Abstract

This Master's thesis is a contribution to the knowledge of Generation Y's perception of going green on their leisure vacation. As surprisingly little research has been conducted on Generation Y and tourism, this study has sought to provide knowledge that may fill this gap. This may not only be helpful in an academic context, but may also contribute to the hotel business' understanding of Generation Y, who appear to be difficult group to target for the hotels as they are not very brand loyal and may, therefore, choose a new hotel on their next vacation, since the essence of vacation is the experience. The study is based on eight in-depth interviews of Danes from Generation Y. The study must, therefore, be understood as a case study by which it is possible to draw tendencies and may, therefore, be regarded as a pilot study and based on the findings construct a foundation for further research.

The constructivist paradigm of the study has played a significant role in the analysis conducted, as the purpose of the study has been to uncover the eight examined Y'ers' perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels and to discover how these may influence their consumer behaviour. The purpose is, thereby, not to compare the Y'ers' answers, but rather to provide a multifaceted answer including all the answers from the interviewees. As the paradigm denotes how I as a research view the world, it has been a consistent element taken into consideration throughout the study.

Some of the major findings in this study were:

It was found that not all the examined Y'ers have the same perception of the importance ascribed to a hotel stay. This, furthermore, became a foundational finding on which the study based other findings. This showed that even though the examined members of Generation Y all perceived the hotel stay as a basic experience of the total tourism experience, the perception within this field appeared to differ from one another.

Even though the examined members of Generation Y appear to be aware of the notion of green hotels; it is, however, not a consideration they take into consideration when going through their individual decision making process of choosing a

hotel for their leisure vacation. Ending up at a green hotel may, therefore, be more a coincidence rather than an active choice.

The examined members of Generation Y has a set of criteria, which are significant when choosing a hotel for their leisure vacation; price, quality and location. When examined Generation Y are searching for a hotel, there is a significant focus on the information search and the evaluation of alternatives appear to operate simultaneously. As the primary searching tool is online hotel search engines, such as hotels.com, booking.com or google.com, one could question whether the fixed searching criteria of the webpages may signify that more information and green hotels as a criteria is not an element taken into consideration among the examined members of Generation Y.

Another major findings deals with an international aspect of the study; the examined members of Generation Y appear to be more inclined to choose a green alternative when going on leisure vacation in Denmark, rather than when going on leisure vacation abroad. This signifies that going abroad denotes a greater distance to the everyday lives of the examined members of Generation Y.

There appear to be a difference in the way the research sample view the normative habits of being green in their everyday lives and when going on leisure vacation. Due to financial and the limited timeframe of the vacation versus the everyday green habits at home, slacken off on the green normative habits appears to be more legitimate. This, moreover, signifies that the examined mombers of Generation Y must be referred to as smart and hybrid consumers, who seeks to get the most out of their resources.

It is, however, significant to note that the findings may only be seen as tendencies and the opinion of the majority, there is, moreover, always some of the examined members of Generation Y, who does not agree with the majority. This aspect has, moreover, been taken into account in the study.

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1. Introduction

Today tourism is seen as one of the fastest growing industries internationally; this must be seen as a product of a general increasing income, more leisure time, improved mobility and tourism has become part of the westernised lifestyle (Wall & Mathieson, 2006; Sharpley, 2003; Theobald, 2005; Fien, et al., 2010; Holloway, 2004; UNWTO, 2012). Over the last six decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification, thereby, becoming one of the fastest-growing economic sectors in the world (UNWTO, 2012). In fact, tourism has become a significant industry and billion dollars are each year spent on travel; the last decade international tourism recipes have continued to increase and in 2011 international tourism recipes exceeded US$ 1 trillion for the first time (UNWTO, 2012). Despite the economic aspect, travelling also helps to reflect and constitutes the individual's status, identity and culture (Hughes, 1997; Wall & Mathieson, 2006).

Because of the significant growth in the travel industry the competition is considerable and destinations across the world are seeking to improve their product in order attract visitors (Holloway, 2004). In recent years it has, moreover, been recognised in the travel industry that taking care of the environment is important as they are dependent on the environmental and cultural resources (Sheldon & Park, 2010; Han & Kim, 2010). The relationship between tourism and climate changes must arguably be seen as bidirectional; tourism is actively impacted by the climate changes as well as being a major contributor to the phenomenon of climate changes (Buhanlis & Costa, 2006).

Green living and minimising ones' impact on the natural environment is one of today's major social trends in the western world, which over the last years has become a global phenomenon (Buhanlis & Costa, 2006; Kaman, 2008). An interesting aspect to examine, in this context, is consumer behaviour of the tourists, since the primary object of going on vacation is rejuvenation and relaxation (Akehurst, et al., 2012). As mentioned, travelling also reflects the individual's status, identity and culture; this study will, therefore, focus on the consumer aspect of the travel industry. However, as the travel industry must be regarded as fairly broad, it is significant to narrow it down and generate a clear-cut perspective in order to obtain focus of the study; this

study will, thereby, be focusing on hotel business. In the context of environmental sustainable tourism the hotel industry is a very interesting aspect to examine. This must be seen in the light that hotels have become even more significant in the tourism industry, since tourists are demanding higher standard services (Quan & Wang, 2004). In social science, the supporting activities of the tourism experience, such as hotels, are often ignored, whereas marketing literature encompass the supporting activities, this hereby makes it interesting to examine from a social scientific point of view.

As the tourism sector is growing significantly, is also a need of diversification to gain a competitive edge within the hotel business. Moreover, for a hotel to isolate them from competitors and obtain a superior advantage, they need a competitive edge in their marketing strategy (Becerra, et al., 2013). An aspect which may create a competitive advantage, is by taking advantage of the social trend of being green and, thereby marketing themselves as green hotels. Hotel consumers may, moreover, be more ready and willing to respond to appeals based on the green trend (Kaman, 2008). Knowing this, it is significant to look at how the social trend of being green can be spotted in society.

Over the last few decades, consumer concerns regarding the environment have progressively escalated (Han, et al., 2010; Kalafatis, et al., 1999; Laroche, et al., 2001). Concern for the environment is seen in consumer-polls and lifestyles, in political campaigns, in the media, and in product offerings and marketing strategies (Zimmer, et al., 1994). In order to show how significant this is, attitudes and focus towards the environment has even changed generated a shift in paradigm from the traditional anthropological thought about the environment which expresses the feeling that nature exists primarily to serve the needs of mankind (Uysa, et al., 1994). The new paradigm, New Environmental Paradigm advocates that mankind must live in harmony with nature and that there are limits to the capacity of the natural environment to absorb growth of human activities. This is a perspective which has gained progress and people have become increasingly aware of the re of the impact of their buying behaviour, which are strongly connected with environmental problems (Han, et al., 2010; Laroche, et al., 2001). In fact, there is sufficient empirical evidence that environmental concern is a major factor in consumer decision making

(Diamantopoulos, et al., 2003; Zimmer, et al., 1994; Kilbourne & Beckmann, 1998). Green marketing is even considered one of the major trends (Akehurst, et al., 2012; McDaniel & Rylander, 1993). Seeing environmental concerns being a major factor in the consumer decision making process, it is also interesting to examine how this may influence the consumer behaviour in the hotel business.

Green consumerism and its subsequent ethical consumerism are forms of symbolic consumption, as consumers consider not only individual but also social values, ideals and ideologies (Kaman, 2008; Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004). Consumers have, moreover, started to demand a saying in production, processing and resourcing of the products. Green consumerism does, thereby, not only function as a way for the businesses to differentiate from other businesses, but is also functioning as a way for the consumers to express their individual status, identity and culture.

The presence of green consumption in society has also proven significant to the hotel industry, where the consumers' demand for green establishments has been gradually increasing. This has also resulted in an increasing number of hotel companies adopting proactive environmental management and implementing environmentally conscious practices to improve their competitiveness (Han & Kim, 2010). As in other businesses consumers have become aware of the connection between consumption and environmental issues, the hotel business is not an exception and many customers who are being aware of the environmental damages and the wasting of environmental resources caused by hotels now sought for eco-friendly practices (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). This has resulted in an increasing number of hotels implementing the green practices. One could, thereby, question if differentiation is in fact a reality in this context as an increasing number of hotels are buying into the concept of green hotels; one could, hereby, question whether this is a matter of fact just a buzz-word, applied by the hotel industry to attract more consumers? The focal aspect of this study will, therefore, be on the hotel consumers and how they may perceive green hotels. This may be hotels in Denmark, but also on an international level; this will show in the analysis of the study.

An interesting group to examine in the context of green consumption and hotels is Generation Y; the generation born between 1978 and 1994 (Nusair, et al., 2013).

This group must be regarded as interesting as studies have shown that younger people are more environmental aware than older generations (Jackson, 1983; Kaman, 2008). Furthermore, this group are also more ready to accept new and innovative ideas and supporters of environmental protections seem to be younger in age (Jackson, 1983; Kaman, 2008). Even though Generation Y is regarded as being greener than the older generation, there do, however, appear to be a gap between thinking and doing, whereas with the older generation of consumers green consumption appears to be more present. This may have to do with the financial resources available to Generation Y; this will, moreover be examined during this study. Furthermore, in the context of the hotel industry Generation Y appear to be a significant segment to examine, as surprisingly little research has been conducted on Generation Y and tourism, seen in contrast to other age-related market segments (Pendergast, 2009). In this field there do seem to be lack of knowledge; this gap of knowledge seem to interesting to examine; not only from an academic perspective, but also to the hotels and tourism industry, as Generation Y represents a fairly large group of people, who tend to be keen on traveling.

As I, as a researcher do not have access nor time to examine the entire Generation Y, this study will be conducted as a case study of eight members of Generation Y; this will, furthermore, be elaborated in the methodology section. This study seeks to examine the consumer behaviour of eight members of Generation Y when going on leisure vacation, based on the assumption of a supposedly high environmental awareness. The study, hereby, seeks to answer the problem statement:

What are Generation Y's perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels when going on leisure vacation, and how do these influence their hotel consumer behaviour?

In order to guide the research and create a sufficient answer to the problem formulation a set of sub questions will be introduced. These have been included to sup-

port the problem statement and to make it easier to answer the problem statement. The sub questions are as follows;

- To what extent does the everyday life attitude towards green consumer behaviour comply with the attitude towards green consumer behaviour when going on leisure vacation?

- To what extent is Generation Y aware of the green alternative in the hotel industry?

- How does Generation Y's' perception of hotels on leisure vacation affect their decision making process?

An answer to this problem statement should provide a complex understanding of how Generation Y's environmental awareness influences their hotel consumer behaviour.

2. Methodology

2.1. Paradigm

The main goal for this study is to generate a deeper understanding about the perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels among eight members of Generation Y and to understand how these may influence their hotel consumer behaviour, taken into consideration the significant focus on environmental issues in the last four decades. The methodological section will start off with a clarification of the paradigm as well as ontological and epistemological considerations towards the chosen topic. In other words, the aim of the following paragraphs is to explicate the way I, as a researcher, perceive the world. From the very beginning and throughout this study the aim is to reach transparency towards the paradigm represented. The term 'paradigm' can be understood in various ways; however, the paradigm presented in this study should be understood according to Thomas Kuhn (1962), as a collection of shared beliefs shared by scientists; a set of agreements about how problems are to be comprehended (Kuhn, 1962; Guba, 1990). The paradigm is treated as the methodological point of departure of this study, since it affects and to a great extent determines the choices, which have been made in order to approach the research question properly. Depending on how reality is perceived, a certain basis for construction of knowledge and deduction of conclusion is constructed. Therefore, it is significant to consider within which paradigm the research will be carried out and how the choice affect the study (Guba, 1990). Guba (1990) must, thereby, be seen as supporting to Kuhn's (1962) perception of the paradigm.

Based not only on personal considerations, but also in the specific way the problem is formulated the **constructivist stance** must be considered the most adequate approach to use in the presented research. In the following paragraph I will seek to discuss the constructivist approach, which will be applied throughout this study; however, the main constructivist approach, which will be employed throughout this study is Guba's (1990) approach to constructivism.

Guba (1990) provides a very explicit definition of constructivism; this may help to construct a frame the nature of constructivism, but also to understand how it is different from other existing paradigms.

Green consumption, and more specifically in this context, the choice of a green hotel when going on leisure vacation, is specific for each individual and they may vary from one setting to another. Moreover, they are influenced by different factors, such as social trends and opposing critics, e.g. environmental sceptics. An attempt to reach total objectivism, thereby, seems not as much impossible as pointless, as the aim of the study is to generate knowledge about the perceptions and attitudes of the eight examined members of Generation Y and how these aspects may influence their hotel consumer behaviour. Hereby, the constructivist stance seems to be the most appropriate choice of paradigm, as it stresses an understanding of the various parts of the context. Unlike the case of positivism, the aim of the presented research is not to find an objective truth and how things 'really' work, but rather to deeply scrutinise and to understand the existing parts of reality (Guba, 1990). Furthermore, positivism must be argued to be an opposite of constructivism, since positivism argues that an objective and ultimate truth exist. Constructivism on the other hand, argues that 'reality' exists only in the mind of the context of a mental framework and is, therefore, a significant aspect to include throughout this study. Bryman (2008) agrees with Guba (1990) in his view on constructivism and states:

> *'Constructionism essentially invites the researcher to consider the ways in which social reality is an ongoing accomplishment of social actors rather than something external to them and that totally constraints them.'* (Bryman, 2008, p. 20)[1]

The question here is, moreover, how the paradigm in fact influences the research in a more practical way. Every element of the research needs to be related to the rest of the project, otherwise it not possible to obtain coherence. Hereby, it can be argued that the paradigm determinates the shape and character of the entire research. This includes the theories chosen to draw upon, research design and methods; e.g. the research method chosen for this study. In the case of this presented research the paradigm is significant especially in regards to one of the main concept of the study; namely consumer behaviour. The field of consumer behaviour would be fairly difficult to deal with using a positivist stance, as consumer behaviour varies from individual to individual based on the various influential aspects.

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[1] According to Bryman (2008) constructionism and constructivism should be understood as the same.

2.2. Ontological and epistemological considerations

The paradigm directly affects the way a researcher perceives reality. Therefore, in terms of the ontological considerations related to constructivism, one could argue that reality is only a matter of perception and the nature of this term, thereby, stays relative (Guba, 1990). Due to this understanding of reality, it is seen as a dynamic concept, which is constantly formed and influenced by a variety of factors and is, thereby, constructed through people's individual interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba, 1990). The ontological approach of this study is, hence, **relativism**.

In terms of epistemology, this particular approach is characterised by subjectivity. Taken into account Denzin and Lincoln (2005), only by interaction with social actors is the researcher able to understand reality. In Social Research Method, Bryman (2008) specifies the described epistemology as interpretivist, where the main goal is to understand and not only to explain the given social phenomena. Hence, the epistemological stance of this thesis is **subjectivism**.

2.3. Research method

Taking the point of departure in eight members of Generation Y, the aim of this study is to examine their choice of hotels when going on leisure vacation. Therefore, to answer the research question posed adequately, it is significant to find the research strategy which provides the most appropriate means. Qualitative and quantitative research represents the two different research strategies. These influence the choice of theory, epistemology and ontology. Hence, the research strategy is essential to the course of the project. The quantitative research strategy is focusing on numerical data, as exhibiting the relationship between research as deductive and predilection for a natural science approach, especially positivism, as having an objectivist conception of social reality (Bryman, 2008). Qualitative research, on the other hand, differs from quantitative research in a number of ways. The most distinct difference between the two research methods is that qualitative research is concerned with words rather than numbers, while being concerned with subjectivity, which cannot be said for quantitative research (Bryman, 2008). A strength of the qualitative research strategy is, hence, that it is possible to examine the context of the study and not only the answers which are provided. This is well connected to the con-
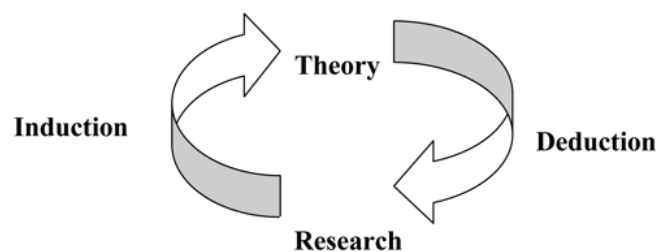
structivist paradigm of this study, as it is possible to examine the informants as individuals.

In order to answer the research question in the best possible way, a **qualitative research method** will be applied, as it typically emphasises content rather than quantifications in the collection and analysis of the data. Hereby, interviews of eight members of Generation Y will be conducted and, thereby, making an analysis, which is going in depth of the collected data. In order to gain an insight of the decision making regarding hotels on leisure vacation of the eight members of Generation Y, qualitative research strategy will be applied. By using qualitative research strategy, the collected data will be interpreted more subjectively than it would have been by using a quantitative research strategy (Bryman, 2008). Hereby, due to the subjectivity the examination provides an understanding of the social world through an examination of interpretation of the world, which must be regarded as a practical way of seeing the social world. However, even though interpretations of the social world may be regarded as practical, it may also lead to misinterpretations due to subjectivity, which signify that it is very essential to be critical when conducting a qualitative research analysis. Hereby, it is significant to not merely conduct the analysis based on the interviews of the examined members of Generation Y, but also to support and connect it with the theoretical framework of the study. Moreover, as the aim of this study is to examine eight members of Generation Y and their perceptions and attitudes towards hotels on their leisure vacation, going in depth with the data collection will help to answer the problem statement adequately.

According to Bryman (2008), qualitative research has rejected the practices and norms of the natural scientific model (particularly positivism), especially for an emphasis on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world; it will help to understand the meaning that lies behind the research sample's decision making regarding hotels on their vacation. The focus of qualitative research also embodies a view of social reality as a constant shifting emergent property of individuals' creation. As the supposedly high environmental awareness among Generation Y may be regarded as a construction of reality created by the external environment; it must, therefore, be seen as constantly shifting.

The use of qualitative research strategy predominantly emphasises an inductive relationship between theory and research; here the emphasis is on the generation of

theories (Bryman, 2008). It is, however, significant to note that some qualitative studies differ, as they have also been employed to test rather than generate theories; in other words testing whether a theory actually comply with reality. Hereby, it can be stated that induction entails an element of deduction and the other way around, as the deductive approach refers to the notion where theory guides research. This denotes that there is not a coherent answer to what characterises qualitative and quantitative research and the interconnection between the different features is not straight forward. Hereby, one cannot state that a qualitative method may not be perceived as the opposite of a qualitative method. An inductive approach will, however, be applied in this thesis, as the approach is moving from findings to theory or from the bottom up; in other words, from specific to general (Bryman, 2008). As mentioned deduction and induction may not be understood as each other's opposites; using an inductive approach does, thereby, not exclude making use of a deductive approach (Bryman, 2008). Moreover, the deductive approach will, hence, be applied in this study to generate questions for the interviews, it will, however, not be the dominating approach of the analysis.

