sustainable development as an emergent concept include the publishing of Rachel Carson’s 1962 book *Silent Spring* (Mulligan & Buxton 2015), the founding of the Club of Rome in 1968 and the release of the 1972 report *The Limits to Growth*. Following from these earlier developments, according to Wass et al. (2011), the subsequent notable milestones were as follows: the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment (Stockholm); the 1980 World Conservation Strategy; the 1987 Brundtland Report (WCED); the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (UNCED) from which a major output was the action-orientated blueprint *Agenda 21*; the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit; the 2000 Earth Charter; the 2002 United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development; and, the 2012 Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (2011).

To this list of prominent milestones could well be added the creation of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and the sequel to the Club of Rome 1972 report *Limits to Growth* i.e. the 1992 report *Beyond the Limits: Global Collapse or a Sustainable Future*. Also of notable significance are the United Nations Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) which expired in 2015 and the successor to these, the 17 far-reaching Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including the 169 targets encompassed in the ambitious *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN 2015). Notwithstanding criticisms of the SDGs, such as that by Scott, Hall & Gossling in arguing that the SDGs are unattainable within the context of the gravely destabilising impacts of climate change (2016), the SDGs do indicate how sustainable development is now firmly established into the aspirations of global
society. And, in very recent times, given that climate change is more and more being seen as an issue of utmost urgency for society’s future, the signing of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement is a notable event. Yet this agreement needs to be seen only as the start of the next critical sustainable development phase which, in the tourism context, requires a redoubled effort in both research and also actual industry outcomes (Scott, Hall & Gossling 2016).

Within this chronology of key sustainability and sustainable development milestones it is worth covering in some specific detail the 1987 Brundtland Report, as it is through this work by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development that the concept of SD was established prominently on the global stage (Waas et al. 2011; Sharpley 2009). In this report, titled Our Common Future, sustainable development is defined as ‘development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED 1987, p. 43). Brundtland strongly connects the environmental, social justice and economic facets of human life, and espouses the principle of limits (Butler 1999; Wall 1999). The report very much put forward a new development modus operandi. This achievement was significant, notwithstanding uncertainties around both definition and practice of sustainable development (Hopwood 2005), and criticisms that the Brundtland Report is weighted towards human needs (Horobin & Long 1996) and potentially marginalises the more environmental focus inherent within the sustainability concept (Sanders 2016; Waas et al. 2011).

2.2.2 The contestability of sustainability and sustainable development

Notwithstanding the broad international acceptance of sustainable development as a guiding societal principle, it is acknowledged that sustainability and sustainable development as concepts are characterised by contestability and vagueness, in both definition and practice (Quental et al 2012; Wass et al. 2011). Waas et al. specifically bemoan the lack of understanding of the terms and their common misuse, and how this can lead to unsatisfactory outcomes (2011). Such a situation is hardly surprising given the wide variance in how the concepts are understood, this contestability being highlighted by Beeton, Bergin-Seers and Lee who point to there being in excess of 100 definitions of ‘sustainable development’ (2007).

As earlier alluded to, even in terms of basic definition the terms sustainability and sustainable development are commonly conflated (McManus1996; Wass et al 2011). Yet a clear distinction between them is highlighted by some writers who point to the loss of the dominant
environmental principles inherent in the earlier concept of sustainability. It has been argued that this distinction was subsumed in the wave of the somewhat universal political and general acceptance of the concept of sustainable development as put forward by the Brundtland Report (Waas et al. 2011; McManus 2007).

However, while there are many unresolved debates surrounding sustainability and sustainable development, some writers see this tension as not surprising nor unexplainable given that they are broad concepts and not rigid definitions. In other words, it is part of their very nature that they are contestable (Burns 2012). Indeed, as is said, they are multi-layered normative notions such as "democracy", "social justice", "equality," "liberty", and so on (Lindahl et al. 2015; Burns 2011). Consequently, any tensions should not necessarily be overly problematic or hinder sustainable development effectively being practiced. As Vernon et al. put it, ‘the broad nature of the term [sustainable development is also considered to be a strength in that focus is placed on implementation and focus’ (2003, p. 50).

2.2.3 The failure of sustainable development to produce concrete results

Despite the efforts made to achieve environmental, social and economic sustainability, the literature overwhelmingly establishes that meaningful sustainability or sustainable development has not been achieved, and that examples of substantive positive outcomes are sparse (Gupta & Vegelin 2016; Smythe 2014; Burns 2012; Waas et al. 2011; Munro 2001; Butler 1999). Where specific gains can be pointed to these are sometimes devalued by unexpected environmental outcomes, such as when energy efficiency gains help to encourage increased consumption (Luarenti et al. 2016). The continued pre-eminence of the economic side of the tripartite triple bottom line (TBL) equation, or the blind ‘growthism’ as termed by Hall (2009), has led to little substantive progress being made in the quest for real sustainability, particularly given the concern from the threats posed by climate change. Some writers say unequivocally the sustainable development has been an abject failure (Sanders 2016).

Since Brundtland, the meaningful change envisioned by the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development are hard to find and the continuation of the business-as-usual (BAU) market driven trajectory is a completely unviable option (Smythe 2014; Waas et al. 2011). As Quental, Lourenco and da Silva put it, the challenge is now to ‘transform the meritorious ideas and goals of sustainability into reality’ (2012, p 28). Given this situation, urgent and ongoing endeavour is needed into delivering greater sustainability understandings, policy settings and
practices by a range of actors. My thesis is, in a broad sense, a response to this established need for so critical an endeavour.

2.3 Literature Theme 2: Sustainable tourism and environmentally sustainable tourism

This section presents background information and discussion concerning sustainable tourism and environmentally sustainable tourism. It provides context to the concepts and seeks to establish that this project is a response to a need for greater sustainability in the industry.

2.3.1 Sustainable tourism: definitions and background

This thesis is underpinned by the principles of sustainable tourism (ST) which is a well-established concept (Whitford & Ruhanen 2010) and it is specifically focused on the subsidiary paradigm of environmentally sustainable tourism (EST). Sustainable tourism has evolved from the foundation notion of sustainable development (Beeton, Bergin-Seers & Lee 2007; Butler 1999). However, not surprisingly, as is with the notions of sustainability and sustainable development, sustainable tourism is still a hotly contested and widely debated concept academically, and as such it is open to being interpreted in any self-interested manner (Saarinen 2015; Torres-Delgado & Saarinen 2014; Brambell & Lane 2011).

Sustainable Tourism is defined by the World Tourism Organisation as:

*Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities* (UNWTO 2017a).

As Torres-Delgado and Saarinen posit, the sustainable development principles of both inter-generational and intra-generational equity, as well as adoption of genuine ecological, sociocultural and economic principles are inherent in sustainable tourism (2014). Indeed, sustainable tourism ‘espouses triple bottom line principles’ (Collin & Collin 2012). Furthermore, Boley and Uysal show that the concept of triple bottom line, as first proposed by Elkington in the late 1990s as a means of encapsulating environmental, socio-cultural and economic sustainability, has become a guiding principle for sustainable tourism. It is seen as a way of maximising positive impacts and minimising negative impacts of development (2013).
There have been numerous definitions of sustainable tourism put forward over the years with varying emphases placed on specific principles inherent in the concept i.e. economic, environmental or social, or a combination of these, depending on the interests of the particular stakeholder. According to Butler, this situation has led to both wide adoption and wide misuse of the concept, so giving the opportunity for pro-development government and business interests, and pro-conservation minded interests to all claim loyalty to sustainable tourism principles in one way or another (1999). This is nonetheless a situation that is to be expected and, as with the term sustainable development, so equally is the case in the sustainable tourism context. In other words, the term has been successful because of the universality of its appeal based on the wide interpretation able to be applied to it (ibid.).

2.3.2 Thesis focus on environmentally sustainable tourism

Whilst the definition of sustainable tourism embraces triple bottom line principles, my project focuses on environmental sustainability in tourism alone for the following reasons. Firstly, the economic side of tourism is already given significant, and arguable excessive, attention relative to the other two components of the triple bottom line concept (Aall 2014; Saarinen 2014, Wright 2003 in Whitford & Ruhanen 2010). This fact is also seen specifically in the Australian jurisdiction as shown by the dominance of economically aligned considerations found in key government tourism planning and research sources (Ruhanen, McLennan & Moyle 2013). Secondly, regarding the social aspects of sustainability, the project’s limited scope and resources have precluded inquiry into this subject. Furthermore, whilst it is granted that each of the three elements of TBL are worthy of investigation, a specific interest in the environmental aspect sits far more closely with my personal research interests than do the other two.

2.3.3 The current unsustainability of tourism

It is sometimes stated that there is an upward trend towards tourism sustainability both in industry documentation and occasionally in academic literature (UNWTO & UNEP 2012; van Haastert and de Groisbois 2010). And indeed, it is important to acknowledge that there are certainly important actions taken in an attempt to move the industry towards greater sustainability. Several high level instances of these efforts are the 10YFP Sustainable Tourism Programme auspiced by the industry’s peak global body, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, and the work done by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTP). This
latter organisation, amongst other things, oversees a set of industry global environmental and cultural sustainability criteria applicable to destinations and businesses (GSTP 2017).

However, there is considerable academic consensus that in effect the lofty aspirations of achieving greater sustainability are not being met and that the tourism industry has made unsustentaitive progress in improving its performance in the delivery of a range of environmentally friendly practices, including in response to climate change (Law et al. 2016, Aall 2014; Coles, Zschiegner & Dinan 2014; Juvan & Dolcinar 2014; Moscardo & Murpphy 2014; Bramwell & Lane 2013; Buckley 2012). Weaver even postulates that sustainability for tourism may be out of reach (2011).

As to why this poor performance is occurring, it is clear that in large part it is simply because of wider social habituation to consumerism and how this translates into demand for tourism products and services which are by nature very resource hungry (Bramwell & Lane 2013). This aspiration versus action deficit is also in part due to the fact that broader sustainable development is not only a complex and ambiguous notion in its own right, but that there are real difficulties when it is applied to tourism (Saarinen 2015). One of these key difficulties is the dominance of small tourism businesses in the industry (van Haastert & de Grosbois 2010; Roberts & Tribe 2009; Hall 2006). This industry feature complicates the enabling of sustainability partly as tourism SMEs are characterised by a somewhat informal management approach closely linked to personal lifestyle where there is little reliance on formal business planning (Sampajo, Thomas & Font 2012; Thomas, Shaw & Page 2011; Carlsen, Getz & Ali-Knight 2001).

2.3.4 Tourism’s negative environmental impact

Industries such as manufacturing may produce higher harmful impacts than tourism (Beeton et al. 2007). However, there is a solid body of literature pointing to the substantive negative environmental impacts produced by tourism. In the case of Tourism SME’s specifically, whilst having a small impact individually, these businesses have a large negative footprint on the environment collectively (van Haastert & de Grosbois 2010; Kasim 2009).

The tourism industry is ‘environmentally dependent’ (Sharpley 2009, p. 22), as well as very energy and travel dependent (UNEP & UNWTO 2012). It is responsible for 5% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally which are rapidly growing (Peters & Landre 2012; UNEP & UNWTO 2012). Consequently, tourism is a significant contributor to human induced climate change.
change (Juvan & Dolcinar 2014; UNEP & UNWTO 2012; Buckley 2012). The picture is replicated in Australia with tourism being the 7th highest producer, in industry terms, of GHG emissions (Tourism Victoria 2009). Once again, within the context that many industries have a high ecological footprint (EF), tourism activities also produce a range of other substantial harmful environmental effects (Marzouki, Frogger & Ballet 2011) which commonly manifest cumulatively (Schaper & Carlsen 2004) and at the local level (Buckley 2012). Examples of such detrimental effects include waste production and effluent discharge, high use of valuable resources such as water and land, and the enormous stress put on natural assets (UNEP & UNWTO 2012) which produces ‘pollution of all kinds’ (ibid.). As Gossling and Peters put it, tourism is now dependent on an extraordinarily fast-expanding consumption of resources and say that, as examples, the industry’s water use could increase by 92% and its land use increase by 189% from 2010 - 2050 (2015).

2.3.5 The threat to the viability of tourism

These tourism-related environmental impacts described above are brought into even greater focus when it is recognised that tourism industry is highly exposed to being detrimentally effected as a result of that very degradation it is party to (Michailidou, Vladokostas & Moussioloulos 2016; Gossling & Peeters, 2015; Moeller, Dolnicar & Leisch 2010; Choi & Sirakaya 2006). As even a peak industry representative body, the World Travel & Tourism Council, admits: ‘Without the planet’s oceans, coasts, forests, wildlife, and other resources, tourism in many parts of the world would cease to exist’ (WTTC 2012). Numerous writers specifically point to climate change and the likely pressure it will put on key tourism resources such as water, food and ecosystem health, and on coastal and alpine destinations (Jopp et al. 2014; Schott 2010; Sharpley 2009). However, these pressures are clearly not restricted to climate change alone (Tourism Victoria 2009). Given the industry’s size and economic importance it is easy to see how impacts such as these will, in all likelihood, lead to downside adverse economic flow-on effects for the industry in the future, even threatening its economic capacity (Choi & Sirakaya 2005; Horobin & Long 1996).

To adequately consider why it might be so critical that the tourism industry does address issues of sustainability, both in terms of societal obligation and because of the threats posed to its own future, it is important to get a sense of the sector’s magnitude. In size, tourism is ranked 3rd in terms of global export categories, accounts for 10% of Global Domestic Product (GDP), provides 1 in every 10 jobs, and delivers 7% of the world’s exports with international tourist arrivals of over 1.2 billion (UNWTO 2017). And in the Australian State of Victoria, within
which this project’s case study location is situated, it is an important economic driver contributing 7% of employment, and making up some 5.8% of Gross State Product (Tourism Victoria 2013b).

Consequently, with this picture of the enormous size of tourism in mind, it is not difficult to imagine that the industry might indeed produce significant negative environmental impacts. This is a situation which, if true, should unequivocally lend weight to moral and practical imperatives for the need for meaningful sustainability measures and outcomes. Equally as logically, it is not difficult to imagine that, due to its size, the industry might have the potential to be an important actor for positive environmental change if adequate sustainability approaches were practiced. And indeed this case is made by the UNEP & UNWTO when putting that ‘the greening of tourism can reduce the cost of energy, water and waste and enhance the value of biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural heritage’ (2012, p. viii).

2.4 Literature Theme 3: Transitioning to tourism sustainability through SMEs

This section seeks to highlight the importance of the business sector as a whole, and of SMEs in particular, as agents for change regarding environmental sustainability.

2.4.1 Transitioning to tourism sustainability: actors

As Elsez and Wieczorek state, the very nature of transitioning towards a sustainable production-consumption future, generally speaking, is that it is a multi-actor, multi-factor, and multi-level process (2012). From a tourism perspective, actors in the industry are variously identified as the state, the business sector, the organisational sector such as destination and regional management organisations, the community and voluntary players, as well as markets i.e. tourists (Pechlaner & Volgger 2013; Brambell & Lane 2011). The combination of this wide diversity of players, together with the extensive range of policy areas directly relevant to tourism, are significant factors that can inhibit positive change leading to sustainability becoming a reality (ibid.). When one adds to this the numerous challenges around getting the tourism private sector committing to change due to factors such as disinterest, cynicism and perceived cost burdens, making change happen is no easy task (ibid.).
2.4.2 SMEs as key actors enabling sustainability: a wider gap in the literature

Notwithstanding the existence of the range of important actors in the tourism industry identified above, the business sector, particularly SMEs, stand out as key agents of change. As Lawrence et al. state with respect to enabling sustainability: ‘One of the fundamental questions is how a single economic entity, especially a small-scale enterprise, can be engaged in the uptake of sustainability practices’ (2006 p. 242). Indeed, it is considerably harder to encourage SMEs, irrespective of the actual industry, to become more sustainable than it is to do so for large enterprises (Vernon et al. 2003). This is partly as smaller businesses lack resources and also because sustainability tools that suit larger operations often are ineffective for SMEs (ibid.).

This importance of businesses as a key actor to enabling sustainability is also narrowed down to the SME sector in the tourism context by Roberts and Tribe (2009) and Dewhurst and Thomas (2003) who have established that small and micro businesses are seen as the key actors in delivery of sustainable development. This view is underpinned by Schaper and Carlsen in showing that SMEs, whilst supporting strongly the value of environmental considerations, show a far lower rate of adoption of environmental practices than do large firms (2004). This situation they refer to as ‘the so-called SME problem in environmental management’ (Merritt 1991 in Schaper & Carlsen 2004, p. 204). The importance of enabling greater SME sustainability is further focused by Hall in finding that businesses are critical tourism actors in effecting a meaningful response to climate change and that tourism SMEs have been previously ignored compared to the amount of work done on resorts, destinations and tourism organisations (2006).

These points provide a sound reasoning for the focus of my thesis concentrating on the SME sector, and investigating the role SMEs play in contributing to green tourism. This is so, particularly given that as Alonso and Ogle (2010) have determined that ‘very little discussion exists on the views of SMTHEs [small and medium tourism and hospitality enterprises] regarding their involvement in environmentally sustainable practices’ (2010, p. 824). This observation is supported by previous findings by both Schaper and Carlsen (2004) who established that research actually investigating tourism SMEs from an environmental angle is actually small in number, and by Font who says that there is a dearth of studies gleaning insights into why or why not tourism SMEs are sustainable (2014). This is a wider gap in the literature concerning sustainability within tourism SMEs generally, and is one which this thesis helps fill.
2.5 Literature Theme 4: Environmental sustainability practices and motivations within tourism SMEs

This section looks at that previous research into environmental sustainability practices and motivations of tourism SMEs and seeks to clearly show how this project responds to specific literature gaps in that field comprising both accommodation and non-accommodation service providers.

2.5.1 Previous literature focusing on the accommodation sector

A distinctive body of research does exist into sustainable development practices and motivations specifically of tourism SMEs. However, much of this research focuses exclusively on the SME accommodation sector of tourism comprising small hotels, bed and breakfast establishments, backpacker establishments and resorts, amongst others. It also focuses to a minor degree on restaurants/café operations, such as in Kasim and Ismail 2012. Some of the more commonly cited works in this accommodation focused literature are: Coles, Zschiehner and Dinan 2014; Carmody 20012; Nicholls S and Kang S 2012; Sampaio, Thomas and Font 2012; Chan 2011; van Haastert and de Grosbois 2010; Kasim 2009; O’Neill and Alphonso 2009; Tzschentke, Kirk and Lynch 2008; Carter, Whiley and Knight 2004; and, Stabler and Goodall 1997. This list is not exclusive with a 2016 paper by Chan and Hsu analysing the content of 149 hospitality studies on the subject of environmental management (EM) published between 1993 and 2014 (2016), and a paper by Manganari, Dimara and Theotokis which is a review of articles within the topic of the greening of the lodging industry, published between 2003 and 2014 (2016).

Due to this concentration of previous sustainability research into tourism SMEs in the accommodation sector, whether the literature adequately reflects the state of play in what is a very diverse industry is very much open to question. Indeed, as Roberts and Tribe identified, industry sectors such as ‘retail, dive, restaurant, attractions and tour and travel’ have largely been previously ignored (2009, p. 557). This question is an important one, for as referred to in the formal definition of tourism given in Section 1.6.1, the industry provides ‘goods and services produced by the travel, hospitality, attractions/activities and retail sectors’. In other words, there is a high degree of differentiation of types of businesses within tourism.

One could put the view, of course, that a proposition that accommodation-related research is over-represented made just on the basis of an analysis of the various sectors comprising the
industry is simplistic and does not take into account the possible higher negative sustainability impact that accommodation may have, for example in water and energy use. Indeed, it has been suggested that accommodation providers are high users of some resources collectively (Alonso & Ogle 2010). Notwithstanding this, an analysis of the actual environmental impact of the various sectors within tourism lies well outside the scope of this project. Consequently, it could be said that what is, arguably, an over-concentration of previous research on the accommodation sector is a gap in the literature hindering a fuller understanding of issues surrounding sustainability amongst tourism SMEs. My thesis helps address this gap.

2.5.2. Key literature focusing on both accommodation and non-accommodation sectors

Within that literature on tourism environmental sustainability within SMEs, there is a small collection of research that does inquire into SMEs across both accommodation and non-accommodation sectors together. Whilst not necessarily completely representing this collection, highly notable within it are the following six papers which span the period between 2010 and 1996: Alonso and Ogle (2010); Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee (2007); Schaper and Carlsen (2004); Vernon et al. (2003); Dewhurst and Thomas (2003); and, Horobin and Long (1996). It is these particular papers that are selected as being highly useful as references for this project. It is not suggested that these papers somehow formally represent a cluster linked together in substantive ways. Each differs in terms of methods employed, case study locations utilised, the range of enterprises selected for data collection, and whether or not participants are likely to be predisposed to possess green values. Neither is it suggested that when comparisons with these studies are made in the context of findings from this thesis, that these comparisons are necessarily completely thorough. Nevertheless, together these six papers in the main provide a comprehensive and rich source of findings across the subjects of environmentally sustainable practices and motivations/attitudes of SMEs comprising both accommodation and non-accommodation sectors together. Indeed, close reference to these papers strongly assists in the achieving of the aims of my project.

However, one area important to the aims of this project where these six papers have little or no content is that of climate change. Horobin and Long do note that ‘[i]n the late 1980s concern about climate change, depletion of natural resources and pollution led to the concept of “sustainable development”‘ (1996, p. 15). Additionally, Alonso and Ogle in their inquiry into water use in tourism SMEs in Western Australia do in passing refer to climate change (2004). However, these two studies neither bring forward findings on climate change nor offer discussion around it, and the remainder of the articles do not cover the subject. It is outside
the scope of this project to discuss in detail as to why this might be so. Nevertheless, on the surface of it, it can only be surmised that climate change was not investigated by the researchers purposely, and/or it was not of particular concern to the study participants, and/or to some degree a number of the papers pre-dated the era of climate change being a phenomenon of critical importance to the tourism industry.

It has been seen that the wider tourism literature has highlighted the very significant threats arising from the negative impacts from climate change, both current and future, to the tourism industry (Juvan & Dolcinar 2014, Morrison & Pickering 2013; Buckley 2012, Gossling & Hall 2006). Consequently, it is important for this project to gather data relating to climate change. To enable this to be done, whilst the six papers cited earlier are used as the primary references in my project, two additional studies are looked at in some detail. These additional studies focus exclusively on climate change, one of these in a very specific winter ski sector sense (Morrison & Pickering 2013), and the other in a broader tourism destination sense (Hall 2006). These papers do not cover a broad cross-section of tourism SME sectors. Morrison and Pickering focuses on key industry stakeholders including resort operators, land managers, local government and researchers (2013), and Hall focuses on rural accommodation businesses, some of which also offer visitors activities. However, the coverage in these papers of climate change issues is important, not so much with respect to sustainability practices, but with respect to sustainability motivations.

2.5.3 Selected key literature: findings regarding environmentally sustainable practices

With respect to how the selected key literature referred to in the previous section, excluding that focused on climate change, cover the subject of environmentally sustainable practices, all have different approaches and focus. For example, several studies have a specific focus, such as Alonso and Ogle (2010) who concentrate primarily on water, and Beeton, Bergin-seers and Lee (2007) looking at a small pre-determined list of categories of practice. Further, Vernon et al. (2003) identify practices that are both actually carried out and envisaged to be adopted, and some papers give considerable detail on practices (ibid), whereas others give little detail on these (Dewhurst & Thomas 2003). Nonetheless, taken overall, these papers identify a very wide range of practices. Included in these practices are those which it could be said are more socially mainstreamed, such as energy, waste, water and transport related practices, and those that are industry focused such as accreditation and awards. There are also those dependent of some degree of personal commitment to sustainability such as
conservation education, as well as more minor activities such as green product purchasing, amongst others.

2.5.4 Selected key literature: findings regarding environmentally sustainable motivations

With respect to how the selected key literature, excluding that focused on climate change, covers the environmentally sustainable motivations of tourism SMEs, it can be said that there are two streams to this content. The first of these streams has to do with individual motivations, and the second with findings concerning the discrepancy between the green aspirations and green actions of enterprises.

Regarding individual motivations, three of these stand out as being identified by almost all of the studies, they being personal belief or commitment, cost-benefits, and customer demand. Apart from these, only Beeton, Bergin-seers and Lee (2007) identify a wider range of motivations. This is done in a detailed fashion and additional motivations brought to light by them include environmental programs, resource supply concerns, an intention to reduce environmental impact, competitive advantage, corporate policy, and staff welfare, amongst several more.

Regarding that discrepancy where enterprises might express aspirations to be green and yet don’t take meaningful actions to achieve sustainability, a number of writers do draw attention to this phenomenon. For example, Schaper and Carlsen (2004) put that while there is substantial support for sustainability this is not translated into practice. This position is echoed by Dewhurst and Thomas in finding that many enterprises are in favour of sustainability but green actions are ad hoc and not large in number (2003). Furthermore, Vernon et al. show that there is not a high appreciation of the fundamental meanings inherent in the concept of environmentally sustainable tourism with it commonly being conflated with economic outcomes (2003), and Horobin and Long claim there is even a gap between a desire to act and an understanding of what green practices actually are, let alone actually putting practices into action (1996).

Regarding the two papers looking at climate change, the findings of each was different, with Morrison and Pickering establishing that an almost universal belief that climate existed as a factor critical to the industry (2013), whereas Hall found that climate change was a low level priority to enterprises (2006). Notwithstanding the concern found amongst stakeholders regarding climate change by Morrison and Pickering, it is evident in their study that this concern appears to be based on how climate change will negatively affect the ski sector’s
economic viability, as distinct to concern about it based on a commitment to sustainability. A comment such as: ‘...with the loss of [the ski industry] you’ve got loss of income’ (ibid. p. 180) illustrates this concern.

2.5.5 Limitations in the selected key literature: currency

As pointed out, the six papers looked at in detail that research both accommodation and non-accommodation sectors do indeed provide very useful findings into the environmentally sustainable practices and motivations of tourism SMEs. However, it is logical to propose that, due to the passage of time, the findings in these papers most probably don’t reflect fully what is occurring today. It is likely that interesting new data, not uncovered in these works, is now available which could deepen the understanding of the issue of tourism SME sustainability. In other words, given that the earliest of these papers was published in 1996 and the last of them in 2010, it is reasonable to argue that this represents a limitation in the tourism literature. It is important to question what changes have occurred regarding the practices and motivations of tourism SMEs since the publication of these studies. It is logical to expect that an up to date appreciation of the current sustainability practices and motivations of tourism SMEs from a broad cross-section of business types will enlighten future efforts to make the industry greener. Indeed, to undertake actions with the goal of improving industry sustainability based on older data, may not of course produce the most effective results. This is a specific gap in the literature concerning sustainability within tourism SMEs, and one which this thesis helps address.

2.6 Literature summary and project implications

The examination of the four literature themes has shown a number of key things which have implications for this project.

The first theme has highlighted that the principle of sustainable development has become embedded as the mainstream principle of development. This is notwithstanding contentiousness and unresolved questions, including those concerning whether society is actually making progress towards meaningful sustainability. The second theme has shown that the specific notions of sustainable tourism and environmentally sustainable tourism are also characterised by contestability and uncertainty, and that the stated goals of sustainable tourism have not been met. From the environmental perspective the industry continues to be
a high contributor to environmental degradation, global warming and climate change, putting into peril even the industry’s future viability. The key implication from these two literature themes is that this project is in a wider sense a response to the clear and urgent need for ongoing research to assist societal efforts towards greater sustainability.

