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*How can the UN Sustainable Development Goals help Norwegian
SMEs create awareness about sustainability to their guests/tourists?*

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Preface

This thesis is written as a graduating assignment of our bachelor degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management at the Norwegian School of Hotel Management at the University of Stavanger. The topic of our thesis was inspired by a course in our degree concerning responsible tourism and ethics. In connection to this we would like to thank our supervisor and professor Åsa Helen Grahn for introducing us to this important and urgent topic. On the basis of her enthusiastic nature and excellent teaching we eventually landed on this research question. Further, we also want to thank Åsa Helen for giving us valuable guidance throughout the process of producing this paper.

In addition, we would like to thank all the small and medium enterprises which have contributed to this paper. Without them we would not be able to present a comprehensive research and write about our chosen topic. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Kjartan Thomas Madsen, Ørjan Lunde and Kjetil Sand who took their time to proofread and give us feedback that has led us to our final product. Finally, we would like to thank all group members for a great team effort and support network these three past years; including under the process of writing this paper.

Abstract

The focus on environmental and social challenges have never been more important than what we see in the world today. There is an urgent call for strategies and measures that can tackle these challenges, and in 2015, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development developed 17 goals that could provide possible solutions to the global environmental and social challenges. The tourism and hospitality sector are mentioned in the goals as the industry contributes significantly in the creation of jobs and creating positive and negative ripple effects in societies on a global scale. Small and medium enterprises account for a large number of the tourism and hospitality businesses and are therefore crucial in the ability to reach the sustainable development goals of the United Nations Commission. The theoretical framework is the foundation of the empirical work for this thesis. The empirical research has led us to two distinguished findings. These findings are the basis for a constructed model highlighting communication tools and techniques that can be used in a business- tourism encounter.

Abbreviations

B2B - Business to business

B2C - Business to consumer

ECOSOC - Economic and Social Council

EU - European Union

GRI - Global Reporting Initiatives

IBM - International Business Machines

ICSB - International Council of Small Business

NAV - Ny Arbeids- og Velferdsetaten

NHH - Norges Handelshøyskole

NHO - Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon

OECD - The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

RQ - Research Question

SDG - Sustainable Development Goals

SME - Small Medium Enterprises

SSB - Statistisk Sentralbyrå

UN - United Nations

UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNWTO - United Nations World Tourism Organization

WBCSD - World Business Council for Sustainable Development

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1. Introduction

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

- Margaret Mead, Anthropologist (Keys, 1982, p. 79)

1.1 An Agenda to Transform the World; an Agenda for All

Never before has there been a bigger focus on social and environmental challenges than what we see in the world today. As the world we live in faces multiple pressing challenges such as: climate change, inequality, warfare, conflict, and hunger (Brown, 2020), there has been an urgent call for action by all countries, both developed and developing countries, to come together in a global partnership to end poverty and tackle climate change (United Nations, n.d.*a*). The former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated that *"We are the first generation that can put an end to poverty and we are the last generation that can put an end to climate change"* (United Nations, 2015). In 2015 the United Nations developed an agenda to account for, and take into consideration, all aspects of pressing challenges and provide possible solutions. The agenda is named "Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and is adopted by all 193 UN member states. It consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); which again comprise 169 targets, and further 231 unique indicators (United Nations, n.d.*b*). The SDGs are built upon decades of work performed by the UN and their partners, and they are assembled to give a clear and precise vision of what needs to be done to improve life above and below water. The means of implementation speaks to a Global Partnership, and it will facilitate global engagement by bringing together governments, civil society, businesses and local communities to work together to reach common goals (United Nations, n.d.*c*). Measures and indicators for follow-up and review have been established to ensure that the goals are being followed, and no one is left behind (United Nations, n.d.*c*)

Businesses play an important role in sustainable development, both locally and globally. Businesses impact, directly or indirectly, all parts of the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, social benefits, and environmental inclusion. Ignacio Álvaro, a specialist in Management and Leadership of Public Organizations and Development at the Comillas Potifical University claims that "*The business sector has become one of the most important means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals"* (Sustainable Development Goals Fund, 2017). The Business and Sustainable Development Commission was launched in 2016 and aimed to map the economic gain that could be available to business if the SDGs were to be achieved. By examining four economic systems (food & agriculture, cities, energy & materials, health & well-being) the commission concluded that the Global Sustainable Development Goals opens for 12 trillion US Dollars. This gives an estimate of an economic gain 2-3 times higher than we see today (Business and sustainable Development Commission, 2017). This goes to show that businesses need the global SDGs as well as the SDGs need businesses to achieve the targeted transformation stated in the agenda.