The inductive approach is typically working with a subjective approach, as it is normally associated with interpreting the social world (Bryman, 2008). Since the chosen paradigm of this study is constructivism, the study is built on a reality, which is constructed by social actors; therefore, the inductive approach of subjectivity must arguably be estimated to be the most dominant approach to apply in this context. The inductive approach will, however, not be applied solely, as an approach inspired by grounded theory will also be applied in this study. Grounded theory method applies both inductive and deductive thinking to generate theories from the collected data

(Bryman, 2008). Hereby, elements of deduction may also be used in the thinking of this study.

2.4. Research Design

As the research design provides the framework for collecting and analysing data, applying a research design, which is suitable, is very significant to writing a good project (Bryman, 2008). The research design must, moreover, be perceived as significant to the study as it reflects decisions about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the research process. The research design has been included in the study in order to answer the research question as unambiguously as possible. Finding and applying the most adequate research design is, therefore, crucial to the project and to making the right decisions. The discussion of research designs includes five different types of design; case study design, experimental design, cross-sectional or survey design, and comparative design (Bryman, 2008).

This study is based on a study of eight Danish members of Generation Y and their perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels, and how these may influence their hotel consumer behaviour. As this is a group of people examined in a specific context; the most relevant research design to apply in this context is, thereby, a **case study design** (Bryman, 2008). The conventional way of understanding case study is usually as the detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena. According to this perception a case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, but it may be useful in the preliminary stage of an investigation since it provides hypotheses, which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases (Flyvbjerg, 2011). This is the conventional way of understanding a case study; Flyvbjerg (2011), however, argues that this definition may in fact be oversimplifying and grossly misleading of the concept. One of the great misconceptions of this definition is that a case study may only be used as a pilot method and not providing credible findings to the scientific world. Bryman (2008) supports the perception that case studies may only be used as pilot project; Flyvbjerg (2011), thus, argues that this is a misunderstanding of the concept. A number of scholars have sought to clarify the definition of case study; a clear definition is, however, still lacking.

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One of the advantages of using a case study design is that it is the most flexible of all research designs, allowing the researcher to retain the holistic characteristics of real-life events while investigating empirical events. According to Yin (1981), a case study does not imply the use of a particular type of evidence (Yin, 1981). Case studies can be done by using either qualitative or quantitative evidence and is, therefore, not an aspect to take into consideration; however, as already mentioned in the research strategy, this case will be making use of qualitative evidence.

Identifying the research design as a case study makes it simpler to specify and limit the case even further. In this identification of the case study, it is possible to narrow it down to a mix of a critical case and an exemplifying case. According to Bryman (2008) any case study can involve a combination of different case study elements, which can best be viewed as rationales for choosing particular cases. The critical case is chosen as it will allow a better understanding of the circumstances in which the hypothesis will or will not hold; whether the eight examined members of Generation Y have a high environmental awareness. In other words, the aim is to test whether or not the research sample really does have a high environmental awareness. The exemplifying case has been chosen in this study, as the object is to capture the circumstances and conditions of a common place (Bryman, 2008). Applying a mix of the research design in this study provides the opportunity of taking factors of the two aspects into consideration when collecting the data and conducting the analysis. This may help to achieve a more adequate answer to the perceptions and attitudes of the examined Y'ers towards green hotels and how these may influence their hotel consumer behaviour.

2.5. Data Collection
Taken into consideration all the possibilities in terms of data collection, this study will be making use of **a mix of primary and secondary data**. Even though it could be argued to be sufficient intrinsically, these two approaches will both be needed in order to answer the research question adequately. Primary data will, however, be used as the centre and most important data in this context, as it is has been collected for the purpose of this study, which will occur through interviews of the eight members of Generation Y. This provides an opportunity for obtaining a unique

result as the data may be regarded as unspoiled or in other words unbiased, since it has not been processed by other researchers before, such as secondary data has. According to the constructivist paradigm applied in this study, reality is subjective and one scholar's study will not be similar to another scholar's study of the very same data. The collection of data may be seen as an on-going process according to Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) terminology, since new knowledge significant for the study may occur continually throughout the collection and the analysis of the empirical data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Hereby, new knowledge may be contributed to the findings throughout the interviews and the analysis; the result of this study may, therefore, not be predicted. The next section *Qualitative interviews* will elaborate of the method in which the primary data is collected.

Secondary data do, moreover, prove sufficient in some parts of the study. This will be applied to construct a theoretical background and, furthermore, to support the findings of the analysis, which is based on the primary data. Whereas secondary data may be seen as biased, it may on the other hand also be seen as high-quality data, because it has been generated by highly experienced researchers and may often be seen as representative (Bryman, 2008). Where the primary data will be used to in the analysis, the secondary data will be used to understand the background, providing the conceptual framework and the theoretical framework.

2.6. Qualitative interviews

As mentioned in the research method section, this study is based on a qualitative research method; collection of data will be done by means of qualitative interviews. Using qualitative interviewing is an advantage as they, opposed to quantitative interviewing, tends to be more flexible, responding to the interviewees' reply and, thereby, being able to adjust the emphasis in the research as a result of significant issues that emerges in the course of the interviews (Bryman, 2008). In order to provide a valid and the most adequate answer to the research question, using a qualitative interview style may prove to be the most sufficient method, as there is a greater emphasis on the interviewees' point of view. This may, however, also be seen as relevant in regards to the applied constructivist approach of the study.

The in-depth interview was chosen in this study as it may be possible to obtain a contextual image of their attitudes and perceptions of green hotels and their hotel consumer behaviour when being alone with the interviewer, as being others' answer, such as in a focus group, may influence how they choose to answer. This may be based on the notion of social norms telling us to take care of the environment, which has progressively escalated over the last few decades (Han, et al., 2010; Kalafatis, et al., 1999; Laroche, et al., 2001). In order to obtain the most adequate data I have chosen a semi-structured in-depth-interview. One could argue that the unstructured interview form occurs in form of conversation in the everyday life; Semi-structured interview, on the other hand, must be regarded as a more structured activity (Bryman, 2008). The semi-structured interview is open-ended and follows an interview guide containing a list of questions and topics, which must be covered during the interview. Hereby, it is possible to follow interesting subjects brought up by the interviewees during the interviews. In order to obtain as much information about the topic, the interview will be based on a minimum amount of control, thereby, letting the interviewees feel free to talk, yet keeping a certain control with regard to the interview guide. As transparency is very significant and in order to up-hold consistency the questions and topic in the interview guide will contain topics from the conceptual framework and the theoretical framework, which will be introduced later in this study.

The open-ended questions of the interviews help to still be attentive to the phenomenon of interest and the interviewees' experience with the topic will, moreover, help to shape the direction of the research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Fontana & Frey, 2005). Furthermore, these allow the interviewees to give their explanations to what they may find relevant about a topic or question, which arguably reflects the constructivist approach with a numerous view on life. In order to attain the best possible result of the interview and empirical data, I have learned from experience that the same questions may not be given to all of my interviewees, as more knowledge will most possibly be learned throughout the interview process. Hereby, the questions may alter from one interview to the next, as interesting topics may be brought forward throughout the interviews. The answers of the questions may, therefore, not be compared to one another in the analysis, but merely measured on

the content of the interview. This approach of the data collection signifies an element of the hermeneutic circle, which states that there is a connection between the parts and the entity; hereby, when the questions of the interviews change so does the findings (Langergaard, et al., 2006). This should, however, not be understood as having a crucial meaning to the entire study, which will still be conducted based on the constructivist paradigm.
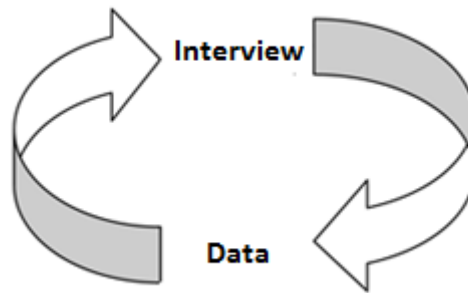
The interview will take place where the interviewees feel comfortable, in order for them to open up to me the best possible way. Also, even though this study is written in English, the interviews will still be conducted in Danish, as one of the criterions for the choice of research sample is that informants must be Danish. Being Danish, most people have Danish as their mother-tongue and using English would, therefore, seem unnatural and language barriers may occur; therefore, in order to gain the most adequate knowledge from the interviews I have chosen to conduct the interviews in Danish.

As the aim of the qualitative research method is an attempt to uncover what people think or how they feel, reaching greater depth and more detailed responses. This may result in in-depth descriptions, which better comprehend the subjective nature of the studied phenomenon (Bellenger, et al., 1976; Van Maanen, et al., 1982). Using a qualitative interview method may, therefore, prove to be the most adequate data collecting method in this particular case.

2.7. The Research Sample

Bryman (2008) states, that it is also necessary to have considerable additionally knowledge of the social context to probe beneath the surface' (p 519). Therefore, taking into consideration the limited time frame I decided to focus on **eight members of Generation Y**. As I am a part of Generation Y personally should help to better understand the chosen research sample. Also by focusing on a social group with specification makes it easier to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations during the process of data analysis.
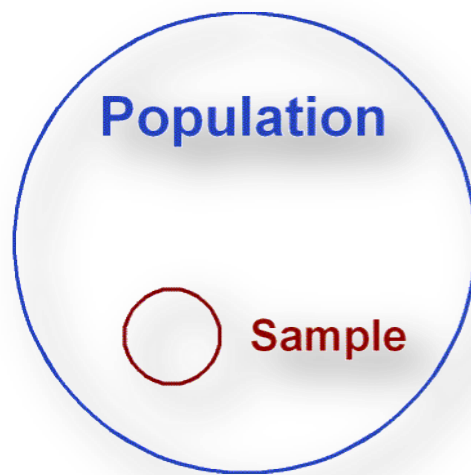
In most cases, including this, the researcher does not have access to the entire population, which is being investigated, in other words, it is not possible to examine the entire Generation Y (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). It is, therefore, expedient in such circumstances to select a sample from the target population. When speaking of the choice of research sample one could ask why these eight members of Generation Y have been elected as research sample instead of another group of who may better afford a green lifestyle, e.g. the grey gold. As mentioned in the introduction Generation Y tends to have a high environmental awareness than the older generation. The interest of this study is, however, to scrutinise the buyer behaviour of Generation Y and their choice of hotel when going on vacation. Further elaboration will not be provided here, as the notion of Generation Y has already been elaborated in a separate section.

In the presented research eight members of Generation Y will be scrutinised. Focusing on this particular number of people was determined and at the same time com-

pelled by the time limitations. However, since the research has a qualitative approach, the study will not so much focus on the number of examined people, but it is, however, merely the content of the collected data, which is significant to this study. Therefore, in order to approach the data fairly, a high number of interviewees cannot be included in this study as it could threaten the validity of the research, as the purpose of this study is to go into depth with the data collected and as this study is limited in time and extent, it could threaten the validity of the study to include more interviewees. Moreover, limiting the number of the research sample should get as close to the nature of the qualitative strategy as the study is not interested in general and superficial finding, but rather, a deeper and more circumstantial case study analysis. The study will, thereby, not say something about the perceptions and attitudes among the general Generation Y, but the research sample may prove a tendency within Generation Y.

2.8. The criteria for the sampling

When conducting research it is not possible to include all the people in whom we have an interest, therefore, there has to be a basis for selecting some rather than others (Long, 2007). Consequently, a set of criteria needs to be set to make sure that the research sample has not been chosen in whim. In order to create a valid study the selection of the research sample needs to be carefully expressed to create a higher level of transparency. In terms of criteria set of the sampling of the research sample, a set of main determinants which has been decided.

The first and main criteria of this research are the most obvious and has already been stated; the research sample must be **Danish** and **part of Generation Y**. Apart from this apparent criteria, a criterion which must be taken into consideration is the notion of age. As Generation Y stretch from people between the age 19 and 35, this also allows people to be different in their way of living; it is, therefore, significant to include people who are different places in their lives and who have **different social characteristics**, such as occupation and income. This will lead to a broader segment of the examined members of Generation Y; if one does not take different aspect of Generation Y into consideration when conducting the study, the findings may prove very homogeneous due to their lack of variety.

A significant criterion of the selection of the research sample deals with one of the central concepts of this study, namely consumer behaviour. Since the youngest part of Generation Y is 19 years old, this may also denote that they are not part of the decision making process regarding the choice of hotel when going on leisure vacation; this is arguably a significant aspect of this study. An important criterion for choice of research sample is, therefore, that the research sample must take **an active part in the decision making process** of the selection of hotels on their leisure vacation. It is, therefore, important to question the potential respondents' role in the decision making process, before being able to examine the buyer behaviour in this context.

Personally being part of Generation Y, collecting data may prove more straightforward and less time consuming, as I have a personal relation to the research sample. It is, however, significant to the research that the research sample are people with whom I have strong personal relations, since it may lead to pre-assumptions and pre-understandings of the empirical data. However, personally being part of Generation Y should not only be seen as a disadvantage when collecting empirical data from Generation Y. It can also be seen as a strength, as people may find it easier to open up to people open up and, thereby, generate a higher quality if the interviewer is better at putting her- or herself in the shoes of the respondent (Long, 2007).

2.9. Reliability, Validity and Replication

The notion of reliability, validity and replication are significant elements to take into account when conducting research (Bryman, 2008). These elements include measurement validity, internal validity, external validity, reliability and replicability. When approaching these factors one must, however, take into account the choice of research strategy, as being either qualitative or quantitative some factors are more significant than others. The researchers whose point of orientation lies on the qualitative research strategy tend to play down or ignore the salience of these factors, whereas those being strongly influenced by the quantitative research strategy tend to depict them as more significant (Bryman, 2008). As this study's orientation lies in qualitative research, I will not be taking into account all factors of reliability, validity and replication, only those which are significant to the project. There is, however,

one aspect which must be taken into consideration when dealing with case studies, such as this; the notion of external validity or generalizability of case study research.

As mentioned in the section *Research design*, scholars have questioned if case studies are in fact scientific enough. Bryman (2008) is one of the scholars who have been questioning the scientific values of a case study; he is questioning whether a case study can in fact be generalised and seen as a representative to other cases. Bryman (2008) states that it is significant to appreciate, that case study researchers do not delude themselves that it is possible to identify typical cases that can be used to represent a certain class of objects. In other words, there are some scholars who do not believe that a case study can be representative as a sample of one (Bryman, 2008; Holdaway, 1982; Holdaway, 1983). Moreover, Flyvbjerg (2011) has a different opinion and argues that it is a misunderstanding that case studies cannot be generalised. He argues that whether or not a case can in fact be generalised is dependent on the case in question and how it has been chosen (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Case study may not always be the most appropriate research method; the choice of method should clearly depend on the problem under study and its circumstances. Despite the fact that knowledge is not formally generalizable, it can still be transferable, as it may help to cut a path to scientific innovation. Flyvbjerg's (2011) argument of generalization regarding case studies is as follows:

> 'One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas 'the force of example' and transferability are underestimated.' (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 305).

Hereby, it may be argued that case studies can be regarded as generalizable or not. Even though this study is an exemplifying case study and the study is taking its point of departure in the eight examined members of Generation Y and based on the constructivist paradigm of this study, I am choosing to some extent to make use of Flyvbjerg (2011) argument regarding generalisation. Hereby, I will argue that it is

possible to prove a tendency among Generation Y based on this study, total generalisation will, however, not be possible.

External validity is a significant criterion in relation to the chosen research design, case study; another criterion is, however, also important when evaluating qualitative research, namely internal validity, which tend to be a strength of qualitative research (Bryman, 2008). Internal validity aims at creating a good match between the researcher's observations and the theoretical ideas they develop. To attain the goal of internal validity of this study the findings of the empirical data will be examined with theoretical knowledge suitable for to analyse these findings.

External reliability when evaluating the study, here question is whether or not the study is replicable (Bryman, 2008). In qualitative research this is a difficult demand to meet, since it is practically impossible to freeze social settings and circumstances of the study to make it replicable. In the case of Generation Y and their choice of hotels, it may prove possible to some extent; yet the outcome of the study will most possibly be different, since the social settings in which the study is made, the empirical framework, is changing.

One of the areas in which this study may be having a weakness is the notion of internal reliability. In qualitative research internal reliability is attained when agreeing about what they are seeing and hearing (Bryman, 2008); since I am only one researcher it is important to be very critical when collecting and analysing the empirical data. This is very significant to the study, as it is being conducted based on a constructivist paradigm, which makes the analysis more subjective than it would have been using other paradigms. Moreover, in order to not become too subjective and, thereby, becoming biased it is important to stay critical of the empirical data and when conducting the analysis, as it may create misunderstandings. Therefore, it is significant to keep in mind the secondary data of this study when conducting the analysis.

2.10. Delimitations

When conducting a study there will always be a set of limitations one must take into consideration. It is significant to create focus on the weaknesses of the methodology applied in the study, to be able to see what aspects to be aware of to create a valid and reliable project, thereby, making the study feasible. If not addressing the limitations of this study seriously, it may result in a non-academic result. This section will, therefore, focus on the limitations of the methodology section in relation to this study.

In the previous section some limitations have already been addressed, which must be taken into consideration when collecting and analysing the empirical data. A significant aspect to take into consideration is the chosen paradigm, constructivism. In the constructivist stance, the interpretation of the data will become fairly subjective; in other words reality is a matter of perception and nature is a relative term. Hereby, it is argued that the choice of paradigm is rather significant to the process of the data; thereby, being a significant aspect to cover when covering the limitations of the methodological considerations of this study. Because of this subjectivity of the constructivist approach it is almost impossible to conduct a true replication, since there is hardly any standard procedures to be followed (Bryman, 2008).

As mentioned in earlier sections some scholars regard the notion of generalizability of case studies to be impossible. However, having a constructivist stance I have chosen to take Flyvbjerg (2011) into consideration; this will, however, not be elaborated further in this section, as it has already been elaborated in the earlier section, *Reliability, Validity and Replication*.