The third and fourth literature themes covering transitioning towards sustainability and the practices and motivations of tourism SMEs establish a number of important points. It is seen that SMEs have a vital role to play in the sustainability journey. Tourism small and medium enterprises have a significant environmental footprint collectively and have been shown to lag behind larger businesses in effecting sustainability outcomes as well as being under-researched in the past. And, within this context, it is reasonable to propose that this thesis, in providing a more up to date understanding of the current sustainability practices and motivations of tourism SMEs in both accommodation and non-accommodation sectors, could very likely lead to enhanced insights into how the tourism industry could become greener.

Interrogation of this key literature enables the identification of knowledge gaps, leads to the development of appropriate research design and identifies crucial outcomes from previous studies which form an essential context around which findings from this project can be discussed.

The following chapter details the project’s methodology and explains how this supports the appropriate collection, interpretation and discussion of the data.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Structure of chapter
3.1 Introduction
3.2 Theoretical framework
3.3 Standpoint
3.4 Methods

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 describes the methodology employed in my project. This includes information on the theoretical background and how this, together with alignment to key literature, leads to the chosen methods of data collection. Detail is also provided on the selection of interview participants, the interview style and questions, experimentation with pilot interviews, refinements made to the project, and finally various limitations relating to the discussion of findings. This information aims to establish that a sound methodology has been put in place to enable an answering of this project’s research questions.

3.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this project is guided by a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology.

With respect to the ontology, the personal insights gathered from the research participants were not a set of detached, unchanging and value-free perceptions which could be studied from a more fixed, objective view of the social world (Staller 2010). On the contrary, the views of the interview subjects would have been constructed by a host of influences, whether from within the sphere of their own private lives, or from within the sphere of their business activities. And the same could be said myself as the researcher. Consequently, a constructivist ontological position, with its embracing of the constant of interactivity of people and social occurrences (Bryman 2001 in Punch 2005), and an interpretivist epistemological approach, with its acceptance of the inherent value of looking for subjectivity (ibid.), are highly suitable to this project’s aim and objectives. An objectivist ontology, with its more absolutist view of
social reality (Punch 2005), and a positivist epistemology with its strictly impartial approach devoid of subjective values (Staller 2010) could not achieve the study’s qualitative aims.

This approach is in keeping with that of Hopkins and Mclean in their study into Scottish ski industry attitudes and practices into climate change where they chose qualitative semi-structured interviews over structured surveys (2014). This was due to the capacity of the former approach allowing ‘perceptions to be tackled in depth’ (ibid., p. 403).

3.3 Standpoint

It is evident that there were several factors likely to influence the methodological standpoint surrounding this project at the time the research was undertaken. The first of these relates to my own personal commitment to the principles and practices of sustainable development generally, and to environmental sustainability in particular. The second of these relates to my having been active in the tourism industry as a local government practitioner in the case study region for 11 years leading up to, and during most of the study. And furthermore, I was prior to that running a small ecotourism business in the region for some five years. This is important to note as Walter places considerable store on the ways that social standing, and epistemological, axiological and ontological positioning of the researcher are all likely to impact the characteristics of a researcher’s practice (2013).

It is certainly reasonable to acknowledge that my personal commitment to environmental sustainability has strongly contributed to the decision to undertake the research. However, this contribution could be said to simply have been to create an interest in the subject studied and given me the motivation to undertake the study, and not in its own right led to the development of any bias during the project. By following a scientifically rigorous methodological process I have taken care to avoid the possibility of producing any preferred outcomes in line with my personal views.

In addition, my professional experience in both the public and private sectors has given practical insights into the East Gippsland tourism industry, for example in terms of its nature and structure. This has assisted in engendering a sense of confidence in me that the industry and its issues are reasonably well understood, which has helped during the preparation and undertaking of the project. However, these insights and this confidence are things which could have been gained in other ways if they had not pre-existed, through for example making an adequate effort to gain familiarity with the local industry. Consequently, they do not in
themselves constitute an impediment to the study’s capacity to produce sound research which is unbiased to an acceptable degree.

3.4 Methods

The constructivist and interpretive theoretical framework followed in this project and described previously lend themselves to the essentially qualitative nature of the project. Further to this, face-to-face interviewing of individual participants was considered the most suitable method of data collection in contrast to other potentially viable methods, for example, telephone interviews, questionnaires or focus groups. Whilst having their own unique strengths, and also having being used variously in some of the previous key literature in the field, it was felt that each of these latter approaches would have been less productive than face-to-face interviews for the collection of the depth and range of data sought. For instance, telephone interviews and questionnaires would have restricted the opportunity for an in-depth interaction to be created between interviewee and interviewer. And, the running of a focus group, or groups, would have limited the range and depth of questions which could have been covered.

And, regarding the interview style, the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews was considered to suit the project far better than would have either more structured interviews posing closed and pre-set questions. The in-depth semi-structured approach is in keeping with the need to uncover personal insight and understanding from interview participants, as described by Walter (2013). Notwithstanding this qualitative approach, as is seen in Chapter 4 (Findings) and Chapter 5 (Discussion), some numerical data are presented and analysed. However, these data are presented in a descriptive sense and precise numbers are not used. This approach is given further explanation in Section 3.4.12.

3.4.1 Case study rationale and location description

In order to best pursue the aims of my thesis, that is, to determine the current environmentally sustainable practices and motivations of tourism SMEs and in so doing make some comparison to key previous literature, a case study approach was determined as appropriate for the collection of data. Utilising a case study made the project feasible within the context of limited time and resources being available for it, and allowed a detailed focus to be made, in what is the extremely broad global phenomenon of green practices and motivations of tourism SMEs. As Hancock and Algozzine say, the case study is useful for ‘intensive analyses and descriptions of a single unit…bounded by time and space’.
(2006, pp. 10-11). Furthermore, each of the six papers comprising the key previous research identified for specific attention in this project utilises a tourism destination case study as a cornerstone of its methodology (Alonso & Ogle 2010; Beeton, Bergin Seers & Lee 2007; Schaper & Carlsen 2004; Vernon et al. 2003; Dewhurst & Thomas 2003; Horobin & Long 1996). Consequently, the following of this approach has been most likely to enable a credible comparison of results between the earlier studies and my project. This, in turn, arguably gives a more solid basis to maximise the relevance of generalisation of findings from this project to other similar regional destinations.

The case study destination selected for this project is East Gippsland, which, formally identified by the term “Lakes”, is one of the two distinct sub-regions within the Gippsland tourism region (Victoria State Government 2017). Gippsland is one of the 11 tourism regions within the State of Victoria, Australia (ibid.). As to why the specific case study destination was chosen, this has been done for several reasons. Firstly, East Gippsland, is a tourism destination comprising tourism SMEs from a wide range of sectors. As the region’s official destination website conveys, in East Gippsland there is a broad offering of visitor activities and experiences serviced by businesses including accommodation, tours and cruises, local food and beverage products, water, land-based and adventure activities, retail activities, as well as arts and culture (EGSC 2017a). This characteristic fits very well with the need to collect data from a span of businesses that could confidently be seen as reflecting both accommodation and non-accommodation tourism sectors. Secondly, East Gippsland, with its strong focus on natural attractions, has similarities in terms of tourism characteristics to the case study locations used in each of the previous studies. For example, Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee investigate the Geelong Otway Tourism region in Victoria, Australia (2007), and Schaper and Carlsen look at the Margaret River tourism region in Western Australia (2004), both of which are rich in natural attractions. Furthermore, Vernon et al. study the Cardon district in Cornwall, England, of which the main attraction is ‘the area’s high quality environment’ (2003, p. 53), and both Dewhurst and Thomas (2003) and Horobin and Long (1996) study the Yorkshire Dales National Park region in England. These first two reasons point to East Gippsland being a good typical case study example. Finally, the third reason guiding the specific case study selection was that East Gippsland provided easy to access physically for myself whilst undertaking the data collection. This consideration, whilst a purely practical one, was not to be underestimated in importance given the amount of travelling and time required to undertake all of the 16 interviews. In other words, the limited scope of the project lent itself well to the selection of a study location that was not over-taxing in terms of resources required to pursue the research.
The East Gippsland tourism region is located in the far east of the State of Victoria, Australia, as shown in Figure 1.1. The tourism region comprises a single Local Government Municipality, that of East Gippsland, which had a population in 2017 of 45,426 and a landmass of 21,000 square kilometres (EGSC 2017b). East Gippsland has a strong tourism sector which is the local economy’s third largest industry in terms of employment (EGSC 2017c). The Municipality’s commercial centre is the city of Bairnsdale, largest tourism destination the seaside town of Lakes Entrance with other important towns servicing tourism areas being, Orbost, Metung, Paynesville, Omeo and Mallacoota. Natural features include lakes, national parks and forests, rivers, coastal areas and touring routes (EGSC 2017b).

**Figure 1.1: Map of East Gippsland case study location**

(Source: https://tinyurl.com/ya67peuj)

(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_(Australia)#/media/File:Victoria_in_Australia.svg)
3.4.2 Utilising a qualitative purposive quota sampling method

With respect to gathering data on the green tourism practices and motivations of tourism operators a qualitative method was used to pose, as Walter puts it, the ‘What meaning? Questions’ (2013 p. 56). The interview participants were selected using purposive quota sampling methods. The purposive sampling method was deemed more appropriate to the project than other methods of non-probability sampling techniques such as convenience, snowball or self-selected sampling, in that I had good access to, and knowledge of, the target group. The quota sampling method was also appropriate given that refinement of the prospective participant list was possible based on the variables of, first, tourism business sectors, and second, East Gippsland geographically based destinations. It was felt that by using the combination of purposive and quota sampling, the data collected were more representative of the target group than would otherwise have been the case if only one or the other had been used.

However, notwithstanding the efforts to ensure that interview participants reflected a good cross-section of businesses in the case study region, it is not posited that the intent was to have a fully representative sample. Rather, in the project’s limited scope, the intent was to make the sample relatively comprehensive, firstly for the purpose of being able to gain as much insight from the data as possible, and secondly, to strengthen prospects for research replication, if that is ever sought.

3.4.3 Determining the interview quota

The enterprises interviewed comprised tourism businesses, all but two of which were privately run. In order to ensure the enterprises interviewed represented a good spread across the tourism business typology in the target area, the selection of them was guided by an independent and objective framework, which was subsequently refined. This framework, prior to refinement, was the 31 award categories used in the 2014 Victorian Tourism Awards (Tourism Victoria 2014). These categories could confidently be seen as reflecting that State’s current key industry sectors as endorsed by the Victorian Government’s official tourism agency, Tourism Victoria. To further match these State-level categories to East Gippsland’s regional-level characteristics several adjustments to them were then made.

In the first adjustment, the full list of 31 award categories was reduced by excluding categories which were not relevant to the project objectives or of little relevance to East Gippsland. These
categories excluded comprised those of a more conceptual rather than concrete nature e.g. industry contribution or achiever award categories, those relevant to organisations as distinct to businesses e.g. destination marketing, local government and visitor services award categories, and those relating to events which in East Gippsland are generally run by community groups. And, finally, categories where there were no businesses, or too few businesses, in the region to warrant inclusion were also excluded. These final excluded categories comprised heritage and cultural tourism, business tourism, and backpacker accommodation. This first adjustment reduced the original list of quota categories from 31 to 15. These categories, as shown in Table 3.1, are: Major Tourism Attraction; Ecotourism; Indigenous Tourism; Specialised Tourism Services; Tour/Transport Operator, Adventure Tourism; Tourism Restaurants & Catering Services; Tourism Wineries, Distilleries & Breweries; Tourist & Caravan Parks; Hosted Accommodation; Unique Accommodation; Standard Accommodation; Deluxe Accommodation; Luxury Accommodation; and, Food Tourism. Each of these categories represents a tourism sector for this project.

Table 3.1: Victorian Tourism Awards (VTA) categories used to identify interview participants from various tourism sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories (VTA 2014)</th>
<th>Definition (VTA 2014)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Major Tourist Attractions</td>
<td>Attractions that are hallmark private or public destinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ecotourism</td>
<td>Products meeting formal ecotourism criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Indigenous Tourism</td>
<td>Products specialising in Indigenous culture, history and traditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Specialised Tourism Services</td>
<td>Services enhancing visitor experience e.g. shopping precincts, souvenir or artefact retailers, airports, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tour/Transport Operator</td>
<td>Tour and/or transport operators with fewer than 15 FTE employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Adventure Tourism</td>
<td>Participatory adventure tourism experiences e.g. rafting, bushwalking, four-wheel driving, horse riding etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Tourism Restaurants &amp; Catering Services</td>
<td>Provision of food and beverage; can include restaurants, event caterers, pubs and cafés.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Tourism Wineries, Distilleries &amp; Breweries</td>
<td>Businesses that offer a cellar door experience and create a significant contribution to tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Food Tourism</td>
<td>Food producers, tour operators, cooking schools, food attractions, farmers markets, trails etc. featuring local produce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Tourist &amp; Caravan Parks</td>
<td>Excellence in caravan or holiday parks that offer cabin and tenting accommodation and enhance the tourism experience in the destination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Hosted Accommodation</td>
<td>Owner/operators offering a high level personal guest contact e.g. bed &amp; breakfast, farm stay, cottage etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Unique Accommodation
Unconventional accommodation in a unique settings e.g. tented holidays, houseboats, yacht charters, etc.

13. Standard Accommodation
Motels, hotels, cabins etc. 3 – 3½ Star Rating.

14. Deluxe Accommodation
Apartments, hotels, motels and self-catering accommodation etc. 4 – 4½ Star Rating.

15. Luxury Accommodation
Typifying excellence across the board equivalent to an official 5 Star Rating.

In the second adjustment, although nominally it was intended that one enterprise in each of the 15 categories would be interviewed, a further refinement was made to give a more accurate representation of the particular strengths of several of the categories in East Gippsland. Given the cafes, restaurants and catering sector in 2012-13 accounted for 17% of tourism expenditure in tourism characteristic industries in Australia (TRA 2014a), the number of interviews conducted in this sector was increased to two. This second adjustment increased the number of interviews undertaken from 15 to 16.

Regarding the use of quotas in my project is not meant to seek representative saturation

3.4.4 Determining appropriate geographic spread of interviewees

A process was also undertaken to ensure there was a geographic spread of business locations to broadly reflect the relative size, from a visitation point of view, of the key tourism sub-destinations in East Gippsland. The primary general guide used for this was the estimated populations of so-called ‘profile areas’ on the official East Gippsland Shire community profile statistical website (EGSC 2014d). Adjustments to this guide were made to reflect the standing of the town of Lakes Entrance as the key holiday destination in the region. After the application of this guide, the respective sector, the number of interviews and the sub-destinations was settled on. Consequently, it was determined, if at all possible, to undertake seven interviews in the Lakes Entrance sub-destination, four interviews in the Bairnsdale sub-destination, three interviews in the Paynesville/Metung sub-destination, one interview in the Omeo/High Country sub-destination, and one interview in the Orbost/Marlo/Buchan sub-destination. For the purpose of practicality, due to the remoteness of Mallacoota, that town was combined into the Orbost/Marlo/Buchan sub-destination which is logical as each of the four towns lies within the “Australia’s Coastal Wilderness” part of the Municipality (Australia’s Coastal Wilderness 2016). Table 3.2 represents the tourism sectors, and the number of interviews to be held in each key tourism sub-destination in East Gippsland.
### Table 3.2: Interviewee sectors and number of interviews to be held in key sub-destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview participant sectors</th>
<th>No. of interviews</th>
<th>Sub-destination within East Gippsland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Major Tourist Attractions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Orbost/Marlo/Buchan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ecotourism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lakes Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Indigenous Tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bairnsdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Specialised Tourism Services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lakes Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tour/Transport Operator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lakes Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Adventure Tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Omeo/High Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Tourism Restaurants &amp; Catering Services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lakes Entrance (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Tourism Wineries, Distilleries &amp; Breweries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bairnsdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Food Tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lakes Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Tourist &amp; Caravan Parks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lakes Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Hosted Accommodation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bairnsdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Unique Accommodation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Metung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Standard Accommodation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bairnsdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Deluxe Accommodation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Paynesville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Luxury Accommodation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Metung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.5 Application of coding to ensure anonymity of participants

In order to minimise the chance of the identification of participants from the presentation of data, particularly with the attribution of quotations taken from interviews in the findings and discussion chapters, codes are applied to the business categories in Table 3.2, as they relate to the 16 interviewees. These codes are based on a simple distinction between interview participants representing either non-accommodation or accommodation or enterprises. There being 10 non-accommodation interview participants, each of these is given the letter 'N', together with a number from 1 to 10 i.e. from N1 to N 10. And, there being 6 accommodation interview participants, each of these is given the letters 'A ', together with a number from 1 to 6, i.e. from A1 to A6. The numbers are allocated to interviewees in a random way not consistent with the chronological order of categories in Table 3.2 and are not recorded in this thesis. Consequently, the likelihood of identification of any particular enterprise in the thesis.
is negligible. Table 3.3 shows the interview participant sectors and anonymity codes excluding allocated numbers.

Table 3.3: Interviewee sectors and anonymity code excluding allocated number

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourism sectors</th>
<th>Anonymity code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Tourist Attractions</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecotourism</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Tourism</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialised Tourism Services</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour/Transport Operator</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventure Tourism</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Restaurants &amp; Catering Services</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Wineries, Distilleries &amp; Breweries</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Tourism</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist &amp; Caravan Parks</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosted Accommodation</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique Accommodation</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Accommodation</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deluxe Accommodation</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury Accommodation</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.6 Development of interview questions

The development of interview questions was done in three stages, the first two of these being major stages and the third being minor. The first stage was based on an initial and narrower literature appraisal than subsequently completed. At this point, a series of draft interview questions was devised. These questions, while covering the three elements of green practices and motivations, as well as barriers impeding sustainability, also had a noticeable focus on a testing of SME awareness of publically available online tools and programs designed to assist businesses to become more environmentally sustainable. The inclusion of this latter focus had been derived from an emphasis given to the subject area in a previous study seen as highly relevant to my project (Beeton, Bergin-Seers & Lee 2007). The reason for this approach was that it was thought a testing of SME awareness of publically available online tools and programs designed to assist businesses to become more environmentally sustainable would
reveal interesting data which would make a significant contribution to the project outcome. At that point my thinking was that, if perceptions about the value of these sustainability resources was known, then recommendations could potentially be made to improve their effectiveness in assisting industry sustainability. A comprehensive list of these website-based resources and programs had been compiled by me.

In January and early February 2015 three pilot interviews were undertaken to test both the draft interview questions as well as my own interviewing style and skills. The three interviewees were selected as they were all active East Gippsland tourism enterprises who were known to me personally as acquaintances but, intentionally, were not personal friends.

However, it was found during the pilot interview phase that the list of website-based sustainability resources were not of interest to interviewees who were generally very unfamiliar with them. It was clear that asking more than just cursory questions about the resources was very laborious and unnecessarily reduced the time available for other questions. It was evident that data of considerably more value was unearthed by concentrating on questions which revealed in-depth responses to do with a broader range of subjects rather than getting more superficial responses around whether or not particular resources had been used.

Consequently, from the learnings from the pilot interviews, together with a wider literature inquiry in particular into the selected key literature cluster, the second stage of interview question development involved a major question revision. A focus was still around the three core subjects of the practices and motivations (including attitudes) of SMEs, as well as barriers that might be impeding environmental sustainability. To further inform these three core subjects, also included were questions relating to associated matters including the use of website-based sustainability tools and programs, local environmental concerns, climate change, and suggestions for future actions needed to improve sustainability. It was felt that each of this latter group of questions would enrichen the data relating to the three core areas.

Following the pilot interviews the process of undertaking the formal interviews was begun. To enable the 16 interviews to be completed, 31 prospects in total were contacted. Fifteen interviews were completed within a two week intensive period during May 2015 and one in November 2016.

However, during the undertaking of the first formal interview, local food and beverage products surfaced clearly as a distinctive practice espousing some potentially green characteristics. Subsequent to this initial interview I found substantiation in the literature of the potentially
environmentally friendly aspects of food tourism. Moreover, as I had already established that local food and beverage products were one of the distinctive tourism offerings of the case study destination, the value in inquiring further into his practice was evident and I made a decision to add an interview question to reflect this. This represented the last, and minor revision of interview questions.

3.4.7 Subsequent exclusion of barriers from project scope

During the period immediately following the undertaking of the formal interviews I had the intention to investigate the important subject of barriers to environmental sustainability as well as those of practices and motivations. However, my assessment of what has been feasible to investigate within the scope of this project has become considerably more focused over time. It became clearer that there was considerably more value in inquiring in greater depth into a smaller set of subjects than being broader and less focused. Accordingly, whilst data on barriers was collected in the interviews, it has not been used in my project. This un-reported data could well lend itself to worthwhile additional research.

The questions used in the formal interviews are shown at Appendix C.

3.4.8 Identifying potential interview participants

Within the context of the purposive quota sampling methods employed, identification of potential enterprises to be contacted as suitable prospects for interviewing was done by applying as much objectivity to the process as possible. In order to achieve this, the destination websites for each of the sub-destinations was viewed. This was considered more likely to contain a range of businesses meeting the criteria of each tourism business category relative to each location as encapsulated in Table 3.2. Where a location had no specific website, Victoria's official tourism consumer website, 'Visitvictoria', was used as the first default backup website. If this did not contain the necessary product information to enable identification of appropriate enterprises then East Gippsland’s official tourism consumer website ‘Discovereastgippsland' was used as the second default backup website. On viewing the relevant pages of the respective websites, the first enterprise meeting the sector and sub-destination criteria was selected as the first prospect to contact with an invitation to be a participant, the second enterprise meeting the criteria selected as the second business to contact should the first enterprise decline, and so on. By following this process it was judged that subjectivity in the research in the selection of enterprises was avoided, a risk that could
otherwise have materialised. The websites and specific web pages visited for each sub-
destination are provided at Appendix C.

3.4.9 Determining the interview participants

Notwithstanding the precise process undertaken to compile a “Prospect List” of enterprises to
invite to participate in interviews, when the activity of actually contacting prospects and
proceeding with interviews was begun, not surprisingly, putting the theory into practice was
not straight forward. For example, in some instances, enterprises when contacted declined
the invitation to participate. In other instances businesspeople didn’t arrive on time at the
arranged interviews, and on yet other occasions interviews could not be carried out in East
Gippsland due to the working location of interviewees. Consequently, it was deemed
reasonable that adjustments to the methods needed to be made in situ, so to speak. The main
factor in bringing about the need for these adjustments was the time and travelling constraint.
Only a certain number of days was available for doing interviews, and when to this was added
the reality of distances needed to be travelled to meet interviewees in the regional area of
East Gippsland, it became clear that if the theoretical list of enterprises was going to be
unquestioningly followed then the budgeted interview timelines and resources allocated for
travelling would quickly become unworkable. When adjustments were being made, it was
assessed that it was more important to ensure that the assigned number of enterprises within
each sector were interviewed and less important that the exact number of interviews assigned
to each sub-destination was precisely followed.

Subsequently, the flowing steps were followed in the process to complete interviews:

1. Enterprises were contacted in the first instance as per those identified in the prospect
   list. Initial contact was made by dropping into the business physical address and
   requesting to see the manager or other appropriate person, or in a small number of
cases by email due to the business not having a physical address;

2. In a few cases, the above step was made unnecessary where the business manager
   was unexpectedly met outside their business environment, at which time the
research project was explained and an invitation made for them to participate;

3. Where invitations to participate in interviews were declined, a different approach was
then reverted to. As normally a decline was made when I was actually in a tourist
town it was decided that the only practical solution was simply to walk into the next
business of the same typology e.g. motel, café which I could physically locate and make the invitation to them to participate. Importantly, this was still a random process;

4. The formal RMIT University ‘Invitation to participate in a Research Project’ forms were provided to all interviewees. All participants signed the form consenting to interview and having it voice-recorded. A copy of this form is shown at Appendix A.

All but one interview took place at the work location of the participant, and given the rural location within which the data was sourced it was not surprising that a significant amount of travel was required to meet interview participants. The one interview which was the exception was done by telephone due to the operator at that time working in another region. Although this telephone interview in a physical sense was obviously very different in style to those done face to face, and in theory presented some additional challenges, the result was a quite satisfactory one. One interview needed to be carried out in Melbourne due to an office location.

With respect to the duration of the interviews, because the intention was to give as much opportunity as possible for revealing in-depth meaning through the questioning, interview length was largely tailored to the responsiveness of the interviewees. In a practical sense it was found that the length of interviews generally varied from approximately 30 to 40 minutes, although there was some variation to this.

3.4.10 The interview style

As previously described, data collection was done using the in-depth semi-structured interview style characteristic of interpretivism (Walter 2013). Open questions were posed to the respondents, and although the same questions were put to each interviewee in the same broad order, issues or opinions which surfaced were explored in as much depth and flexibility as possible. Interviewees were probed for further responses, with myself as the interviewer expressing an opinion or a suggestion in order to further uncover the deeper meanings and insights of the interviewee where needed, a technique supported by Walter (2013). This flexible approach used was not dissimilar to that employed by Beeton, Bergin-Sees and Lee in their study into practices and attitudes of tourism SMEs (2007). The interviews of these researchers ‘were semi-structured and conducted as a conversation, while guided by a list of questions but not strictly adhering to them’ (ibid., p. 8).
3.4.11 Findings coding and reporting approach

A large amount of rich, raw data were gathered from the project interviews providing substantial information for analysis. In the first phase of interview audio transcription, one quarter of the final interviews were transcribed fully by myself. It was then determined that the remaining interviews would be best transcribed professionally in order to conserve my time resources for other phases of the project. All of the transcribed interviews were checked against the respective original audio version at the same stage of the analysis process in order to verify accuracy. This also ensured a consistent engagement with the data took place allowing early results threads to surface.

The approach taken in the initial analysis of the raw data is essentially what is described by Bloomberg and Volpe as a templated one (2008). The templated approach is based on the establishment of codes derived from the literature together with the project’s research questions and a first engagement with the data (ibid.) Although this approach has a certain a priori prescriptiveness to it, there is also the element of flexibility that allows the coding to be adjusted to suit the emerging stories from the data and enabling the analyst to respond to the inevitable ‘nuances, subtleties, caveats and contradictions’ (2008, p. 101).

With respect to this project specifically, data coding was carried out in NVivo proprietary software.

3.4.12 Numerical data providing context for qualitative data

Some of the data collected in the project, specifically that relating to the number of practices and motivations, is more quantitative in nature than qualitative. However, this data is employed not in its own right but because it provides important context for the qualitative analysis.

Against this background, and in order to improve the clarity with which practices and motivations are described and discussed, data that are more numerical in nature are allocated to a series of descriptors adapted for this thesis from those suggested by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008). In this thesis the descriptors are less numerically precise than presented by these authors so making them more suitable to the relatively broad degree of measurement applied here. Their application avoids the need to use numbers in the findings, so minimising the attention given to numerical values in a qualitative study. There are two variations to these descriptors. The first variation reflects both the level of adoption of individual practices by all
Sixteen interviewees overall as described in Section 4.2.1, and the level of importance of individual motivations amongst all 16 interviewees overall, as described in Section 4.5.1. This first variation of the descriptors is as follows:

- 16 interviewees is described as "all";
- 13-15 interviewees is described as “very high”;
- 10-12 interviewees is described as “high”;
- 7-9 interviewees is described as “moderate”;
- 4-6 interviewees is described as “low”;
- 1-3 interviewees is described as “very low”;
- 0 interviewees is described as “zero”.