Today, over 99% of all companies in Europe are small- or medium enterprises (SME) (Gouardères, 2021). In Norway, also 99% of all enterprises are considered small or medium in size (Næringslivets hovedorganisasjon, n.d.). This means that SMEs constitute almost all the business sector and it is therefore crucial to engage them in the work of the global goals. The second most growing sector in Norway today, and the fastest growing sector in the world is the tourism industry (Regjeringen, 2019). In the Transformative Agenda, the industry of tourism has been mentioned explicitly because of its close link to the three dimensions and its rapid growth.

Going forward, this research paper will discuss the use of SDGs in small and medium sized tourism and hospitality businesses and how the SDGs can facilitate in conveying sustainability to tourists and guests in a Norwegian context. To be able to discuss the mentioned topics above a research question (RQ) is needed.

1.2 Research Questions and Delimitations

The tourism sector is considered an important factor in achieving the SDGs. With a United Nations specialized agency called World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), responsible for the promotion of the 2030 Agenda, the world of tourism obviously carries a big responsibility to work towards the goals (UNWTO, n.d.). Despite the relevance of SDG work in the tourism industry, many businesses may not be aware of their responsibility in working towards the SDGs - especially concerning the small and medium enterprises. Many businesses are in some way contributing and promoting green initiatives and enhancing social security. However, many of these may not be aware of the Sustainable Development Goals.

To investigate how small and medium businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry approach the work towards sustainable development, this paper will undergo a qualitative study of five tourism SMEs in one specific region in Norway, Rogaland. The research paper examines SMEs awareness and usage of the SDGs, and how they convey their knowledge and work to their customers. The research question we seek to answer is:

How can the UN Sustainable Development Goals help Norwegian SMEs create awareness about sustainability to their guests/tourists?

Furthermore, we find it useful to limitate subjects and concepts presented in the paper. This next section will therefore define and address the SDGs and SMEs. We will limit the concepts to the requirements of this paper as the subjects presented have a magnitude of reach which would be necessary to narrow down.

1.2.1 Delimitations of the SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals, also called the SDGs, is the United Nations Agenda to transform the world. The goals focus on three dimensions: social, economic and environmental (United Nations, n.d.*c*). Tourism is in many countries a vital source of income, an important influence in local cultures and societies and affect the environment through consumption, transportation, etc. Goals 8, 12 and 14 are highlighted with direct links to sustainable tourism operations. However, the targets assigned to sustainable tourism entails

the creation of jobs and promotion of local culture and local products (United Nations, n.d.*d*). These are all mainly concentrated around the dimension of economics. Yet, in Norway, our social infrastructures and governmental regulations enable the opportunities for economic growth and social satisfaction. On the other hand, Norway's arguably biggest challenge is to protect the environment and create clean energy and sustainable cities (Bjørnestad, 2021). The three dimensions are independent and their relationship determines if something can be called sustainable or not. This paper will focus on the environmental aspect of the SDGs, and how sustainable consumption and production is conveyed to tourists.

1.2.2 Delimitations of the SMEs

The focus of this paper is aimed towards small and medium-sized enterprises. Although the meaning lies in the name, there are different interpretations of how to categorize businesses as SME´s around the world. The European Union (EU) sets various criterias; That the company has no more than 250 employees, that the annual turnover does not exceed 50 million euros or that the annual balance sheet does not exceed 43 million euros (European Commission, n.d). The Norwegian organization Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon (NHO) describes that in Norway it is more usual to categorize SMEs as a company with less than 100 employees (Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon, n.d). Norwegian SMEs account for more than 99% of all the companies in the country, and that they contribute to approximately half of the annual value creation, giving the country more than 700 billion NOK. These numbers indicate the relevance of SMEs in value creation for Norway. Their internal organizational structure differs from larger firms who in contrast have a considerably higher amount of resources to manage the work towards sustainability. We therefore consider SMEs to be highly relevant for the shift towards sustainable development because of their big market share and their lack of resources to contribute.