A limitation which is difficult to get around when conducting a qualitative research is the notion of transparency. In qualitative research it is sometimes difficult to establish what the researcher actually did and how he or she arrived at the study's conclusion (Bryman, 2008). An example of this is that researchers sometimes are unclear about how people are being chosen for interviews or observations. Readers have the right to know how far research participants have been selected to correspond to a wide range of people. Another aspect of lacking transparency of qualitative research, which must be taken into consideration, is the process of data analysis, which is frequently unclear. It is often not clear how the research was conducted, in

other words what the researcher was actually doing when the data were analysed and, therefore, how the study's conclusions were arrived at. Having a qualitative research approach it is significant to know the limitations of lack of transparency to be able to address them and, thereby, creating a valid and transparent result. In order to attain the highest level of validity the methodological section of this study have also be sought to be as transparent as possible.

Taking into account the data collection method applied in this project, ethical issues cannot be omitted. These can be looked at from various aspects. As a researcher one has an ethical commitment to produce a level of ethical integrity of an investigation is its quality (Bryman, 2008). In fact, research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken in a way that ensures its integrity and quality. As mentioned, personally being part of Generation Y, an ethical limitation of using this advantage is not to overstep the boundaries when conducting interviews; in other words, not to influence and probe into the life of the interviewees and reveal inner thoughts and feelings (Bryman, 2008). This may be regarded as a form of deception of the interviewees and should be avoided as far as possible. Hereby, there is also a possibility of the interviewer to become biased and inflict this feeling upon the interviewees.

Deception of the interviewees must also be avoided in the case of letting them know what the study is really about and not leaving out essential information. The interviewees should, therefore, be provided with as much information as possible for them to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in the study. Furthermore, when agreeing upon engaging in a study they should be fully informed about the process.

An essential aspect of the ethical considerations in this study is the interviewees and their privacy. Since this study is working on the basis of a constructivist stance, it is also important to take into consideration that all people are different and have different perceptions of what is important to them. Hereby, it is also significant to acknowledge that what may seem like trivial and unimportant information to some people may be more significant to others. Therefore, even though the perceptions and attitudes of hotel consumption may not be a sensitive topic, it may be to some people; it is, thereby, important to treat the personal data of the interviewees sensitively and provide them with as much anonymity as possible.

The invasion of privacy is closely connected to the notion of informed consent, as to the degree that informed consent is given on the basis of a detailed understanding of what the research participant's involvement is likely to entail, he or she in a sense of acknowledgements that the right to privacy has been surrendered for that limited domain (Bryman, 2008).

3. Literature review

3.1. Introduction

By letting the collected data speak for itself, the aim is not to test already existing theories; moreover, the conceptual knowledge included in this chapter provides knowledge relevant to approach the research question provided for this study. More specifically, the included theories will lead to a complex and theoretically based understanding of the main concepts in relation to the topic within this study. These refer to:

- A characterisation of the field of tourism, more specifically sustainable tourism; a discussion of hotels and green hotels.
- A conceptualisation of Generation Y.
- A discussion of consumer behaviour, covering the decision making process and the involvement when purchasing a product, such as a hotel stay.
- A conceptualisation and discussion of hedonism and reference groups in connection with the hotel tourism.

The conceptualisation of the research field is intended to help structure the analysis. Furthermore, it will help leading through the process of the data analysis in order to reach a profound understanding of the given phenomena and finally define how the examined members of Generation Y's perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels may influence their hotel consumer behaviour when going on leisure vacation.

Even though the study is constructed from a constructivist point of view, it is significant to settle on and discuss these concepts in order to create a clarity and transparency of the study.

3.2. Tourism

The first and a very significant concept, which needs to be clarified in connection to this study, is tourism. In order to create a solid foundation for analysing the examined members of Generation Y's consumer behaviour regarding their choice of hotel when going on leisure vacation, one of the essential concepts to cover is tourism, as the concept is dealing with people travelling and staying outside of their homes for recreational purposes (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). This section will seek to provide an extensive image of what tourism is in relation to this study.

Tourism is a difficult term to define; it has been defined in a numerous of ways and there is no single definition of tourism to which everyone adheres (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). This is based on the understanding that tourism must be understood in a broad stakeholder context, which is the sum of processes, activities, and outcome arising from the interactions among tourists, tourism suppliers, host governments, host communities, origin governments, universities, community colleges and nongovernmental organisations, in the process of attracting, transporting, hosting and managing tourists and other visitors. Hereby, tourism must be regarded as a complex and interconnected network, in which possibilities exists for interactions among any component within the system. Defining tourism in one fixed way is, therefore, very difficult and practically impossible. It is, therefore, relevant to discuss tourism in a way, which is specific and relevant in terms of this study.

As tourism can be understood differently because of the purpose of the travel, it is in the context of this study significant to understand why tourist chose to travel. According to Weaver & Lawton (2006) people may be travelling for recreation and leisure, visiting friends and family, or business purposes; it is significant to elucidate what is meant by the term in the connection of this study in order to understand the context and, thereby also the significance of the vacation. This study is dealing with the category leisure and recreation, which is the category which often comes to mind, when we try to imagine the stereotypical tourism experience (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). Leisure and recreation account for the largest single share of tourist activities at a global level. When conducting interviews of the research sample this is an aspect which must be taken into account, as this denotes the signification of the hotel in this specific context.

A significant aspect to cover in terms of this study, is the connection between tourists and consumer, and why I have chosen to use general consumer theories to examine this reseach sample and their choice of hotel when going on leisure vacation. From the tourist's point of view, the tourism product is composite of many different sub-products (French, et al., 1997). They include transportation to and from a given destination, travel and accommodation at the location, purchase made holiday, etc.. These sub-products may be combined in any number of different ways to produce a given tourism product. Probably the most crucial factor that will determine the nature of the product offered o the tourist is tourist demand. Due to the demand created by the tourists the marketing approach will prove to be superior in most situations and, therefore, the real consumer needs become important. People are motivated to satisfy felt needs, and patterns of demands are reflected in the actions that they take in attempting to satisfy those needs. Since we are not dealing with tourism as a full category and merely a sub-product of the entire notion, it is possible to understand the choice of hotel as a product and working with consumer theories is, therefore, relevant in order to understand why the research sample are choosing the accommodation product they do. The notion of understanding the tourist as a consumer must, therefore, be seen from a marketing approach, where the tourist is completely understood as a consumer, as he or she is served and forms

a commercial exchange relationship with goods suppliers and service delivers (Quan & Wang, 2004).

Tourism has become as significant as ever before, especially in the Western part of the world due to a generalised increasing income and more leisure time; it must, therefore, be seen as one of the fastest growing industries (Wall & Mathieson, 2006; Sharpley, 2003; Theobald, 2005; Fien, et al., 2010; Holloway, 2004; UNWTO, 2012). Even though tourism has become very significant, most people have an intuitive and often simplistic perception of the word, which is usually focused around an image of people travelling away from their homes for recreational purposes (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). The concept is, however, more complex than that. The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) define tourism as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon, which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside of their usual environment for personal or business purposes (UNWTO, 2007). Tourists may, thereby, be defined as persons going to places for private interests or is sent there, but is not employed at this place. The duration of this stay may be anything between one night to a year. As such tourism has implication on the economy, on the natural and build environment, on the local population at the destination and the tourists themselves. Traveling does, thereby, not only influence the travellers themselves, but does in fact have multiple stakeholders. Due to the multiple stakeholders involved in or affected by tourism, there is a need for a holistic approach to tourism development, management and monitoring. The UNWTO recommends the holistic approach, as it may not only include national and local tourism policies, but also necessary international agreements or other agreements in respect to tourism. The holistic approach is, however, only significant to this study to a certain extent as the study is dealing with only a part of the tourism product.

According to Shoemaker (1989) tourism may be divided into subgroup. He claims that broader studies of the topic have been conducted, but there seem to be a lack of segmented studies (Shoemaker, 1989). A significant and interesting aspect within tourism this study will focus on, is the notion of environmental sustainable tourism, which will, therefore be elaborated. In response to increasing contradictions and anomalies in the dominant Western environmental paradigm, society appears to be

shifting and changing towards an ecocentric green paradigm (Weaver & Lawton, 2006).

Due to the significant focus on green consumption throughout the last decades, the tendency to purchase goods and services that are deemed to be environmentally and socially sustainable; situates along a spectrum from true green to veneer green attitudes and behaviour. This significant focus on green consumption has created what we may call the 'new traveller'; this consumer has created a market niche that is highly discerning and critical in ensuring that its travel does not negatively affect destinations. This niche travelling market may be referred to as sustainable (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). Sustainable tourism may be understood as tourism managed in such a way that it does not exceed social, cultural, economic or environmental carrying capacity of a given destination; the focus of this study will, however, be on an environmental sustainable aspect. Hereby, environmental sustainable tourism can be regarded as a way to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). Environmental sustainability is often perceived as the public understanding of sustainability, which is perceived as the need to avoid or minimise the environmental impact of tourist activities (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). In this context it is significant to comprehend the perception attached to environmental sustainable tourism in order to understand the framework around the notion of environmental sustainable hotels or green hotels. This is one of the key aspects of this study, as the aim is to understand the eight examined members of Generation Y's perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels and the impact these may have on their hotel consumer behaviour on their leisure vacations. This must be taken into consideration based on the supposedly high environmental awareness of this group.

3.3. Hotels and Green Hotels

As the aim of this study is to discover the examined members of Generation Y's perceptions and attitudes towards green hotel and the impact these may have on their hotel consumer behaviour, the concept of hotels and green hotels becomes crucial to elucidate before beginning the analysis as this provides a narrower framework to understand the notion of green hotel in this study. Additionally, it is signif-

icant to this study to understand Generation Y in relation to hotels, as studies have shown that they tend to travel more often, exploring more destinations and are hungry for more experience, which also makes them an interesting object for the hotel industry to target (Pendergast, 2009). Generation Y supposedly experience a high level of concern over the social and environmental impacts of travel, which, furthermore, makes it interesting and relevant to examine Generation Y's choice of hotel based on their perceived high environmental awareness.

As a part of environmental sustainable tourism, one of the sub-products of this category is accommodation or more specifically, in this context green hotels. In recent years, the experience of consumers plays an increasingly important role in economic and social life. In social science literature on the tourist experience, most researchers focus on the experience in sharp context to the daily experience (Quan & Wang, 2004). However, when examining the concept further the tourist experience is understood as the peak experience usually derived from the attractions, rather than supporting experience, such as eating, sleeping, etc.. The hotel must, therefore, according to Quan & Wang (2004) be understood as a supporting experience and is, thus, often not the main purpose of the vacation, there may, however, be exceptions. Hotels may, moreover, be understood as an extension of the daily experience to the tourist journey, which are mostly taken for granted. Thus, hotels and other supporting activities have become even more significant to the tourism industry, as tourists are demanding higher standard services for the supporting experiences, which have caught the full attention in the tourism industry. From the tourism industry's perspective the tourist is a consumer.[2] In social science, the supporting activities are ignored, whereas in marketing literature, the supporting activities are encompassed (Quan & Wang, 2004). Therefore, it is significant to note that even tough accommodation, such as hotels, may only be regarded as a supporting experience on a vacation it is still a significant part of the total experience for the tourist. On the one hand, the total experience cannot be equated to supporting consumer experience. If the attraction constitute the major motivation to pleasure travel are disappointing, then a high quality of accommodation cannot fully compensate for this deficiency. On the other hand, however, the experience of attraction, as peak

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[2] This, furthermore, justifies the use of general consumer theories.

experience, cannot replace supporting consumer experience. This provides the theoretical basis of how consumers may regard hotels and how they will be treated in this study.

Furthermore, in connection with the focus on environmental sustainable tourism, the above mention perception of hotels becomes significant, as it provides a theoretical assumption of how green hotels should be comprehended in this study. In practise, the environmental concern has translated to a movement for green management in the hotel industry, that aims to mitigate the environmental effects of excessive non-durable goods consumption, energy use, water wastage and the release of pollutants into air, water and soil (Lee, et al., 2010). To begin with the green focus among hotels was based on government regulations and saving money on reducing waste and energy use; however, now the motivator for the hotels are the growing demands for green hotels, which has become directly associated with quality and employee morale (Lee, et al., 2010). The concept of green hotels are well articulated by the *Green Hotel Association*, which states that green hotels are environmentally friendly properties whose managers institute programs that save water, save energy and reduce solid waste to protect the earth ("Green" Hotels Association, 2013). A green hotel is an environmentally friendly lodging property that institutes and follows ecologically sound practices. With the growing number of customers seeking green operations, being a green hotel con provide a basis for good marketing strategies in that its environmental friendly practices may help to position it differently in the competitive market (Han, et al., 2010). In addition it may also gain a competitive edge, differentiating themselves from similar, but non-green alternatives, thereby, fulfilling the consumers' need for environmentally friendly hotels. In green hotels, the following are quite commonly used, practiced, and served: durable service items, cotton towels and linens for air quality, donations to charity, well-educated staff about green practices, energy conservation, environmental cleaning, eco-friendly/organic foods, fresh air, water recycling/conservation, recycling bins, towel reuse program , etc. (Han & Kim, 2010). Being green may result in various benefits to the operation; such as reductions of energy consumption and operational costs, enhancement of the company's image, coping with government regulation, and positive public attention (Han, et al., 2010).

3.4. Generation Y

The focus of this study is on the people born between 1978 and 1994, the so-called Generation Y (Nusair, et al., 2013). In order to understand the examined members of Generation Y's consumer behaviour regarding green hotels and their hotel consumer behaviour it is significant to thoroughly understand this segment; the concept, Generation Y, will, therefore, be elaborated in this section. In the context of travelling and tourism Generation Y seems to be a very interesting segment to examine, as surprisingly little research has been conducted on Generation Y and tourism, seen in contrast to other age-related market segments (Pendergast, 2009). One could, therefore, argue that there seem to be a lack of knowledge in connection to Generation Y and the tourism field. This is, therefore, a gap which is interesting to examine; not only from an academic perspective, but also to the hotels and tourism industry, as Generation Y represents a fairly large group of people, who tend to be keen on traveling.

Generation Y has been provided with many names; such as the Millennial Generation, Echo Boomers, I Generation, Einstein Generation, Google Generation or the Y'ers. Henceforth, Generation Y will be referred to as the Y'ers. All these different names signify that the Y'ers is a complex generation with apparently contradicting lifestyle choices (Chacko, et al., 2012). Fairly interesting is that much of the description of the generation and proposing future implications from these descriptions is generated by the mass media, commercial consultants and social survey research companies. This signifies that the knowledge produced about the Y'ers may not be valid, as it is produced in particular contexts; it is, therefore, significant to be critical, as knowledge produced in one context may not be valid in others.

As in any other generation the individuals have different traits, which make them different; this is arguably in accordance with the paradigm chosen for this study, namely constructivism, which states that there are as many views on the world as there are people. Despite of their differences the Y'ers also share a set of similarities because of common location in the social and historical process, thereby, limiting them to a specific range of potential experiences, predisposing them from a certain

characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action (Pendergast, 2009). More specifically put, generation theorists postulate that changes in the macro-environment influence the profile of people born in a specific time period, imprinting a specific and common purchasing and consumption behaviour (Gurau, 2012; Howe & Strauss, 2000).[3] This makes it possible to treat the Y'ers as a group, yet having in mind that differences may occur, which must be seen from the constructivist stance of this study, which argues that reality exists in the mind and one perception may not be any more correct than the other. This makes it possible to look at how the Y'ers as a group view the notion of traveling and their way of thinking in relation to being green. This will help to evaluate and examine Y'ers' perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels and their hotel consumer behaviour; but also to see what could in fact be done to direct their choices of hotel towards green hotels.

One of the noteworthy characteristics of the Y'ers is that they are not a local concept only present in Denmark; moreover, it is a global phenomenon, which signifies that according to theory, all Y'ers across the globe carry some similar characteristics because of the historical and social context they have be exposed to. The aim of this study is not to make generalisations globally, this may rather be understood as an in-depth explorative study and the findings may be used for further research whether or not one could talk about a general tendency on a global level.

One of the notable aspects, which indicate a difference among the Y'ers is the significant age span. The Y'ers are born between approximately 1978 and 1994 and do, therefore, span between the age 19-35; an age-span of 16 years may also signify different characteristics for the older segment of the generation towards the younger segment of the generation (Yeaton, 2008).[4] From these points it becomes clear that there is no clear-cut definition accepted by all for this generation. In fact, several studies have shown that the characteristics and behaviour of the Y'ers might be difficult to distinguish. Furthermore, as mentioned they do share some characteristics that create a level of similarity, which will be drawn upon in this study.

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[3] This will be elaborated in the next section of the literature review.
[4] It is important to note that there is little consensus about the time period; other time intervals indicates a slightly different time scale.

The Y'ers tend to be fairly different from the older generation, Generation X, who are born between 1961 and 1979 approximately.[5] As mentioned in the introduction younger people are more environmental aware and committed than the older generation; hereby, they are, in theory, also more inclined to choose and purchase a greener alternative than the older segment (Jackson, 1983; Kaman, 2008). Some scholars argue that this may be because the solution to environmental problems often are viewed as threatening the existing social order, as it possibly requires substantial changes in traditional values, habitual behaviours and existing institutions (K.D. & Dunlap, 1980; Diamantopoulos, et al., 2003). This denotes an interesting aspect of the Y'ers in the context of this study, as it also shows a stronger sense of morality when it comes to the environment, which makes the Y'ers an interesting subject to examine in the context of this study, and maybe even as potential buyer for a stay at a green hotel. Another interesting aspect when examining green consumer behaviour among the Y'ers, is that other studies have shown that there seem to be a lack of coherence between their general attitudes towards environmental issues and their actual buyer behaviour. Moreover, these are studies focusing on general green consumer behaviour. Therefore, examining the Y'ers behaviour when it comes to green hotels may be different, as this is arguably a high involvement product; this will, however, be elaborated in a later section.

It is not only the Y'ers attitude towards green consumption, which makes them interesting to examine; it is also the complexity of this segment. The Y'ers have also by popular literature and the popular press been described as 'The Look-at-me' generation, which according to Myers & Sadaghiani (2010) is implying that they are overly self-confident and self-absorbed (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Furthermore, the media have also provided the Y'ers with the name, the prima-donna-generation, which signifies that the Y'ers have a high focus on promoting themselces (Toft, 2008). One way of staging oneself, is through consumption. In this study, this, thereby, becomes one of the significant aspects of the Y'ers, as purchasing a stay at a hotel on a leisure vacation often must be seen as a high involvement purchase and, thereby, tend to have a high interest in, as a stay at a hotel, in this context, is not only a utilitarian product.

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[5] There is no general consensus regarding the Generation X, which is indicated by a slightly different time interval.