The second variation of the descriptors reflects the level of adoption of all the practices by each interviewee individually as described in Section 4.2.2, and is as follows:

- 17 adopted practices is described as “all”;
- 14-16 adopted practices is described as “very high”;
- 11-13 adopted practices is described as “high”;
- 7-10 adopted practices is described as “moderate”;
- 4-6 adopted practices is described as “low”;
- 1-3 adopted practices is described as “very low”;
- 0 adopted practices is described as “zero”.

3.3.13 Overcoming limitations when comparing practices and motivations with past literature

When discussion is carried out in Chapter 5 concerning a comparison between findings in this thesis and that seen in the selected literature, a liberal approach is taken when labelling and assessing individual practices and motivations which are identified in earlier studies. Numerous practices and motivations identified in the literature stand clearly as important and distinct activities in their own right. On the other hand, some other practices and motivations that are less distinct are best viewed when compiled into groups bearing similar features. This is done in order to overcome the complexities of trying to align the considerable variability that has naturally occurred in both terminology and characteristics of practices and motivations found in previous papers over time. For example, amongst the practices in the literature, Beeton, Bergin-Seers and Lee explore five wider groupings only, however, within these groupings they specifically identify 36 individual subsidiary practices. And, Schaper and
Carlsen compile from the literature relating to small enterprises per se i.e. not only tourism, 38 ‘possible environmental practices in a small firm’ but list these under only seven broad groupings (2004, p. 201). Furthermore, Vernon et al. compile a list of environmental actions of businesses but these are not only those actually undertaken but those that were both ‘actual and proposed’ 2003, p. 59). Clearly, if in my thesis a literal approach was taken to listing every variation of every practice found in the literature the task would have made the project unfeasible and rendered it more of an audit than an analysis searching for meaning. Conversely, if only the wider groupings seen in the literature were analysed, then this would inevitably have substantially limited the depth of analysis made.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Structure of chapter
4.1 Introduction
4.2 Environmentally sustainable practices of tourism SMEs
4.3 Environmentally sustainable motivations of tourism SMEs
4.4 Summary

4.1 Introduction

In order to respond to this project’s research questions regarding what are the current environmentally sustainable practices and motivations of tourism SMEs and how these might have changed compared to the past, findings on firstly, the current practices, and secondly, the current motivations of SMEs is presented in this chapter.

4.2 Environmentally sustainable practices of tourism SMEs

Section 4.2 presents findings relating to the environmental sustainability practices of tourism SMEs in the East Gippsland case study, firstly in terms of the actual practices, secondly in terms of the further analysis of numerically-based data.

It was found that a diverse range of environmental sustainability practices were undertaken by tourism SMEs. These practices, in alphabetical order, are:

- Accreditation and awards;
- Biodiversity activities;
- Building design and construction;
- Carbon reduction tools;
- Energy efficiency;
- Environmental education;
- Local food tourism;
- Digital office practices;
- Green boating;
Green horticulture;
- Green products and services;
- Lobbying and activism;
- Motor vehicles emissions efficiency;
- Photovoltaics;
- Recycling and waste minimisation;
- Solar hot water; and,
- Water conservation.

In order to better inquire into these practices, two steps are taken to analyse the data prior to the narrative presentation of interview material. The first of these steps is to view in a descriptive sense the relative frequency, or level of adoption of individual practices by all of the 16 SMEs overall. The second of these steps is to determine the level to which each individual interviewee adopts the total number of practices. These two ways of looking at the data have a precedence in the literature (Beeton, Bergin-Seers & Lee, 2007).

4.2.1 Level of adoption of practices by all 16 SMEs overall

The first step in the data analysis is carried out to identify the level of adoption for each practice as explained in Section 3.3.12, and is presented in Table 4.1. This analysis identifies that the most implemented practice was that of energy efficiency which had very high adoption. The next most adopted practices were those of recycling and waste minimisation, and water conservation which had high adoption. The next most adopted practices were accreditation and awards, environmental education, local food tourism, and water conservation, which had moderate adoption. The next most adopted practices were biodiversity actions, digital office activities, green boating, and green products and services which had low adoption. The least adopted group of practices were building design and construction, carbon reduction tools, green horticulture, lobbying and activism, motor vehicles emissions efficiency, photovoltaics and solar hot water which had very low adoption.

Table 4.1: Level of adoption of practices amongst all interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Level of adoption of individual practice by all of the 16 interviewees overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energy efficiency</td>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Level of adoption of individual practice by all of the 16 interviewees overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling and waste minimisation</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water conservation</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation and awards</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental education</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local food tourism</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biodiversity activities</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital office technology</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green boating</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green products and services</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building design and construction</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon reduction tools</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green horticulture</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbying and activism</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle emissions efficiency</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photovoltaics</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar hot water</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Where more than one practice has the same level of adoption, practices are in alphabetical order.

4.2.2 Level of adoption of all practices by each interviewee

The second step in the further analysis of data is identifying the level of adoption of all practices by each interviewee. This analysis is also done using the level of adoption descriptor for each practice, and is presented in Table 4.2 in which interviewees are designated according to the random codes allocated to them. This finding is important as a basis for later discussion in Section 5.6.2 around the extent to which enterprises adopt practices and the relationship of this to an environmental sustainability belief and commitment held by them.
What this analysis shows is that interviewee A4 had a high adoption of practices and interviewees N7, N3, N8, N4 and N10 had moderate adoption of practices. Furthermore, interviewees N2, N9, N1, A1, A3 and A6 had low adoption of practices. Furthermore, interviewees N6, N5 and A5 had very low adoption of practices. And, finally, interviewee A2 had zero adoption of practices.

Table 4.2 Level of adoption of the practices by each interviewee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee designated by tourism sector code</th>
<th>Level of adoption of all practices by each interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N7</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N3</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N8</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>N4</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td>N10</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td>N2</td>
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<td>N9</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>N1</td>
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<td>A1</td>
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<td>A3</td>
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<td>N5</td>
<td>Very low</td>
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<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Zero</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: (1) Codes ‘A’ indicate participants from the accommodation sector, while codes ‘N’ indicate participants from the non-accommodation sectors.
4.3 Practices: narrative descriptions

This section presents a rich narrative description of the findings regarding practices arranged according to the order in which they are presented in Table 4.1, that is, in the descending order from the most adopted of the practices by the 16 interviewees to the least adopted of the practices.

4.3.1 Energy efficiency

Energy efficiency was the most supported sustainability practice and it had very high adoption. There was also a high awareness by interviewees of wider power usage issues relevant to their businesses.

Use of low wattage globes and LED lighting was common with installation having been done either as part of a government incentive scheme, as highlighted by: ‘[W]e’ve had about 200 downlights changed to LED and that was a free initiative from the State Government…and that was purely for power consumption’ (A3), or self-initiated, as highlighted by: ‘Well we’ve got the LEDs in here now’ (N9).

Two interviewees reported using solar sensing lighting which only operated after dark, with one of these demonstrating their commitment to the practice by making the extra effort to purchase the product directly from England after a local retailer ceased to supply them. As this interviewee reported: “now they don’t sell them at all [here], so I get them from England” (A1).

An inclination to continue to upgrade to more efficient lighting when that was possible was also evident, with one interviewee saying: “Here we use the low wattage globes, which when they go we’ll probably change to…LED ones. (N1). There was also a tendency to turn off unnecessary lighting when use was not essential, as shown by this comment: “Almost all of our lights now are low consumption and we keep things turned off” (N8).

The employment of simple methods to minimise power use by guests was common by interviewees. Examples included the turning off equipment which was not being used or had been left on by guests. There was also the monitoring of power consumption, in one case very effective use of shading and of cross ventilation due to building design, and fine-tuning
irrigation activities to suit lower tariffs. These examples are demonstrated with the following comments:

When people leave the park, we always make sure we go to the cabin and make sure that the electric blankets are turned off, that the heaters are turned off, air-cons are turned off because quite often people leave those on…So in that small way, we try and minimise the power. (A6)

We keep things turned off…[We’re] conscious of…reducing power consumption and with the ceiling fans and the cross ventilation, we use a lot of that passive heating and cooling. (N8)

[W]e keep a track of what power we use and everything goes off and then on when we are using it. (N1)

[W]e try to get cheaper rates at night time…and just run the cool store at night-time when we can…Some of [the power companies] will give you a cheaper rate at night. (N2)

A good example of energy saving awareness being deeply part of the business focus is shown by the following interviewee who demonstrates a breadth and depth of activities covering energy saving and carbon neutrality, the latter even considered within the context of outsourced web hosting:

Well, in my business life as well as my private life I try to reduce my environmental impact. You know, the black balloon thing¹…[And] website hosting is carbon neutral…which is really good (N7).

In summary, energy efficiency had very high adoption. Considerable awareness and commitment by enterprises is seen in general with a particularly deep demonstration of practice evident in a small minority of businesses.

¹ ‘black balloon’ refers to a Government of Victoria, Australia, energy saving and climate change awareness campaign launched in 2006.
4.3.2 Recycling and waste minimisation

Recycling and waste minimisation practices had high adoption. The range of recycling and waste minimisation practices was diverse. Individual examples identified included recycling of food scapes to hens and disposal of effluent on the property via a septic tank (N8), a self-operated small sewage plant in an operation with very high summer visitor numbers (N3), and ensuring no rubbish is left when bushwalking such as food wastes which may spread seeds into the wild (N7). Other notable instances were recycling an entire vessel for refurbishment as a tourist venue (N9), and cutting the number of rubbish bins collected by the waste contractor from 100 to 50 by initiating a recycling program and following this up educating tenants found to be mixing rubbish and recycling items (A6). As this operator put it:

We at the park paid for 100 bins per week to be emptied, so we cut that in half and got very strict about what went into our recycle bins and we’d stick labels on them. (A6)

Many of the instances of recycling and waste minimisation activities were reasonably commonplace and could not be considered as exceptional. On the other hand, there were standout examples of what could be described as more in-depth approaches taken by five or six interviewees. These approaches amounted to more than just a collection of various activities, but appeared to indicate a more deeply embedded attitude and a motivation that included an on-going search for further improved practice. Examples of this approach can be seen in the following comments:

So we’ve done everything from looking at how we can reduce the paper in the environment…how we’re reducing the amount of rubbish by being really vigilant with recycling. (A4)

So, obviously recycling wherever I can…you know reducing the amount of new products I need to use and…I re-use the back of paper that is blank…or something gets used as scrap paper…and things like that. I use recycled paper for printing where I can, I use recycled envelopes. (N7)

You see what we are trying to do with our operation is deal with [waste] entirely on the property. And what leaves here goes to recycling…[It] comes down to recycling where you can. (N10)
In summary, recycling and waste minimisation had high adoption. A diverse range of practices was seen as commonplace with some evidence of exceptional commitment to the practice by a few enterprises.

4.3.3 Water conservation

The activity of water conservation measures including water saving and harvesting had high adoption. Three interviewees relied on their own water supply completely, two of these were horticultural pursuits and the other an accommodation business located outside the town reticulation area who commented: “We have our own water supply. All…effluent is disposed of on the [property]” (N8). The horticultural operators, not surprisingly, had an in-depth understanding of their water needs and usage and showed a strong inclination to invest, innovate and tweak their systems with one of them a recipient of a State-level award for implementing an irrigation system “that saves 70 percent of our water” (N10).

The majority of the balance of enterprises were all located in town water reticulation areas and all expressed an awareness of the need to find ways to use water efficiently. The range of practices varied business to business with examples being in-house laundry operations including use of efficient front loading washing machines, use of low flow showerheads, installation of rain water tanks for back up supply, drought resistant gardens, and reliance on a supply of recycled effluent water from the local water authority for golf course irrigation. Comments from these interviewees included the following:

Things like showerheads had been very easy to do and we have addressed that problem in several parks. (A6)

[We] might put a tank in…to try and get the run off…We’re putting in plants that are very summer tolerant…so we won’t use a lot of water really. (N1) 

We use recycled water from the recycle plant…Just about every green in the place is watered by recycled water. (N5)

One interviewee was in the position of not viewing water saving measures at all a priority in their operations in the state of Victoria where this project’s case study region was located, but being very mindful of the practice in an operation in northern Australia, For this interviewee, the issue driving their approach to water conservation was cost, and said: ‘in Victoria, water
is not a big cost, [but in] my [Western Australian] property on the other hand [it] is ridiculous’ (A5).

In summary, water saving or harvesting had high adoption with a range of practices seen across the spectrum of enterprises including those using agricultural irrigation. Very strong commitment was evident in some operations.

4.3.4 Accreditation and awards

Accreditation and awards had moderate adoption. This was done either at the time of the interviews or in the recent past, both of these timeframes taken as relevant to this project. An additional operator who demonstrated a high level of sustainability practices, although not being accredited, expressed that this was the case due to their possessing a uniquely high market recognition as a green nature-based product. Whilst this operator is not included as being accredited in this study, it is worth noting that they may well have been under different circumstances.

For the purpose of definition, accreditation can be seen as referring to a formal industry standards scheme. Awards naturally comprise a competitive element. Regarding other schemes, such as those relating to fresh produce standards, or wine awards, although these were participated in by several of the interviewees, they lie outside the scope of this project to assess for relevance and so are not considered.

Overall, there was a positive attitude held towards the value of both accreditation and awards with it clear that for those enterprises being active in them, participation did provide an incentive to research and adopt environmentally sound practices. Positive comments were in the main from operators for whom undergoing an accreditation or awards application process was an extremely useful business development tool. Examples of comments supporting this include the following:

I’ve gone into the tourism awards…and you research and you look at different options when you are forced, when someone says “what do you do?”…So that’s probably pretty key for us…I would google it and it would be examples and excerpts from different articles, you know what the big players are doing…what’s the Hilton doing, what’s the Quest doing…“that’s a good idea!”. (A3)
But that was the most useful thing I ever did because they do go through your sustainability, your public liability and everything else and that was something I would recommend. (A1)

[The tourism award process] was good because that forced us to look at it in a really deep way and measure everything...So, it just hones your focus into, “Okay...so let’s just measure everything now...Let’s revisit it in 12 months and try and make it an annual thing.” (A4)

This last operator cited above also reported that although they had never had standalone environmental accreditation, they had utilised published criteria from such schemes in order to benchmark and improve their own green standards. They had, “basically downloaded all the information that they had about what you would need to do to be accredited with them and I used that as a bit of a checklist” (A4)

Very strong support for accreditation or awards was also noticed amongst one of the interviewees who saw it as an essential part of their business ethos, particularly as their customers had high environmental expectations. For this enterprise, awards were also seen to have an important educational role to play in the advancement of environmental awareness amongst industry members and tourists, as indicated by this remark:

I do have ecotourism accreditation and that does require that I have standards around those sorts of things more so than before I had accreditation... I'm promoting that I'm doing the right sort of thing and [customers] are coming with some sort of expectation that that's the way it'll be...accreditation has led me to look at things I hadn't previously considered and it's a good way to lift the standard even more. (N7)

While barriers lie outside the scope of this project, a number of unsolicited and well-defined criticisms emerged in the interviews regarding accreditation or awards which need to be taken into account when trying to understand the practice. Indeed, notwithstanding the positive attitude overall towards various schemes, approximately a quarter of all interviewees voiced negative critiques regarding the effectiveness or value of tourism accreditation or awards. The criticisms made ranged from strident censure to milder observations and covered the subjects of cost, time and effort required, lack of value, and lack of credibility.
Regarding cost, time and effort required to achieve green accreditation, 1 interviewee said:

[T]hey don’t do anything apart from collect money. The only time that you hear anything from them is when they want money”…“they just make it more and more paperwork, and it's empire building. (N8)

Regarding lack of value, several operators expressed only mild criticism, such as that who commented: “but apart from being able to use the symbol, as a business at this stage, we haven’t really seen the benefit (A4). However, there was some very strong condemnation levelled at the credibility and marketing approach of some green programs, in particular from one operator who expressed their views in the following manner:

And it's just a joke…they offer [green accreditation] to us for no reason at all…we don't do anything to be awarded that so that’s a terrible marketing ploy, I think, from AAA to give it to properties like us. So they’ll send us out the pack and say, “Here you go. You put this sticker on your door to say you’re green star rated.” And I totally disagree. (A5)

This operator also spoke somewhat disparagingly about broader tourism awards more generally in commenting that winning awards was often more a reflection of the time put into the submission, rather than it being an indication of the applicant being a standout business. As the operator remarked:

[W]e get accredited all the time. But these bodies will just give you – they're not a true indicator of what – they give you accreditation if you pay. It’s embarrassing. So that’s all the tourism awards and so forth. (Ibid.)

There was also an observation raised concerning the looseness and confusion of the term “sustainability” when that was used with reference to awards that included an environmental component. As one interviewee said: “I'm always a bit sceptical. It’s become a very trendy word now. To be sustainable. But sustainable in what [way], economically sustainable, environmentally sustainable?” (N4).
In summary, accreditation or awards schemes are strongly supported. A very few enterprises saw them as essential to their market appeal. There is a positive attitude to the schemes overall with their value as business development and research tools highlighted. Accreditation or awards criteria were sometimes used as benchmarking tools without enterprises actually participating in schemes formally. Criticism included some question marks regarding resource demands, value, credibility and management.

4.3.5 Environmental education

Environmental education as a sustainability practice had moderate adoption. Education was overwhelmingly directed at customers. A few enterprises did have a critical interest in ensuring their staff were environmentally educated as tourist ecological interpretation and general conservation of nature were obvious core parts of their business offer, even though little was said in the interviews about this. Visitor education practices were very diverse, ranging from simple one-off actions to instances at the other end of the scale where conservation and education principles lay at the heart of the enterprise, such as in the case of true ecotourism or a national parks type experience.

Some enterprises had initiated simple signage in response to excessive power and water consumption by clients or for encouraging guests to re-use towels. It was noted by one interviewee, however, who said: “But we all have that” (A3), indicating that his latter practice was commonplace rather than notable. One enterprise that had initiated a power saving signage measure also highlighted a wider industry resource consumption problem and the challenge of influencing unsustainable customer expectations. As this interviewee said:

So, the issue that you have, that most people have in this industry is that you can’t walk into an apartment when they’ve got the air conditioning all day…and the heating all day and you know it and they’re not home…and it’s common….power, water and all that sort of stuff has increased. So we implemented some signage 12 months ago….saying please help us be kind to the environment and turn off your lights and your air cons when you’re out, and it also talks about water usage. (A3)

There were four interviewees who, it could be said, had sustainability education principles as a core of the business rationale, two of whom had formal eco-accreditation. Another of these enterprises, whilst not being actually accredited, had applied a range of ideas taken directly from accreditation criteria to their business, and the last of them not only delivered a significant
range of education resources but was also actively looking to expand their education significantly through the use of modern digital technology such as Wi-Fi. Some half of the interviewees practicing education undertook pre-visit education in a formal way as part of a strategy to make their customers more aware of environmental impact. This education, both pre-visit and during the visit, was not just of a “do” and “don’t” approach, but could probably be described as having the objective, and also the capacity, to genuinely change behaviour. Examples of insightful comments from these interviewees were:

We try to flag quite a few things with our guests before they arrive...to try and minimise rubbish, encouraging them to manage their holiday in a particular way that is in sync with that treading lightly philosophy...it changes the connection they have with that environment and I think they're more likely to wanna care for it. (A4)

[I] educate my clients before they arrive in my pre-departure notes about what behaviours are going to be expected...if we’re hiking not washing in streams with soap or sunscreen in case you affect the life in the water...obviously not picking the flowers or touching artefacts or historic items or taking souvenirs home or anything like that. (N7)

[G]etting back to the environmental concern is my education package that I deliver...my purpose there is to educate people about the environment, so they realise that various things whether it's drainage or sewage or thrown rubbish, will have an effect on the environment. (N4)

[W]e're trying to develop a bit more of an educational bent with regard to the proper care of site in terms of educational school groups, etcetera. (N3)

In summary, environmental education had moderate adoption. Furthermore, the practice was deeply embedded in half of those adopting customer environmental education. A diverse range of activities was evident across the spectrum of enterprises, much of this directed at visitors although staff education was an important element in several instances.
4.3.6 Local food tourism

A practice that unexpectedly surfaced during interviews was the subject of local food tourism in terms of locally produced food, beverages and other produce offered within a tourism destination to visitors. This practice is included as an environmentally sustainable practice for a somewhat different reason to all of the other practices, that is, not because it was seen to be green by many interviewees, but because it was adopted by a significant number of the interviewees and has been shown in the literature to possess environmentally sustainable features. The subject has been identified as having a beneficial role in improving the wider sustainability of tourism destinations, including from economic, environmental and cultural perspectives (Sims 2009). Sims puts that ‘buying local’, as she calls it, does support greater environmentally sustainable agriculture and she shows that previous researchers have concluded that the practice is critical if the tourism industry is to reduce its carbon footprint particularly with respect to lessened transportation (2009, p.322). Other writers have referred to the subject simply as “food tourism” (Everett & Slocum 2013).

In terms of what actually is included in the concept of “local food”, an initiative in the project’s case study region of East Gippsland includes not only primary produce such as meat, vegetables, seafood, fruit, honey, nuts, olives and so on, but also regionally manufactured product using local produce and/or labour, such as alcoholic beverages (wine, beer, cider, liquers etc.), oils, smallgoods amongst others (East Gippsland Produce 2107).

Results from the data show that local food tourism had moderate adoption. Half of the enterprises engaging in it actually produced and supplied to their customers local food or beverages including wine, fruit, wild caught seafood and Australian bush foods. Whilst not actually producing them, another half provided a wide range local foods and wines to customers. Several additional enterprises, although not actually involved in local food provision were strongly supportive of the environmental credentials of the concept.

A small number of enterprises engaged in local food tourism did acknowledge that locally produced food items did inherently possess sustainability credentials, including one of these who commented, “I mean you got food miles and all that. (N8). It was clear, however, that environmental sustainability credentials of local provenance were not the primary reason for most operators being involved in this niche market. Indeed, only one interviewee appeared to be catering to a visitor market actually seeking local food as a green product, in this case fresh produce for the organic and semi-organic market. On the other hand, the characteristics of
quality, freshness and uniqueness were emphasised considerably more, and it was evident that customer demand for these latter qualities of local produce was very much the key motivation for interest in the uptake of this practice by operators. These points are highlighted in the following remarks:

[O]ur main focus is on getting our local...seafood and vegetables as much as we can...[soon] I'll be a 100% [local seafood]. So, I've been really working at that...because...people ask for it and it's really important to me. (N6)

We would probably value [local food] more from a quality [than sustainability] point of view...a lot of fruits and things that you can source locally. Eggs are probably one that make a major difference. (N8)

And we tell people every wine that's there we grow here, nothing's brought in. We do it, we bottle it – and that's a selling point. (N10)

[I]t's all fresh...so everything's local except for Atlantic salmon...[T]hat was always the premise for the whole concept...to value-add what I was catching myself and push the local seafood. (N9)

One interviewee, not only provided local produce to customers but also supported local food in a more strategic manner by hosting invitation only dinners, as described in this way:

[W]e've had quite a few opportunities to showcase local produce...So, having dinners, and getting international journalists... It's that kind of paddock to plate concept while you're out immersed in [an environment] that is beautiful. It's something that's unique... and very much about the experience. (A4)

In summary, local food tourism does possess an environmentally sustainable component. It has strong appeal to visitors and had moderate adoption. However, its popularity is due far more to its perceived qualities of freshness, taste and uniqueness rather than for its green characteristics.

4.3.7 Biodiversity activities

Biodiversity activities had low adoption. However, the practice was at the upper end of the
“low” scale and clearly saw more uptake than some other practices in this group. This practice comprises a range of activities which don’t fit into other categories and that could be said to directly have a positive impact on the landscape, habitats and the local ecology. Examples of actual activities included low impact bushwalking, proactive conservation works, formal habitat protection through conservation schemes, planting of native flora and so on. In particular, four interviewees placed very high importance on having a small footprint in the landscape. The following remarks indicate some of the biodiversity activities:

> [W]e’re looking to reduce the impact of our visit as much as possible…I only visit areas irregularly sometimes only once a year so it’s not as if I’m returning…remaining on tracks where we are walking and if we are walking off track for whatever reason because there isn’t a track…we spread out. You know it’s not hard to have as little impact as possible. (N7)

> [C]onservation of [natural beauty…80% of the work is around conservation and keeping things. (N3)

So, redeveloping this [gully] is important for those issues, things like [giving] the flying foxes somewhere for a refuge, the parrots that come up and down the coast as they immigrate through if there are no Lily Pillys and pittosporums and those sort of things and blue box for them to feed on, then that’s the end of them…Just that whole [thing of] maintaining the ecological balance that’s going to mean that we’ll have a liveable planet. (N8)

> I do a couple [of ecotours] as a community service. (N4)

> We’re putting in plants that are very summer tolerant…you know. It’s all going to be basically bush foods. (N1)

In summary, biodiversity activities had relatively low adoption. However, where practiced it had an impact on landscape and habitat conservation and was passionately followed by some interviewees.
4.3.8 Digital office technology

Digital office related activities had low adoption. However, as with biodiversity activities, the practice was at the upper end of the “low” scale and also saw more uptake than some other practices in this group. An evident pattern was that all but one of those enterprises undertaking the practice demonstrated a relatively high number of sustainability actions. In these cases digital office practices were seen as part of the business’ wider sustainability ethic as shown by the following remark:

I have always tried to put [sustainability] into practice as much as I can in an office situation…These days of course it’s a lot easier to use digital means for communication and things instead of having to use printed paper. (N7)

Other comments regarding digital technology being a driver for minimising paper use and printing, as well as a more substantive move towards a genuine digital office environment were as follows:

I think technology is helping to drive [office sustainability practices]. With friendly tablets and what not you can actually write on Word documents. It helps immensely I know that. (N1)

So moving towards a paperless office, it’s been a big step forward for me, the iPad use…99 percent of my bookings are travellers who have mobile phones, …So therefore, it’s much easier for me just to send an SMS back to that person, confirming their booking…So there’s no issuing of paper tickets, there’s no sending a letter, even if they’re booking a week in advance, it still works. (N4)

So, the contact that we have with our guests is all – it starts there, so it’s all electronic. We’re not printing off stuff and posting it. Everything’s electronic. (A4)

Technology was also shown as having the potential to render some computer equipment obsolete. However, the recycling of superseded equipment was raised as a concern by one interviewee in saying: “I’ve got screen, I’ve got an old computer, I’ve got an old modem, I’ve got an old printer. What can I do with it? That to me is an annoying part of the process” (N4).

The provision of paperless visitor information via Wi-Fi was seen by one interviewee as an
How can we change the work today by this [digital] stuff? I'm researching and finding out ways of delivering it better and driving the provision of Wi-Fi…which will cost very, very little, and researching better ticketing the system, so we go to a paperless system, and people have iPhones…so we go to paperless systems as much as possible. (N3)

Although digital monitoring of, for example, power or water, was barely reported, one enterprise had imported from overseas a digital energy monitor which tracked in real-time both photovoltaic energy input as well as the business consumption. As the participant said: ‘[the monitor] tells me our usage here and how much I'm exporting or importing’ (N10). Using this device helped to maximise the returns from the solar power investment, for instance by delaying turning on electrical equipment until the power input could cope with it because ‘the miserable government is only paying us 8 cents per kilowatt we export which is scandalous’ (ibid.).

In summary, there was relatively low adoption of digital office technology but a high awareness of the sustainability opportunities of the practice by those utilising it. However, the active use of digital technology to optimise resource efficiency was barely reported. The sustainability benefits of Wi-Fi as compared to printing were also raised.

4.3.9 Green boating

Green boating had low adoption. However, the practice actually had universal support amongst those with a boating business interest. All highlighted some clear concerns about boating issues and demonstrated a commitment to various green boating practices, which were in response to these issues. Whilst the arising of this practice is seen within the context of the case study region being a key boating destination in Victoria, and so would be less likely to appear in a region with a smaller or no boating focus, the issues raised are important ones.

Key environmentally friendly boating activities undertaken included the elimination, or minimisation, of anti-fouling boat hull treatments which leach copper into the water, the elimination of water pollution arising from the discharge of grey water, bilge water and human waste into the local waterways, and impacts from fuel spillages and boat motor exhausts.
Remarks of positive steps taken regarding anti-fouling included:

Well…we’re not using anti-fouling on the pontoons but maintaining by rotation. (N9)

Probably from…a straight, minimal impact on environment aspect…I don't use anti-foul on the boat…because the anti-fouls…do have a big effect on environment, no doubt about that. (N4)

Examples of comments concerning effluent, fuel and bilge pollution were:

So, our entire fleet is fitted with holding tanks and we don’t pump any human waste out into the water…but we would see less than five percent of private boats come in and get pumped out. So, it's a real [issue]. (A4)

It’s terrible…they’re pumping [effluent] into the lakes, same with…it’s illegal to fuel your boat from jerry cans while your boat’s in the water, it illegal…People pumping out bilges into the middle of the lake. We would see people all the time, and we would report it…So, you know, they are two massive, massive impacts into our environment!!...Oh we’ve seen some pretty bad things. I think there’s some disrespect for our lakes and that needs to change I don’t know how you do that… (A3)

Several operators spoke about the well-known polluting impact of boat motors due to oil discharge into the water, in particular from 2-stroke motors, with one of these stressing the very purposeful efforts taken by them to ensure that boat motors used were the most efficient and least polluting available even though they were more expensive to buy. As this operator said: “[S]o I went to the extra four-stroke. So therefore I’m running no oil through my motor” (N4). The use of solar panel for boat power generation was not directly mentioned. However, given the high degree of green boating seen, it is safe to assume that this technology was used, particularly by those enterprises operating overnight hire boats.

In summary, green boating practices had low adoption overall, although had universal and passionate support amongst those operating boats as part of their business. Activities included responses to anti-fouling issues, the elimination of water pollution arising from the discharge of grey water, bilge water and human waste into the local waterways, as well as actions to control impacts from fuel spillages and 2-stroke boat motor exhaust residues. Solar power generation was probably also utilised but not directly raised.
4.3.10 Green products and services

The use of green products or green services had low adoption.

Only two interviewee expressed that sourcing and using green products or services was an important strategic practice of theirs. One particular enterprise had the objective of limiting wherever possible any contamination of the waterway environment their business relied on and their approach was as shown below:

[W]e use biodegradable products…and don’t let anything touch the water that’s got anything that’s harmful in there. We look at…all the products that we use. (A4)

Another two interviewees sometimes used cleaners that were more environmentally friendly than the stock standard commercial items. However it appeared that these alternatives were limited to simple applications such as using ‘vinegar solutions on tables’ (N9) and ‘dishwashing detergent to clean glass’ (A3). There was a perception that some of the products available to the average consumer and stocked in local supermarkets were reasonably eco-friendly, such phosphate-free laundry powder. However, this certainly wasn’t the case for may products with the view being put that: ‘you can’t transfer [non-commercial products] across into commercial because a lot of the time it takes longer to clean, and you’re just not getting that end result’ (A3). Three interviewees indicated they used no environmentally friendly products.

One respondent acknowledged that their cleaning staff were always on the lookout for ways to limit any negative health impacts from harsh chemicals by saying: “My girls are mindful. They prefer to use water and a little bit of dishwashing detergent to clean glass…as opposed to a strong window cleaner, but that also comes down to their health benefit” (A3). This suggested more of a concern about occupational health and safety than environmental impact.

Regarding green services, one enterprise took great pride in using a green printing service where ‘everything is carbon neutral about their operations’ (N7). The wider activity of locally buying the vast majority of all primary produce used in a restaurant was a core part of the business model for another interviewee who said: ‘[T]hat’s what I’ve really focused on’ (N6). Whilst it can’t be assumed in general that buying locally is always inherently greener than using produce imported into a region, in this case the local vegetables, meat and seafood
would very likely have been produced relatively sustainably given the reputation of the case study region for being "clean and green".

In summary, green products and services had low adoption other than for an isolated case where the practice was part of a business commitment to minimise environmental pollution. Apart from this specific case usage was mostly minor, such as for cleaning products. There was a sense that some commonly available cleaning products were reasonably green, although in many instances consumer products were seen to be inferior to commercial products.

4.3.11 Building design and construction

Only a few interviewees had engaged in building design and construction activities in order to, at least in part, improve environmental sustainability outcomes. Consequently it had very low adoption.

One of interviewees had undertaken a re-roofing which made the building more suitable for future photovoltaics, and as this interviewee said: ‘I’ve just had it re-roofed so I’m hoping sometime in the future solar panels will be a reality’ (N7). Another interviewee was undertaking ‘a new construction’ (N3) which would not only be more energy efficient but also lend itself to Wi-Fi provision because of its lower cost and footprint. However, although there was little undertaking of green building design and construction, it was clear that a much larger group of interviewees were aware of the limitations their current buildings placed on their becoming greener, in particular with respect to constraints regarding installing photovoltaics. In this regard, remarks such as: ‘but the pitch of our roof is quite tricky to get onto’ (A3), and ‘due to the shape of the roof as well because they’re rounded’ (N1), and ‘We’re 104 years old, the tiled roof, and it can’t be done’ (A1) were not uncommon. Certainly the reference to photovoltaics was widely cited regarding building design or construction although there was some indication that building sustainability design in more general was appreciated in principle. As one interviewee commented about an imminent new development they had a connection with:

Just over here...[t]here’s planning permits that have gone in for 10 2-bedroom apartments...So in terms of environmental thinking as far as our input into the development of that, certainly that’s got to be top of mind. This resort is 15 to 16 years old now so you’re a little bit restricted because you have what you have but in terms
of a new development you would hope they are going to be a little bit environmentally mindful I guess with the type of things that they put in (A3)

The use of cross-ventilation was mentioned by one participant (N8) as a means of passive heating and cooling. However, it was evident that this was done more because of the interviewee's good management of the opportunities the building had, rather than because it was efficiently designed. Indeed, this interviewee commented that green building design was not top of mind many years ago when the building had been constructed.

In summary, building design or construction was a practice had very low adoption in a practical sense. However, numerous interviewees were aware of the sustainability limitations of their own buildings, mainly, although not exclusively, in respect to photovoltaics. It was clear they would ensure future buildings they invested in were greener, given the opportunity.

4.3.12 Carbon reduction tools

Only a few interviewees were familiar with the concept of carbon offsetting and/or appeared to have a good understanding of where carbon counters could be accessed online, and how to use them. Consequently, the practice had very low adoption. One respondent in particular had employed carbon counters to determine the relative very low carbon footprint of their nature-based holiday product compared to a hypothetical more standard holiday of a similar length but involving air travel to a major Australian city destination and hotel accommodation. These results had been used in submissions for a State-level tourism award as well as using the tool to advance their own understanding regarding their business carbon neutrality. As this enterprise remarked:

There’s good tools…there’s great websites where you can sort of punch in a whole lot of data and work out what [carbon footprint you have]…The calculators are really good. So, that’s all really helpful. (A4)

Another interviewee was very familiar with carbon counting and offsetting in principle and also with the online functional capacity of them. However, specifically employing these tools to guide green business development had not yet been done by them, as suggested by the following:
I know there are some calculators online you can use to work out how much emissions you’re producing and how much land you would require to actually offset that, but…I’m hoping it certainly contributes, but to what extent it does I don’t know. (N7)

One additional interviewee, whilst not actually using carbon counters did, however, express an understanding of them, and even indicated that it would be interesting and potentially useful to experiment with offering accommodation customers carbon offset options when booking rooms in a similar way to that done by some airlines. The concept was expressed lucidly by the operator as follows:

But one of the test case that I’d like to do, which we can’t, is you offer – and I suppose the airlines do it with their carbon offset, but if you offer a room online for 200 dollars and then you’ve got another room for 202 or 205 or 210 [dollars] that is sustainable, that room, how many are gonna take it up and what’s that level – what’s that dollar amount? Is it one dollar, five dollars, ten dollars that people are willing to pay for that – what the worth is?...It is a good idea, so – yeah. And I’m sure a lot of businesses do it. A lot of – well, big business…but when it’s coming down to someone’s profit, I’m not sure the majority would. (A5)

In summary, the use and awareness of carbon counters and offsetting had very low adoption. However, where utilised they were seen to be very effective sustainability business management tools.

4.3.13 Green horticulture

Only a few of the interviewees were engaged in green horticulture and the practice had very low adoption. However, as with green boating, it was a practice likely to be participated in by only a restricted number of business types, but was universally adopted within the small cohort it was relevant to, in this case, horticultural pursuits.

Enterprises applied a range of green horticultural actions on their properties, some of which, as well as being driven by environmental goals, also had the aim of cost minimisation. These practices varied on each property but included farm product waste recycling, electricity saving measures, an in-depth commitment to water conservation investment and innovation within their operations, and the application of organic principles where possible. Both interviewees adopting the practice possessed a significant understanding of sustainable horticultural
practices including the need to minimise chemical use and improving soil health. As one respondent put it:

Well, we try to spray as little as possible…And we try to use as much organic fertiliser as we can too…Because artificial fertiliser does not improve the soil. (N2)

In summary, green horticultural practices had very low adoption, but were seen to be strongly committed by those few enterprises involved in horticultural production. In addition to broader sustainability, actions such as resource conservation, soil conservation and organic practices were adopted as far as possible.

4.3.14 Lobbying and activism

Only a few interviewees were actively engaged in various ways in what could be called lobbying and activism and the practice had very low adoption. For the purposes of this project, lobbying and activism can be said to refer to purposefully engaging in activities external to one’s own business in order to positively influence wider industry green behaviour. Activities seen variously involved formal participation in regional level tourism organisational boards or more one-off lobbying opportunities surrounding environmental issues. For this practice that has some political ramifications, quotations are not identified by the standard codes used in this thesis, but by the alternative letter codes ‘Interviewee X’ and ‘Interviewee Y’ in order to add an extra level of confidentiality to the data.

One interviewee, who ran a nature-based business and personally had wide-ranging environmental awareness and commitment, had a record of being active on several tourism or environmentally related organisational boards. This operator viewed involvement on selected boards partly as a way to be a green voice at the table, as well as a means of representing the interests of the nature-based tourism sector. This operator commented regarding one of the several boards on which they had participated:

There are people on that group that aren’t very green…So, I was quite pleased to be on that group. So I can at least try and put forward my views. (Interviewee X)

It was also evident that the operator was aware of the influence that key organisations have in determining the strategic direction of tourism and, regarding another organisational board experience, was said: “they weren’t a very green organisation”. The view that how what goes
on in board rooms is cemented into key strategic planning has a large impact on what happens from an environmental perspective at the business level is captured by the following observation:

They are the big drivers there that’s the concern. They run the big show. And if you haven’t got much…happening up there, it’s not gonna filter down unfortunately because people will look at [them] and go, “Well – oh, they don’t think about too much about [green issues]…And that filters right down the system [whether it’s] shire, whether it’s government agency. It does filter down. (Interviewee X)

Another interviewee involved in facets of lobbying, although not active specifically in a “green” capacity at in a formal organisational role, was in an influential board role and was clearly able to bring personal commitment on sustainability into the higher strategic direction of the industry. This operator was also a respected and influential stakeholder whose views were sought after by government and other key tourism players on specific environmental issues, and spoke of their advocacy activities, and some of the challenges of doing that, as follows:

[W]e’d get invited sometimes to sit at a table in conversations…I mean we’ve raised [a specific environmental issue] with a local member….with different key people within the industry and within the region. And we do table it as often as possible, but…we haven’t had the capacity, being time poor to try and do a bit more about that and keep it on the agenda more than that. (Interviewee Y)

Several further interviewees supported a number of conservation organisations and for these enterprises their activism was an important part of their personal and business ethos and helped them contribute to wider environmental sustainability.

In summary, green lobbying and activism regarding environmental issues was a practice having very low adoption. It took the form of engagement on organisational boards as well as issue-specific political lobbying and support for conservation-based groups. These instances were seen by the participants to be an important means of influencing policy development and give a practical form to ethos.

4.3.15 Motor vehicle emissions efficiency

Motor vehicle emissions efficiency was raised by only a few of the interviewees as important
in terms of environmental sustainability in their businesses and so had very low adoption. For most of the interviewees who did use efficient vehicles, transport of passengers or boats was an important part of their tourism enterprise. Interviewees adopting the practice were highly conscious of the emissions impact vehicles have and the need to use modern low emissions transport were at all possible. Comments from these interviewees included looking for ‘minimal [environmental] impact and towing ability’ (N4), and:

I’m using vehicles to transport people all the time and I have a few vehicle options open to me and that has changed over time and I guess I’m happier about my vehicle sustainability now than I probably have been in the past. (N7)

One interviewee highlighted being prepared to do extensive research to find the most appropriate vehicle for their needs, as indicated by this remark: ‘It was a challenge [to find the right vehicle] (N4), and one other interviewee brought up the subject to diesel emission filters by saying: We’ve got two vehicles that are both diesel and very efficient...they’re diesel with particulate filters and so on. (N10)

The high business cost of a vehicle and the lengthy time a model was held by small business owners, even when the efficiency of them was inferior to current standards, appeared to limit capacity of motor vehicles to make a quick impact on business sustainability, with the comment: “so it’s just upgrading when you can” (N1) pointing to this.

In summary, motor vehicle emissions efficiency had very low adoption. However, those few enterprises committed to motor vehicle emissions efficiency had high awareness of vehicle pollution and the need to minimise it in their businesses.

4.3.16 Photovoltaics

Only a few interviewees, had invested in photovoltaic technology. Consequently, it had very low adoption. For one of these interviewees, solar power had a clear economic value as shown by this comment: ‘We got solar panels on, which mostly cuts out virtually all of the power from [the guest rooms] and some from up the house’ (N8). The second of these had a significant installation of solar panels, however, whilst still believing that use of photovoltaics was warranted expressed some uncertainty about the actual economic value of them due to poor tariff returns. This operator was looking to future battery technology advances to make the technology more clearly financially attractive and commented: ‘as soon as we get some sort
of battery that’ll come on the market in the next year or…then I can give the electric companies the flick’ (N10).

However, photovoltaics stood out as a green practice in that there was very high interest in it by numerous interviewees not currently using the technology. Although this project is not covering the subject of barriers, it is useful to put the low use of photovoltaics in perspective by highlighting the obstacles halting their current uptake of solar power. These obstacles were clearly defined and primarily centred on unsuitably designed or old buildings that restricted solar panel installation, as alluded to in Section 4.3.11 on building design and construction. Apart from this constraint, the cost versus return ratio was also a consideration.

In summary, there was very low adoption of photovoltaics by enterprises although those using the technology were very committed to it even though cost benefits were sometimes questionable. Substantial interest was seen in photovoltaics by those not having adopted it with building suitability for rooftop installation being the primary obstacle.

4.3.17 Solar hot water

Solar hot water had very low adoption. That enterprise having solar hot water showed a keen commitment to the technology which was used for home and business operations. As this interviewee said: “We also have solar hot water by the way, we have 2 units and have 600 litres of capacity of solar hot water on our roof too” (N10).

In summary, solar hot water had very low support but was committed to where adopted.

4.4 Practices: Summary

This section has presented findings regarding what are the environmental sustainability practices of tourism small and medium enterprises in the East Gippsland case study.

In summary, the single practice having very high adoption was energy efficiency, while recycling and waste minimisation, and water conservation had high adoption. Some instances of particularly deep commitment to these 3 practices was seen. Practices that were moderately supported were accreditation and awards, environmental education, and local food tourism. Examples of particularly strong delivery of customer environmental education
were evident, and the support of local food tourism was driven by visitor demand for freshness, taste and uniqueness rather than its sustainability features. Practices that had low adoption were biodiversity activities, digital office technology, green boating and green products and services. Green boating stood out for having universal adoption amongst boat-operating businesses who interestingly reported there was little attention given to the practice by recreational boat users. Practices which had very low adoption were building design and construction, carbon reduction tools, green horticultural practices, lobbying and activism, motor vehicle emissions efficiency, photovoltaics and solar hot water. Notwithstanding the low level of adoption of energy efficient building design and construction, there was evidence that enterprises were clearly constrained by the complexities in modifying buildings to make them greener. These building constraints related particularly to photovoltaics.
4.5 Environmental sustainability motivations of tourism SMEs

Section 4.5 presents findings relating to the environmental sustainability motivations of tourism SMEs in the East Gippsland case study, firstly in terms of the actual motivations, secondly in terms of further analysis of data prior to the narrative presentation of interview material.

It was found that there were a moderate number of influences with respect to what positively motivated tourism SMEs to undertake those environmentally sustainable practices previously presented in Section 4.2. Given the less concrete nature of motivations compared to that of practices, so making the interpretation of them more subjective, any motivations that were only cursorily revealed in the data were not considered for inclusion within this project.

The motivations influencing sustainability, in alphabetical order, were:

- Accreditation and awards;
- Climate change response;
- Competitive advantage;
- Corporate policy;
- Cost-benefits;
- Customer demand;
- Industry expectation;
- Belief or commitment;
- Regulation;
- Staff welfare; and
- Supply chain.

4.5.1 Level of importance of motivation

In order to better analyse these motivations of tourism SMEs, one step is first taken to view in a descriptive sense the relative level of importance of individual motivations amongst the 16 interviewees overall. This is done using the descriptors as explained in Section 3.3.12 and is in keeping with the analysis of the findings relating to practices.

This analysis demonstrates that the two most influential motivational factors were those of cost-benefits and belief or commitment which both had very high level of importance overall. The next two most influential motivational factors were those of accreditation and awards, and customer demand, which had a moderate level of importance overall. The next most influential
motivations were regulation, climate change response, industry expectations, and supply chain which had a low level of importance overall. The least influential motivations were those of competitive advantage, corporate policy and staff welfare which had a very low level of importance overall. Table 4.3 presents this level of importance of motivations.

Table 4.3 Level of importance of motivations amongst all interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations for practices</th>
<th>Level of importance of motivation amongst the 16 interviewees overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost-benefits</td>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief or commitment</td>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation and awards</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer demand</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change response</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industry expectations</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supply chain</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive advantage</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate policy</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff welfare</td>
<td>Very low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Motivations: narrative description of findings

Section 4.6 presents a rich description of the findings regarding motivational influences that helped tourism SMEs to undertake environmentally sustainable practices in their operations, as they appear in Table 4.4. This data are used to support discussion on the findings in Chapter 5.
4.6.1 Cost-benefits

Cost-benefits coming from the uptake of environmentally sustainable practices had very high importance as a factor influencing what practices were actually adopted. There were, however, two somewhat distinctive sub-groups in this cohort. Most of the interviewees placed a greater importance on cost factors, and a much smaller number, whilst cost was still a factor for them, were less concerned about it. In contrast to these two groups, one operator stated emphatically that seeing cost-benefits from their business practices ranked substantially behind the sustainability imperative.

Remarks from some of the first sub-group, that is, operators placing varying degrees of higher importance on cost factors relating to green practices included the following:

[My motive is] Just to save costs…That’s all. (A2)

[T]he owner has to believe that he’s seeing value for his dollar… [Business people are] not ogres…At the end of the day, you’re running a business and I think some people lose sight of that. (A6)

[T]he main factor is obviously the economics of [sustainable practices]. It’s just not – it’s not viable for a small business. (A5)

[W]e try to get cheaper rates at night time and all that, and just run the cool store at night-time…saving on a bit of water, but the electricity outweighs the fact that you might be saving on a bit of water. (N2)

So that's [local food provision] the area that I'm in interested in and that's what I've really focused on. Because the other areas are too hard or too expensive, I suppose. (N6)

I mean we wouldn’t do it if we weren’t gonna save money. There’s a practical side to doing things. (N5)
These comments confirm the observation made by one interviewee about tourism businesses in general who said: ‘People aren’t involved in tourism to sustain the environment. They’re involved in tourism to make money’. (N8)

Remarks from some of the second sub-group, that is, operators indicating that whilst cost was a factor, it was weighed up together with a commitment to sustainability, include the following:

Yes definitely…it is partly a cost thing although I must confess that even with the photovoltaics there’re a lot of marginal things…all the investment of thousands of dollars and you are getting a miserable 8 cents back, but I’m looking at long term and we want to go down this path. (N10)

Sometimes maybe there’ll be a cheaper cleaning product or something like that and you’ve got to make those decisions…generally, it’s not really a factor of cost, is it, in terms of making those sorts of decisions… We’re not extreme in our views, but there’s a balance…with trying to run [a business]. (A4)

And I don’t think I would worry either of us if you weren’t getting your money back [from solar panels]. (A1)

Remarks from that single operator indicating that sustainability was without doubt far more important as an influence on them compared to cost factors included the following:

Well, the most important reason is that I believe in sustainability …certainly not economics because I don’t tend to look at that. (N7)

In summary, the receiving of a cost-benefits from green practices had very high importance. However, the views of interviewees ranged from cost-benefits being the priority, to its being a lesser factor to varying degrees, with one interviewee even conveying a view that cost was subsidiary to taking green action.

4.6.2 Belief or commitment

Personal belief or commitment was a motivational factor of very high importance on the uptake of environmentally sustainable practices. This motivation primarily embodied concern for the
environment, although personal wellbeing and lifestyle values were also evident. It was discerned that a difference existed between two broad sub-groups of interviewees, that is, those exhibiting a very strong belief and commitment to environmentally sustainable outcomes, and those exhibiting a belief but it not being as strong as the former group.

Approximately half of the interviewees expressed a managerial ethos of running their operations in a way that had as little environmental impact as possible. Insightful comments arising in the data that point to a conscious intention by operators in practicing the minimisation of their ecological footprint include the following:

> And we kind of have this philosophy about treading lightly with the holidays. (A4)

> Well, in my business life as well as my private life I try to reduce my environmental impact. (N7)

> I think that you have to move with the times and be seen to be at least be caring for your own environment and doing as much as you can for your environment and sustainability. (N3)

> [T]he business is set up to fit the situation and us and so that it treads lightly. (N8)

> Well, the business has two aspects. One aspect is environmental education. And again, my purpose there is to educate people about the environment. (N4)

> Look it’s all part of the package, not abusing your surroundings…be thoughtful, I mean as if you’re not going to live forever. (N10)

> [W]e try to spray as little as possible…And we try to use as much organic fertiliser as we can too…And if the melting of the ice keeps going on, it’s gonna flood a lot of countries. (N2)

The sense of the importance of personal beliefs and commitment to sustainability, while not being as comprehensive and directly expressed by almost all of the remaining participants was still evident. One of these operators who, whilst expressing: ‘we’re not doing anything
over and above…that’s different from the other[s]’ (N9), did nonetheless show in multiple ways a considerable understanding of sustainability. Comments from this group were as follows:

[T]he sustainability of tourism has got to have more sway than [logging] or a new wood chipping coup, or the fact that you have…farmers [putting] heaps of agriculture chemicals on these little lettuces. (N9)

So my number 1, if I had to order them, would be my personal beliefs and the economic footprint for sure. (A3)

So in that small way, we try and minimise the power and stuff that we use. We don’t waste. (A6)

But you’ve just got to make everyone understand why this is happening, why that is happening….such as if we take the trees out of this spot it’s going to erode the land right down to the [l]akes and put stuff in the [l]akes that will build up…But knowing the impacts of the past can affect the future. (N1)

Further accentuating this picture that many enterprises do possess varying degrees of belief or commitment which has a positive environmental impact in their operations, it was on the other hand seen that only one interviewee opposed, so to speak, the notion of the importance of sustainability. This interviewee appeared to actively resist making any positive comments that would paint the value of having a clean, green environment as a tourism asset. Comments such as ‘I don’t believe for one minute’ (A2) about climate change, that their only business and personal motivation was ‘[i]t’s all about the guests’ (ibid.), that industry accreditation ‘is a bloody waste of time’ (ibid.), and that having a clean natural environment is ‘not an issue’ (ibid.) underscore this negative attitude. Whilst several other interviewees certainly indicated that business priorities were more important than environmental ones they also had a clear awareness about the need to protect natural assets.

In summary, a positive personal belief or commitment towards environmental sustainability was of very high importance. It was a very strong motivational factor underlying the uptake of green practices for some half of all enterprises who made a noticeable conscious effort to minimise their environmental footprint. Most of the remaining half of enterprises did have some or belief or commitment towards sustainability but it was less evident than the former group to varying degrees. There was very little evidence of an outright negative attitude towards the value of the environment, although it did exist.
4.6.3 Accreditation and awards

Industry accreditation and awards schemes were included as an environmental sustainability practice. It is evident from the data, however, that they are also a motivational influence and, in relevant instances, require applicants or entrants to engage in business activities that are sustainable. This is the case where either the entire focus of a particular scheme is sustainability, or where a scheme might be far more general in nature but may comprise one or more individual criterions having a distinctive environmental focus. In the Australian context, prominent examples of the former are the various programs offered by Ecotourism Australia which include not only ecotourism specific schemes but also Climate Action Certification (2017). An example of the latter is the Victorian Tourism Awards (Tourism Victoria 2014). Other schemes such as those relating to fresh produce standards, or wine awards, although participated in by several of the interviewees, lie outside the scope of this project to assess for relevance and so are not considered.

Approximately half of the interviewees had been motivated to adopt environmentally sustainable practices by accreditation and awards criteria. Consequently, this motivation had moderate importance. It is not intended to duplicate here the findings relating to practices, presented in Section 4.3.4, that also pertain to motivations. However, it is worth saying that some of the previously reported comments from different interviewees regarding accreditation and awards as a practice do also encapsulate the importance of them as a motivational factor. Indeed, it is clear that participation does provide an incentive to research and adopt environmentally sound practices. Some of these previously made comments from Section 4.2.4.4 highlighting this were: “[Y]ou research and you look at different options when you are forced, when someone says ‘what do you do?’ you look for different alternatives” (A3); “they [accreditation organisations] do go through your sustainability” (A1); “That [the tourism award process] was good because that forced us to look at it in a really deep way and measure everything” (A4); “[A]ccredit…does require that I have standards around those sorts of things” (N7).

As well as the positive influence of accreditation and awards as a motivation, those negative critiques brought to light in presentation of the practice also have relevance here. Citations previously given including referring to cost, time and effort, such as only being contacted by award managers ‘when they want money’ and ‘they just make it more and more paperwork (N8), and in reference to lack of credibility: ‘they offer [green accreditation] to us for no reason
at all…we don’t do anything to be awarded that so that’s a terrible marketing ploy’ (A5), are examples of this criticism which equally applies to accreditation and awards as a motivation.

In summary, as with accreditation or awards schemes as a practice, these schemes had moderate importance as a motivation for sustainability. Some criticism was evident, ranging from mild irritation to deep cynicism, variously relating to resource demands, value, credibility and management.