A significant aspect regarding the Y'ers in the context of green consumerism and tourism is that the Y'ers want products which match their personality and lifestyle, and are, therefore, paying little attention to the bands (Gurau, 2012). In other words, there needs to be a value alignment between the product and the consumer. If the Y'ers wish to purchase a stay at a hotel they may not be strained to choose a hotel just because they have been staying at another hotel before. This may prove as a disadvantage as much as an advantage to the hotels, as it makes it possible to obtain more consumers, but at the same time they may not be choosing a hotel more than once, in their pursuit of new experiences. This complexity of the Y'ers is connected to them being deeply influenced by several trends throughout the 1990s and 2000s (Eisner, 2005). All of the presented aspects about the Y'ers constitutes an interesting foundation for examine the Y'ers in the context of this study.

3.5. Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is relevant in terms of examining the Y'ers' perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels and how their hotel consumer behaviour may be influenced by these when going on leisure vacation. It must be perceived in this way as tourists must be understood as consumers, as he or she is served and forms a commercial exchange relationship with goods suppliers and service delivers (Quan & Wang, 2004). Since the main focus of this study is the accommodation process, this must be understood as a sub-product of the entire tourism product and, thereby, less complex than the broad understanding introduced in the section, *Tourism*. It, thereby, becomes simpler to understand the consumer behaviour of the Y'ers in this context. Therefore, it is arguably an essential aspect of this study, to examining how and why the examined Y'ers are behaving the way they do when choosing a hotel for their leisure vacation. As consumer behaviour is an essential part of the problem statement, it is crucial to introduce this aspect in order to obtain an adequate analysis in relation to the problem statement. In order to make the theory the most relevant and transparent consumer behaviour will be discussed in relation to being green and being a tourist. The notion of consumer behaviour must be seen as a framework to more specific theoretical aspects of this study.

According to Solomon et al. (2010) consumer behaviour is the study of the process involved when groups or individuals select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services or ideas to satisfy their needs or desires (Solomon, et al., 2010). Traditional consumer behaviour theory perceive the consumer as a problem solver engaged in information processing, e.g. searching for information retrieving memory cues and considering alternatives in order to reach a desired goal (Curtin, 2008). Moreover, the perception has moved from the rational choice to acknowledge seemingly irrational buying behaviour; a product is now not only being bought for utilitarian, instrumental reasons, but also to satisfy needs which goes beyond this. This will, thus, be examined further in a later section. Furthermore, what lies behind the choice of hotel on a leisure vacation must be regarded as irrational, when taken this approach into consideration. The utilitarian approach may, thus, not be the dominating approach. An approach of hedonism will, consequently, be included later in the literature review.

The field consumer behaviour is regarded as being young, dynamic and in flux, and the term was developed in the 1960s (Solomon, et al., 2010; Schiffman, et al., 2008). It is constantly being cross-fertilized by perspectives from many different disciplines. Consumer researchers include basically every social science discipline, plus a few from the physical science and the arts of good measures. This melting pot has resulted in a healthy debate among research perspectives, viewpoints regarding the appropriate research method.

The understanding of consumer behaviour goes beyond the act of buying only, and extends to both having and being as well. Consumer behaviour furthermore extends to how having things affects our lives, and how our possessions influence the way we feel about ourselves and each other – our state of being. This is one of the aspects which are very relevant to this study, namely the context of the purchase and how it may make us feel about ourselves.

Different explanations have been given of the consumer society we live in; one of the most significant features deals with the shift from 'microcosmic' actors to 'macroscopic' perspective, that takes social and other contexts into consideration (Haanpää, 2007; McCracken, 1988). One of these contexts is the environment,

which as mentioned is a concern which has developed rapidly over the last decades. Environment attitudes are now socially acceptable and desirable; in fact, it has become almost a social norm in the western society, it may, however, not have an intrinsic meaning, but is still an aspect interesting to examine (Haanpää, 2007; Derksen & Gartrell, 1993). While the negative effect of consumption has been widely admitted, green consumption choices have become more conventional. Whatever the approach to the issues is, green consumer behaviour generally originates at least from matters of world view or values, norms, beliefs and ideologies.

Consumer behaviour consists of diverse theories; they are, however, not all relevant to this study and a few have been selected based on relevance to the study. Theories on product involvement and the decision making process have been included, as these are relevant in terms of this study. The theories and their relevance to the study will, furthermore, be elaborated in the following sections.

3.5.1. Product Involvement

Product involvement has been extensively used as an explanatory variable in consumer behaviour and is regarded as one of the most important variables of consumer behaviour research, as it performs a crucial function in consumers' persuasive processes (Kim, et al., 2010). Moreover, it has been established that the level of involvement determines the depth, complexity and extensiveness of cognitive and behavioural processes during the consumer choice process. Product involvement is, thus, a central framework and vital to understanding consumer decision making behaviour and associated communications (Bian & Moutinho, 2011). Therefore, product involvement is a significant aspect to include in the theoretical framework of this study, in order to understand what purchasing a stay at a hotel may mean to the Y'ers. Furthermore, it is significant to comprehend the aspect of involvement connected to the decision making behaviour and the communication around it. More concretely, this will help to determine and examine the personal relevance of purchasing a stay at hotel and what it actually means and symbolises to the Y'ers to purchase a stay at a green hotel when they go on leisure vacation.

According to Zaichkowsky (1994), product involvement is the perceived personal importance and interest evoked by a specific stimulus in specific surroundings or degree of perceived personal relevance towards an object (Zaichkowsky, 1994). This definition captures both the affective and the cognitive relevance of the term. The product involvement is, based on the given description, not similar for all individuals as it is based on the perceived personal importance. This section will, moreover, seek to discuss the keys to high and low product involvement in order to understand the consumer behaviour of the Y'ers decision making processes when choosing whether or not to choose a green hotel when going on leisure vacation.

Research shows that when product involvement is high, consumer decision processes are thought to proceed through extended decision making process, which is a series of sequential stages involving information search and evaluation of criteria (Bian & Moutinho, 2011). In a low involvement situation the consumer are not able to nor wish to exert a great deal of effort to process information. Hereby, a low involvement product is something, which does not have a high level of importance or personal relevance to them. Thus, when products are high involvement consumers are more likely to put effort. As a consequence they will search for more information; the process, therefore, relies on the degree of involvement in the product (Kim, et al., 2010). In high involvement products consumers look for more personal, experimental and symbolic gain than in low involvement situations, rather than maximising product functionality (Solomon, et al., 1985). Hereby, the product becomes a mean to achieving a goal rather than the end result itself; this will be elaborated further in another section. One could argue that since a stay at a hotel, or more specifically to this context a stay at a green hotel, do not solely express utilitarian buyer behaviour, it also express a level of hedonism; this will, moreover, be elaborated in a later section. This indicates that purchasing a stay at a green hotel must be argued to be high involvement, since it arguably looks more for personal, experimental and symbolic gain, rather than maximising product functionality.

Hereby, one may argue that a high involvement product is a product that the consumer is prepared to spend considerable time and effort searching for, e.g. a stay at a hotel for the leisure vacation. A low involvement product is, on the other hand, a frequently bought product and with a minimum thought and effort as they are not

of essential concern or have any great impact on the lifestyle of the consumer, e.g. milk or toilet paper. From this perspective it is possible to position a purchase of stay at a green hotel as having high involvement, as they are performing more than the actual function, being a hotel. Hotel consumers may be attaching a level of personal, experimental and symbolic gain from staying at a green hotel rather than a non-green alternative. Hereby, it may be a means to expressing their values regarding environmental issues. Including theoretical framework about product involvement will help to understand the importance and relevance of a hotel stay on a leisure vacation for the examined Y'ers.

3.5.2. Decision making process

The decision making process (DMP) is highly connected to the product involvement and is a process we all go through basically every day without knowing it; e.g. when we go to the supermarket to buy something as ordinary as cereal or milk. The DMP is incorporated in our everyday life, but usually not something we, as consumers, pay attention to in the small everyday purchases. This section will, therefore, elaborate the theory of the DMP. As mentioned in the methodology section *Criteria for the sampling*, it is significant to the research that the research sample is taking an active part in the DMP when purchasing a stay at a hotel for their leisure vacation. This is significant since the purpose of this study is to uncover how the Y'ers' perceptions and attitudes may influence their hotel consumer behaviour when going on leisure vacation. This is, however, only possible to examine if the examined Y'ers are in fact taking part in the DMP of choosing a hotel when they go on leisure vacation. Presenting the framework of an individual decision making is, therefore, essential to this study and the understanding of the consumer behaviour of the Y'ers in this context. The model presented should be seen as an analytical and explorative model, which seeks to provide a framework of the key elements will help to explain the behaviour of the consumers.

Since the DMP vary from individual to individual, this model must also be seen as a simplistic linear representation of the key steps in the DMP. However, in reality the process does not flow as smoothly from the top to the bottom (Solomon, et al., 2010). There are variables, which affect how the consumer undertakes these steps;

this is, however, the level of complexity or risk involved. This should in this context, moreover, be seen as a guideline for understanding the hotel consumers and their consumer behaviour when purchasing a stay at a hotel when going on leisure vacation. Taken into consideration the constructivist paradigm of this study, it is important to take into account the perception that all people have different mind-sets and a singular framework does, therefore, not fit all people's DMP. When taking into consideration the DMP when purchasing a stay at a hotel for a leisure vacation, some of the Y'ers may be more influenced by the environmental awareness they experience than others and may, therefore, be more inclined to acquaint themselves with the possibilities of choosing a green hotel and, hence, spend more time in collecting information before making the purchase.

As mentioned in the section *Consumer Behaviour*, the notion of consumer behaviour is not only about buying the product itself. Therefore, when purchasing a stay at a hotel when going on a leisure vacation, the Y'ers go through a DMP; this can, moreover, be broken down into individual stages. Scholars have come up with different DMP-models; most of them are similar to the ones presented in this discussion of the topic. In this context the theory will be used to understand the process the Y'ers are going through when choosing to stay at a hotel and the processes they go through to reach this decision (Solomon, et al., 2010).

According to Solomon et al. (2010) the DMP encompasses four stages; problem recognition, information search and evaluation, the purchasing process, and the post-purchase behaviour. As mentioned, the DMP consists of different stages depending on the scholar; according to Solomon et al. the DMP involves the four presented stages, whereas Schiffman et al. (2008) present a DMP model, that consists of merely three stages; the in-put, the process, and the out-put. Moreover, one of the best known DMP-model, and the one which will be applied in this study, is produced by Kotler & Keller (2009). The model consists of five stages: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase behaviour (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

1.	• Problem Recognition
2.	• Information Search
3.	• Evaluation of Alternatives
4.	• Purchase
5.	• Post-Purchase Evaluation
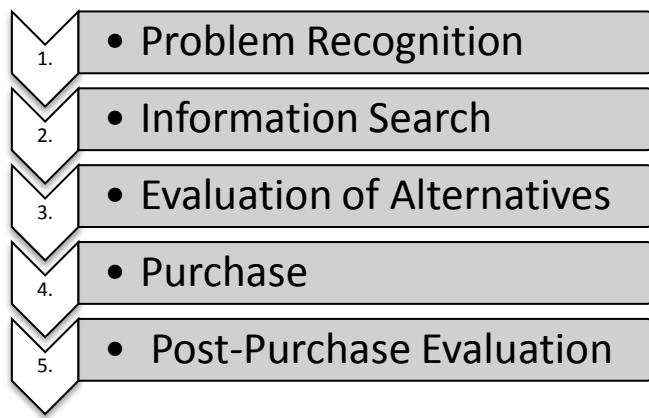
According to Kotler & Keller (2009) the DMP begins with problem recognition. There may be a number of ways in which consumers become aware of their need to initiate a purchase. These will fall into two categories – either a sharper awareness of their current state or greater clarity or urgency surrounding the way the consumer would like things to be. In this study personal aspirations of being a green consumer may trigger the desire to purchase a stay at a green hotel when going on vacation. The next stage in the model is information search. According to Kotler and Keller (2009) the consumer is highly influenced by marketing strategies of retailers during this stage of the process. In the context of this study one could question if the hotel consumers may be influenced by the significant exposure of environmental issues in the media.[6] During the third stage of the DMP the perspective consumer is engaged in evaluations of alternatives. The fourth step of the DMP corresponds to making a purchase. Factors which play a significant role in the choice of product are satisfaction of previous experiences and the intensity of the time pressure that is connected with the purchase. The fifth and last stage of the consumer DMP is post-purchase behaviour. The post decision making behaviour is essential to the marketers for ensuring the satisfaction of the consumers after the purchase. The level of satisfaction or dis-satisfaction associated with specific shopping experience consumer value brand perception and the nature of their repeat.

The stages of the DMP models should not be seen as separate, but merely as interlocking stages. The stages of the decision making process vary not only from individual to individual, but also from the product of interest; therefore, the model will not look the same in all cases; e.g. there is a significant difference on wanting to

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[6] This is, however, not certain and will be examined in analysis.

purchase ten apples and a hotel for your next leisure vacation. As presented in this section, simplified models do exist, but a standardised model will not be applicable to all cases. High involvement products, such as a hotel stay on a leisure vacation, may need more information search than low involvement products, such as milk or hand-soap; the latter being cases where we are hardly aware of the process. The models presented in this section are fairly similar, I do, however, as mentioned deem Kotler & Keller's (2009) model to be the most applicable one of the presented models in this context, as there is a significant focus on the information search and evaluation of alternatives. I regard these stages as being very significant to take into consideration in this study, since the purchase of a hotel stay has been estimated as being a high involvement product, where the information search is high compared to low involvement products; this may, however, vary based on the individual. I will, therefore, be taking Kotler & Keller's (2009) model into consideration when conducting the analysis of this study. The model should, as explained, not be seen as a key, but merely as a flexible guideline.

The DMP shows different stages the consumers go through when purchasing a product or a service and is typically useful in terms of obtaining knowledge about the consumers. This will also be the function of the model in this study, namely obtaining knowledge about the examined Y'ers which may help to uncover the significance of the choice of hotel on a leisure vacation. In order to answer the problem statement adequately, the focus will merely be on three first stages of the model: need recognition, information search and evaluation of alternatives. The latter two of the model, purchase and post-purchase evaluation, which are dealing with the actual purchase and whether or not the purchase have been successful, are not interesting to examine to gain a solid answer to the problem statement of this study.

3.6. Hedonism

Today's consumers are more driven by the feeling of pleasure than necessity; the field of tourism is not an exception (Alba & Williams, 2012). In its most simple form leisure tourism is about going away for recreational purposes; in other words, it is about pleasure. However, in the light of this study there do seem to be a paradox in maximising ones pleasure when going on vacation and being environmental aware at the same time. In order to understand the consumer behaviour of the ex-

amined Y'ers, it is significant to introduce the notion of hedonism in theoretical framework. This may help to examine the gap there appears to be between taking care of the environment and staying in a hotel with excessive non-durable goods consumption (Lee, et al., 2010). In comparison to more traditional theories of consumer behaviour, the experiential approach considers the importance of hedonic and pleasure seeking goals (Curtin, 2008). Hedonism is, therefore, a significant aspect to include in this study, as it is making use of an experiential approach to consumer behaviour, which is arguably a significant approach to the examined Y'ers.

Even though there seem to be little controversy regarding hedonism, it still seems difficult to circumscribe the activity itself neatly. Sketchy, hedonism is defined as 'the doctrine that pleasure is the highest good; the pursuit of pleasure; a lifestyle devoted to pleasure seeking' (Hopkinson, et al., 1999). Understanding the concept is, however, a little more complex than that; originally Hirschman & Holbrook (1982) characterised hedonic consumption as those facets of consumer behaviour that relate to the multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive aspect of ones' experience of the product (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Many scholars have adopted less expansive operationalizations, that facilitate experimental inquiry; this, however, present a different set of challenges (Alba & Williams, 2012). While few people are able to devote themselves entirely to pleasure, the quest for hedonic experience is widespread (Hopkinson, et al., 1999). The hedonic experience is, moreover, individual. In the same context it is important to note that the hedonic experience of a leisure vacation is also individual; thereby, saying that staying at a green hotel may be regarded as a hedonic experience for some, whereas others may regard a stay at an excessively luxurious (non-green) hotel as a hedonic experience, which is in line with the constructivist paradigm of this study. This is an aspect I have chosen to include in the study to obtain a more complete understanding of the examined Y'ers' consumer behaviour of a hotel stay on a leisure vacation.

When discussing hedonism it is significant to identify the notion of utilitarianism, as a hotel is often not chosen based on utilitarian needs. Utilitarianism accounts for an alternative motivation for applying a product than hedonism. According to hedonic theory, consumers purchase goods and services for two basic reasons: consummatory affective gratification and instrumental utilitarian reasons (Voss, et al., 2003). The

significant aspect to be aware of regarding utilitarianism is that products are purchased based on their functional dimension; in this context a hotel with only utilitarian purposes may only include only a bed for sleeping. It is, however, more complex than that; a prototypical utilitarian product may possess hedonistic characteristics; e.g .when detergent is marketed on its scent rather than its cleaning abilities; and a prototypical hedonistic product, such as chocolate could be consumed for its cardiovascular benefits (Alba & Williams, 2012). Consumer activities suffer the same problem, as the same overt activity may be primary hedonic or primary utilitarian. Therefore, saying that a hotel is either primarily hedonic or utilitarian is depending on the individual, which is, thereby, an aspect which is significant to examine when studying the examined Y'ers in relation to the proposed problem statement of this study. In order to examine this perspective, a goal based perspective that focuses on whether the consumer is pursuing utilitarian or hedonic objectives is helpful in two ways; firstly, viewing hedonic consumption as being person driven, with products serving merely as a means to a pleasurable end, corresponds more closely to how people pursue hedonic consumption in reality and reflects how idiosyncratic any one consumer's pleasure may be (Alba & Williams, 2012). This perspective supports the empirical investigation by leading research away from confusion inherent in any product-to-product comparison (Alba & Williams, 2012). Secondly, many acts of consumption may entail some combination of utilitarian and hedonic motives, and identifying the relative strength of each can be a daunting task, as they may contain both utilitarian as well as hedonistic motives. Researchers must carefully consider the distinction between means and end. When conducting the analysis of the study it is, therefore, important to focus on the result and values connected to why one should choose a green hotel over a non-green alternative. It is, thereby, not the process which is significant when looking at the hedonic objective of choosing a hotel for ones' leisure vacation, but, moreover, significant to look at what is in fact lying behind this choice.