4.6.4 Customer demand

Customer demand for environmentally sustainable tourism product was seen to have moderate importance as a motivation influencing implementation of green practices amongst interviewees, although the strength of this varied between participants. Almost a third of interviewees confirmed their customer base possessed a high expectation for a green experience. As three of these interviewees stated:

I’m promoting that I’m doing the right sort of thing and they [customers] are coming with some sort of expectation that that’s the way it’ll be. (N7)

I think that you need to look at who you’re attracting now in terms of the visitor or the person who’s going to use your [facility]. I doubt there’ll be a person…[who] would agree with going to somewhere where they didn’t recycle. So, it’s about your market.’ (N3)

Yes. A lot of people come and [ask] “Are you organic?” (N2)

Another interviewee from the third commented that having a green tourism product gave the business a marketing advantage with respect to their competitors, a view that does imply customer demand. This interviewee remarked:

[Being environmentally friendly] does give you a – kind of your marketing edge…I suppose trying to get myself a bit of an edge over other boat operators. I suppose it goes for accommodation as well…to me, that’s a motivation to try and be a bit greener. It’s just that business edge…It is a factor, I believe. (N4)
Other enterprises in this group seeing market demand as a factor for them stated that their customers did value sustainable experiences but this was only the case to a certain degree. One of these who ran a very environmentally sound nature-based product commented that whilst most of their customers appreciated protecting the environment, ‘it’s not always the case’ and that ‘people come for a lot of different reasons’ (A4). The other operator pointed out that, whilst in their case guests certainly came for the unique bush-based experience offered, broader environmental sustainability credentials weren’t a priority, an observation backed up by the comment: ‘People don’t come here because it’s ecologically sustainable…[T]hey’re not really looking for an eco [experience], I mean they wanna be comfortable. They want to enjoy their time’ (N8).

Another approximately one third of the interviewees indicated specifically that demand for green tourism product did not exist in any meaningful way in their customer base. However, interestingly, this group comprised three interviewees who did undertake a range of environmental sustainability practices in their businesses, in one case substantially so, with two of them showing a strong business commitment to sustainability. In other words, a paucity of demand didn’t appear to constrain their own activities in any significant way. As one of these interviewees said in answer to the question as to whether their guests valued that the business had green accreditation, their response was: “No, I do [care myself]…I don’t care about what the customers think. It’s all for me. It brings us up to speed and it makes me make sure…” (A1). This operator did acknowledge, however, that formal green accreditation did help improve their ranking on accommodation internet search engines. The other of these two operators remarked similarly regarding their own commitment, and stated very firmly:

I don’t think [our product being largely sustainable] makes a difference. People don’t mention it when they come here. I don’t think it’s front of mind. We’re doing it because we want to do it not because the market is saying. We’d do it anyhow. (N10)

The balance of the interviewees indicated that there was little or no demand for sustainable tourism product, as shown by the following comments:

They’ve never expressed, “Oh wow, you’re using low wattage globes. How great to see it.” It’s never – they’re on holidays. They’re not here to examine stuff like that…They’re more concerned with the comfort of the bed, the success of Wi-Fi is definitely number one at the moment. (A6)
I can’t manage it. I can’t tell a guest to use less power. In fact, guests use from what I’m aware of, they use more power because they are not paying for it. They pay for the room. So they come in, switch the heaters on, and leave them going all night…or they’ll get up in the morning and leave the electric blankets on. They wouldn’t do that at home. (A2)

[T]he guests don't want it [a green experience] and although they’ll say they do, they don't. If you put a water saver showerhead, that's where your complaints will come from, like the shower wasn't good enough. Or if you’ve put in dim lighting, they'll complain the lighting is not good enough. So although everyone talks about that they wanna be sustainable, in reality, if they're paying for something, they don't. So that's the gist of it and I think everyone’s in the same boat or majority…. (A5)

[A] lot of the smartest people [leave air conditioners on] – our doctors and judges, they’re the ones that are the biggest energy users, which is very interesting…and it’s common. (A3)

In summary, some third of interviewees reported that there was customer demand for green experiences, making it moderately important as a motivation overall. However, this demand varied between strong and moderate. A further third reported that there was no demand and it was apparent that customer expectations for indulgence actually inhibited the uptake of green practices by enterprises.

4.6.5 Regulation

The existence of regulations was of moderate importance as a motivation influencing environmental sustainability practices. However, it should be pointed out that only regulations apparent to interviewees in a day-to-day commercial sense were likely to be raised by them. This is as distinct to regulations that might be more obscurely embedded behind social practices such as, for example, energy efficient whitegoods standards, and so on.

It was seen that regulation related to only two categories of activities, they being boating and fresh food production. Regarding boating, three aspects of boating had regulations constraining them. These were fuelling, effluent and bilge discharge, and the use of anti-fouling chemical treatments. The latter of these aspects appeared to be controlled by commercial availability only of approved anti-foul chemicals. Regulations prohibited on-water
fuelling with all of the interviewees involved in boating adopted off-water fuelling and strongly supporting the purpose of the regulations which was to reduce fuel spillage into waterways. As highlighted in Section 4.3.8, this universal commitment by boat operators to reduce spillage was not replicated in the tourist boating market which suggested that regulation was only partly effective. As one participant remarked:

There's a lot of illegal fuelling that happens on the water still...the risk of spill contamination is significant. (A4)

There was an inconsistency of views from boat operating businesses regarding regulations covering effluent discharge with several stating that they did exist but simply weren't policed whilst others stating that regulations didn't exist, or hadn't been fully implemented. Notwithstanding this, none of the interviewees discharged human waste into the water, with one of them even electing to pull the boat into on-land public toilets rather than have a toilet on board. This interviewee remarked:

I don't have a toilet...So I'm quite happy to stop my boat [at] jetties or wherever it has to be. And everybody out, go to the toilet...I find that environmentally much more sustainable than actually trying to put a toilet on my boat [and] pumping out [and] chemicals you have to use. (N4).

The regulations for pumping out of bilges was also adhered to by boat operators. But, as with fuelling, both bilge and human effluent discharge regulations were reportedly ignored by many boating tourists. As one interviewee said regarding bilge water: ‘People pumping out bilges into the middle of the lake. We would see it time after time’ (A3), and another commented with respect to effluent: ‘[B]ut we would see less than five percent of private boats come in and get pumped [out]’ (A4).

The other area where regulation played a part, that of fresh food production, was limited in scope and had to do with chemicals applied during growing or storage. For example, one interviewee stated in some detail how not only were certain chemicals restricted by the government in terms of use, but that precise records had to be kept to ensure a paper trail existed. As this interviewee explained:

You're allowed to use one particular spray twice in the season. You're only allowed to use it twice...[We record] what we spray and the rates and everything, and when, and
what's the wind and everything is like...Now, when you pick the fruit, you've got to write down what patch. (N2)

In summary, regulation was only a moderately important motivation for green practices overall. Regulation applied in the main to boating operations with chemical pollution impacts from anti-fouling, and bilge and effluent discharge impacted. High levels of adherence to regulations was seen by enterprises, although this was reported as not always the case with boating tourists. In the fresh food production area, regulations applied to the use of chemicals, and once again were adhered to.

4.6.6 Climate change response

Only a few of the interviewees, were motivated in their adoption of environmentally sustainable practices by concerns regarding climate change. This made the motivation of low importance. These enterprises saw the phenomenon not only having some local impacts, including on their own businesses, but also involving wider environmental perspectives, as indicated by the following comments:

It [climate change] worries us. Yeah...And if the melting of the ice keeps going on, it’s gonna flood a lot of countries...every season seems to be different now...the sun seems to have more sting in it. (N2)

Yes definitely, climate change is something that concerns me...yes, the impacts of climate change will affect environmental sustainability in my business...and it could impact on the economic side of my business because of the dramatic things such as the changes in sea level, changes in the weather conditions and the environment in general...And fires...but you know I can only see that getting worse and harder as time goes on. (N7)

Two additional interviewees did also have some apprehensions about climate change but these had not appeared to impact their own sustainability practices. In one case, this concern primarily was a result of a particular previous incident of unprecedented property damage due to ocean storm surge. In the other case, alarm regarding climate change appeared to be focused on the inhibiting impact of government planning restrictions on local property development. As the first of these interviewees commented: 'But it wasn't just over one storm. It continued over about two months...Oh, there was a lot of trees here and suddenly there's
no trees there. What’s happened to the trees?’ (N5). And the second remarked: ‘I’m not denying the idea of climate change but what…I see is…this stagnation of anybody able to do this’ [develop commercial low lying land] (N9).

Strong concern over climate change did not mirror strong concern over environmental sustainability. This is illustrated by the evidence that only a small minority of those interviewees who demonstrated a managerial ethos of running their operations with minimal environmental impact also expressed unease over climate change. This is supported by these remarks: ‘So, [climate change is] in the back of my mind, but I must admit don’t make too many business decisions currently based on having any sort of climate change thinking in my head’ (A4), and ‘I think there are other factors that are more important for tourism that spring to mind than [the local tourism destination] being flooded [from sea level rise]’ (N10).

In summary, climate change was not a motivational factor to the vast majority of interviewees and only few enterprises had any deeply held concerns over climate change. However, to those few it was an important subject which influenced their businesses activities. An additional small number of interviewees had moderate climate change concerns but these were very limited in scope. Overall, many interviewees otherwise holding environmental issues very highly, saw climate change as a low priority.

4.6.7 Industry expectations

Only very few interviewees mentioned that industry expectations were a motivational factor for them regarding their own commitment to environmental sustainability practices and the motivation was of low importance. This motivation does not encompass any expectations coming from organisational membership or accreditation criteria but is linked to an expected level or standard of operation that gives it a certain standing amongst peers. Regarding one enterprise, which had a high level of eco-accreditation, the representative directly commented that their sustainability motivations were not driven by economic issues but by: “a combination of client and industry expectations” (N7).

In summary, industry expectations was of low importance as a motivation. Its importance appeared to be limited to enterprises engaged in niche service areas encompassing ecotourism type experiences.
4.6.8 Supply chain

Supply chain demands were of low importance as a motivation for environmental sustainability. It appeared that the only noticeable impact of the supply chain was when either on-sellers of a product required certain levels of sustainability, such as in the ecotourism market, or in the fresh food market. In both of these instances, market accessibility would have been curtailed to varying degrees if the product signed up to be sold was not delivered. For instance, an interviewee growing fresh food needed to be Quality Assured (QA) to access key markets and this involved strict adherence to numerous guidelines including chemical spraying tracking. As this participant said: ‘We’re Quality Assured. We…go through a sort of an exam once a year where we’ve got to write all our sprays down, and what we spray and the rates and everything (N2).

In summary, supply chain demands were a motivation of low importance. Its influence was limited to instances where tourism product on-sellers demanded certain green standards to be met.

4.6.9 Competitive advantage

Competitive advantage was of very low importance as a motivation leading to adoption of environmentally sustainable practices.

One interviewee saw that: ‘[T]rying to get myself a bit of an edge over other…operators…that’s a motivation to try and be a bit greener… It is a factor, I believe’ (N4). And although there was no evidence to support that this was a factor for other tourism SMEs, this interviewee did make the more general comment: ‘I suppose it [having the competitive advantage] goes for accommodation as well’ (ibid.).

In summary, competitive business advantage arising from being green was of very low importance as a motivation for environmentally sustainable behaviour by SMEs.

4.6.10 Corporate policy

The existence of formal corporate policy was of very low importance as a motivation for environmentally sustainable practices.
The only interviewee referring to a policy was to a larger, multi-levelled management operation. In this particular instance, the operator's business structure included a CEO and a Board of Directors, and the interviewee commented:

I think there is a policy. I know the CEO sent an email to use emails instead of [paper based communications]. And it comes from the Board because they've all got laptops and stuff and there was a lot of wastage of paper so correspondence is all basically by email and if you need to print it off you print it off… And also working from the top down, so the CEO embracing that as well. (N1)

In summary, corporate policy was of very low importance as a motivation for green practices amongst SMEs and appeared to be limited to enterprises with more complex management structures.

4.6.11 Staff welfare

Staff welfare, or health and safety, was of very low importance as a motivation contributing to uptake of environmental sustainability practices. Even where seen it had only a very minimal role and was in several cases associated only with use of alternative cleaning chemicals as indicated by this remark:

They prefer to use water and a little bit of dishwashing detergent to clean glass…a lot of windows as opposed to a strong window cleaner, but that also comes down to their health benefit. (A3)

In summary, staff welfare was of very low importance as a motivational factor for tourism SMEs in undertaking green practices, and appeared limited to minor activities within business operations.

4.7 Motivations: Summary

In summary, cost benefits and personal belief or commitment were the two standout motivational factors influencing the uptake of sustainable practices by tourism SMEs, with both having a very high level of importance. It was notable that half of enterprises were seeking to minimise their environmental footprint. Also significant motivations, although less so, were accreditation and awards, and customer demand. However from the negative point of view, regarding the former, a modest amount of criticism was also evident, and regarding the latter,
there were certainly instances where indulgent customer demand clearly dampened green practices. Regulation, industry expectations, supply chain demands, competitive advantage, corporate policy and staff welfare were all of either low or very low importance. Climate change response was also of low importance, however, was of interest in that it was even a low priority for most enterprises which otherwise demonstrated high levels of commitment to environmental sustainability.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Structure of chapter
5.1 Introduction
5.2 Overall comparison with the literature on practices
5.3 Discussion of individual practices
5.4 Summary: contribution to the literature on practices
5.5 Overall comparison with the literature on motivations
5.6 Discussion of individual motivations
5.7 Summary: contribution to the literature on motivations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter looks for meaning and understanding through discussion of the findings in the last chapter and is founded on the 2 research questions posed within the project. To recap, the 2 research questions are:

- What are the current environmentally sustainable practices of tourism SMEs, and how might these have changed compared to those previously seen?
- What are the current environmentally sustainable motivations of tourism SMEs, and how might these have changed compared to those previously seen?

Where comparisons with the literature are made in this chapter, discussion focuses in the main on the key selected studies previously identified in Section 2.5.2. To reiterate, these studies are Alonso and Ogle (2010), Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee (2007), Schaper and Carlsen (2004), Vernon et al (2003), Dewhurst and Thomas (2003) and Horobin and Long (1996).

In this chapter, all citations of interviewee comments have been presented in Chapter 4.

5.2 Practices: overall comparison with the selected literature

As presented in the Section 4.2, a diverse range of environmentally sustainable practices are found to be undertaken by tourism SMEs in the East Gippsland case study.
From the key selected literature, it can be established that most of these practices are seen to have been adopted by tourism SMEs in the past. These previously seen practices are:

- energy efficiency;
- recycling and waste minimisation;
- water conservation;
- environmental education;
- accreditation and awards;
- biodiversity activities;
- motor vehicle emissions efficiency;
- green products and services;
- photovoltaics;
- lobbying and activism;
- building design and construction;
- and solar hot water.

In addition to these, there are some practices found in this research project not previously seen. These new practices are:

- local food tourism;
- digital office technology;
- green boating;
- green horticulture;
- and, carbon reduction tools.

Table 5.2 presents this comparison of findings on practices to the selected literature. In this table yellow rows denote practices found in this project that are new to the literature.

### Table 5.1: Comparison of findings on practices to selected literature

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What this comparison indicates is that there has been a moderate expansion in practices undertaken by SMEs over the some 22 years covering the time span between the earliest of the studies reviewed (Horobin & Long 1996) and this thesis. Additionally, it is of note that a handful of previously unseen practices are revealed.

It is acknowledged that this comparison with the literature is done in a raw numerical sense only and does not cover other potential questions which lie outside the scope of my project such as, for example, the depth to which practices are described as being adopted in the other studies.

### 5.3 Discussion of individual practices

What follows in Section 5.3.1 through to Section 5.3.17 is a discussion of each of the environmentally sustainable practices found in this thesis.

#### 5.3.1 Energy efficiency

Energy efficiency was found to have very high adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.1.

There is universal coverage of this practice in the previous studies with all referencing it, although the degree of coverage varies. References are only made in passing in Alonso and Ogle (2010) although Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee (2007), Schaper and Carlsen (2004) and Vernon et al (2003) all found that energy conservation measures were commonly evidenced. Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee, for instance, identify ‘light bulbs and insulation…heating, cooling, refrigeration, and building design’ (2007, p. 10) as being employed.

The findings in this thesis regarding energy efficiency broadly confirm the selected literature. There is clearly shown to be a high awareness of power usage matters with the uptake of new technology, tracking of power use by customers and an inclination to alter routine business
activities in response to indulgent customer behaviours. And whilst deeply held and high level energy minimisation awareness was only seen in very few of the interviewees, there were numerous ways in which energy saving measures could be put into place, such as using low wattage lights and turning off power when not in use. Modest actions such as these helped to enable broad uptake of a wide range of practices by enterprises. In both the literature and this thesis, energy efficiency practices could be said to be mainstreamed in the tourism industry.

Notwithstanding the broad confirmation with the selected literature, some more emphasis is found in this project concerning the awareness enterprises have of excessive use of power by guests, with efforts being made to manage that where possible. Comments such as “When people leave…we always make sure…[things] are turned off” (A6) reflect this approach. This action may be linked to high power prices seen in recent times. Conversely, building design as a feature of energy efficiency is a little more emphasised in the earlier literature. Despite these slight differences the findings in this thesis are broadly in line with previous knowledge.

In summary, this thesis overall confirms the literature regarding energy efficiency. Specifically, this thesis shows both a wide diversity of efficiency actions are undertaken and an energy conservation awareness is evident amongst most enterprises. A deep commitment to the practice is noted in a few businesses. The practice could be said to be mainstreamed and not dependent on a particular commitment to sustainability being held.

5.3.2 Recycling and waste minimisation

Recycling and waste minimisation was found to have high adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.2.

There is universal coverage of this practice in the selected literature with the all previous studies referencing recycling and waste minimisation. For example, a wide range of recycling and waste practices are cited by Alonso and Ogle, Beeton et al. (2207), Dewhurst and Thomas (2003), Horobin and Long (1996), and Schaper and Carlsen (2004). The latter cite that around half of operators undertake recycling and set targets for reduction of waste (ibid.). Detailed actions are revealed by Vernon et al. including recycling, providing kitchen waste to animals, composting and so on (2007). Horobin and Long (1996) identify recycling as the most commonly adopted practice and Dewhurst and Thomas (2003) concluded that most businesses were very committed to the activity, and there was even a reasonable uptake of it amongst operators who did very little else.
The findings in this thesis regarding recycling and waste broadly confirm the selected literature. Diverse activities were somewhat commonplace such as maximising recycling and minimising office paper use. There was however a noticeably deep commitment to waste reduction amongst a small number of interviewees within this project which stands out a little more than in some the literature. For example, comments such as “being really vigilant” (A4), “reducing the amount of new products [used]” (N7), and “deal[ing] with [waste] entirely on the property” (N10), illustrate this commitment, and do contrast with findings that operators had only a ‘basic understanding of recycling’ (Beeton, Bergin-Seers & Lee 2007, p. 11). The finding of a high level emphasis in this project is not surprising given the strong sustainability commitment to sustainability seen in at least a third of interviewees as shown in Section 5.2.3 and may be indicative of a growing green focus compared to years gone by. Notwithstanding this, for all intents and purposes, the findings of this thesis are overall in line with previous research. In both the literature and this thesis, recycling and waste practices could be said to be mainstreamed in the tourism industry.

In summary, this thesis overall confirms the literature regarding recycling and waste minimisation. Specifically, this thesis shows strong adoption of a diversity of recycling and waste minimisation activities, although a somewhat deeper commitment to the practice may be evident overall than previously seen. As with energy efficiency, the practice could be said to be mainstreamed and not dependent on a particular commitment to sustainability.

5.3.3 Water conservation

Water conservation was found to have moderate adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.3.

There is almost universal coverage of this practice in the selected literature with most studies referencing it. For example, Schaper and Carlsen note that almost 80% of businesses ‘follow water conservation procedures’ (2004, p. 206), Vernon et al. (2003) class water conservation together with waste and energy reduction as having the ‘highest levels of awareness and activity’ (2003, p. 58). Alonso and Ogle, who concentrate their inquiry on water, noted a range of conservation measures adopted (2010). That paper not finding water conservation as a practice was Dewhurst and Thomas (2003) who established a belief from operators that their small amount of water usage wasn’t an environmental issue.
The findings in this thesis regarding water conservation broadly confirm the selected literature, even though some studies show greater overall engagement with the practice than see in the East Gippsland case study. A diverse range of activities are shown to be employed by enterprises with most measures taken up being more commonplace, such as low-flow shower heads, rainwater collection and storage, and drought tolerant gardens. Innovative irrigation techniques and use of recycled water were seen in irrigation dependent businesses. In both the literature and this thesis, water saving or harvesting practices could be said to be mainstreamed in the tourism industry.

In summary, this thesis overall confirms the literature regarding water saving or harvesting. Specifically, this thesis shows wide adoption of diverse water saving or harvesting practices. As with energy efficiency and recycling and waste minimisation, the practice could be said to be mainstreamed with both commonplace and innovative measures in place.

5.3.4 Accreditation and awards

The practice of accreditation and awards refers to a range of schemes that include at least some environmental sustainability criteria. These schemes may be either tourism specific or generalist in nature. This practice was found to have moderate adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.4.

Only a few of the previous selected studies reference this category of practice. However, it is done in a somewhat detailed way including an audit covering a substantially broader spectrum of specific programs than that focused on for this project (Beeton, Bergin-Seers & Lee 2007). These authors note that membership with the various schemes was ‘relatively low’ (ibid., p. 14).

The findings in this thesis shows a noticeably higher participation level by operators in accreditation and awards than does the literature, with programs adopted by half of the interviewees.

Regarding industry attitudes as to the benefits of accreditation and awards, as distinct to membership of them, both this project and the selected literature highlight promotional advantages to be gained in demonstrating the green values of a business to customers and peers. In this respect, Beeton, Bergin-Seers & Lee do point to awareness of certification in marketing, but equally comment that some schemes are undeveloped as green mechanisms
and influential to only small niche visitor markets (2007). However, an emphasis found in this thesis not clearly seen previously is the value of accreditation and awards schemes as an outstanding development tool for the research and application of environmental sustainability practices. This finding is encapsulated by the comments: ‘…you research and look at different options’ (A3), ‘…that was the most useful thing I ever did’ (A4), ‘…it [awards process] …hones your focus…’ (A1), amongst others. These endorsements by interviewees suggests value in continuing to grow industry participation in accreditation and awards. Doing so would be in line with the conclusion of Toplis that formal awards schemes that are ‘quality awards mechanism[s]’ can certainly contribute to tourism environmental sustainability (2004, p. 182).

Some aspects of the resistance to accreditation and awards seen in this project are also noted by Beeton, Bergin-Seers & Lee (2007). For example, these writers reference objections to the time resource and cost demands of meeting criteria of schemes, lack of certainty regarding value for money and a sense that scheme managers don’t provide enough marketing backup to build consumer recognition (ibid.). Notwithstanding that this project probably highlights a deeper level of cynicism from some enterprises concerning accreditation and awards, overall, criticisms seen in the East Gippsland case study were somewhat similar in their broader nature to the literature.

It is worth noting that apart from the selected studies, there has been some additional research into the environmental sustainability efficacy of tourism quality schemes, such as Toplis 2003. Although Toplis focused specifically on “awards” in particular, he did bring to light several findings similar to those found in this project. Examples of these on the positive side include that quality advancement mechanisms, such as awards, can have a crucial role to play in improving environmental sustainability, and that they do have a business benchmarking value. And, on the more negative side, that criticism and even cynicism do exist, and overall there is low participation by SMEs in awards.

In summary, this thesis adds to the selected literature regarding accreditation and awards. In particular it shows greater support for accreditation and awards than previously seen amongst SMEs, with their value as business development and research tools evident, even when the schemes were not formally entered but used as information and benchmarking reference points only. Criticisms concerning accreditation and awards by enterprises are certainly evident, but it appears that these in the main have been seen previously.
5.3.5 Local food tourism

The practice of local food tourism was found to have moderate adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.5.

This practice is identified in none of the previous selected studies.

This thesis uncovers new data on local food tourism. The support for local food tourism saw enterprises involved in the production and/or provision of local food and beverage products, both primary and manufactured. There was also enthusiasm and even pride from a business achievement point of view noticeable from those engaged in the activity as comments such as the following suggest: ‘well, people ask for it and it’s really important to me’ (N6); ‘we tell people every [item] that’s there we [produce] here, nothing’s brought in. We do it…– and that’s a selling point’ (N10); and, ‘that was always the premise for the whole concept…to value-add what I was catching myself and push the local seafood’ (N9).

As noted previously, the environmental sustainability of this local product offer was recognised by some, for example when it was said: ‘there’s not trucks going down the highway’ (A3), and ‘I mean you got food miles and all that’ (N8) and ‘I think we could promote the sustainability of seafood a lot better’ (N9). However, this was noticeably of considerably lesser importance than the characteristics of freshness, quality, uniqueness, and so on. Currently in the case study region local food is a popular tourism product offer which is supported not only by enterprises but also at an industry level. Initiatives such as East Gippsland Produce (2017), the East Gippsland Foodmap (2017) and the East Gippsland Food Cluster attest to this. The latter of these is an organisation supported by both the Local and State Governments, and has as one of its goals being: “Sustainably growing the East Gippsland food sector” (2017). This niche tourism market has a capacity to deliver environmentally sustainable outcomes whether it be minimisation of “food miles” or by the encouragement of “clean and green” product. For example, green farm-food practices encompass water, energy, transport and chemical conservation activities. The data clearly shows that this important sustainability characteristic of the local food tourism appears to be not as recognised as it could be by the local industry.

What is also a valuable insight in the findings of this thesis is that the enthusiasm with local food tourism comes from across the spectrum of SMEs and is not limited to operators who deliver higher levels of sustainability practice. For instance, even one of the businesses
delivering a low number of practices who had said regarding sustainability generally: ‘The short answer is we do next to nothing’, commented enthusiastically about local food: ‘Yeah. And actually, I love that topic and I’ve used it a lot in my restaurants throughout’ (N6).

In summary, this thesis adds to the literature regarding local food tourism. Local food tourism was seen to be widely supported by visitors and enterprises, with support amongst the latter group seen in SMEs delivering numerous green practices and those which don’t. However, its appeal is based upon characteristics of quality, freshness and uniqueness with its inherent green attributes under-recognised. Local food tourism is an area worthy of considerably more attention than it has received to date as a vehicle to assist sustainability practice improvement amongst tourism SMEs.

5.3.6 Environmental education

The practice of environmental education was found to have moderate adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.6.

Of the previous selected studies, most reference this category of practice. Several of these do so in a relatively cursory way and mention guest education for recycling (Alonso & Ogle 2010), general information provision and signage such as that for water saving and laundry use (Beeton et al. 2007), or information given to guests on walks and transport (Vernon et al. 2003). Conservation education is identified in a substantive way by 4 previous papers although a deep embedding of the practice as part of normal business operations is not evident. These include Beeton et al. (2007), Schaper and Carlsen (2004) and Horobin and Long (1996), the latter showing that advice was given to customers on local area conservation actions that could be taken. Staff education is also briefly alluded to, for example in Schaper and Carlsen (2004) and Alonso and Ogle (2010), the latter referring to their chef being aware of waste issues.

By contrast, this thesis presents a more in-depth picture of environmental education than seen previously in the aspect of visitor education. Certainly, similar to previous studies, it is seen that a range of more commonplace activities were undertaken, such as signage, comprehensive pre-arrival notes and digital information, as well as personal interaction with guests to help them improve their behaviours. But, as well as this, it is noticeable that a quarter of interviewees in this project had green education practices deeply embedded into their operations. As one interviewee cited in Section 4.2.4.5 indicated, they try to alter the
relationship their guests have to the environment so ‘they’re more likely to wanna care for it’ (A4). While there is a somewhat less direct reference to staff education in this project than in the literature, it was clearly evident that several interviewees relied critically on staff being highly informed and up to date on environmental and ecological issues. It is therefore safe to assume that staff education did play an important role, where a need to convey environmental messages to customers was an intrinsic part of the operation. This is important, for as Vernon et al. say, ‘tourism is a people-based industry’ (2007, p. 2) and so ‘the training and education of personnel are an important component toward sustainability practices in the industry’ (ibid.).