When choosing a green hotel over an alternatively just as good non-green hotel it is arguably a question of value expression. Moreover, some have characterised value-expressive motives as possessing both hedonic and utilitarian aspects. In fact, even relatively mundane consumption behaviours can be multiply motivated by a desire

for adventure, social interaction, mood enhancement, and altruism (Alba & Williams, 2012). Value expressions is one of the significant aspects, as it may express why one is choosing to act in a certain manner over an alternative, since it may help to express a value significant to the individual. Using the theoretical framework of hedonism may, therefore, help to see the correlation between the attributes offered when the Y'ers are choosing a hotel for their leisure vacation and their self-relevant consequences and values.

3.7. Reference groups

As mentioned, environmental attitudes are regarded as socially acceptable and desirable; in fact, they have become almost a social norm in the western society; therefore, the notion of reference groups is a significant aspect to include in this study. Furthermore, taking into consideration the significant psychological aspect there is in choosing a hotel for a leisure vacation, a noteworthy aspect to include in the theoretical framework is the role of reference groups. As mentioned in the section *Hotels and Green Hotels,* hotels are regarded as a supporting experience and not the peak experience itself, yet hotels are still significant as it is part of the total experience and cannot be replaced. Reference groups may, moreover, be a determinate factor when choosing a hotel for a leisure vacation; especially for the Y'ers as they seem to be aware of what other people may think of them, because of their tendency of being very aware of how they exude to the world (Phua, 2013); in other words they are also known as the Look-at-me generation.

Reference group theory is based on the idea that people standard others as a foundation for self-evaluation, comparison and choices concerning need and use of information. One may, however, question why reference groups are so effective; this has to do with the notion of social power, the capacity to change the actions of others. Furthermore, what other consumers say about products are often more influential than the advertising we see (Solomon, 2013). Significant in this context is that the type of product also influences how significant reference groups are in the purchasing process; e.g. whether it is a necessity or a luxury product. The reference group tend to be not as strong regarding the necessity product category, as they are in the luxury category. Also reference groups tend to have a stringer value in public

consumption, rather than in private consumption. Hereby, theoretically speaking, reference groups are a very significant aspect in relation to choosing a hotel for a leisure vacation, as this may be regarded as a luxury product, since it is a product, which is high in price and also not be regarded as a necessity. Due to the importance of reference groups in the context of purchasing a stay at a hotel, it is highly linked to the rest of the theoretical framework of this study.

Levine & Hogg (2010) define a reference group as a collectivity that is used as a standard or frame of reference by an individual in evaluating his or her own abilities, attitudes, or beliefs or in choosing behaviour. They may help orient people and may comprise non-interacting individuals, status categories, or members of social groups (Levine & Hogg, 2010). Reference groups can be groups to which an individual currently belongs, groups to which an individual once belonged, or groups to which an individual wish to belong. These groups may be real and tangible groups, present or not present, or even imaginary.

According to Phua (2013) humans are social animals and in today's society people are intricately interconnected through networks and communities, engaging in interpersonal conversations, transmitting information, norms and identities. Human behaviour is heavily influenced by perceptions of how of one's group think or act (Phua, 2013). Among young adults, such as the examined Y'ers, peer influence and normative beliefs about peer groups are important determinants of healthy behaviour. The extent to which peer groups influence one's behaviour is often based on what the individual thinks about what others believe and do, than their actual beliefs and actions. Hereby, it is significant to the study what the examined Y'ers think about leisure vacations and green consumerism rather than the actual behaviour of those who belong to the reference group.

Psychological groups may be defined as reference groups based on diverse explanations; when the individual is aware of those composing the group; when the individual identifies him- or herself as a member, former member, or potential member; when the group is seen as emotionally or cognitively significant for the individual (Levine & Hogg, 2010). A reference group may, therefore, be a group with whom one has face to face contact or one that one may not have met. These may include

people with whom we interact in our everyday life, or people on our TV. A reference group could, moreover, be referred to as either associative or dissociative; where one either wish to be associated with a certain group or groups whose attitude, values and behaviour one disapprove of.

Often people do not belong only to one reference group, and these groups may be conflicting or mutually sustaining. In a positive notion, these groups may be used to provide standards of comparison or as a source for values, norms, and attitudes. On the other hand, they may also be used to provide standards of comparison in direct opposition with those of the group or as a source of values, norms, and attitudes formed in direct opposition to the group. This study will apply this theoretical framework to discover motivational factors when the examined Y'ers are choosing a hotel for a leisure vacation. This will help to provide an adequate answer to the problem statement as it helps to generate knowledge regarding what factors may play a role in this context.

4. Analysis

4.1. Analysis Introduction

The aim of the analysis is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the eight examined Y'ers' perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels and how these may influence their hotel consumer behaviour. The analysis will take its point of departure in the empirical findings discovered through interviews of the research sample, using the secondary data introduced in the literature review as framework for the analysis. It is difficult to argue what is the most significant aspects of the literature review in this study, as all the introduced theories are interconnected and helpful to the analysis in order to provide an adequate answer to the examined Y'ers' perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels and, furthermore, how these may influence their hotel consumer behaviour.

As mentioned in the methodology section, the research sample consists of eight members of Generation Y. The analysis has been based upon thematic patterns discovered through the interviews of the research sample. However, this study should merely be seen as a case study and not providing a general image of the Generation Y and their perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels and their hotel consumer behaviour. It may, however, through this study be possible to say that there is a tendency and that this may be tested on a larger research sample in future studies.

This study will by means the of theoretical framework of the literature review, a conceptualisation of tourism and significance of hotels, diverse consumer behaviour theories, as well as theoretical knowledge about hedonism and reference groups seek to provide an answer to the problem statement; what are Generation Y's perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels, and how does these affect their hotel consumer behaviour.

The references of direct and indirect quotations are drawn on the interviews of the eight examined Y'ers. The interview guide can be found in the appendix I and the interviews in the appendix included on the enclosed CD.

4.2. A hotel stay: Peak or basic experience?

As this study is seeking to uncover the eight examined Y'ers' perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels when going on leisure vacation, and how these affect their hotel consumer behaviour, it is significant to uncover the examined Y'ers' perceptions of a hotel experience. This will help establish a foundation of the analysis, as it will reveal the extent of importance the examined Y'ers ascribe to the hotel experience compared to the total tourism experience.

According to Quan & Wang (2004) a tourist experience consists of peak experience and a supporting experience. A hotel stay is according to Quan & Wang (2004) regarded as a supporting experience, as it must be viewed as an extension of the daily experience to the tourist journey. Even though a hotel stay is merely regarded as a supporting experience, it has experienced increasingly more attention in the tourism industry, as tourists are demanding higher standard services for the supporting experiences. Even though social science seems to ignore supporting activities, the supporting experience, in form of a hotel stay, is a significant aspect to this study, as it will determine how significant a hotels stay actually is to the examined Y'ers. It may also help to shed a light on how the perceptions and attitudes towards hotels and green hotels may affect their hotel consumer behaviour.

Due to the constructivist paradigm of this study, it is significant to recognise the differences in perception and attitude among the examined Y'ers. Additionally, from the interviews it became clear that the examined Y'ers do not have similar perceptions of the significance of a hotel stay on leisure vacation. Therefore, in order to examine their perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels it is, significant to uncover their perception of the importance of a hotel stay in general.

Based on the interviews the examined Y'ers have been divided into groups based on how they perceive the importance of a hotel stay on a leisure vacation and how it is understood. Moreover, some of the examined Y'ers regard the hotel as a more important part of the vacation, signifying that the involvement in the hotel stay is significantly higher to some of the examined Y'ers. However, to some of the examined Y'ers the hotel stay is understood as a very basic experience and simply as a place to sleep.

Usually it is merely a place to sleep, when I go on vacation I want to go on an active vacation and be by the pool. So it is not a lot of time you spent at the hotel or the apartment you have. (Christoffer)

It does actually not matter that much, it is actually just a base where I sort of have my stuff and where I sort of sleep and relax, but it is not where I spend my time. (Jacob)

To the first group of the examined Y'er the hotel does not play a substantial role to the vacation as a total tourism experience; the hotel has, thereby, no significant importance to them. In other words, the hotel is not regarded as part of the tourist experience. Group two share some similarities of perception with the first group; yet they regard the hotel stay to have some importance to the total tourist experience. According to this group, the hotel is still regarded as a very basic experience, nevertheless to the extent that the hotel stay does in fact matter to the total hotel experience.

It actually does not mean that much, because I am not spending that much time there. Well, that is not true if it is rubbish, then it is very important, because then I am annoyed about it. But if it is alright then it is somewhere I spend an hour or two before I go to sleep. (Stine)

It matters if you are living in a real crappy hotel, where there is only cold water and cockroaches in the sink, so of cause. This will affect your vacation and that you will also remember for something bad. (Kathrine)

For the second group the hotel is important for the total tourist experience to the extent that if the facilities of the hotel are alright, the hotel has no real significance for their total tourism experience. This, moreover, signifies that if the facilities do not live up to the expectations, the hotel stay will affect the total tourism experience in a negative direction. To the second group, expectations of the hotel prior to the stay play an important role of how significant the hotel is to the total tourist experience.

The role of the hotel stay to the total tourist experience does, however, play an even more important role to others of the examined Y'ers; in fact, some of the examined Y'ers regard the hotel stay to have a more extensive importance of their total tourist experience. This does, however, not denote that the hotel stay becomes a peak experience. Even though the hotel may merely be perceived as a base to the stay, as mentioned to the first group, who did not perceive the hotel stay to be of significance their total tourism experience, the hotel as a base may have more significance to others of the examined Y'ers.

> *Well, it is the base sort of. Because it is the base it matters, I think. That is very important to me [...]* (Morten)

Whereas the hotel as a base is not important to the first group, the hotel as a base is, however, important to the examined Y'ers of this group. Group three can arguably be compared to the previous group, group two, who view the hotel stay to be important for the total tourist experience to the extent that the hotel live up to the expectations the examined Y'ers have beforehand. Group three, however, states, that the hotel is important as a base; it may, thereby, also influence the total tourism experience in a positive direction.

> *[...] when you come home you want to feel safe, that you do not have to worry about anything happening, because it is your home or you intimate space or where you feel at home and you do not need to worry about anything happening.* (Elise)

Elise's perception of the hotel stay may be regarded as having a great significance to her total tourism experience. Not only does she regard the hotel as being a base, but also use the words home and intimate space, which signifies that the hotel is significant to her personally. However, despite the perception of the hotel as being very significant to group three, it is still perceived as supportive experience according to Quan & Wang (2004) description of the division of the tourist experience, as the hotel is stay regarded as a base and the notion of feeling safe, home and intimate space.

Group four, could arguably be referred to as the contextual group. This group regard context as being a key concept to the degree of importance ascribed to the hotel stay. To group four, the purpose of the vacation plays a significant role. In some

contexts the hotel is mainly understood as a place to sleep and does, thereby, have very little significance to the total tourist experience, as the case with the first group; however, in other contexts the hotel is more important and the hotel stay is, thereby, very important to the total tourist experience.

> *It can be a very important thing and it can also be a place where you only sleep. It depends on the purpose of the vacation. […]* And *then I have been on vacation with my boyfriend and then the hotel was more important, because you presume that you will be spending more time there and it is nicer to spend time together when the surroundings are nice.* (Pernille)

> *It is actually very different. It can be a very important thing and it can also be a place just for sleeping. It depends on the purpose of the vacation. I have been on vacations were it was just sleeping there; hotels and hostels were just a place to sleep. It was still price and quality, but where the price level was lower. And that was not that important. Then I have been on vacation with my girlfriend, where the hotel was more important, because you presume that you are going to spend more time there and it is nicer being together when the surroundings are nice.* (Niels)

Based on the interviews the examined Y'ers have been divided into groups based on their various perceptions of the importance of the hotel stay to the total tourist experience. It is, hereby, not possible to say, that a hotel stay is perceived in one collective way. However, the hotel stay is, moreover, perceived as a supportive experience rather than a peak experience by all of the examined Y'ers of this study. The examined Y'ers do, however, not agree on the perception of the importance of the supportive experience has of the total tourist experience and has, therefore, been divided into groups in order to gain an overview.

Group 1	• The hotel is perceived as not very important to the total tourism experience and only a place to sleep
Group 2	• The hotel is perceived as important to the extent that the facilities do not live up to their expectations.
Group 3	• The hotel is perceived as an important base and may influence the vacation in a positive and a negative direction.
Group 4	• The hotel is perceived very contextual, as it may be only a place to sleep, thereby not significant; but it may also be regarded as significant – based on the context.

By dividing the examined Y'ers into groups by recognising their differences and not simply stating that they regard the hotel stay as being a supportive experience, also embraces the constructivist paradigm of this study. This signifies that the examined Y'ers have different perceptions of the hotel stay experience and it is, therefore, even more important to treat this study and the examined Y'ers as a case study as this signifies that the perception of the importance of a hotel stay may vary significantly from individual to individual. It is, hence, not possible to generalise to all Y'ers, despite of them being part of one generational group, based on their mutual social and historical experiences on a global level.

4.3. An active choice?

During the interviews a significant and very interesting tendency occurred among the examined Y'ers; namely the awareness connected with green hotels. According to Solomon's (2003) theory of the extended self, one could argue that the choice of a green hotel should in fact be active in order for it to convey if the examined Y'ers identify with the notion of a green hotel (Solomon, 2003). The notion of making an active choice is, thereby, an important aspect to discovering the perceptions and attitudes of the examined Y'ers towards green hotels. This will be elucidated by the awareness of green hotels in the DMP.[7] The awareness of green hotels is, moreover, a noteworthy aspect, which will affect the DMP among the examined Y'ers significantly. The awareness connected to green hotels is, therefore, not only important to this study, but also to the hotel industry who claim that they are applying the green

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[7] The decision making process will be elaborated later in the analysis.

mind-set to differentiate their hotel from other hotels. This approach will, hereby, provide an image of a tendency whether the message in fact gets across to Generation Y, who has a presumable high environmental awareness. Moreover, in order for the examined Y'ers to be able to make an active choice in the decision making process, awareness of green hotels, is crucial. This section will, therefore, examine the awareness linked to green hotels among the examined Y'ers.

A notable observation to bear in mind is, that based on the study so far, it has been discovered that not all the examined Y'ers have the same perception of the importance of the hotel in the total tourism experience; therefore, the choice of hotel may mean something more to some of the examined Y'ers than to others. Due to the constructivist perspective of this study it is important to bear in mind that it is examining eight various members of Generation Y, this will, moreover, construct a more varied interpretation, as some of the examined Y'ers are more involved in choosing a hotel than others. The individualism connected to the product involvement may, therefore, signify that some of the examined Y'ers are more aware of green hotels than others, as they tend to spend more time searching for information when choosing hotels than others of the examined Y'ers (Bian & Moutinho, 2011). This also denotes the contextual importance of this study. As it is based on eight individuals, who carries various perceptions and attitudes towards the importance of a hotel on a leisure vacation, it is highly unlikely that this study is replicable, as social settings are difficult to freeze and even more impossible to find other Y'ers who share the exact same perception and attitude towards green hotels as the examined Y'ers.

> *Green hotels I associate with decreasing their environmental imprint. For example, you know that the hotels are using a lot, for example, they have a lot of laundry and generally there is a big consumption on hotels, but if you try to decrease that consumption and think about they can cut back so that it is good for the environment.* (Jacob)

The general perception of green hotels among the examined Y'ers is that it has to do with reusing the towels and decreasing carbon footprint. This must arguably be regarded as a fairly sketchy understanding of the term, which is merely scratching

the surface of the notion. The central and most tangible perception of green hotels among the examined Y'ers is, moreover, that it is about the sign over the towels in the bathrooms asking to reuse the towels (Appendix II b).

> *I think about it as something with not throwing away.., that you do not get your towels laundered every day, that it is maybe every third day or something.* (Kathrine)

Even though the perception of the green hotels seem to be fairly sketchy, this does, however, still signify that to some extent there is an awareness of the concept, which must be regarded as important information in this context. However, according to another of the examined Y'er, Elise, green hotels are not something that she has thought about.

> *No, I have actually never thought of it like that, as you can see with other products, that you can it is environmental, no I did not know you could choose hotels in that way.* (Elise)

This perception signifies that there is some inconsistency about the awareness regarding green hotels. Therefore, a related and at least as important aspect is whether the examined Y'ers are in fact aware of this term and bear them in mind when making the choice of hotel when going on leisure vacation. This is a significant reflection to include, as this it shows how the perceptions and attitudes associated with green hotels actually influence the consumer behaviour of the examined Y'ers. Taking into account Solomon's (2003) theory of extended self, which states that the purchased good must be understood as an extension of consumer's personality and, moreover, defines who we are and who we are not; it is also possible to tell something about the individual based on its active decisions of consumer behaviour. However, if the choice is not actively made, the green aspect of the hotel will practically be irrelevant to the choice, and the perception and attitude of green hotels as well. Furthermore, it will moreover not uncover much about the person in this context, as a low awareness may signify that ending up on a green hotel is merely a coincident rather than an active choice.

Throughout the interviews it was found that the environmental aspect was, moreover, not an aspect the examined Y'ers included in their consideration when choosing a hotel for their leisure vacation.

> *It is not a very conscious choice I have made so far actually, but it has probably been more the financial and practical aspect actually. But I would like it to be more existent, but also that it would be easier to make the choice actually.* (Pernille)

One could question the reason for why the examined Y'ers do not include the environmental aspect when looking for a hotel for their leisure vacation; is it in fact that they do not care about the environment or what is the reason for this? According to the examined Y'ers there is one element which is fairly noteworthy in relation to choosing a green hotel, namely the focus on the green aspect; in fact not many hotels seem to brand themselves on this.

> *The problem, with green hotels is that I do not really think that they are really that many who are branding themselves on it. Whether it is because they do not really see a product in it, that there is not really a market for it, I simply do not believe, because there has to be a market for it as it is something the tourism industry can see.* (Niels)

This perception is a general perception among the majority of the examined Y'ers, when asked about the focus they experience on green hotels (Appendix II b). In fact, some of the examined Y'ers claimed that they were not familiar with the concept of green hotels. This is arguably an interesting and somewhat contradicting, since there seem to be an increasing demand for green hotels within the hotel industry (Lee, et al., 2010). Others of the examined Y'ers are, however, more aware of the concept being an alternative, but the environment is not the first thing that comes to mind when searching for a hotel for their leisure vacation (Appendix II b). The focus when choosing a hotel for their leisure vacation is on the feeling of pleasure and price, which seem to be two aspects which are more relevant to the examined Y'ers when looking for a hotel for their leisure vacation. One could argue that the eye may become selective and merely focus on the aspects, which is significant to the individual in the first place. Here the DMP plays a significant role and also the methods the examined Y'ers are using to find the hotel for their leisure vacation.