It might be argued that the greater depth of customer education practice evidenced in this thesis could be partly a reflection of a relatively high proportion of nature-based operators in the case study location when compared to previous research. However, it is hard to see that this would be a factor given that a number of the earlier studies were specifically undertaken in green locations or included data collected from green groups. Examples of this are the Green Globe certified research location of Beeton et al. (2003), the national park based locations for both Dewhurst and Thomas (2003) and Horobin and Long (1996), and the green business networking group used as part of the Vernon et al paper (2003). The relatively high level of engagement with environmental education seen in this project is encouraging.

In summary, this thesis adds to the literature regarding environmental education, in particular with reference to visitor education. Whilst it is line with the literature regarding more commonplace education activities, this project finds a deeply embedded commitment to the practice in some one quarter of all enterprises.

5.3.7 Biodiversity activities

Biodiversity activities was seen to be have relatively low adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.7.

This practice is covered in several of the previous selected studies. As it does in my thesis, in these papers biodiversity activities refers to a range of actions including garden planting, native flora protection, habitat protection works, and conservation group/scheme support and membership (Beeton, Bergin-Seers & Lee 2007; Schaper & Carlsen 2004; Dewhurst & Thomas 2003; Vernon et al 2003). Dewhurst and Thomas present an entire section of practices on 'The visitor environment' (2003, p. 396), but in essence paint a picture that very few enterprises actually understand the connection their business has to a healthy ecology.
and environment or take meaningful actions to protect it. Various land planning actions are also mentioned by Schaper and Carlsen (2004). Although it could be seen that land planning is dependent more on government regulation than practices by enterprises, community support for environmentally sound land planning is clearly a vitally important enabler.

This thesis identifies a greater understanding of the importance of biodiversity activities and the uptake of them than does the literature. Previous studies do identify that a similar range of actions is undertaken and also that the practice has relatively low adoption overall. Nevertheless, there is little indication in the literature of the high value placed on landscape and habitat protection in business activities as seen in the East Gippsland case study. Comments referred to in Section 4.2.7 such as ‘[W]e’re looking to reduce the impact of our visit as much as possible’ (N7), ‘80% of the work is around conservation’ (N3), and ‘Just that whole [thing of] maintaining the ecological balance’ (N8) attest to the importance of this practice.

In summary, this thesis advances the literature regarding biodiversity activities in a modest way. It was seen that the practice has an impact on landscape and habitat conservation and was an important contribution to environmental sustainability even though it had a low uptake amongst all interviewees. The breadth and depth of commitment to this practice by those undertaking it was seen as greater than in the past.

5.3.8 Digital office technology

Digital office technology was seen to be have relatively low adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.8.

None of the previous selected studies reference this practice specifically other for a vague reference to ‘computers’ in the context of energy saving (Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee, 2003, p. 20).

This lack of attention in previous studies is probably partly explained by several of them largely pre-dating the current mainstreaming of digital technology having been written over a decade ago, such as that of Horobin and Long (1996). This observation is backed up by the comment made by 1 interviewee and earlier reported in Section 4.2.4.8, saying: ‘These days of course it’s a lot easier to use digital means for communication and things instead of having to use printed paper’.
This thesis uncovers new data on digital office practices. The capacity to heavily reduce paper consumption using digital communication, as well as to reduce power consumption with the increasing availability of more energy efficient technology is brought to light. As one interviewee commented: ‘Everything’s electronic’ (A4). The optimising of solar power inputs and business energy outputs through digital monitoring is also mentioned. To these can be added the significant opening for providing, innovative and impactful customer environmental education via WiFi technology or social media platforms. As was expressed, to ‘deliver [education] better…will cost very, very little’ (N3). Although only one third of interviewees specifically drew attention to their interest in digital office technology, given the ubiquitousness of digital technology and its extremely wide use universally, it is highly likely that the adoption of it by SMEs is far greater than empirically identified in this study. Indeed, the opportunities for digital technology to reduce the environmental footprint of the SME sector, notwithstanding limiting issues such as that of electronic waste, warrants greater attention.

In summary, this thesis reveals digital office technology as a new practice and consequently advances the literature. There is a high awareness of the sustainability opportunities of the paperless office by those utilising it, and modest awareness of the green benefits of Wi-Fi when compared to printing, and of energy digital monitoring. This practice is likely to be more widely adopted by tourism SMEs than captured in this study considering its wider societal ubiquitousness. It is also certain to be a vector for future sustainability improvements as technology continues to quickly advance, particularly if limiting factors such as e-waste can be reduced.

5.3.9 Green boating

Green boating was seen to have low uptake. However, those supporting the practice in effect represented all of the interviewees for whom boating was part of their business operations. Thus, it could be said that green boating had a universal adoption amongst relevant enterprises so making it of greater importance as an environmental sustainability practice than might first seem. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.9.

None of the previous selected studies reference this practice.

This thesis uncovers new knowledge on green boating regarding both those environmentally sustainable practices that are undertaken by enterprises, as well as issues regarding poor practices of recreational boat users i.e. tourists, which were raised as concerns in the
It is accepted that the case study region of East Gippsland used for this thesis is a very popular boating destination and so likely to be a rich source of boating related data which may not be the case in many other destinations. Nevertheless, this lack of universal applicability does not reduce the merit of the findings. Indeed, given that water-based tourism represents a significant component of overall tourism activities and that strong growth in recreational boating is evident internationally (Bergin & Hardiman 2011), the subject is of unquestioned wider relevance.

Some key environmentally friendly boating practices are identified in this project. These include the elimination or minimisation of anti-fouling boat hull treatments, the elimination of water pollution arising from the discharge of bilge water and human waste into the local waterways, and actions to control impacts from fuel spillages and 2-stroke boat motor exhaust residues. Whilst use of solar power on boats was not raised it is expected that photovoltaics are utilised on overnight hire boats. Concerns that environmental protection regulation and policing efforts were lacking was also highlighted. It is notable that the activities highlighted by interviewees in the case study destination cover only one of the three broad categories of boat-related environmental impacts given attention in the specialist literature, that of chemical impacts. The other two categories are specified in the literature as being ‘physical…and biotic impacts’ (ibid., p 683). The first of these relates to such effects as turbulence, noise, anchoring, and wildlife injury from vessels and the second relates to introduction of non-native marine biota (ibid.). Whether physical and biotic impacts would have been raised by interviewees if more in-depth questioning had taken place is unknown although it is reasonable to conclude they may have been. Certainly, however, the concerns relating to chemical impacts is substantiated by the literature, as is that regarding an ineffectiveness of regulatory and policing efforts to control the problems (ibid.). Bergin & Hardiman conclude that substantive advances in environmentally friendly recreational boating activities will only occur with community and visitor awareness and attitudinal changes and that research around these issues in Australia is behind that in some other jurisdictions (2011), a position confirmed by one interview who commented ‘in the US it’s different….’ (N4). Clearly, more research is warranted into this important area of tourism sustainability.

In summary, this thesis reveals green boating as a new practice and advances the literature. New findings in particular relate to responses to chemical impacts of recreational boating. Although SMEs are seen to be as green as could be expected from findings in this project with universal support for sustainable boating practices amongst those involved in boating, this clearly does not apply to the recreational boating market. Lack of leadership from government in regulation and policing is identified as holding back more sustainable recreational boating.
5.3.10 Green products and services

Green products and services purchasing was seen to have low adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.10.

Of the previous selected studies, most reference this practice, primarily in terms of green products, and in 1 instant, both products and services (Schaper & Carlsen 2004) although no details of what the latter entails are given. Regarding green practices, papers variously point to cleaning and customer personal care items, recycled products, organic items, or to purchasing local produce (Beeton et al. 2007; Dewhurst & Thomas 2003; Horobin & Long 1996). And, a broader reference is made to ‘eliminating non-organic chemicals’ (Schaper & Carlsen 2004 p. 206). The notion of ‘supporting local suppliers’ in general is also canvassed (Dewhurst & Thomas 2003, p. 394). However, this reference is considered not relevant to my project due to the emphasis of this activity being to support the local economy rather than as an effort to reduce environmental impact (ibid.).

My thesis broadly supports the findings in the selected literature in that most green items purchased are somewhat minor such as for cleaning and personal care purposes. However, several enterprises were very committed to green purchasing. There was a sense from interviewees that green alternatives were less effective than stronger chemicals. It was also felt that some commonly available cleaning products were reasonably green anyway such as supermarket-sourced phosphate free laundry products. The finding of the use of green services is also generally in concert with the literature in that little of this activity is undertaken. Buying of local primary produce was also seen in 1 standout instance, and although this wasn’t done for environmental reasons the practice would most certainly have contributed to sustainability.

In summary, this thesis overall confirms the literature regarding green product purchasing. Given the modest impact that green cleaning products in particular are likely to have in the overall scheme of tourism SME sustainability, and the general availability of low environmental impact items such as laundry soaps etc., it is unlikely that specific attention to this practice in an industry sense is needed as a priority. That being said, the wider sustainability ramifications of purchasing local primary produce in a relatively “clean and green” region should not be discounted.
5.3.11 Building design and construction

Building design and construction saw very low adoption in terms of it being a green practice. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.11.

With respect to the previous selected literature, building design or construction as a practice is raised in most studies. Specific outcomes identified are energy reduction due to natural air circulation, insulation or better building design generally (Alonso & Ogle 2010; Beeton, Bergin-Seers and Lee; Schaper and Carlsen 2004), and environmentally friendly building materials and pre-construction environmental impact reviews (Schaper and Carlsen 2004). In addition to these studies, Horobin and Long make reference to the use ‘of local building materials when making alterations to premises’ (1996, p. 18) within their listing of sustainable actions. However, the connection between this and “being green” must be seen as somewhat tenuous as no clarification is made by the writers as to why local materials are greener than non-local materials. Certainly items purchased locally may, for instance, inherently have fewer transport GHG inputs than those brought long distances. Nonetheless, it is conceivable that smaller local manufacturers may overall utilise production methods that have a higher ecological footprint than, say, manufacturers importing into the region with greater resources at their disposal. Horobin and Long may be referring to the use of recycled materials, but they don’t specify that point. Consequently, for the purpose of my project, there is uncertainty about including local materials.

While, overall, building design or construction is highlighted to a somewhat similar degree in my project compared to the literature, the emphases are different. Previous studies have brought up specific types of practices such as natural ventilation, building materials, energy reduction and construction audits. This project, on the other hand, although revealing low adoption of the practice, has highlighted a high level of awareness by enterprises of existing limitations in their buildings holding back greater sustainability, in particular regarding photovoltaics, but also more generally. Whilst this illustrates the dampening effect older or unsuitable buildings are having on SMEs seeking to be greener, it also points to the longer term potential of building-related activities to enhance sustainability. Consequently, this thesis adds to the literature regarding building design and construction.

In summary, building design or construction is of very low importance as a practice in both this thesis and the literature. This, however, doesn’t undervalue the new insights gained through this project. In the literature the focus is on specific aspects of green buildings, and in this
project the focus is on the highlighting of the wider appreciation by enterprises of existing building limitations constraining environmental sustainability.

5.3.12 Green horticulture

Green horticulture was seen to have very low adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.12.

Green horticulture is not identified in any of the previous selected studies.

This thesis uncovers new data on this practice. Green horticulture was only undertaken by a few of the interviewees, but for these, there were high levels of adherence to sustainability principles and practices exhibited, including to organic growing, where possible. The practice is of note in the context of this study. Firstly, whilst having low support overall, all interviewees actually engaged in horticultural pursuits undertook some aspects of green production so giving the practice more importance in its own right. Secondly, Green horticulture relates to food tourism. In the case study destination the two activities are closely linked in that, not surprisingly, green horticultural producers themselves provided local produce (fresh or manufactured) to visitors. It has already been seen that there was little importance placed on the environmentally positive characteristics of local food tourism products by enterprises, and that qualities of freshness, uniqueness and taste were far more valued than were green characteristics. Subsequently, it is arguable that a greater recognition by SMEs of the sustainability values adopted by horticulturalists providing locally produced food and beverage products could potentially lead to higher customer demand for the green credentials of local food tourism.

In summary, this thesis reveals green horticulture as a new practice and consequently advances the literature. Strong commitment to green horticultural practices were seen in those few enterprises involved in farm food production. It is possible that more recognition of the existing role green horticultural activities play in the supply of some local food tourism products would increase customer demand.
5.3.13 Lobbying and activism

The adoption of green lobbying and activism was very low. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.13.

With respect to the previous selected literature, green lobbying and activism is identified in varying ways in several earlier studies. In Schaper and Carlsen membership of 'seventeen specific conservation groups' is cited from another study (2004, p. 206). However, the earlier study is focused on farm-based tourism enterprises and so included amongst the "conservation groups" are agriculturally related organisations which are far less likely to appear in my data. In Beeton, Bergin-Seers and Lee, green lobbying and activism is referenced only as 'Local project involvement', and in Vernon et al. (2003) the several references, whilst being somewhat stronger, are simple ones, specifically: 'Influence through local committees and trade associations' and 'Lobbying the local authority for improvements to the area' (2003, p. 59).

The findings in this thesis more strongly establish the existence of lobbying and activism as an identifiable green activity amongst those few enterprises seen to be practicing it than does the literature. A noticeable strategic engagement with the practice was seen in this thesis including organisational board participation and political lobbying. This is in contrast to the somewhat broader identification of this practice in the literature. Earlier studies indicate a wider evidence of various types of lobbying by a larger proportion of the industry overall, even though this was weaker in the depth of how it was applied.

In summary, this thesis adds some modest new insight into the importance of green lobbying and activism as a practice. Specifically, it finds a focus on engagement in organisational board participation and political lobbying, even though the practice is adopted by only a very few committed enterprises.

5.3.14 Motor vehicle emissions efficiency

The practice of motor vehicle emissions efficiency was found to have very low adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.14.
Of the previous selected studies, most reference this category of practice although it is in the main described under the term “transport”. Beeton et al. (2007) investigate ‘Transport Related Practices’ and so cover a broader range of issues than just emissions but still conclude that an interest in transport related sustainability actions has very low uptake. Vernon et al. (2003) refer to environmental concerns by enterprises regarding transport but more so from the point of view of minimising car use of visitors than by the businesses themselves. This is even more the case with Dewhurst and Thomas (2003) who emphasise only the concerns of enterprises regarding poor public transport and increasing congestion from tourist traffic. The practices of enterprises themselves in terms of their own transport is referenced briefly by Vernon et al. and Horobin and Long (1996) but this is from the angle of limiting business vehicle use rather than emissions concerns specifically.

This thesis is in line with the literature in the sense that the practice of motor vehicle emissions efficiency, and transport more generally, is found important to only a small number of enterprises. Whilst the subject of reducing vehicle use by tourists is not highlighted in this thesis, as it is in other studies, the use of energy efficient vehicles by tourism enterprises is, albeit only in a few cases.

That motor vehicle emissions efficiency displays low interest on the one hand is surprising given the ubiquitousness of vehicles and their everyday importance in business operations. Yet, on the other hand, this very ubiquitousness may indicate that wider societal behaviours are the pre- eminent drivers of any interest in motor vehicle sustainability, apart, that is, from a few of those enterprises having a strong green commitment. It is interesting that the literature shows more of a concern from tourism SMEs about high vehicle use by tourists, including the resultant congestion and the impact this has on destinations than it does regarding business vehicle use, and that the former is an issue not raised in this thesis. This discrepancy may have something to do with differences in social characteristics of the various case study locations used in the various studies. For example, Dewhurst and Thomas (2003) find disquiet about high car use by visitors in their UK case study. However, it is not inconceivable that congestion is a more noticeable issue in highly developed western destinations than it is in a regional Australian destination such as that in which evidence for this project has been gathered.

In summary, this thesis overall confirms the literature regarding motor vehicle emissions efficiency. Specifically, this thesis shows that there is, broadly, a low awareness of the issue amongst enterprises, although to those engaged in the practice it is an important concern for them. Concerns over the impact high use of cars by tourists may be having on the environment
and local amenity is raised in the previous literature but not by interviewees in this thesis although this difference can be rated as minor overall. Further change in this practice is probably largely dependent on shifts in wider societal behaviours.

5.3.15 Carbon reduction tools

Carbon reduction tools, as taken to mean in the contest of this project carbon counting and carbon offsetting, are seen to have very low adoption. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.15.

Carbon reduction tools as a discrete practice is not identified in any of the previous selected studies. It is possible that carbon counters or carbon offsetting may not have appeared in previous studies as they are very specific tools, and also possibly less prevalent when some of the earlier papers were published. However, irrespective of this possibility, it was found by Vernon et al. that even from a wider perspective the use of ‘formal tools of environmental management’ was at a very low level (2003, p. 58). Studies such as Beeton et al. (2007) and Schaper and Carlsen (2004) present what could be called detailed data with respect to energy efficiency of enterprises and it is reasonable to assume that carbon counting/offsetting or similar activities fitted to some degree under one or other of the various categories. Notwithstanding this, the specific reference to using carbon reduction tools is certainly absent from the literature.

This thesis uncovers new data on carbon reduction tools. While the practice of carbon reduction tools appears new to that small but key body of tourism SME literature focused on for this thesis, it is however not novel to at least the broader tourism literature covering the hospitality sector. In this wider literature it is referred to, for example, within the context of energy conservation and carbon reduction (ECCR), as for instance in Teng et al. (2014). Given the existence of the recognised field of ECCR study, it is logical to draw a link between the 2 practices of energy efficiency and carbon reduction tools identified in this thesis. When looked at in this context however, it is interesting to note the discrepancy in the uptake of these 2 practices. It is seen that energy efficiency, via way of energy saving, has very high adoption, yet carbon reduction tools are adopted by only a few interviewees. However, this incongruity may not be surprising given that Teng et al. found that, while an appreciation of energy and carbon issues was satisfactory, the deeper understanding by enterprises of ‘carbon emissions, green architecture and green consumption is insufficient and require improving’ (ibid. p. 463).
Even though the study of Teng et al. focused on employees as distinct to business operators, there is probably some relevance of their conclusion to this thesis.

In summary, this thesis reveals carbon reduction tools as a new practice to the specific literature covering tourism SMEs even though it is discussed in the wider tourism literature. Consequently, this advances the literature. The use and awareness of carbon counters and offsetting was seen to be low. However, when adopted they were very effective sustainability business management tools and 1 instance of surprisingly deep interest was seen from an enterprise who had not employed the practice.

5.3.16 Photovoltaics

The use of photovoltaics was very low. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.16.

With respect to the previous selected literature, only very few studies specifically references photovoltaics. In Vernon et al. (2003) the small uptake of the technology is noted, and this is done so within the context of solar panels being seen by the authors as ‘a genuinely innovative measure’ (p. 59). This is probably suggestive of the earlier era in which the paper was written (the early 2000s) compared to this thesis as much as anything else. Schaper and Carlsen, whilst not mentioning photovoltaics per se do point to ‘alternative, non-polluting energy sources’ having a level of adoption of almost 40% amongst operators (2004, p. 207). It could be assumed this does probably include solar power, although it could equally refer to solar hot water or even solar swimming pool heating.

The findings in this thesis regarding photovoltaics, whilst broadly confirming the literature in identifying there is a low acceptance of photovoltaics, add modest new insight into the reasons why this is so as well as uncovering much interest by those not yet having adopted the technology. Those few who had invested in solar systems strongly supported the technology although this appeared to be done with conservation being top of mind rather than purely financial considerations. Whilst not able to be covered in this project, barriers to higher uptake of photovoltaics were raised in a large proportion of the interviews.

In summary, this project, whilst broadly confirming the literature in identifying there is a very low acceptance of photovoltaics, adds modest new insight into the reasons why this is so, particularly to do with unsuitably designed or old buildings, as well as into the attitudes of those
having adopted the technology. Those using the technology were very committed to it. Substantial interest was seen in photovoltaics by those not having adopted it.

5.3.17 Solar hot water

The use of solar hot water was very low. Findings regarding this practice were presented in Section 4.3.17.

With respect to the previous selected literature, only one study references the use solar hot water directly, that being Vernon et al. in their finding that some businesses ‘appear to have adopted…solar heating, although the use of the word ‘appear’ does not engender certainty. More indirectly, as with photovoltaics Schaper and Carlsen’s reference ‘alternative, non-polluting energy sources’ (ibid., p.207). Furthermore, Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee’s noting of ‘[e]nergy saving with regard to heating, [and] cooling…’ may in part include solar hot water (2007, p. 10), and while they find there is reasonable awareness of solar hot water ‘programs’ (ibid., p. 14) they don’t confirm that businesses actually use the technology.

The findings in this thesis regarding solar hot water, while broadly confirming the literature with respect to its low uptake, does show that those enterprises using the technology were committed to it. This low uptake would seem to be a reflection of low uptake of solar hot water in the domestic sector with the Australian Government reporting that in 2012 only 4% of household hot water needs were heated by solar (2017). When seen against the background that domestic water heating produced more GHGs than any other energy use (ibid.), this fact is obviously of concern from a sustainability viewpoint.

In summary, this thesis adds in a minor way to the literature in uncovering that although there is very low uptake of solar hot water, a commitment to the practice was seen where adopted.

5.4 Summary: discussion on practices

From the discussion carried out above in Sections 5.3.1 to 5.3.17, it has been reasonably determined what has changed when practices identified in this thesis are compared to those previously seen in the selected literature cluster.
This thesis confirms the selected literature regarding: energy efficiency; recycling and waste minimisation; water conservation; green products and services; and, motor vehicle emissions efficiency. In particular, energy efficiency, recycling and waste minimisation, and water conservation all have very high adoption, are seen to be mainstreamed amongst SMEs, and within each of these a wide range of individual activities are undertaken. On the other hand, green products and services and motor vehicle emissions efficiency have low levels of adoption and appear to have little impact on overall SME sustainability.

New understandings are added to the literature with reference to: environmental education; accreditation and awards; biodiversity activities; photovoltaics; digital office technology; lobbying and activism; and, building design and construction. Fresh insights into these practices include a broader and deeper embeddedness of environmental education and of accreditation and awards, and the high value placed on landscape and habitat protection through biodiversity actions. Furthermore, there is low uptake of photovoltaics although high interest in it, and a committed involvement in green lobbying and activism by the few active in it. And, lastly, there is wide appreciation by enterprises of how design limitations in their existing buildings is limiting their capacity to adopt some green technologies, in particular photovoltaics.

Finally, those practices found to be new to the literature are: local food tourism; digital office technology; green boating; green horticulture; carbon reduction tools, and, solar hot water. Key understandings regarding these newly seen practices include strong support for local food tourism by both visitors and enterprises, although the sustainability features of this practice are under-recognised, the likely ubiquitousness of digital office technology, and strong adoption of green boating practices by SMEs contrasted with unsustainable practices reportedly undertaken by tourists. Additionally, there is a commitment to green horticulture by the small number involved in it, low awareness of carbon reduction tools and very little investment in solar hot water technology. Table 5.2 summarises the findings in this thesis on practices by identifying whether each practice confirms, adds to, or is new to the selected literature.
Table 5.2: Summary of findings on practices compared to selected literature

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific practice</th>
<th>Project confirms literature</th>
<th>Project adds new insights to practices seen in literature</th>
<th>Project reveals new practices to literature</th>
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<td>Energy efficiency</td>
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<td>Carbon reduction tools</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbying and activism</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Building design and construction</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Solar hot water</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Key: (1) ‘y’ refers to ‘yes’
5.5 Motivations: overall comparison with the selected literature

As presented in Section 4.5, those motivations positively influencing tourism SMEs to undertake environmentally sustainable practices are identified.

From the literature, it can be established that most of these environmental sustainability motivations have been seen to have been adopted by tourism SMEs in the past. These previously seen motivations are: cost-benefits; belief or commitment; accreditation and awards; customer demand; industry expectations; competitive advantage; corporate policy; and, staff welfare. In addition to these, there is one motivation found in my thesis not previously seen, that being climate change response. Table 5.3 shows this comparison of practices found in my thesis with the literature.

This comparison indicates is that there has been very little change in motivations in a numerical sense undertaken by SMEs over the some 22 years covering the time span between the earliest of the studies reviewed (Horobin & Long 1996) and this thesis (2018).

Table 5.3: Comparison of motivations in East Gippsland case study to the selected literature

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost-benefits</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief or commitment</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation and awards</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer demand</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regulation</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate change response</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Industry expectations</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supply chain</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive advantage</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Corporate policy</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff welfare</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>y</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: (1) ‘Rickards 2017’ refers to the East Gippsland case study; (2) The letter ‘y’ refers to ‘yes’; Yellow rows refer to new motivations to the literature

5.6 Discussion of individual motivations

What follows in Section 5.6.1 through to Section 5.6.9 is a discussion of each of the environmentally sustainable motivations found in this thesis.

5.6.1 Cost-benefits

Cost-benefits flowing from green practices had a very high level of importance overall. Findings regarding this motivation were presented in Section 4.6.1.

Of the previous selected studies all identify cost and revenue benefit as a key business motivation and the existence of a concomitant reluctance to adopt green actions if these run counter to the business profit motive. For example, Schaper and Carlsen highlight that SMEs simply struggle to find positive cost outcomes arising from adopting practices (2004), and
Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee say the imperative is to ‘To cut costs’ (2007, p. 11) and ‘To improve profits’ (ibid.) whilst also finding that half of their respondents saw cost savings in green practices. Furthermore, Dewhurst and Thomas find that commercial outcomes are a priority for most small firms (2003).

Findings from this thesis are overall in line with the literature and show that seeing cost-benefits are essential to most operators including to those keen to take environmentally conscious actions where they can. This attitude is epitomised by the comments: ‘At the end of the day you’re running a business’ (A6), and ‘[The] main factor is obviously the economics’ (A5), which are reflective of the view of Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee that business ‘financial sustainability…[drives] all other sustainability matters’ (2007, p. 9).

However, it is also clear from this project that a good proportion of operators are prepared to make concessions and adopt practices because they are committed to sustainability. This position was reflected by interviewees who commented: ‘I’m looking at the long term and we want to go down this path [photovoltaics]’ (N10), and ‘generally, it’s not really a factor of cost…We’re not extreme in our views…but there’s a balance’ (A4), and ‘I don’t think I would worry either of us if you weren’t getting your money back [from solar panels].’ (A1). Furthermore, one interviewee who said ‘I don’t tend to look at [economics]’ (N7) illustrates there is a very small cohort which will, if at all possible, firmly prioritise sustainability over economic outcomes.

In summary, this thesis aligns with the literature regarding cost-benefits to the degree that it is had a very high level of importance as a motivational factor for many enterprises. However, by showing that a reasonable number of them were prepared to make some financial concessions in adopting sustainability measures and furthermore, a very few enterprises saw being sustainable as outweighing financial benefit, this thesis advances the literature. These latter two findings could suggest a positive advancement or shift in industry attitudes and practices.