On their own websites, yes, but often you using booking.com or hotels.com and then there are no one who display it. You cannot choose, 'show me the green hotels first'. As far as I remember it is not a function they have. And it is usually the approach. Then it is not before you actually examine the hotel's webpage, that you find the information or when you get there. (Morten)

There is a general tendency for the examined Y'ers to use secondary online hotel search engines, such as hotels.com, booking.com, or google.com, when searching for a hotel for their leisure vacation. Furthermore, this may also signifies that they do not have any interaction with the hotels webpage and as mentioned in the quote above, this may denote that the awareness regarding being green does not show until they actually arrive at the hotel. Thereby, there are according the examined Y'ers not awareness in the branding aspect of the hotel, which makes it difficult for the examined Y'ers to make an active choice.

It should not be a minor detail on the bathroom door. Well, it is fine, but at that time the consumer is already there. And then it kind of 'oh-well'. People did not choose your hotel because you are green, then it is almost irrelevant. They chose you because you have a swimming pool or whatever. (Niels)

One could argue that the lack of awareness is inflicted by the hotel industry itself, because of lacking branding exposure. Hereby, the hotels do not make it a direct opportunity for the Y'ers to choose this option; it merely becomes a bi-product of the choice they have made based on other criteria. Hereby, in relation to Solomon (2003), it may be difficult to talk about a direct and conscious extension of their personality, as ending up at a green hotel is often more a coincident than an active choice.

## 4.4. Planning a leisure vacation

As mentioned in the preceding section the DMP plays a significant role in making an active choice, therefore, this section will focus on what aspects plays a part in planning a vacation and a hotel stay.

The DMP is arguably highly connected to the product involvement associated with the choice of hotel. However, since this study examines eight Y'ers, there will argu-

ably be differences in their DMP. This perception is based on the finding that the examined Y'ers do not have a uniform perception of the importance associated with the hotel on leisure vacation. This section sets out to discover what aspects are involved in the DMP when the examined Y'ers choose a hotel for their leisure vacation. This will, furthermore, help to examine the consumer behaviour of the Y'ers in relation to purchase of a hotel stay, which is arguably a more practical angle of the perception of hotels. One of the criteria for the research sample of this study, which has been brought forward in the methodology section, has been that the research sample must take an active part in the DMP. This is very significant to this part of the analysis as it makes it possible to examine the pre-purchase process the examined Y'ers go through when they purchase a stay at a hotel. Since, this study have shown that the awareness of green hotels is not an aspect the examined Y'ers keep in mind when they choose hotel for their leisure vacation, it is significant to look at what could be done in the field to increase the awareness through the DMP.

Kotler & Keller's (2009) DMP model presented in the theoretical framework must be seen as a simplistic linear representation of the key guide. The emphasis on various steps will, therefore, vary from individual to individual. This approach is, arguably very much in line with the constructivist paradigm, which claim that no individual is alike and not taking the individual variety into consideration will be a mistake and the result will, therefore, not be accurate, as they are based on assumptions.
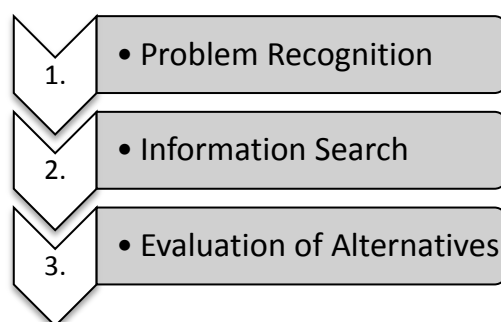
This analysis will primarily take its point of departure in Kotler & Keller's (2009) design of the decision making model. I have, furthermore, chosen to focus on the three first steps of the model; problem recognition, information search, and evaluation of alternatives. The latter two stages of the model purchase and post-purchase evaluation, I have chosen to omit from the study, as they will not provide any useful

information, which will help to provide an adequate answer to the problem statement. Furthermore, after having conducted the eight in-depth interviews, I found that the main emphasis of examined Y'ers' DMP was on two steps of the model, the information search and the evaluation of alternatives. These are, therefore, the aspects which will be emphasised the most in this study.

In everyday purchases, the DMP is not something consumers pays much attention to, but since a hotel stay can be a fairly expensive purchase, it is something the examined Y'ers think about before making the purchase. This must also be seen in the light that price is an aspect which has proven to be fairly significant the examined Y'ers in this context (Appendix II b).

4.4.1. What do the problem seem to be
The first stage in Kotler & Keller's (2009) model is problem recognition. In order to address the need of a hotel stay, it is essential to address the need for a vacation, which has also been an aspect discussed in the interviews. The need to get away is expressed in different ways by the examined Y'ers, and may not only be looked at in through the groups outlined in the section *A hotel stay: peak or basic experience;* even though the Y'ers in the different groups may regard the importance of a hotel stay similarly, individuality still appear to play a significant role. Furthermore, some of the examined Y'ers expresses a leisure vacation as necessity and highly important, whereas others merely described it as pleasant experience. A vacation is, however, always described as positive by all the examined Y'ers.

> *It is probably easier for me to tell what it means not to go. I get restless. I can feel it in my entire system if I do not get to go.* (Stine)

This examined Y'er experience a vacation as very important to her; This may be understood almost a necessity. However, even though the majority of the examined Y'ers stress leisure vacation as significant to them, they do not have as strong a need connected to going on vacation. A vacation is, moreover, always described as being positive (Appendix II b). Not all the examined Y'ers express a direct need to get away; some do, however, express a stronger need than others. The focus is, thus, on

getting away and experience new thing which is on the list of needs tied to a vacation.

> *Sort of a breathing space from your everyday, where you may have the same routines. Then you have a need to get away and experience something new.* (Kathrine)

The majority of the examined Y'ers perceive a vacation as being breathing space from the everyday life and routines, which is interesting to this assignment, as the hotel based on Quan & Wang's (2004) theory is an extension of the everyday experience. When going on leisure vacation, one of the fundamental aspects is the hotel. Even though the hotel is merely regarded as a supporting experience of the total tourism experience, it is more significant to some of the examined Y'ers than to others. The hotel can, however, not be omitted and is an important element of a vacation of any sort, even for the group of the examined Y'ers, who did not regard the hotel to have any influence of their vacation. Therefore, a hotel is an aspect cannot be omitted from the total tourist equation.

Through the interviews it was discovered, that criteria of different sorts, were relevant for the DMP. These criteria is arguably part of the problem recognition, as needs which must be solved, as well as being part of the solution to the problem, which means that they are significant to the information search, they will, therefore, be included in both parts of the model. Some of the criteria found through the interviews were similar, whereas others were fairly individual. The criteria, which recur throughout various interviews, are criteria, such as price, quality and location. Due to the pattern of these criteria discovered among the examined Y'ers these are also the criteria which will be examined. The most consistent criterion among the examined Y'ers was the notion of price. As the examined Y'ers are either students or have not been on the job-market for long, they have not had the time to build up a career or income, which could be an explanation of the recurrence of price throughout the interviews. Price is, moreover, something individual and mainly dependent on the occupation status of the interviewees; it is, thus, an aspect which appears to change with an increasing income.

Price and quality. Of cause, I am a student so I do not have an unlimited amount of money, so when I have the opportunity to go on vacation then there is also a budget, which I am willing to spend, depending on the price and where I am going, using this much money per night or in total for the stay. Then I find the best quality for the money and location as well. (Niels)

Even though the price appears to be a recurring criterion, it is an aspect especially expressive for those who are students (Appendix II b - Kathrine). However, even though the price is an aspect, which appears to matters to all of the examined Y'ers, there seems to be a tendency that the price has less influence when the income increases. One of the examined Y'ers, Stine, who is a newly educated and working psychologist states:

It can be important to me that it is close to the sight I want to see, so I do not need to drive too far. It can be important to me that it is nice and clean. It can be important to me that there is a good service, in that way that I want to be treated properly by the staff. […] So price and quality I think are two things I balance against what my needs are. And then I think that the price must be according to this. (Stine)

One could argue that income or the variation in income denotes a significant gap among the Y'ers in this context, as this group can have very little money, as students, which seems to increase if they have a job. This signifies that a set of criteria needs to be determined before the information search can begin. One of the examined Y'ers, moreover, claims that the criteria varies depending on where he is going, e.g. Aarhus, Copenhagen, London, or New York (Appendix II b - Niels).

The need of finding a hotel for their leisure vacation is usually fulfilled by means of online search engines, such as google.com, hotels.com, or booking .com, which appears to be the primary searching tool (Appendix II b). However, only one of the examined Y'ers referred to reference groups and having significance in this context and, thereby, prioritise a hotel recommended by someone she knows higher. This may be friends, family, neighbour, etc..

Depending on where you are going, well the internet is always the first step. But it would clearly if others have been there it would be number one, because a personal

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recommendation is always preferable, because when you have their word, it is okay.
(Elise)

According to theoretical knowledge learned in the section *Reference groups* this is fairly contradicting, that only one of the examined Y'ers bring up reference groups as having a significant meaning, as theory argues that the reference groups tend to be significant in public and luxury consumption, which a hotel stay arguably is. Another significant aspect to note in this field is that not one of the interviewees brings up green consumerism as being a criterion significant in the problem recognition. This may be regarded as fairly contradicting to the hypothesis that the Y'ers have a high environmental awareness.

4.4.2. How do I solve this?

The next stage of Kotler & Keller's (2009) the DMP is the information search; this is one of the most significant and time consuming stages of model for the examined Y'ers, when they are looking for hotels for their leisure vacation. The time consumed on the information search seems to vary significantly from individual to individual, as the involvement of the hotel varies. This perception is based on the finding that the examined Y'ers have different perceptions of the importance of the hotel. I have, as a result of the findings in the interviews chosen to combine the two stages, information search and evaluation of alternatives, as these two stages seem to be very closely linked and almost impossible to separate without losing contextual meaning in the connection of this study. Therefore, it is significant to study these two aspects of the model closely linked.

The examined Y'ers prefer to use the internet and websites designed for hotel searching worldwide to find the hotels for their leisure vacation. These internet search engines include hotels.com, booking.com, and google.com. Additionally, the criteria determined at the previous stage, problem recognition, become significant at this step. To some, these criteria are more explicit than to others.

> *[…] Then you find a hotel you think is best in relation to the beach for example or the city or has a swimming pool. What is cheapest or what fits into your economy. […]* (Kathrine)

This statement explicitly shows the criteria important for this particular Y'er, which also are the criteria emphasised by the majority of the Y'ers of this study. It should, however, be noticed that there is a significant difference of how long the examined Y'ers are spending on information search and the evaluation of alternatives, which are two steps which must arguably be understood as operating simultaneously in this context. It may be anything from fourteen days to even longer or less than an hour.

> *I am somebody who double and triple checks and cannot decide and going back and it can easily be 14 days from the beginning to the decision, easily longer for that matter. And I can check the same hotel five times and still think that maybe there could be something else. And this usually happens online of cause and I can easily have 20 widows open where you think, tis looks interesting and that looks interesting, and then you start reading about it and then eliminate and then you starts to read reviews, which usually happens on different pages. So it takes its time, unfortunately. I wish I was more of a spontaneous type, who could say, that looks nice, it has three-four stars and in within my price range, good, moving on. No reason to spend more time on this. But no, I am not like that. I am a perfectionist in this area. Every detail must be checked; does it have free internet and how is the transport. All those factors.* (Niels)

As mentioned the time spend on information search and evaluation of alternative, seem to vary significantly; where the examined Y'er, Niels, spend a significant amount of time searching for the 'right' hotel for his leisure vacation, others merely spend an hour or two looking for a hotel for their leisure vacation. This may be seen in the light of the groups formed in the section *A hotel stay: peak or basic experience,* where group one argue that the hotel does not play a significant role to them, the need to look for a hotel for the leisure vacation is, therefore, not an aspect which is spend much time on (Appendix II b – Christoffer; Appendix II b - Jacob). Group two and three, who both regard the hotel stay to have some influence on the total tourism experience, tend to spend maximum a couple of days the information search and evaluation (Appendix II b – Stine; Appendix II b – Kathrine; Appendix II b - Elise; Appendix II b – Morten). This signifies that the hotel merely plays a supportive role in the total tourist experience and that it is an aspect, which compared to group one, is something that is more important to them in having a posi-

tive experience of the leisure vacation. The time spent on information search and evaluation of alternatives can, moreover, be mirrored in this.

The online hotel search engines, hotels.com and booking.com are, moreover, applicable in a way that it is possible to make an explicit search based on the criteria posed as being important to the examined Y'ers, price, quality and location. These criteria are, however, features which are also determined by the websites and one could question whether the websites in fact determine the criteria, which has proven to be significant to the examined Y'ers when they search for hotels for their leisure vacation. In the same context, green consumerism was not a criterion brought up as significant by the examined Y'ers through the interviews. One could, in fact, question whether there is a connection between the possible explicit search on these webpages and the lack of interest in green hotels from the examined Y'ers. Green is not a criterion which is possible to put forward when making criteria on the hotel searching engine.

> *You cannot choose, 'show me the green hotels first'. As far as I remember it is not a function they have. And it is usually the approach. Then it is not before you actually examine the hotel's webpage, that you find the information or when you get there.*
> (Morten)

Because the examined Y'ers have different perceptions of the importance of hotels, there also appear to be various methods of evaluating the hotels. Moreover, the use of online hotel search engines plays a significant role to the information search and the evaluation of hotels; additionally, because of the recurring criteria there does, however, seem to be a similarity connected to the evaluation. Furthermore, the information search and the evaluation of alternatives do in this context occur simulta-

neously, as the examined Y'ers use the criteria to find the best possible hotel for the money they are willing to pay for the stay. One of the methods of evaluation is the pictures available on the online hotel search engines for information search as well as to compare the hotel with other hotels.

> *It is usually the internet. There, I think, I get the best overview for finding hotels and you can also compare hotels and you can easily get an overview of location and price. And often also see concrete pictures of the hotel and what it has to offer.* (Pernille)

This, furthermore, signify that the examined Y'ers may only be taking into account the information they are provided with through the online search engines they use to search for hotels. Another aspect which becomes significant in the evaluation of hotels are the quality of the hotel, which is mainly measured by the numbers of stars; hereby, it becomes possible and very concrete to compare and evaluate the hotels to each other. The latter aspect includes an indirect involvement of reference groups, namely reviews of the hotel based on previous consumers. Hereby, reference groups are not the primary choice when searching for information about hotels, but, moreover, an indirect evaluation method. Other opinions, hereby, becomes significant when in fact making the choice.

> *[…] So I usually look if 5000 people have reviewed the hoteæ and it has a high grad, then you could probably go for that. But the more concrete things people have to say, it is a little like.. So it is only if there are stories that are positive, then it carries a little more weight.* (Morten)

Even though it is not the direct reference groups, such as friend, family, etc., it is a group with whom they can associate. According to Phua (2013) this is especially significant for the Y'ers as they belong to a group for whom the general opinion is very significant. This may also be an aspect which plays a role in the context of choosing a hotel. As mentioned earlier, reference group is not the primary choice of searching tool, among the examined Y'ers, when looking for a hotel; however, as a hotel stay is still regarded as a public and luxury product, there do seem to be an aspect of reference group involved, indirect however. One could, however, wonder why the direct reference groups do not play a more dominating role in the DMP.

This is, however, not an aspect which will be examined further in this study, but could be a feature for further studying.

4.5. Benefits of a green hotel

Based on the importance of the hotel in the total tourism experience, a hotel can either be understood as utilitarian or as a more hedonic reflected experience. This is, however, very individual, which is also reflected in the study so far. In this aspect, the benefit of qualitative also becomes dominating, as contrary quantitative data it is possible to examine a contextual meaning of the Y'ers' perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels. In other words, the individual opinion becomes significant. Examining the functional and psychological advantages of choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel will help to understand the individual attitudes towards green hotels.

In this context it is significant to apply a goal based perspective, presented by Curtin (2008), which focuses on whether the examined Y'ers are pursuing normative and utilitarian or hedonic objectives. This aspect is helpful as it view hedonic consumption as person driven and the choice of hotel is very subjective and highly dependent on the involvement in the product. Furthermore, the goal based perspective focuses on the end and views the hotel stay merely as a means (Alba & Williams, 2012). Hereby, it is possible to see the actions of the examined Y'ers, as a way of expressing the values he or she regard as significant to them, functionally and psychologically. This may also help to express the connection between the examined Y'ers and green hotels. Moreover, examining the functional and psychological benefits attached to purchasing a stay at a green hotel will help to uncover the aspects important to the examined Y'ers and, thereby, how they perceive green hotels. This perception among the Y'ers is arguably subjective and will, therefore, also be treated that way.

Because of the increasingly extensive focus there has been on green consumption over the last decades, the green consumer has created a niche within the travelling market, as well as the hotel industry (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). One of the main attitudes the examined Y'ers associate with the functional benefits of green hotels may not be regarded as a benefit and is in fact the difficulty of spotting the green element, which is supposedly differentiate green hotels from non-green hotels.

[…] It is difficult to spot the green element. Is it because they cut back on the soap, is it because their power has been sustainable produced, or where is the green element. Again, it is not easy to spot, make it visible, what are they cutting back on, what is it that actually makes them green. (Christoffer)

This Y'er is questioning the functional advantage of choosing a green hotel. Others of the examined Y'ers support this position by claiming that they do not think that there are any functional benefits in choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel and functionality may not be the way of measuring the advantages connected to green hotels (Appendix II b - Elise). Another of the examined Y'ers even argues that he thought that choosing a green hotel would be a downgrading of the functional benefits of the hotel, if choosing a green hotel over a non-green alternative.

I am not sure there are any. For example, there is a hotel in Copenhagen who has a fan instead of aircondition, that is a functional downgrading of what you may be used to, as it does not have the same effect. Also it is really nice with clean towels every day and coming back and have new towels. I do not think there are any functional advantages in that. […] Functional advantages, no, I think it is all in the psychological. (Niels)

Choosing a green hotel would, therefore, for the abovementioned Y'ers not be based in the functional benefits the green hotel would be able to offer. Even though this perception is agreed on by the majority of the examined Y'ers, one of the examined Y'ers, Jacob, who does not include an environmental aspect when searching for a hotel for his leisure vacation, claim that in his mind there is one clear advantage in choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel, namely the technological experience.