5.6.2 Belief or commitment

Belief or commitment had a very high level of importance as a motivation influencing the uptake of environmental sustainability practices. Findings regarding this motivation were presented in Section 4.6.2.
Of the previous selected studies, all reference belief or commitment existing as a motivation. Some, however, do not specify the proportion of operators possessing this motivational influence although do show it being clearly evident (Alonso & Ogle 2010). Dewhurst and Thomas highlight that personal belief is a key factor influencing behaviour (2003) and also point out that conservation values are formed during a person’s developmental years. This latter point is somewhat reflective of those operators seen in this project to have led alternative lifestyles prior to becoming tourism operators and a possible positive influence this may have had on their uptake of green practices.

This thesis adds some valuable insights to the literature regarding the motivation of belief or commitment in several ways.

Firstly, whilst demonstrating consistency with the literature in showing that most enterprises have varying levels of aspiration to deliver green practices, this thesis shows that amongst that high majority of enterprises for whom belief was a factor, for approximately half of these, their belief and commitment appeared to be strong, in the sense that there was a very clear intention to minimise environmental impact. This proposition can be illustrated by looking at representative comments taken from Section 4.6.2 for the seven enterprises identified as having a high level of belief and commitment. A selection of these comments are: [T]reading lightly with the holidays’ (A4); ‘I try to reduce my environmental impact’ (N7); ‘you have to [be]…doing as much as you can for your environment and sustainability’ (N3); ‘the business…treads lightly’ (N8); ‘my purpose there is to educate people about the environment’ (N4); ‘not abusing your surroundings’ (N10); and, ‘we try to spray as little as possible…[and] to use as much organic fertiliser as we can too’ (N2).

Secondly, it is seen in the data presented in Section 2.4.2 regarding the practices adopted by each individual enterprise, that a noticeably higher level of practices was adopted by these same seven enterprises, relative to the remainder of enterprises. Specifically, the A4 enterprise adopted a high level of practices, and the N7, N3, N8, N4, N10 and N2 enterprises all adopted a moderate level of practices. This is in contrast to the remaining enterprises which adopted either low, very low or zero practices. Table 5.4 depicts both the indication of strong beliefs and the relatively higher adoption of practices of those specific interviewees identified above.
Table 5.4: Indication of strong belief/commitment and adoption of high levels of green practices by 7 of the 16 interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Sustainability comment by interviewee indicating strong belief and commitment</th>
<th>Level of the adoption of practices by enterprise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>“treading lightly with the holidays.”</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N7</td>
<td>“I try to reduce my environmental impact.”</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N3</td>
<td>“you have to [be]…doing as much as you can for your environment and sustainability.”</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N8</td>
<td>“the business…treads lightly”</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N4</td>
<td>“my purpose there is to educate people about the environment.”</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N10</td>
<td>“not abusing your surroundings”</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2</td>
<td>“we try to spray as little as possible…[and] to use as much organic fertiliser as we can too”</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This demonstration of both a strong environmental sustainability belief and commitment, and the adoption of reasonably high levels of green practices by enterprises gives a real sense that significant green credentials in both ethos and practice are found amongst a sizeable proportion of the case study SMEs.

With respect to this proposition, there is, overall, a divergence from the specific literature used as a reference in my project. Alonso and Ogle (2010) do indeed find that enterprises make conservation efforts particularly in the case of water and waste reduction. However, the great majority of these studies show that, while there is certainly a reasonable level of acceptance of the importance of environmental protection by tourism SMEs, other than in some cases, this has not in the past been necessarily backed up with either knowledge of environmental impacts and/or by the actual demonstration of specific actions (Schaper & Carlsen 2004; Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee 2007; Vernon et al. 2003; Dewhurst & Thomas 2003; Horobin
& Long 1996). As Schaper and Carlsen say with respect to what they call the "green gap" (2004, p. 210): ‘[M]any small firms run by owner/managers with pro-environmental perspectives do not produce eco-friendly results’ (ibid., p. 207). Furthermore, Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee comment there is a positive attitude to sustainability but that various business constraints limit actions (2007) and apart from an elementary grasp of ‘recycling, simple energy saving devices and water reduction requirements’ there was probably little awareness about environmental business issues or solutions ((ibid., p. 11)). Dewhurst and Thomas report they found half of their research participants were, what they called ‘committed actors’ with a strong belief to minimise their footprint and did take action (2003 p. 391). But they also conclude that ‘even the most active firm could only identify six different actions they were taking to address sustainability (ibid, p. 390). And finally, Horobin and Long conclude that, while some good environmentally sustainable actions are taken, these actions are often ‘ad hoc’ (1996, p. 19) and that the motivation to put principles into action is often not there (1996). Against this background, the findings in this thesis suggests that this "green gap" may be less evident now than it has previously been.

However notwithstanding these apparent advances brought to light in my thesis, whether this points to progress that is making a difference overall in the industry is very uncertain. As pointed out in Sections 2.2.4 and 2.3.3, researchers have concluded that across tourism as a whole, no substantive progress has been made in improving the tourism industry’s performance in the uptake of environmentally friendly practices, including efforts to reduce climate change impacts. Consequently, against this wider background, even if there are SMEs demonstrating increased sustainability yet these account for only a small proportion of the tourism output overall then then the wider impact may be small. In other words, any reduced ecological footprint of SMEs at a local level may pale into insignificance in the context of an industry that is rapidly expanding globally and increasing its footprint. Nevertheless, the addressing of this question has not been the aim of my project and the evidence that positive changes have occurred over time amongst the targeted participant group in my project is encouraging.

In summary, this thesis uncovers new insights on personal belief and commitment as a motivation and consequently advances the literature. Key new understandings point to significant green credentials in both ethos and practice being found amongst a sizeable proportion of the case study SMEs. This is suggestive that the "green gap" between intention and practice may be less than previously seen, irrespective of remaining questions about the wider industry-level impact being made.
5.6.3 Accreditation and awards

Accreditation and awards schemes comprising at least some environmental sustainability expectation placed on applicants had a moderate level of importance overall as a motivation, and were also identified as a green practice. Findings regarding this motivation were presented in Section 4.6.3.

Few of the earlier selected studies cover this motivation. The Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee study shows earlier literature claiming that whilst accreditation and such tools as ecolabels can aid market recognition of businesses, there are many question marks over their effectiveness (2007). These authors identify a low involvement with accreditation and awards. Whilst they emphasises a strong recognition of the benefits of such schemes by enterprises, there is more reference to these flowing from marketing benefits derived by accredited or award winning businesses with only some minor mention of their value as a benchmarking tool (ibid.). A further paper, that of Schaper and Carlsen do refer to the value of awards for their capacity to ‘recognise, reward and promote improved environmental practices of best practice’ (2004, p. 210). That only a few previous papers do canvass the subject of accreditation and awards schemes is of itself interesting and points to a lack of recognition of these as a motivational factor for sustainability in the SME specific literature.

This thesis adds some new insight into the literature regarding accreditation and awards schemes as a motivation. The higher levels of recognition by enterprises of the overall advantages of accreditation and awards, and their value as a research and business development tool, as highlighted in the discussion on these schemes as a practice in Section 5.3.4, are also relevant here. Indeed, it is worth repeating several of the citations given earlier, such as ‘…you research and look at different options’ (A3), ‘…that was the most useful thing I ever did’ (A4), ‘…it [awards process] …hones your focus…’ (A1). These clearly underscore the comments of Schaper and Carlsen supporting the role played by best-practice awards in encouraging positive environmental behaviour (ibid.). The range of objections observed such as cost, value for money and credibility are certainly impediments to the effectiveness of accreditation and awards as a green motivational, but these appear to not overly detract from the wider positive view in which they are held.

In summary, this thesis adds the literature regarding accreditation and awards schemes as a motivation for green practices. This is both due to the higher level of industry engagement
than previously seen, and greater insight into their value as tool stimulating best-practice, notwithstanding the existence of some clear negative perception of accreditation and awards. Some aspects of the resistance to accreditation and awards seen in this project are also noted by Beeton, Bergin-Seers & Lee (2007). For example, these writers reference objections to the time resource and cost demands of meeting criteria of schemes, lack of certainty regarding value for money and a sense that scheme managers don’t provide enough marketing backup to build consumer recognition (ibid.). Notwithstanding that this project probably highlights a deeper level of cynicism from some enterprises concerning accreditation and awards, overall, criticisms seen in the East Gippsland case study were somewhat similar in their broader nature to the literature.

In summary, this thesis adds to the literature regarding accreditation and awards. In particular it shows greater support for accreditation and awards than previously seen, with their value as business development and research tools evident, even when the schemes were not formally entered but used as information and benchmarking reference points only. Criticisms concerning accreditation and awards by enterprises are certainly evident, but it appears that these in the main have been seen previously.

5.6.4 Customer demand

Customer demand for green experiences had a moderate level of importance overall as a motivation influencing the uptake of environmental sustainability practices. Findings regarding this motivation were presented in Section 4.6.4.

Of the previous selected studies, all reference market demand and customer expectations existing as a motivation, and these tend to emphasise the dampening effect indulgent visitor behaviours have on green practices. Points highlighted include the nexus between the demands of the market and business practices when it comes to sustainability, the pressure on operators to conform to customer perceptions and expectations with the following operator quote in Alonso & Ogle illustrating this: ‘[Y]ou are expected to have everything green and looking nice’ (2004, p. 822). There is some divergence of views regarding whether market demand is increasing or not. A view that little pressure is coming from customers to increase green practices by operators is put by Schaper and Carlsen 2004, and Dewhurst and Thomas opine that it is unlikely that customer demand is increasing for green product (2003). However, a more optimistic view is taken by Alonso and Ogle who suggest that increasing demand from ‘customers or local communities’ will transpire in the future (2010, p. 824), and also Beeton,
Bergin Seers and Lee who, while accepting that demand for green tourism is low put the optimistic view that it is increasing and 'will force operators to become more environmentally focused' (2007, p. vi). Overall in the literature there is agreement that market forces are key determinant of whether or not sustainability will occur in the industry and a variance of views as to whether demand exists and/or will do so in the future.

This thesis is somewhat in concert with the literature on one hand, particularly in that there is a clear reluctance from some enterprises to adopt green practices where customer demand is absent, and certainly where there is visitor resistance, for example where indulgent were expected. This latter case is seen in some third of enterprises and is highlighted by the sentiment that '[T]he guests don’t want [a green experience]' (A5). If visitor demand is lacking some operators will simply not initiate sustainable practices. This is “the guest comes first” approach. On the other hand, this thesis advances the literature where a greater demand from customers for sustainable aspects to their experiences is seen to exist, and also, that some operators are prepared to take selected green actions even when demand is not overtly there. The first of these points is illustrated in this project where some third of interviewees were definitely responding to customer expectations for certain practices such as recycling, waste minimisation and organic produce. The second point is highlighted where several interviewees were doing what they could to enhance their operations from a green angle, such as installing energy efficient lighting and initiating recycling improvements, even if their guests were ‘not here to examine stuff like that’ (A6).

In summary, this thesis adds to the literature in highlighting that a possible growth in expectation from customers for sustainable aspects to their experiences may well have occurred which supports those few studies predicting that this shift would occur. It also shows that some operators are prepared to take selected actions even when demand is not overtly a driving factor from the market. These points draw attention to a possible growth in tourist green expectations and green commitment by SMEs.

5.6.5 Regulation

The existence of regulations, not including standards such as voluntary codes of conduct or compliance guidelines, had a low level of importance overall as a motivation influencing the uptake of environmental sustainability practices. However, almost all interviewees undertaking boating operations adhered to various regulations so making the motivation very influential in
that sector. Regulation was also evident to a degree in the food growing sector. Findings regarding this motivation were presented in Section 4.6.5.

There is relatively little reference in the previous selected literature to the influence of regulatory mechanisms on green activities amongst tourism SMEs. Schaper and Carlsen do report on an earlier study from 1998 identifying that ‘complying with laws and regulations’ is a key factor influencing the uptake of green practices by tourism SMEs (2004, p. 199). Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee also reference earlier research from 1996 which pointed to tourism operators finding environmental regulations complex and costly (2007), however, what these regulations actually entailed is not made clear. Apart from this, much of the commentary on regulation has to do with broader industry and not specifically tourism. For example, Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee who mention the setting of international and national policies and environmental regulations within the literature (2007), also highlight the importance that law has in delivering sustainability. Furthermore, Vernon et al. report that SMEs are ‘motivated primarily by legislation and cost savings’ (2003, p. 52) and Schaper and Carlsen say that ‘laws and policies often provide the initial “push” factor’ (2004, p. 199) and do influence green behaviour directly and indirectly (ibid.). Regarding tourism SMEs particularly, Beeton et al. do find that strict local government grey water regulations were of concern to some (2007). However this lack of specificity within these earlier findings in relation to tourism is probably not surprising given that Carter and Whiley, in their study into an iconic Australian ecotourism resort, conclude that while environmental regulation is a key part of tourism planning and development it probably has little impact on the operational side of business activity (2004).

This thesis broadly reflects the literature in seeing that, overall, tourism SMEs are not adopting green practices as a result of requirements of specific regulations. However, it is clear that there is high adherence to regulations concerning water pollution amongst boat tourism SMEs, as well as that concerning chemical regulation in the fresh produce sector. These findings add some new insight to the literature. That the subject of legislative codes for energy efficient building construction was only alluded to by one interviewee is of interest. This interviewee commented about a proposed new development by saying: ‘So in terms of environmental thinking, as far as our input into the development of [those apartments], certainly that’s got to be top of mind’ (A3). It is possible that the unexpectedly scant reference to green building regulations overall, or to government environmental regulations such as for hard waste or effluent disposal, results from these codes being so embedded into societal norms that they aren’t top of mind concerns for enterprises.
In conclusion, this thesis does add to the literature regarding the role of regulation as a green motivation by its findings to do with boating operators in particular, and also fresh food production. That being said, there is concurrence with the literature in that regulatory mechanisms have a low impact overall on tourism SMEs.

5.6.6 Climate change response

Climate change response was of low importance as a motivating factor influencing the uptake of environmental sustainability practices. Findings regarding climate change as a motivation were presented in Section 4.6.6.

Climate change response, for all intents and purposes, is not identified in any of the previous selected 6 studies from 1996 to 2010. There is some very cursory discussion around climate change by Alonso and Ogle (2010), however, these writers look at the issue of water use in hospitality businesses in Western Australia and they do not actually bring forward findings on climate change or offer anything but very fleeting discussion around it.

That none of the other previous studies identifies climate change as being an important motivation is interesting. An argument that this lack of attention may be due to the earlier of these papers being written before climate change as an issue became widely debated in the tourism context holds some water. As Bramwell et al. show, only three papers on climate change were published in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism before 2006, but that after then ‘the floodgates opened’ (2017, p. 2). This could partly account for the subject not appearing in Schaper and Carlsen (2004), Vernon et al (2003), Dewhurst and Thomas (2003) and Horobin and Long (1996). The limited climate change reference by Alonso and Ogle (2010) has already been highlighted. And, given that the study of Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee (2007) researched five pre-scripted sustainability impacts of which climate change was not one, it is not surprising the issue doesn’t surface. This previous lack of research observed is in line with Hall’s contention that there are indeed very few studies on climate change in the tourism SME sector (2006), and Morrison and Pickering’s finding that research into how climate change is impacting the industry and what responses it is making is very sparse (2013). Consequently, that this thesis does actually investigate climate change within a broad cross-section of tourism enterprises is itself a valuable advance in the knowledge base on the subject.

As established in the Literature Review (Section 2.5.2), the works of Morrison and Pickering (2013), and Hall 2006) were to be considered in more detail as both articles exclusively focus
on climate change as a tourism issue. The former investigates the ski industry specifically and the latter investigates rural accommodation businesses. However, the findings of each was different. Morrison and Pickering established that an almost universal belief existed that climate change was a factor critical to the industry (ibid.), whereas Hall found that climate change was a low level priority to operators (ibid). Notwithstanding the concern found amongst stakeholders regarding climate change by Morrison and Pickering, it is evident in their study that this concern appears to be based on how climate change will negatively affect the ski sector’s economic viability, as distinct to concern about it based on a commitment to sustainability. A comment such as: ‘…with the loss of [the ski industry] you’ve got loss of income’ (ibid. p. 180) illustrates this.

This thesis uncovers new data on climate change response in the tourism context. The conclusion that climate change ranks clearly as an issue of low importance is new to the specific literature focused on in this project and very much in concert with wider literature such as that of Hall (2006). While there is some departure from the findings of Morrison and Pickering, this is not surprising given their study exclusively looks at the high climate change risk ski industry. There is also agreement with Hall that businesses affected by critical weather events are far more likely to be concerned about climate change (ibid.), and this is mirrored by the two examples presented in Section 4.6.6 of the interviewee suffering damage from storm induced sea encroachment and the enterprise being impacted by extreme sun heat fruit.

Further insights to the literature are added by this thesis in several ways. Firstly, it confirms that a few enterprises do have deeply held concerns over climate change and this forms an important part of their commitment to sustainability. Comments such as: ‘Yes definitely, climate change is something that concerns me’ (N7) characterise this concern. Secondly, it is shown that even many enterprises demonstrating high levels of environmentally sustainability practices do not actually view climate change with any notable apprehension.

In summary, this thesis identifies climate change response as a new environmental sustainability motivation amongst the tourism SME sectors studied. It finds a low incidence of climate change concern amongst SMEs but also that climate change induced damage is likely to increase unease about climate change. The thesis advances the literature in identifying that a small number of enterprises certainly hold genuine fears over climate change, but that many SMEs, otherwise holding environmental issues very highly, see climate change as a low priority.
5.6.7 Industry expectations

Industry expectations as a motivational factor was of very low importance. Findings regarding industry or peer expectations were presented in Section 4.6.7.

There is little mention of industry as a motivation in the selected literature. Whilst a reference is made using different terminology, specifically the motivation ‘To be an industry leader in environmental sustainability’ (Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee 2007, p. 11) it is taken that this does comprise a component of industry expectation whilst it certainly also refers to community profile as well.

This project is in concert with the literature in finding only a low incidence where industry or peer expectations drive the adoption of green practices. One operator identified as responding to this motivation was in a niche sector that highly valued eco-accreditation and it was clear that being able to show high level green credentials to match industry expectations was needed to be able to maintain a high reputation in the peer group. It is clear that this motivation has only limited relevance to enterprises and is unlikely to impact on sustainability markedly.

In summary, this thesis confirms the literature that industry or peer expectations is not an important motivational factor for tourism SMEs. The motivation is more likely to be seen in niche areas where green credibility is important.

5.6.8 Supply chain

Supply chain demands was a motivation of low importance. Findings regarding this motivation were presented in Section 4.6.8.

There is little reference to this motivation in the selected literature. Schaper and Carlsen do report that ‘complying with procedural policies in other firms in the product supply chain’ is an established motivation for green behaviour but this observation comes from an earlier study and is not confirmed as a conclusion of these authors themselves (2004, p. 199). This lack of commentary by them does suggest that little supporting evidence was seen by these authors in their own research.
Certainly, insights from this thesis are new to the literature in that there is some expectation from on-sellers of a green products or services that what is promised is delivered, such as in the ecotourism or fresh produce markets. However, these influences are minor. Given this, it is reasonable to conclude that, overall, this thesis confirms the literature in that supply chain demands, whilst playing some role have a marginal impact.

In summary, supply chain demands were a motivation for only a few enterprises. Overall, it played very little part in the adoption of green practices.

5.6.9 Competitive advantage

Deriving a business competitive advantage due to demonstrating green practices was of very low importance as a motivation for green behaviour. Findings regarding competitive advantage were presented in Section 4.6.9.

There is scant mention in the selected literature of competitive advantage. However, Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee do state that almost half of their respondents believed a competitive benefit was gained from having a green business component with benefits including product differentiation and promotion (2007). Also, Schaper and Carlsen draw attention to competitive advantage as a motivation being referred to in earlier literature (2004).

It could be said that his thesis does reflect the literature in the sense that competitive advantage appears in very few of the selected studies and so can be taken as a motivation of relatively low importance across the board overall. As referenced above there is some divergence to the conclusion of Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee (2007) specifically where they find higher relevance of competitive advantage. However, where motivation was observed in this case study it was reasonably influential, for example, one interviewee saw that: 'Trying to get myself a bit of an edge over other...operators...It is a factor I believe' (N4). This may suggest some degree of alignment with Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee (ibid.).

In summary, findings in this thesis show that competitive advantage is a motivation of very low importance. This is divergent to an isolated reference in the literature. However, given the overall scant reference of competitive advantage in the literature cluster this difference is not taken as being overly significant.
5.6.10 Corporate policy

The existence of a business policy or strategic approach as a motivation contributing to uptake of environmental sustainability practices was of very low importance. Findings regarding corporate policy were presented in Section 4.6.10.

Corporate policy as a motivation for tourism SMEs is not seen in the selected 6 previous studies. However, Schaper and Carlsen do acknowledge that ‘small firms’ per se are far less likely to have formal environmental policies than are large enterprises (2004, p. 204) which certainly gives insight into the low incidence of these amongst tourism SMEs. This is supported by Vernon et al. in finding that microbusinesses in their UK case study region were very unlikely to adopt an environmental policy or engage with any formal environmental management systems (2003).

This thesis broadly reflects the literature in finding a very low incidence of corporate policy influencing sustainability. However, one interviewee that was characterised by a multi-layered management makeup did indicate that resource conservation directives from management certainly impacted on practices at lower levels. Notwithstanding this, there was no evidence that a formal policy actually existed. The low incidence of businesses appearing to have formal policies or strategies seems to generally reflect findings in the previous literature.

In summary, findings in this thesis are in line with the literature regarding the low importance of environmental sustainability policies as a motivation for green behaviour. This is probably a reflection of a low incidence of enterprises actually having environmental sustainability policies.

5.6.11 Staff welfare

Staff welfare as a motivation was of very low importance. Findings regarding staff welfare were presented in Section 4.6.11.

This thesis confirms the selected literature regarding the motivation of staff welfare for green practices. Beeton, Bergin Seers and Lee (2007) find “health of family and staff” as a somewhat minor influence but there is little detail as to what it actually refers to. In this thesis the motivation played only a very minimal role for enterprises and was in several cases associated only with use of alternative cleaning chemicals.
In summary, this thesis confirms the literature that staff welfare is not an important motivational factor for tourism SMEs in undertaking green practices. Where existing it is more evident to do with issues such as cleaning chemicals.

5.7 Summary: discussion on motivations

From the discussion carried out above in Sections 5.6.1 to 5.6.9 it has been reasonably determined what has changed when motivations identified in this thesis are compared to those previously seen in the selected literature.

This thesis confirms the literature regarding: corporate policy; industry expectations; supply chain demands, competitive advantage, and staff welfare, none of which play a major role in motivating the uptake of green practices. Whilst some isolated divergence to the literature with competitive advantage exists, this is not seen as overly noteworthy. Understandings are added to the literature with reference to: cost benefits; belief and commitment; customer demand; accreditation and awards; and, regulation. Fresh insights into these motivations include the greater impact that all of these, apart from regulation, is having in terms of driving environmentally sustainable practice. Most notably, it is evident that there are more SMEs demonstrating both a deep commitment to sustainability as well as undertaking a substantial number of green practices than has been seen in the past. This suggests that the significant gap between intention and action observed previously has diminished. And finally, the newly seen motivation of climate change response is uncovered. A low level of concern is seen about climate change from enterprises suggesting the existence of a lack of industry capacity to manage the adverse impacts likely to put strain on tourism SMEs in the future. Table 5.4 summarises the findings in this thesis on motivations by identifying whether each motivation confirms, adds to, or is new to the selected literature.

Table 5.5: Summary of findings on motivations compared to selected literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific motivation</th>
<th>Thesis confirms literature</th>
<th>Thesis adds new insights to motivations seen in literature</th>
<th>Thesis reveals new practices to literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost benefits</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief and commitment</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific motivation</td>
<td>Thesis confirms literature</td>
<td>Thesis adds new insights to motivations seen in literature</td>
<td>Thesis reveals new practices to literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market or customer demand</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation and awards</td>
<td></td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation</td>
<td></td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry expectations</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply chain demands</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive advantage</td>
<td>$y^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate policy</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff welfare</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^2$ Some divergence with an isolated case in the literature is seen, but overall this is not taken as being overly significant.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Structure of chapter
6.1 Introduction
6.2 Environmentally sustainable practices
6.3 Environmentally sustainable motivations
6.4 Research limitations
6.5 Future research agenda

6.1 Introduction

My thesis has shown what are the current environmentally sustainable practices and motivations of tourism small and medium enterprises and how these might have changed to those previously seen. In so doing it has answered the two research questions and responds to the project’s stated aim. The project contributes to addressing gaps in the field of knowledge and is a timely refreshment to the literature. New findings are uncovered which may well help to lessen tourism’s environmental impact.

In the following sections some implications are drawn from this project’s findings, and recommendations are made for a number of potentially useful future directions for stakeholders to take. These suggested initiatives may assist in improving environmental sustainability both amongst tourism SMEs and within the wider tourism industry. This, in turn, would enhance the industry’s longer-term resilience. A greener tourism industry would without doubt play a significant role in the building of a more sustainable future for society as a whole.

Given that barriers have not been studied within the scope of this project, it is acknowledged that recommendations suggested are somewhat more speculative than what they otherwise might have been.
6.2 Environmentally sustainable practices

It has been seen from this project that the environmentally sustainable practices adopted by tourism SMEs in the East Gippsland case study compare relatively closely to the range of practices seen in the previous key selected literature. However, a reasonable increase in number of practices has been observed. It has also been established in some detail how each of these practices confirm or add to the literature, and of those adding to the literature, which are new to it. The following sub-sections highlight key conclusions and recommendations regarding practices in each of these particular categories.

6.2.1 Practices confirming the selected literature

The previous literature was confirmed for the following practices found through this project: energy efficiency; recycling and waste minimisation; water conservation; green products and services; and, vehicle emissions efficiency.

Because the most highly adopted practices of energy efficiency, recycling and waste minimisation, and water conservation are generally mainstreamed amongst SMEs, it could be said that yet even greater adoption of them is as much as anything linked to societal advances in both technologies and behaviours. However, given the strong engagement with these practices by enterprises, just waiting for wider trends to filter through to the tourism industry is a laissez-faire approach and potentially missing some obvious existing opportunities which could be easily capitalised on. One potentially quick way forward is that, as any basic internet search will reveal, there are numerous websites operated by various governments, NGOs and private organisations containing copious amounts of sustainability material. This includes information, resources and funding programs on energy, waste and water. Because it has been seen that there was very low awareness of carbon reduction tools, it is quite possible that this low awareness extends to sustainability websites more generally and that existing useful resources are not nearly as well used as they could be by tourism SMEs. Indeed, even though outcomes from the pilot interviews done in this project are not taken as formal evidence, a low engagement with online resources is hinted at in them. If this is the case, then stimulating more productive engagement with online resources by way of industry promotion and training actions could help guide SMEs towards better conservation outcomes regarding energy, waste and water.
Green products and services and motor vehicle emissions efficiency were the other of the practices seen to be confirming the literature. These had low and very low adoption respectively and appear in their own right to have little impact on overall tourism SME sustainability. Little further needs to be said here about green products and services due to the minor ways in which these are used and the limited availability of them. Regarding motor vehicle emissions, on the surface of it there seem to be few implications in relation to this practice due to the probability that, as with energy, waste and water, broader societal behaviours would rank far beyond anything else in influencing behaviours at an industry level. However, as it has been seen, interest in carbon reduction tools as a practice is very low and climate change ranks low as a motivation. Thus, it would be logical to assume that, as with the recommendation for energy, waste and water, if more enterprises were familiar with the currently existing range of online sustainability resources, including those offering carbon reduction information, then appreciation of vehicle emissions issues may rise. Similarly, if more enterprises were concerned about impending global warming and climate change risks to their businesses this could then translate into more concern around vehicular GHG emissions. Both of these actions could be quite simply encompassed within industry training programs if actions to further engage SMEs with environmental sustainability issues were undertaken by stakeholders responsible for tourism industry strategic direction.

6.2.2 Practices previously seen in the selected literature for which new understandings are added

New understandings have been added to the previous selected literature for the following practices found through this project: environmental education; accreditation and awards; biodiversity activities; photovoltaics; lobbying and activism; and, building design and construction.

Of most interest amongst these is environmental education for which this project has highlighted a wider and more in-depth engagement than in the past. Implications leading from this include capitalising on the powerful role that education can potentially play in raising the awareness of green values. For instance, a notable proportion of SMEs are already deploying some kind of educational activity. If these enterprises are supported with training to ensure they are delivering effective environmental messages in a best-practice way, this may have a very noticeable impact on improving sustainability values amongst both the SMEs themselves and also amongst visitors. It would be interesting to know if environmental education has been overlooked in the past as an important vehicle to improve tourism industry green outcomes other than in specialty niches such as, for example, ecotourism. Indeed, it may well be that
focused efforts made by key stakeholders towards the up-skilling of tourism practitioners in nature/ ecological interpretation and education at a wider industry level could be a productive area of endeavour for the industry.

Less notable consequences for sustainability possibly arise from the balance of the practices previously seen in the selected literature for which new understandings are added, than do for environmental education. This is because implications relating to them are more medium to long-term rather than short-term. Whilst it is encouraging that higher engagement has been seen in accreditation and awards than in the past, it appears there is already a reasonable degree of familiarity by SMEs with the numerous schemes in existence, some of which have been operating for many years. Consequently, it is not easy to suggest any innovative ways in which uptake of the practice can be easily further leveraged, particularly as some cynicism is seen towards accreditation and awards due to cost and resource demands, perceived value, and credibility issues. Given this resistance, further investigation into the actual barriers limiting wider appeal of the practice is likely to point to productive future directions. Apart from this, it may well be that greater acceptance of the value of accreditation and awards as a tool for improving sustainability outcomes will, more than not, be an incremental process spurred on by higher commitment to green values. And, an ongoing growth in green commitment is also possibly what will be the key factor engendering greater uptake of both biodiversity activities, and lobbying and activism, as practices. This is because both of these appear to be very much driven by personally held beliefs and concern for environmental protection. And finally, regarding photovoltaics as well as building design and construction, both of these practices saw very low uptake. However, this is clearly closely related to the complexities, cost, and longer-term nature of building construction investment. Even with photovoltaics this is borne out by the numerous references by interviewees to the unsuitability of existing buildings for rooftop solar installation. Implications from this suggest that advances in these areas will be slow, although any rapid progress in technology may have relatively immediate results. However, that numerous enterprises would make their buildings greener if they could is encouraging.

6.2.3 New practices to the selected literature

This project has uncovered the following practices as new to the selected literature: local food tourism; digital office technology; green boating; green horticulture; carbon reduction tools; and, solar hot water. Local food tourism and green boating stand out amongst these practices.
Local food tourism has been found to be very attractive to visitors and well supported by enterprises. This support from SMEs is underscored by local food tourism appearing to have equal appeal to a broad range of businesses, including to those resistant to the adoption of other sustainability practices. The key implication regarding this practice is that, as the green characteristics of local food tourism are under-recognised, this area may have significant potential as a vehicle for the raising of awareness concerning environmental sustainability. Pathways to capitalising on the opportunities found in this practice almost certainly need to start at the strategic level. Without, firstly, an understanding by government and industry representative groups that increasing environmental sustainability is an important goal, and secondly, that local food tourism offers some under-valued prospects for achieving this, it is likely that limited meaningful progress will be made. In terms of actual strategic directions, once local food producers are supportive, the promotion through branding and advertising campaigns to consumers of the relative green credentials of local foods and beverages, is one obvious angle to consider. Any increasing recognition by consumers of the green values inherent in local food would encourage more support from producers and re-sellers which would then itself encourage further growth in the sector. That industry standards regarding “greenness” of local food products would need to be established and adhered to in this process is a given. And, regarding the practice of green horticulture, this does have the capacity to contribute to a lower tourism environmental impact in its own right. It is also closely linked to food tourism and has a central role to play in augmenting the market desirability and quality of local food and beverage products. Consequently, enhanced industry initiatives supporting local food tourism would also most probably be a very productive way in which green horticulture could be further assisted.

The high levels of adoption of green boating in the context of chemical pollution amongst those enterprises where boating was part of their tourism experience offer could be said to be a good sign of an awareness about sustainability and a commitment to protect natural assets that tourism relies on. However, of concern are the other important findings highlighting reported contrasting poor levels of sustainable practice exhibited by tourists as recreational boat users, together with the view of boat operators that there is inadequacy of regulation and policing to respond to the environmental degradation of waterways. Consequently, implications from this point to the probability that even modest advances in reducing pollution from recreational boats could see notable improvements to the long-term sustainability of waterways. It is clear that government leadership is needed to ensure adequate policy mechanisms are in place. Further to this, promotion of regulations needs to occur so that the boating public is fully aware of its obligations to minimise water contamination from fuel and effluent pollution. Sufficient policing is of course also required to back up regulations.
Unfortunately, this subject is no doubt an area where solutions may seem to be clear but the achievement of them is probably very difficult, especially as regulation and public resourcing are key. Nonetheless, green boating is an important subject given its popularity and continuing strong growth. Thus, the challenges need tackling, at least in the East Gippsland case study region and other regions where similar issues are found to exist.

The remaining newly uncovered practices had varying levels of support. Digital office technology, whilst having low adoption, can have obvious economic benefits across all business types and sizes. Carbon reduction tools saw very low use which was initially surprising when viewed against the very high support for energy reduction activities. However, it must be acknowledged that it was evident many enterprises were taking steps to reduce power consumption by common and mundane means and these actions may help to consign specific carbon reduction activities to a lower level of relevance. The low engagement with this practice is probably even more understandable when seen in light of the minimal interest shown in the subjects of carbon emissions and climate change. And finally, with little use of solar hot water systems evident, this would seem to reflect the wider low uptake of the technology in the Australian domestic sector. Greater adoption of these three practices will probably follow societal behavioural changes and technological advances, so making immediate implications from this project somewhat modest. Nevertheless, further advances in their uptake would no doubt be seen if government and representative bodies intentionally set out to improve industry environmental sustainability in a wider strategic way. As individual enterprises started to look more closely at their own practices and see opportunities pointed out to them, this, even on its own, would be likely to build momentum and interest.

6.3 Environmentally sustainable motivations

The range and characteristics of motivations found to positively influence tourism SMEs in their uptake of environmentally sustainable practices compares reasonably closely to those seen in the previous key selected literature. However some valuable new understandings are uncovered regarding previously identified motivations and one new motivation is brought to light, that of climate change response. As well as this, a proposition has been made that more enterprises are probably now “walking the talk”, or showing a commitment to environmental sustainability as well as delivering significant green practices.

The following 4 subsections highlight the key conclusions and recommendations with respect to motivations.
6.3.1 Motivations confirming the selected literature

The previous key selected literature is confirmed for the following motivations found through this project: corporate policy; industry expectations; supply chain demands, competitive advantage, and staff welfare. As all of these were motivational factors of only very low importance amongst enterprises, they are likely to have limited immediate importance as a means of driving a greener SME sector in their own right.

6.3.2 New understandings for motivations previously seen in the selected literature

New understandings are added to the previous selected literature for the following motivations found through this project: cost-benefits; customer demand; accreditation and awards; belief and commitment; and, regulation.

Fresh insights into these motivations include the greater impact that all of these, apart from regulation in a limited context, is having in terms of driving environmentally sustainable practice. Most notably and as mentioned, it is apparent that there are more SMEs demonstrating both a deep commitment to sustainability as well as undertaking a substantial number of green practices than has been seen in the past. It has been already noted that the actual sustainability impact of this, both within specific destinations and across tourism more widely, is unknown. Nonetheless, the suggestion that the significant gap between intention and action highlighted in earlier literature may have diminished, at least at localised levels in some destinations, is heartening.

There are some valuable implications from this observation. Indeed, notwithstanding the undisputed message consistently presented in the tourism literature in general that the industry is far from being sustainable, findings from the East Gippsland case study should paint at least a modestly encouraging picture of the progress that has been made and the opportunities that lie ahead. If, as appears to be the case, a sizeable proportion of SMEs are showing greater inclination in various ways to adopt green measures, then every effort should be made by industry to capitalise on this. Ways of doing this no doubt fall into both wider strategic approaches and also more localised specific actions. From the broad strategic level, it may well be that at this point in time there is limited recognition by policy makers that a sizeable proportion of tourism SMEs are actually interested in prioritising the greening of their businesses to varying degrees. If this is the case then it is unlikely meaningful sustainability
initiatives will be built into policy instruments. Without effective policy it is unlikely opportunities to further encourage industry greening will be made the most of. Consequently, an important further step is to investigate whether or not tourism policy makers themselves are focused on the importance of environmental sustainability, and in what ways further greening of the industry can be driven by them. And in terms of immediate more localised actions, even looking for simple ways to harness the insights and skills demonstrated by those enterprises which are “walking the talk”, for example through the recognition of “best-practice” and the delivery of programs showcasing these achievements could prove very beneficial.

The remaining motivation for which new insights have been added to the selected literature is that of regulation. Findings for this motivation are notable in terms of boating, in particular in the localised East Gippsland case study region, and concern the status and/or efficacy of environmental regulations covering the protection of local waterways from chemical pollution. Whether this applies in other regions in Australia or internationally is not known. It certainly is sensible that any regulations in place to protect waterways from tourism related impacts are effectively designed and policed. Consequently, apart from anything else, further efforts to improve the efficacy of boating regulations in the localised case study region of East Gippsland would clearly be of value. These efforts would likely need to be ultimately driven by government agencies responsible for waterways management and policing, although lobbying by tourism industry bodies may well first be needed to bring attention to the issues of concern.

6.3.3 New motivations not seen in the previous selected literature

This project has uncovered the new motivation of climate change response and it has been seen that the phenomenon is of relatively low priority to tourism SMEs. This is an important addition to that small body of literature covering both accommodation and non-accommodation tourism SMEs. Implications arising from this bring into sharp focus many questions about the lack of readiness of the industry to engage in adaptation or mitigation strategies needed to increase the chances of business viability. Indeed, climate change could well be said to be an industry blind spot. Ill-preparedness puts tourism SMEs at grave risk from the damaging impacts climate change will almost certainly have at an industry-wide and enterprise level. Consequently, the sooner SMEs are alerted to these risks, the better. As to how this could be done, it seems apparent that without government leadership little movement will take place. This represents a challenge given how climate change recognition and action is very much impacted by various political and ideological encumbrances at multiple policy-making levels. With this in mind, it seems logical that further research into how policy makers
can be encouraged to effect climate change response initiatives within tourism SME sectors is a critical next step.

6.4 Research limitations

While there has been a valuable contribution to the literature from my thesis, there are a number of limitations inherent in it which need acknowledging in the context of wider application. These limitations are in particular to do with three things. The first of these is the use of the case study approach focused on a regional tourism destination with clear strengths in natural attractions and experiences. The second limitation is the focus on SMEs from a broad cross-section of sectors comprising both accommodation and non-accommodation enterprises. And, the third limitation relates to a focus on the key selected literature.

Regarding the first limitation, when trying to apply the findings from my project to tourism destinations possessing considerably different characteristics to the case study destination used in this project, or to non-destination tourism audiences, caution should be adopted. For example, a metropolitan or regional destinations having key strengths in, say, cultural tourism as distinct to nature-based tourism, or one heavily dominated by accommodation/hospitality enterprises rather than being more broad-based, will certainly comprise a very different composition of businesses responding to different sets of customer expectations compared to what is seen within this study. The same logic applies to non-destination tourism audiences. Notwithstanding this limitation, employing the case study design based on a tourism nature-based destination has enabled alignment with those 6 specialised papers used as key references in my thesis, and so has been essential. Regarding the second limitation, that of focusing on a broad cross-section of SMEs, caution also needs to be applied when seeking to extend the results to either larger enterprises, or, for example, to single industry sectors including accommodation. However, in both of these instances, if the right degree of thoughtfulness is used, any tourism destination or sector(s) should be able to glean value from the outcomes of my project. And finally, considerable care has been taken to select previous key literature for comparison that is most pertinent to my project's aims. However, it is acknowledged various other studies that, in one way or another, also relate to the subject matter focused on in this thesis may be able to shed additional light on the findings and conclusions presented here. Consequently, some future related inquiry into related literature is likely to usefully complement my thesis.
6.5 Future research agenda

With respect to the individual green practices and motivations found in this project, and also the more generalised finding that higher numbers of tourism SMEs “walk the talk” than previously seen, there are some interesting subjects that could lend themselves to further rewarding inquiry, both theoretically and practically.

Nevertheless, all things being equal, it would seem sound that, further research should first encompass the subject of barriers that hinder greater uptake of environmentally sustainable practices. As has been previously explained, it has not been practical to include an investigation into barriers within the scope of this project even though the subject is canvassed to varying degrees in the selected literature. Furthermore, if an actual investigation into barriers were to be done, this would also naturally lead to the proposing of solutions to counter these obstacles as a logical next step. Consequently, it would be of considerable value to the industry to have both these things done in concert within some reasonably short-term timeframe. This could be carried out by either focusing on a select range of practices and motivations in a specialised way, or by inquiring into them as a composite group, as has been done in my project.

Apart from this wider recommendation, those individual practices and motivations independently lending themselves to specific further research comprise the following:

- Energy efficiency, recycling and waste minimisation, and water conservation as practices. Further research could entail inquiry into that range of existing website-based resources offering sustainability information, programs and funding, and whether or not enterprises are utilising these. Greater engagement with these resources could stimulate higher levels of adoption of energy, waste and water conservation;

- Motor vehicle emissions efficiency as a practice. Further research could entail building the connection between carbon reduction practices, climate change and motor vehicle use in order to encourage higher awareness of the impact of vehicle emissions;

- Environmental education as a practice. Further research could enlighten whether environmental education has been overlooked by industry bodies as a wider industry tool and whether it is being delivered in a best-practice way. If it is not, then ways to address this can be proposed;
Accreditation and awards as a practice and a motivation. Research into how those factors limiting the appeal of accreditation and awards to SMEs would potentially lead to positive adjustments to existing schemes, so increasing industry engagement. It is also possible that innovative new ways of offering accreditation, certification and awards could be found;

Local food tourism as a practice. Further inquiry into firstly, how to encourage industry bodies and producers to recognise the environmental sustainability benefits of local food tourism is warranted. Once that is done, the establishment of green standards, as well as promotional strategies to market the green credentials of local food produce to consumers are important next steps;

Green boating as a practice and regulation as a motivation in the context of green boating. Clarification concerning existing regulatory settings and implementation, at least in the case study destination of East Gippsland, is needed to help address clear localised issues which have been raised. Attendant to this, investigation of the actual practices/opinions of recreational boat owners, as distinct to industry boat operators, and the identification of ways to minimise waterway chemical pollution is needed. And, finally, how widely the issues found in this project are relevant to other boating destinations, domestically in Australia and internationally, are important questions to be answered;

Belief and commitment as a motivation, and the observation that more SMEs are “walking the talk” and putting green aspirations into practice than previously observed. Avenues for further research on this topic could fall into 3 areas. The first of these is strategic and involves inquiry into whether or not policy makers are aware of the level of interest in green practices that exists amongst SMEs. This would further reveal how effectively policy is reflecting industry needs and could potentially lead to better opportunities to support environmental sustainability in the industry being developed. The second area is more action-based at a localised level and could involve devising initiatives to use the possible “best-practice” skills and knowledge of those enterprises that are “walking the talk”. This could help generate significantly more momentum at both the smaller and larger destination level. And lastly, as has been noted, the actual environmental impact of that proportion of SMEs found to be “walking the talk” relative to the balance of the industry, both at localised and wider scales, is an important question to answer. Investigation into these uncertainties would create much greater clarity regarding how much, if any, net progress has indeed been made; and
Climate change response as a motivation. Urgent research is required to better assist SMEs to recognise the risks to their own businesses and wider industry from climate change, and then to have the capacity to take mitigation and adaptation steps. Inquiry into the attitudes of policy makers regarding climate change needs to be an important attendant action.

### 6.6 Final note on key contributions made by recommendations in this thesis

Some of the recommendations for future actions and research opportunities made in my thesis do bear varying degrees of commonality with recommendations contained in the selected previous research. Nevertheless, each of the suggestions put forward in this chapter is specifically tailored to the conclusions of this project and represents a unique insight into productive ways forward for further greening of tourism SMEs.

Apart from this, amongst the multiple recommendations presented in this chapter a number of them certainly stand out as making the most notable and original contributions to the literature. With this in mind, it is deemed useful to provide a simple synthesised guide to the key recommendations that have been derived from my research project. These key recommendations are: (1) investigation of barriers into green practices based on the findings in this thesis, and into solutions to those barriers; (2) more effective use of existing online sustainability resources; (3) maximising the potential of environmental education for both SMEs and visitors; (4) raising the profile of local food tourism as a vehicle for environmental sustainability; (5) improving effectiveness of green boating regulations, at least in the East Gippsland case study destination; (6) better preparing SMEs to respond to climate change; and (7) recognising that at least a sizeable proportion of SMEs are already both noticeably committed to environmental sustainability and delivering green practices, and ensuring that both tourism policy and practical initiatives reflect this, and fully capitalise on it.
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INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Project Title:
Support for environmental sustainability by tourism businesses in East Gippsland, Victoria: practices and perceptions

Investigators:

- The investigator for this research project is:
  - Phil Rickards
  - Qualifications:
    - M Soc Sc (IntUrban&EnvMgt) (Distinct), RMIT University, 2012
    - Grad Dip Ec Dev (Distinct), RMIT University, 2011
    - Dip Tourism (Operations Management), East Gippsland TAFE, 2009
    - Dip Events, East Gippsland TAFE, 2009

- The investigator’s senior supervisor is:
  - Dr Joe Hurley
  - Qualifications:
    - PhD, RMIT University, 2011
    - Grad Cert Tertiary Teaching and Learning, RMIT University, 2010
    - B Eng (Civil) (Hons), University of Melbourne, 1999
  - Phone: (03) 9925 9016
The investigator’s second supervisor is:

- Associate Professor Ian Thomas

  Qualifications:
  - PhD, Monash University, 1991
  - Grad Dip Urban Systems, Swinburne Institute of Technology, 1977
  - M Eng Sc (Transport), University of Melbourne, 1974
  - B Eng (Civil) 2B Hons, Monash University, 1971

**Who is involved in this research project? Why is it being conducted?**

- The research is a post-graduate student project by Phil Rickards in fulfilment of the requirements of Master of Social Science (Global Urban & Social Studies) as a Higher Degree by Research.

- As detailed above, the researcher’s senior supervisor is Dr Joe Hurley and the researcher’s second supervisor is Associate Professor Ian Thomas.

- The research project has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee.

**Why have you been approached?**

1. You have been invited to participate in the research project generally because you operate a tourism business in one of the main visitor destinations in East Gippsland, which is the study area. More specifically, your business belongs to one of the tourism business groupings which the study is concentrating on, they being:

   - Major Tourist Attractions
   - Ecotourism
   - Indigenous Tourism
   - Specialised Tourism Services
   - Adventure Tourism
   - Restaurants & Cafes
   - Wineries & Breweries
   - Tourist & Caravan Parks
   - Hosted Accommodation
   - Unique Accommodation
   - Standard Accommodation
   - Deluxe Accommodation
   - Food Tourism
2. You have been selected at random and your details found via a publically accessible internet search engine.

**What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?**

- The purpose of the project is to discover what is the level of support for Environmental Sustainability by tourism businesses in East Gippsland?

- To find this out, the following broad lines of questioning will be explored during interviews undertaken by the researcher with tourism business operators:
  - What environmental sustainability practices do tourism operators undertake in their businesses?
  - What perceptions and views do tourism operators have regarding environmental sustainability, including:
    - Do they see environmental sustainability practices as important to them in the operation of their businesses?
    - Do they see environmental sustainability as important in a wider industry or social sense, including as a response to Climate Change?
    - Are there adequate resources, tools and support currently available to assist tourism operators should they wish to undertake environmental sustainability practices in their businesses?

3. The value of the research is two-fold. First, it will give a useful picture of what is actually happening ‘on the ground’ in East Gippsland. Second, knowing this could well help the industry at the individual business level to further improve its environmental sustainability performance, as well as influencing higher policy-making levels. These things could assist the industry’s future viability.

4. During the research project approximately 20 interviews will be undertaken with different tourism business operators in East Gippsland.

**If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?**

- All that you will be asked to do as a participant is to answer a set of questions in an interview with Phil Rickards as the researcher. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and would normally take place at your own business, although if another location is preferable to you, you are free to discuss that with the researcher.

- Interview notes will be taken by the researcher and an audio recording will be made of the interview to enable data analysis to be undertaken at a later stage.

- The questions to be asked will follow the format outlined in the section under the above heading: **What is the project about? What are the questions being addressed?** However, the
interview will be semi-structured and you will be free to bring up any issue or line of thought that you feel is relevant to the research project.

**What are the possible risks or disadvantages?**

- There are no perceived risks or disadvantages to you from participating in the project, outside the time required for the interview itself.

- If, however, you were to find any aspects of your participation concerning or distressing in any way you should contact the researcher’s senior supervisor Associate Professor Ian Thomas, or his second supervisor Dr Joe Hurley as soon as convenient. Either Ian Thomas or Joe Hurley will discuss your concerns with you confidentially and suggest appropriate follow-up, if necessary.

**What are the benefits associated with participation?**

- It is not expected there will be any direct benefit to you from participating in the interview other than from any information or ideas that you might find useful that come to light as a result of the questions being asked. If any changes occur to wider industry practices as a result of the research project once its findings are published, you may or may not find these beneficial to you.

**What will happen to the information I provide?**

- Only the researcher, and potentially his supervisors, will know your personal details and be able to link the specific responses you give during the interview to you. In other words, information about you will remain confidential and seen only by a small number of people who have direct responsibility for the research.

- Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is to protect you or others from harm, (2) if specifically required or allowed by law, or (3) you provide the researchers with written permission.

- When the research results are published all of the data gained from the interviews will be aggregated. No participants will be able to be identified as data will be reported using pseudonyms, coding or any other de-identifying techniques.

- As the purpose of the research is to publish a thesis, the thesis will be held in the RMIT Repository which is a publicly accessible online library of research papers. Additionally, in the future, the project results may appear in journal articles, conference presentations or other similar academic activities.
• The research data (i.e. the raw information including audio recordings) will be kept securely at RMIT for 5 years after publication, before being destroyed. The final research paper will remain online.

• As a participant, the thesis produced as a result of the project will be made available to you electronically, should you request that.

What are my rights as a participant?

• You have the following rights as a participant in the project:
  o The right to withdraw from participation at any time.
  o The right to request that any recording cease.
  o The right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, provided it can be reliably identified, and provided that so doing does not increase the risk for the participant.
  o The right to have any questions answered at any time.

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?

• If you have any questions at any time regarding your involvement in the project you may contact the researcher or his supervisors on the phone numbers provided earlier in this participant information sheet.

Yours sincerely

PHIL RICKARDS

M Soc Sc (IntUrban&EnvMgt) (Distinct), RMIT University, 2012
Grad Dip Ec Dev (Distinct), RMIT University, 2011
Dip Tourism (Operations Management), East Gippsland TAFE, 2009
Dip Events, East Gippsland TAFE, 2009

If you have any concerns about your participation in this project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers, then you can contact the Ethics Officer, Research Integrity, Governance and Systems, RMIT University, GPO Box 2476V VIC 3001. Tel: (03) 9925 2251 or email human.ethics@rmit.edu.au
CONSENT FORM

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in the research project and return it to the researcher. A photocopy of the signed form will be given to you.

1. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet.

2. I agree to participate in the research project as described.

3. I agree:
   - to be interviewed.
   - that my voice will be audio recorded.

4. I acknowledge that:

   (a) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).

   (b) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.

   (c) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.

   (d) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published. Any information which will identify me will not be used.

Participant’s Consent

Participant: ___________________________________________ Date: ___________________________

(Signature)
APPENDIX B
Interview Questions

Interview questions

1. What environmental sustainability practices do you undertake in your business?

2. How have you developed the knowledge or found the tools to do those things you mentioned?

3. Have you used any of the website-based sustainability tools and programs that can easily be found online?

4. What are the reasons you might be interested in environmental sustainability as a business person i.e. what motivates you?

5. Is being green important to you in your business operation?

6. What perceptions and views do you have regarding environmental sustainability, including:
   a. Do you think the tourism industry is doing enough for environmental sustainability…or could it be doing more?
   b. (If yes) What more could be done specifically?

7. Are there any pressing environmental issues in East Gippsland, or in Victoria, impacting on tourism that something should be done about?

8. I want to ask you about a couple of things specifically (if not raised unsolicited):
   a. What to do think about climate change as a tourism issue?
   b. Do you offer local food or beverage products?
      i. What do you and your customers value in local food or beverage products?

9. Are there adequate resources, tools and support currently available to assist you should you wish to undertake environmental sustainability practices in your business?

10. If you wanted to become more environmentally friendly, could anything be done to better assist you?

11. Are there any other comments you would like to make, or questions you’d like to ask me?
Ethics Notice of Approval

Date: 11 August 2014

Project number: CHEAN B 0000018831-07/14

Project title: Support for environmentally sustainable tourism tools and programs by tourism business operators in East Gippsland, Victoria: practices and perceptions.

Risk classification: Low Risk

Investigator: A/Professor Ian Thomas and Mr Philip John Rickards

Approved: From: 11 August 2014 To: 27 July 2017

I am pleased to advise that your application has been granted ethics approval by the Design and Social Context College Human Ethics Advisory Network as a sub-committee of the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

Terms of approval:

1. Responsibilities of investigator
   It is the responsibility of the above investigator/s to ensure that all other investigators and staff on a project are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure that the project is conducted as approved by the CHEAN. Approval is only valid whilst the investigator/s holds a position at RMIT University.

2. Amendments
   Approval must be sought from the CHEAN to amend any aspect of a project including approved documents. To apply for an amendment please use the ‘Request for Amendment Form’ that is available on the RMIT website. Amendments must not be implemented without first gaining approval from CHEAN.

3. Adverse events
   You should notify HREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

4. Participant Information and Consent Form (PICF)
   The PICF and any other material used to recruit and inform participants of the project must include the RMIT university logo. The PICF must contain a complaints clause including the project number.

5. Annual reports
   Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an annual report. This form can be located online on the human research ethics web page on the RMIT website.

6. Final report
   A final report must be provided at the conclusion of the project. CHEAN must be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

7. Monitoring
   Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by HREC at any time.

8. Retention and storage of data
   The investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

In any future correspondence please quote the project number and project title.

On behalf of the DSC College Human Ethics Advisory Network I wish you well in your research.

Suzana Kovacevic
Research and Ethics Officer
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University
Ph: 03 9925 2074
Email: suzana.kovacevic@rmit.edu.au
Website: www.rmit.edu.au/dsc
APPENDIX D
# Websites and specific web pages visited to determine interview participants in each sub-destination

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Tourism business category</th>
<th>Website page used to select participant</th>
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