I think so, when it is associated with technology and technical solutions then it is usually some of the latest technology. It is an industry very much in progress sort of, so I would think that they would have some very functional solutions. I presume that they work better than a hotel with an old air condition, which is practically falling

apart and use a lot of power. Well A++ are both more green, but I also think that because it is new technology it can do more and is less noisy and so on. (Jacob)

This aspect is very idiosyncratic and, thereby, very subjective to the study and tells something about who he is and his values and interests (Alba & Williams, 2012). One of his goals for choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel is, hereby, a technological experience associated with green hotels. This displays the experience of technology as being a functional benefit, is important to him when choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel. The majority of the Y'ers, thus, argues that the functional benefits associated with green hotels do not play a decisive factor when choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel.

> *For me it is the attitude about it and here I am returning to the feeling of doing something good, the feeling that they have done something good, they have committed themselves to something and the feeling that I am part of something bigger. Or that I am feeling really god, also psychologically by knowing that I am taking care of the environment and my child. So I am thinking that there is a lot of psychology in it. Therefore I am puzzled over the functional elements, because I am thinking if it is an advantage for me that the bed sheets are not changed that many times […]. I do not know if there are that many functional advantages. There is in the way that if they use some good materials or if they treat their facilities in a certain way that it also mean something to me. But to me there is clearly a bigger psychological effect.* (Stine)

A more distinct way of expressing values associated with green hotels, are the psychological benefits the examined Y'ers associate with green hotels. These are possibly more individual than the functional benefits, as they are not tangible; as can be seen from the quote above, it is 'about the feeling'. The difference between the functional and psychological benefits associated with green hotels is expressed fairly well by the examined Y'ers, Stine, who argue that the benefit associated with green hotel is more a psychological benefit of feeling that you are doing 'something good', rather than a functional element of the green hotel. One must, however, keep in mind that this perception is intangible and, therefore, the aspect of individuality connected to this.

Value alignment of green hotels is also an aspect which is introduced through the interviews, as a psychological benefit of green hotels. This must, moreover, also be seen as a benefit for the green hotel industry and their branding strategy, as this signifies that there is an emotional connection between the product they have to offer and the examined Y'ers.

> *Well, I would probably say it is more that. It is more a form of value alignment or what I should call it. At least there is some reason.. And that is the way it is with value-laden marketing. That it appeal to you because it is in line with your own values.* (Morten)

This perception is closely linked to Alba & Williams' (2012) approach that hedonic consumption is person driven. However, due to the difference in perceptions of the importance of a hotel on a leisure vacation among the research sample, the hedonic versus utilitarian goal of the hotel is, moreover, impossible to lump all together (Curtin, 2008). Hereby, one could claim that the value alignment also appeal differently to the various Y'ers examined in this study, as the message conveyed through purchasing a stay at a green hotel, is seeking to appeal to our own values or to the values we think are important and wish to identify with (Phua, 2013). The notion of identification through the purchase, hereby, becomes a significant aspect associated with choosing a green hotel over a non-green alternative. According to Phua (2013) humans are social animals; people are in other words heavily influenced by the perception of how one's group thinks. This is especially the case for the Y'ers, and also something experienced among the research sample, who associate green consumer behaviour with good consumer behaviour. This perception is mirrored throughout the interviews; moreover, it becomes especially clear when focusing on the psychological benefits of a green hotel. In this context conscience plays a significant factor in the psychological benefits the examined Y'ers associate with green hotels.

> *I think that you can sort of have a vacation with a better conscience. I think it has to do with the conscience primarily. You know that just because you are going on vacation, then you can still bring your green lifestyle. Also because I think that most people can imagine the hotel industry is an industry which can become a lot greener.*

Generally, that big companies can make a bigger difference than individuals can. So I definitely think that there is a psychological aspect in it. (Pernille)

Hereby, the 'self' becomes an important aspect to include and emphasis when examining the psychological benefits of purchasing a stay at a green hotel; this must be seen in relation to the notion of conscience as a primary aspect of choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel when going on leisure vacation. In modern psychology the notion of the self is closely tied in with consciousness, in the sense of being self-aware, possessing conscious control and striving towards self-realisation (Ledoux, 2006). By purchasing a stay at a green hotel over a stay at a non-green hotel, it is possible to identify with good consumer behaviour, which is associated with green consumer behaviour and, thereby, 'have a vacation with a better conscience'. The perception of conscience associated with green consumerism and green hotels reflects the socially accepted and desired social norms in the western society, which according to Phua (2013) seem to be highly significant to the Y'ers, who regard normative beliefs are important determinants of healthy behaviour (Haanpää, 2007; Derksen & Gartrell, 1993). This refers to the reference group as being important to the Y'ers and denotes a form of self-realisation. Furthermore, the notion of conscience and identification as relevant factors and psychological benefits of choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel is not a unique case among the examined Y'ers and has proven to be a significant tendency among the examined Y'ers. Furthermore, the notion of identification, the 'self' and a green hotel as a value laden product are pointed out by one of the interviewed Y'ers, Niels. He argues that there are two aspects of choosing a green hotel.

There are two angles. You can be green for yourself and you can be green because you want others to see you being green. So obviously, if you check in at the green hotel and it says that you are checking in at some hotel, world's first green hotel or something. (Niels)

This demonstrates that there is a satisfactory perception in choosing a green hotel instead of a non-green hotel, as it is perceived as the most correct thing to do in relation to the desired social environmental norm of western society. This statement indicates that being green is something, which is important to strive for in order to

create a self-image, which lives up to the social norms of western society. Moreover, this corresponds to the notion of self-realisation; this may be obtained through either being green for themselves or being green so others see them being green. Among the examined Y'ers there are those who would choose a green hotel for their own conscience primarily; there are, however, also some who would be doing it for the appearance.

> *That I think is important. Then you can always go and brag a little about it, that you chose a green hotel.* (Christoffer)

This, moreover, indicates that purchasing a stay at a green hotel may either be for themselves or based on others to see this purchase. Based on the interviews, the majority of the examined Y'ers argue that they would chose a green hotel in order to feel good about themselves (Appendix II b). There are, however, those who are more focused on what others may think them when purchasing a stay at a green hotel and the benefit of this. To purchase a stay at a green hotel to feel good about oneself and one's consumer behaviour, is, hence, closely linked to the social norms associated with environmental issues. It is, therefore, possible to argue that purchasing a stay at a green hotel over a stay at a non-green hotel is associated with what is socially accepted; as this is in accordance to this notion the social environmental norm they examined Y'ers are not doing it solely for themselves anymore. The consumer behaviour, therefore, always appears to be influenced by external factors.

Creating a positive self-image must, therefore, be seen as a significant value associated with choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel among the examined Y'ers. This is an aspect which may only be associated with psychological benefits. Moreover, choosing a green hotel does not seem to be a factor which is related to the functional benefits associated with green hotels; the majority of the examined Y'ers argued that the functional benefits of a green hotel compared to a non-green hotel was either not present or downgrading of the functional benefits of the hotel. Only one of the examined Y'ers sees a functional benefit in choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel, the technological experience; in this context, the hotel is rather perceived as a peak experience rather than a supporting experience of the total tourism experience, as elaborated in the previous section of the analysis. The psycholog-

ical benefits are the aspects that carry the most value-laden emphasis among the examined Y'ers. It is, therefore, also the psychological benefits which are important when the examined Y'ers seeks to express the values significant when choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel.

4.6. Denmark vs. abroad

The notion of globalisation is also an aspect which appears to play a significant role in the perceptions and attitudes the examined Y'ers have towards green hotels and also how these affect their hotel consumer behaviour. Since all the examined Y'ers are Danish an interesting aspect is, namely whether the attitude towards green hotels and being green is just as explicit when travelling abroad as it is when spending a leisure vacation in Denmark. This is also a topic which was brought up during the interview of the eight examined Y'ers.

> *I have an expectation that if I am travelling in Europe, then there is a bigger focus on thinking green than if I am travelling in Asia or the US for that matter, I think they are pigs to put it nicely. Yes, I have a definite perception that there is a bigger awareness about it in Europe, but that is also because I have travelled in Asia. But I cannot say what it is like if I went to Hongkong or Beijing. But my feeling in connection to having traveled in Asia and the US, is that I have more faith to the part of the world I am a part of.* (Stine)

According to this statement there is a perception of the environmental awareness being more significant in this part of the world, that this examined Y'er is a part of, Europe. This denotes that she has more faith in this part of the world when it comes to being green. This appears to be a tendency among the majority of the examined Y'ers in this study, namely that the western world have a higher focus on being environmentally friendly than in other parts of the world. This may also have something to do with the opportunities behind it. According to another of the examined Y'ers, Morten, Africa does not have the same opportunities to have an influence, as maybe the case with the western world (Appendix II b - Morten). To that extent he regards the environmental aspect to be different when going on leisure vacation in Denmark than going on a leisure vacation somewhere else.

The general perception among the examined Y'ers is that the environmental awareness is more penetrating when going on leisure vacation in Denmark than abroad. However, the fact that this study is examining eight different Y'ers, seem to matter as the reason behind this vary significantly. According to one of the examined Y'ers polluting when going on leisure vacation in Denmark opposed to abroad means that he is polluting in his own backyard, if he is not paying attention to the environment when going on vacation (Appendix II b - Christoffer).

> *I think that I am more inclined to forget the green aspect when I am abroad, a little.*
> *Definitely regarding the hotels.* (Pernille)

That the majority of the examined Y'ers are more inclined to not choose a green alternative when travelling abroad, indicates that the aspect of hedonism become more important than the normative aspect of green consumerism, which is arguably the socially accepted and desirable environmental norm within western society. According to Lindenberg & Steg (2007) the hedonic goals often overpowers the normative goals, which may lead to environmental irresponsible behaviour.[8] Whereas the hedonic goal is fairly short sighted and focuses on the 'feel better right now'-aspect, the normative goal is more focused on acting appropriately (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007). One could in this context claim that the goal of a leisure vacation when going abroad is more hedonic, than the goals attached to leisure vacation in Den-

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[8] The notion of hedonic versus normative goals will be elaborated later in the analysis.

mark. According to Quan & Wang (2004) the hotel stay must be seen as an extension of the daily experience, which through this study has been confirmed by the examined Y'ers; it can, however, be argued that the goal of the hotel stay is more hedonic abroad, as going abroad may signify a longer distance to the daily routines than is the case with a hotel stay on a leisure vacation in Denmark. Furthermore, being more conscious about the green element may, however, also have to do with trust.

> *I would probably have more faith in the initiatives here in Denmark, because we are so good at being at the forefront with these things in Denmark. So if some hotel in Bulgaria was branding itself on being green, then I would probably be pretty sceptical and not have much faith in them. So I think this is definitely connected.* (Jacob)

This demonstrates that the green way of thinking when going on vacation in Denmark is more penetrating than when going on leisure vacation abroad. The subjectivity of this study also becomes evident due to the high interest in technological solutions from this Y'er. Whereas others of the examined Y'ers have been talking about polluting in their own backyard, this statement is more interested in the notion of trust connected to technology. This, moreover, signifies that that the reasons behind choosing a green hotel on leisure vacation in Denmark and either consciously or unconsciously not choosing a green hotel on leisure vacation abroad may be different depending on the individual making the decision. However, this may be seen in connection with the recognisability of the Danish system of being green.

> *[..] I think it is easier being green in Denmark than it is abroad. But is also because we know the things here at home and how to cut back, such as recycle bottles and things you have. You know how it is all done or how it works. For example, where you get rid of plastic bottles, you do not have the same recycling system and it is difficult to understand that you should just throw it away. You do not have an opportunity to hand it in. So in that way I think it is really difficult just throwing it away. In that way I think it is much easier in Denmark, where we have a place where we can hand it in and do not have to feel bad about it.* (Elise)

The notion of the everyday experience may play a significant role in this context, as this is something the Danish Y'ers are accustomed to. Hereby, when being on lei-

sure vacation abroad the hotel experience may be further away from the everyday experiences of the examined Y'ers, as the routines and culture is different. They may, therefore, be more inclined to forget about the normative goals of a green alternative. Hedonism is, therefore, arguably a bigger part of the leisure vacation when going abroad than when staying inside the Danish boarders. This, furthermore, signifies that there is a tendency that the examined Y'ers are paying more attention to the environment and are, thereby, being more inclined to choose a green hotel when going on leisure vacation in Denmark than when going on leisure vacation abroad.

4.7. A hybrid consumer?

4.7.1. The Y'ers in the everyday life

According to Jackson (1983) and Kaman (2008) the Y'ers are more concerned with the environment than the older generations; this signifies that the Y'ers are more inclined to support new and innovative ideas and environmental protections. However, throughout the interviews of the examined Y'ers it was uncovered that there seem to be some contradiction in this assertion. Since this study is dealing with green hotels on leisure vacation, which is regarded as the everyday element and supporting experience of the total tourist experience, it is interesting to examine whether there is in fact compliance with the everyday behaviour of the eight examined Y'ers of this study. This aspect will provide a perspective on the examined Y'ers' perception and attitudes towards environmental awareness and how they choose to act on it in the everyday life. Furthermore, it will show the extent to which the Y'ers' environmental awareness is in fact influencing them in their everyday life. Green consumption is in the interview left for the interviewees to find the interpretation he or she has of the term in their everyday life. This is important as being a constructivist means that the term may perceive the term differently by the interviewee than the interviewer. By getting the interviewees' interpretation of what green consumption in their everyday means, provides the study with a multifaceted insight into the lives of the informants.

> *I try to think about it in the everyday life, but it is not something I am constantly*
> *focusing on, but still thinking about the little things you can do. E.g., save energy*

assort garbage and not buy new stuff all the time. You know, try to limit you consumption a little actually. Also a little about food and buying organic, but it is small scale and limited as it perhaps more the economy which is kind of controlling it. (Pernille)

This perception of green consumerism denotes the changing consumer perspective from microcosmic to macroscopic, which signifies that the environment is an aspect which is becoming an increasing part of the everyday life and consumption (Haanpää, 2007; McCracken, 1988). In other words, this Y'er, Pernille, is arguing that consumers have a responsibility for the outcome of the consumer society. She, moreover, recognise that this may only be possible on a small scale. As mentioned, the Y'ers are highly exposed to the opinions of others, the notion of reference groups does in the everyday context seem to be significant. According to Phua (2013), young people, including the Y'ers, are highly influenced by the social norms; hereby, one could argue that because of the change of social norms in the field of consumerism, the Y'ers' perception of consumption also changes in the same direction. This does, however, not signify that all of the examined Y'ers have the same perception of green consumerism as part of their everyday life. This perception is , moreover, supported by one of the examined Y'ers, who argues that she believe that young people are better at accepting and adapting to a new social tendency (Appendix II b - Elise). This attitude is supported by Jackson (1983) and Karman (2008) who claim that younger people are more environmentally aware than the older generations. Moreover, this perception of green consumerism in the everyday is, however, only one of the Y'ers who have chosen to engage in this form of consumerism.

It has definitely changed from that I may not have thought about it very much when I was younger. But I will say, that my parents have always cared about assorting garbage so that you could reuse it again. But still there has been more focus on it after you have become older because you see an idea in recycle and noticing products, which are 100 percent recycle. It is nice that it is pointed out so that you can choose that instead of a product, which is only waste of resources. (Elise)

According to this Y'er the notion of green consumerism is an aspect, which has become more significant with age. The perception is also supported by one of the other examined Y'ers, who claims that when she was younger she did not care about the environment, but as she has become older she has discovered a curiosity and a feeling of responsibility (Appendix II b - Stine). This, she claims, has to do with increasingly financial resources. Hereby, money also becomes an issue, which has been brought forward in the majority of the interviews for this study. Even though the examined Y'ers associate green consumption with being a good consumer, green consumerism is also associated with most often being more expensive than the non-green alternatives. According to an examined Y'ers, Niels, the Y'ers may not have the same financial opportunities of being green than older generations, which may denote the extensive focus there is on the financial perspective of green consumption among the Y'ers of this study (Appendix II b - Niels).

> *Especially because I am a student and receive SU (red: State education grant). If I had a really good job, lots of money then I do more. I hopefully would. I wish I would.* (Kathrine)

Thereby, even though the Y'ers think that green consumerism is the same as being a good consumer, there appear to be a tendency that of money having a decisive role. However, there do seem to be aspect of green consumerism, where being green actually pays off financially, which also seem to be an aspect which is taken into consideration in the everyday life of some of the examined Y'ers.

> *It is a bonus that you do not waste as much, but at the same time it also pays off economically by not more power and water, etc..* (Morten)

Here it shows that the financial aspect also plays a role in being green and that green consumption is not only understood as being expensive and, thereby, written off. Another of the examined Y'ers argues that being a green consumer and taking care of the environment is not his responsibility as a citizen, but is, moreover, the responsibility of the government; yet saving money by consuming green is an aspect he will agree on:

> *Well, if I'm thinking about saving power, then it is to save money. [...] I am primarily driven of what is cheapest. (Jacob)*

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Thereby, saving money on green consumption is not only an act committed due to a perception that green consumption is better consumption; moreover, it may be based on the fact that it in this context is cheaper, than the alternative. This matches Jacob's statement, that he would be greener if it was smarter and cheaper.

Even though the examined Y'ers all seem to have an attitude towards green consumption in their everyday life, there still seem to be a multifaceted perception of the term 'green'. One of the Y'ers explains it fairly well in the interview, by saying that green can be a lot of things.

> *Green are a lot things. I think it is a big question. Well my relation is that I do not drive car in the city, I bike to work, I start the car as little as possible, I grow what I can in the garden, I cancel the catalogues, because I think it is a waste of rainforest, I recycle my bottles, I am aware of my laundry. […]* (Stine)

Being green is an aspect which seems to have an extensive meaning in almost all peoples' lives, not only to the examined Y'ers of this study. The examined Y'ers show an insight in this perception, understood from the concrete acts in their everyday life. The conducted interviews indicate a tendency that the examined Y'ers' green consumer behaviour originates from matters of the social norms of western society. This may, however, merely be stated as a tendency, as the constructivist paradigm of the study, indicates that the underlying intentions of the examined Y'ers are different, despite seemingly similar opinions.

> *I believe that a little difference makes a big difference, if a lot of people do it. You have to start somewhere. You cannot say that everybody are environmental aware from the beginning, so we all need to participate and take part of the responsible in taking care of the environment and every little thing I do is significant, I have no doubt.* (Stine)

Despite of the different arguments and reasons given of being green in their everyday life, there seem to be an agreement among the majority of the examined Y'ers that green consumption is associated with better consumption; the economic aspect of being green do, however, play a significant role in their decision making in choos-

ing a green product over a non-green alternative. Only one of the examined Y'ers appears to differ in this matter by arguing that the responsible for the environment is not the citizens. However, there seem to be a tendency among the Y'ers that they wish to act as green consumers in their everyday lives.

4.7.2. The Y'ers on vacation

Even though the study shows that the majority of the examined Y'ers' aim to be green in their everyday life; one could question whether there is a gap between the everyday lives and when they go on leisure vacation. In other words, does going on vacation have any significance to the research sample regarding their attitude towards green consumption? Until now, the study has discovered that making an active choice proves difficult to the examined Y'ers, as there seem to be lack of information about the green alternative on the primary online hotel search engines; the main benefit of a green hotel is in the psychological aspect and is about the 'feeling good about having done something good'; furthermore, the examined Y'ers show a tendency of leaving the green attitude at home to a greater extent when going on leisure vacation abroad than when they go on leisure vacation in Denmark. The study has not yet uncovered how the research sample behave when going on vacation, taking into consideration the majority's green attitudes in their everyday lives.

One could assume that based on Quan & Wang's (2004) theoretical comprehension of a hotel being an extension of the daily experience of the tourist journey, which is mostly taken for granted, the examined Y'ers take their consumer behaviour with them when going on leisure vacation. Moreover, taking into consideration the constructivist paradigm and the findings of the study so far, it cannot be assumed that this is a uniform comprehension that can answer to all the examined Y'ers. It is, therefore, significant to examine the Y'ers as individuals and not as a group per se.

In this context it is significant to understand that the examined Y'ers' central object of going on a leisure vacation is to unwind and to relax (Appendix II b); this also fits the characterisation provided of the term in the theoretical framework (Weaver & Lawton, 2006). A leisure vacation is by the examined Y'ers also being viewed as break in the everyday life and getting away; as mentioned in the section *Hotels and*

Green Hotels, a vacation may be seen as a contrast to the everyday life. Moreover, as found earlier in this study, there seems to be a contradiction between going on leisure vacation at home and abroad. This section will, therefore, examine the perception of going on a leisure vacation and the green aspect of the everyday life is something they bring along.

> *It is something I still bring with me. I still collect bottles when I go and bring them to the local supermarket. […] And actually, when I am on vacation, I tend to buy more organic than I do at home. Then I can better afford it.* (Stine)

According to this examined Y'er, the green habits of the everyday life is an aspect she brings along when she goes on leisure vacation. Also very interesting as it appears to contradict the perceptions and attitudes of this study so far, as she tend to be more green when she goes on leisure vacation than she is at home. As elucidated in the literature review, the notion of hedonism is a very individual term (Hopkinson, et al., 1999). According to the Y'er, Stine, the motivation of being green is not being green for the environment, but because of the pleasure she finds in being green (Appendix II b - Stine). Hereby, being green is something she does for herself and finds some luxury in doing so. Therefore, the notion of being green adds pleasure to her life and, furthermore, also the experience of hedonism, which may be very unique to her. This is, however, not an aspect which is found among others of the examined Y'ers of this study and, moreover, indicates that the hedonic experience is something unique and subjective, also in this case. It is, however, not all who feels that being green is associated with luxury. The general perception among the examined Y'ers is not to bring the everyday habits with them when they go on vacation.

> *I think that you can easily be inclined to think that you want to have some extra luxury, when going on vacation, because now you have the time to relax and you want it to be an extra experience.* (Pernille)

According to the examined Y'er, Pernille, it is possible to be green in one's everyday life and slacken a little when going on vacation (Appendix II b - Pernille). She, furthermore, argues that this way of thinking can be justified because of the green habits in the everyday life at home and one is, thereby, allowed to go on vacation and

relax. It is, hereby, implied that being green is supposedly not a part of going on a leisure vacation. This signifies that to her a hedonic experience does not include being green when she goes on leisure vacation; this is also the general perception among the examined Y'ers of this study.

As mentioned in the section *The Y'ers in their everyday lives*, economy play a significant role in the examined Y'ers' choice of being green in their everyday lives; moreover, money also appear to be significant to the examined Y'ers when they choose a hotel for their leisure vacation. Additionally, a new feature occurs, which has not been introduced in the study so far; the concept of time associated with going on leisure vacation.

> *It is more time-limited, I think that the time-perspective in it, where you are willing to say, that I am allowed to feel good, I paid a lot for this.* (Niels)

It becomes clear that on leisure vacation there is, theoretically speaking a significant difference between the everyday life and habits, and the idea of going on vacation; according to the Y'er, Niels, the notion of being green when going on leisure vacation plays a less significant role, because of the limited timeframe connected to going leisure vacation. This may be seen as similar to the previous statement arguing that one is allowed to slacken on the green habits when going on vacation, as this can be justified due to the green habits present in the everyday life. This must be seen in connection with the economic aspect of the leisure vacation to the examined Y'ers. Based on the examined Y'ers' perceptions, it becomes clear that the normative perception of consumer behaviour in relation to being environmental aware, plays a minor role and the notion of the hedonic goals of a leisure vacation becomes evident (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007). Leaving their daily habits at home, moreover, seems to be the general tendency among the examined Y'ers of this study. This signifies that there is a hybridisation tendency among the majority of the examined Y'ers in the sense that the majority of the Y'ers tend to be aware of being a green consumer in their everyday lives, whereas they tend to not be green to the same extent when they go on leisure vacation. Thereby, they tend to slacken on the green consumer behaviour they would normally have in their everyday lives. Hereby, there also seem to be a disagreement in the Phua's (2013) claim that young people are

highly influenced normative beliefs that is perceived as determinants of healthy behaviour. The western social norm of green consumerism seems not to play a distinctive role in the consumer behaviour of the examined Y'ers when going on leisure vacation. As mentioned, this may be explained by the notion of hedonic goals being more significant in this context than normative goals (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007).

The notion of hybrid behaviour must according to Leppänen & Grönroos (2009) be seen as a conscious choice, because it is about being a smart consumer who actively looks for the best value for money based on personal preferences for what is important and what is not (Leppänen & Grönroos, 2009). According to Gabriel & Lang (2006) today's consumer are unpredictable and the cotemporary western consumption fragmented (Gabriel & Lang, 2006). This perception fits very well with the examined Y'ers of this study, where the majority is aiming for green consumer behaviour in their everyday lives and choose not to follow their green consumer behaviour when going on leisure vacation.

The goal based perspective applied focuses on the people behind the choices and furthermore argues that a product merely serves as means to reaching a pleasurable end (Alba & Williams, 2012). As discovered so far from this study, choosing a hotel not only serves as a place to sleep, it also reflects how idiosyncratic the examined Y'ers' pleasure can be. Hereby, the focus on the goals behind the act is more significant to understand than the acts themselves, as it makes it possible to examine why the examined Y'ers are making the decisions they do. As already mentioned and according to Lindenberg & Steg (2007) the hedonic goals often overpower normative goals, which may lead to environmentally irresponsible behaviour. The hedonic goal frame focuses on the 'to feel better right now' goal whereas, the normative goal frame focuses on notion of 'acting appropriately' (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007). According to this study the majority of the examined Y'ers' aims for green consumer

behaviour in their everyday lives, as this is what is expected from the social western environmental norms, which is typically understood as good and ethical consumer behaviour by the examined Y'ers. However, when going on leisure vacation these social norms do not seem to apply, as the concept of vacation by the examined Y'ers typically is understood as relaxing and getting away from one's daily habits. The everyday and the leisure vacation aspect seem to be divergence. Apart from the normative and hedonic goal frames Lindenberg & Steg (2007) also provides, what is arguably a more adequate goal frame; the gain goal frame, which appear to be a mix of the normative and the hedonic goal frame. The gain goal frame focuses on 'guarding and improving one's resources'; this may, moreover, be seen in relation to Leppänen & Grönroos' (2009) definition of the hybrid consumer, claiming that hybrid behaviour is a conscious choice, because the consumer is a smart consumer, who actively looks for the best value over money based on personal preferences for what is more significant to the individual. Hereby, the majority of the examined Y'ers are not fully controlled by the normative goals, but at the same time they are not completely controlled by hedonic goals either; the majority appear to act based on normative goals in their everyday lives and on hedonic goals when they go on leisure vacation. One could on the basis of this study argue that the examined Y'ers are smart and hybrid consumer, who do what they find best for them and in various situations. It, thereby, appears that they are not fully controlled by the supposedly high awareness they have gained through their upbringing, but merely sees it as a guideline for 'good consumer behaviour'.

5. Conclusion

In the last part of the study I will draw conclusions on the basis of the research undertaken. In the introduction it is implied that the analysis is conducted based on the assumption that the Y'ers have a supposedly high environmental awareness, which guides them in their consumer behaviour. As it is not possible to examine the entire Generation Y, this study must be seen as a case study and the findings may not be regarded as a general truth, but may, however, be regarded as a tendency, which could be used for further research. Throughout this study I, thereby, set out to uncover eight examined members of Generation Y's perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels when going on leisure vacation, and how these may influence their hotel consumer behaviour.

Even though a hotel stay is by all the examined Y'ers perceived as a supportive experience of the total tourist experience, the importance ascribed to the hotel on leisure vacation appears to have different meanings to the examined Y'ers. Some of the Y'er perceive the hotel stay as being without meaning for their vacation, others perceive the hotel to have some extend of influence, either in a positive or negative direction, the last group regarded the hotel's importance to be contextual. These aspects play a significant part to the analysis throughout the study.

In order to discover the perceptions and attitudes towards green hotels, making an active choice is an essential aspect. Even though the examined Y'ers are aware of the notion of green hotels, there is a mutual perception, that the hotels are not being branded enough on being green and the elements included in this perception. Even though being green is a supposedly significant focus point in the hotel industry, it is not a message, which appears to get through to the examined Y'ers, through the searching tools they primarily use for information about a hotel for their leisure vacation. When searching for hotels for a leisure vacation the criteria important to the examined Y'ers are price, quality and location. In this context, one could question whether the online hotel search engines, such as hotels.com and booking.com are in fact responsible for the lack of information provided about the green aspects of many hotels, as the examined Y'ers' criteria for hotels when going on leisure vacations are similar to the fixed searching criteria of hotels.com and booking.com. One could, therefore, argue that including a green element on the online hotel search

engines may include a more significant awareness of the environmental aspect when the examined Y'ers are going through their subjective DMP to find a hotel for their leisure vacation. In fact, the majority of the examined Y'ers may be willing to choose the green alternative if given the option.

When examining the perception of green hotels among the examined Y'ers, it becomes clear that the significant difference and benefit of choosing a green hotel over a non-green hotel is not so much in the functional aspect of what the green hotel has to offer. Only one Y'er argued that he saw green hotels as offering another functional dimension in shape of a technological experience; the rest of the examined Y'ers argued that the functional aspect of green hotels does either not contributing to the functional aspect or as being a direct downgrading of the functional dimension. However, according to the examined Y'ers the main benefit of green hotels is in the psychological aspect. Green consumption is among the examined Y'ers perceived as being a good and ethical consumer; therefore, the main psychological benefit of choosing a green hotel over a non-green alternative, is about 'feeling good about having done something good'. The 'self', however, plays a significant role in choosing a green hotel, as it may be viewed from two different sides. According to the examined Y'ers, one can either choose a green hotel in order to feel good about him-/herself or so others may see that he or she is choosing a green hotel, thereby, complying to the western social environmental norm of being green. Choosing a green hotel is to the research sample mainly about creating an environmentally friendly self-image, complying with social norms.

An interesting finding in relation to uncovering the examined Y'ers' perception and attitudes towards green hotel is the international perspective. The finding shows that physical distance of the vacation also plays role in the hotel consumer behaviour. As a hotel stay according to Quan & Wang (2004) is an extension of the everyday life of the tourist, this study found that going abroad on leisure vacation also signifies a distance to the daily habits of being green. When going on leisure vacation in Denmark the examined Y'ers are, however, more inclined to choose the green alternative; whereas when going abroad they are more inclined to forget the green habits and, thereby, not choose the green alternative. This, moreover, signifies that the goal of going on leisure vacation abroad can be characterised as a more hedonic experi-

ence than the leisure vacation in Denmark. Even though this is the general perception among the research sample, different reasons seems to be the reason why. The different perceptions also represent the constructivist paradigm of the study, which recognises the diversity of the examined Y'ers, which is very significant to this study.

In order to understand the examined Y attitude towards green hotels, the everyday consumer behaviour must been seen in relation to the Y'ers being on leisure vacation. Being a green consumer is perceived as being a 'good and ethical consumer'. This is also a reason why the majority of the examined Y'ers strive to include green habits in their everyday lives. There is, however, one of the examined Y'ers who claims that taking care of the environment is not his responsible as a citizen and that this is the responsibility of the state. This must be seen in the light that even though the examined Y'ers regard green consumption as being 'good and ethical', it is, however, also associated with being expensive. Hereby, the perception of being a green consumer in the everyday life is highly connected to the price level. The study found that price is also an aspect which plays a significant role of the consumer behaviour associated to green hotels.

However, there does seem to be differences between whether or not the examined Y'er bring the green habits of their everyday lives with them when going on vacation. One of the Y'ers states that her habits are greener when going on leisure vacation. Being green is to this Y'er, associated with luxury and, thereby, also an individual notion of hedonism. The majority of the examined Y'ers, however, leave their green everyday habits at home when going on leisure vacation. There appear to be a perception that because of the limited timeframe and the economic aspect associated with going on leisure vacation, pursuing a hedonic goal rather than the normative goal of being green is acceptable. Hereby, there appear to be an inconsistence between the examined Y'ers everyday lives and how they choose to act when going on leisure vacation. In the everyday lives the examined Y'ers choose to act in accordance with the normative goals of being a 'good and ethical' consumer, whereas when going on leisure vacation they choose to follow hedonic goals. This signifies a gain goal, as the examined Y'ers are consciously making a choice and appear to gain the most from the resources available to them. Furthermore, this finding indicates that the examined Y'ers in this context may be referred to as smart and hybrid con-

sumers, as they actively look for the best value for their money, based on personal preferences. This way of thinking makes it possible for them to act green in their everyday lives, but also to gain the most when going on leisure vacation.

Answering the problem statement, this study has found that despite the fact that the examined Y'ers have a perception and attitude towards the notion of green hotels, it is not an aspect they include when choosing a hotel for their leisure vacation. Ending up at a green hotel must rather be seen as a coincident, rather than an active choice. The individuality of the Y'ers do, moreover, appear to play a significant part in their DMP of choosing a hotel for their leisure vacation. As the research sample are all Danish, there appeared a significant tendency, that they are more inclined to choose a green alternative when going on leisure vacation in Denmark rather than abroad. Consequently, the study shows that the examined Y'ers may be regarded as smart and hybrid consumers, who are not compelled by the social environmental norms to the extent that it affects their consumer behaviour in all aspects.

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Appendix I

Interview Guide

Before the interview:

Briefing: Thank the participant for his/hers participation; define the situation for the interviewee (confidentiality, recording of the interview, approximate time of the interview); briefly explain the purpose of the interview; ask if the interviewee has any questions before beginning the interview.

General:

1) Kan du fortælle mig lidt om dig selv?

2) Prøv at sætte nogle ord på det fokus du oplever der er på grønt forbrug i dag.

3) Hvor føler du det her fokus det kommer fra? Hvad er det du føler påvirker dig i forhold til at vælge det grønne alternativ?

Tourim:

4) Prøv kort at forklare mig hvad du forbinder med at tage på ferie.

5) Hvilke elementer synes du er vigtig før en ferie bliver betragtet som en god ferie?

6) Er miljøet et aspekt du tager med i dine overvejelser når du tager på ferie/skal vælge hotel?

7) Hvad forbinder du med grønne rejser?

8) Hvad forbinder du med begrebet grønne hoteller?

Generation Y:

9) Føler du der er nogen forskel på hvordan din generation og ældre generationer opfatter miljømæssige problemstilling?

10) Oplever du der er forskelle på hvordan de takler det?

Consumerism:

11) Hvad er dit forhold til at forbruge grønt i din hverdag?

12) Hvordan vil du betegne dig selv i forhold til den grønne forbruger?

13) Hvad tiltaler dig i forhold til at vælge et grønt produkt fremfor et ikke-grønt produkt? Ville dette også gøre sig gældende ved valg af et grønt hotel?

14) Hvorfor/Hvorfor ikke?

15) Kan du sætte nogle ord på hvilke faktorer spiller ind når du vælger hotel på din ferie?

Sum up what the participant said – if there is a difference between how he/she experience green consumption in the everyday life and when going on vacation – ask.

Product involvement:

16) Hvad betyder en ferie for dig?

17) Hvor ofte tager du på ferie?

18) Hvad betyder hotellet på ferien for dig og hele din oplevelse af at være på ferie?

19) Hvor længe bruger du på at finde det rigtige hotel når du tager på ferie?

20) Hvordan finder du disse hoteller? (Søger du på nettet, har du tidligere boet der, har du fået det anbefalet af nogen)

21) Er hotellet et aspekt du føler der er essentielt for en god ferie?

22) Er der nogle personlige elementer, der spiller ind i valget af hotel?

23) Vil du sige at valget af hotel også siger noget om de personer der vælger det?

24) Hvilke værdier synes du der ligger i at vælge et grønt hotel fremfor et ikke-grønt hotel?

<u>Decision making process:</u>

25) Kan du beskrive den proces du går igennem når du vælger hotel til din ferie?

26) Er der nogle sammenhænge du er mere opmærksom på hvilke hotel du vælger end andre?

27) Hvilke elementer føler du påvirker dig i forhold til at vælge et grønt alternativ?

<u>Hedonism:</u>

28) Vil du beskrive hoteller, som har grønne rutiner som mere eller mindre attraktive? Hvorfor?

29) Hvad er de funktionelle fordele ved at vælge et grønt hotel?

30) Hvad er de psykologiske fordele ved at vælge et grønt hotel?

31)Føler du dit valg af hotel siger noget om dig som person?

<u>General and follow-up questions:</u>

32) Har det nogen indflydelse om du er i Danmark eller i udlandet?

33) Føler du at du at dine forbrugsvaner er grønnere end andre i din omgangskreds?

34) Hvad kunne motivere dig til at vælge et grønt hotel oftere?

After the interview:

Ask the participant if he/she has anything more to add. Thank the participant for his/her time. Ask if he/she has any questions about the study.

Appendix II

Appendix II a

Audio files of the interviews can be found on the enclosed CD.

Appendix II b

Transcriptions of the eight interviews of examined Y'ers conducted for the study can be found on the enclosed CD.