 1.2.3 Delimitations of Sustainability

Sustainability means: "to be able to sustain". According to Cambridge Dictionary the word means to: "cause or allow something to continue for a period of time" or "to keep alive"

(Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). The word sustainability calls for a wider understanding with working on three interdependent aspects: social, economic, and environmental. It is also important to address that the word has been polluted in newer times with companies, governments and individuals calling minor adjustments undertaken by the parties as sustainable options, when they really are minor "improvements" that in the end is not going to reach the global goals and turn the trend of climate change (Samuelsen, 2020). In this paper we want to concretize that the word "sustainability" will be used with respect for its initial meaning when it was introduced, and it will be used within the frameworks of the idea of the three interconnected dimensions.

1.3 Background

The SDGs were introduced in 2015 at the UN Sustainable Development Summit. The plan is adopted by all UNs 193 member states, including the Norwegian Government (United Nations, n.d.*a*). This enquires full commitment to the cause by all stakeholders. This means that businesses operating in Member States are committed to work towards the content of the global goals. To better understand how Norwegian SMEs can utilize the SDGs we firstly need to look at the relevance of the tourism industry, and SMEs in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and thereafter put it in the context of the Norwegian market.

1.3.1 The Relevance of the Tourism Industry in the SDG Work

Sustainable tourism is firmly positioned in the 2030 agenda, but to achieve this agenda it takes a clear implementation framework, satisfactory financing and investment in technology, infrastructure and human resources. The tourism sector has significant potential when it comes to contributing both directly and indirectly, and this to all of the 17 SDGs. But there are some goals in particular that can be targeted by the tourism sector - this is goals 8, 12 and 14. These goals target sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production and the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources (UNWTO, n.d.).

Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth

Tourism is one of the biggest driving forces of global economic growth and the tourism industry provides 1 in 11 jobs worldwide. The tourism sector is included in the target 8.9 which states: "By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products" (UNWTO, n.d.).

Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production

The tourism sector can play a significant role in the global shift towards sustainability. This means that the sector needs to adapt sustainable consumption and production practices. Target 12.b comments that the sector needs to "Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products" (UNWTO, n.d.).

Goal 14: Life below water

The coastal and maritime segment is a big part of the tourism sector. The development in the tourism industry must include the Integrated Coastal Zone Management, this way we help to conserve and preserve fragile marine ecosystems (UNWTO, n.d.).

1.3.2 The Context of the SDGs in SMEs

Small and medium sized enterprises is not only an important aspect of the economy in Norway, in Europe we see a similar number as the European Commission states that more than 99% of the companies in Europe are SMEs (as cited in Verboven & Vanherck, 2016, p 167). They also state that SMEs generate almost 58% of the value added in Europe. If we look even further, the World Bank writes that SMEs represent 90% of businesses and more than 59% of employment worldwide (The World Bank, n.d). These numbers indicate that small and medium sized enterprises actually contribute significantly to the economy both in Europe and worldwide. Taking the environment into consideration, these enterprises will also play a role when it comes to pollution, and despite their size, they do have a similar responsibility as larger corporations to act sustainable. It is difficult to find literature on how much pollution SMEs generate, however research indicates that SMEs account for 60-70% of the industrial pollution in Europe (Miller, as cited in OECD, 2018, p. 16).With these numbers

in mind we can see how important it is to get the SME´s on board to sustainable development. The book *Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and the Environment* describes SME`s as an under-researched sector, where there is little knowledge about its attitudes and control over its environmental impacts. They go on to write "Its unquantified contribution to pollution load and unknown management of its environmental impacts means it has a critical role to play in contributing to sustainable development." (Hillary, 2000, p.12). Verboven & Vanherck argue in their paper "The contrast between the importance of SME`s for the European economy and the lack of attention for SME`s and concrete information about SDG implementation, however, is noteworthy." (Verboven & Vanherck, 2016, p.167). The article also describes the SDG Compass which is a tool to help translate the Sustainable Development Goals into what they call management objectives. However, this is a tool that is created for large corporations, and does not take small and medium sized corporations into consideration (Verboven & Vanherch, 2016, p.165). In addition Verboven & Vanherck writes about how SME`s often have limited resources and knowledge in implementing the SDGs; that they need guidance on strategies and writes that "...SME`s need a holistic, generic and user-friendly management approach that allows them to plan, implement and test their sustainability initiatives across the value chain" (Verboven and Vanherck, 2016, p.167). Several other researchers have also highlighted the important role of SME`s in reaching the Sustainable Development goals, the president of ECOSOC, Oh Joon stated in the ICSB 2016 Conference that "We must strengthen our support for SME`s particularly in the developing world, but at the same time be careful not to cut corners in pursuit of profit and growth." (Joon, 2018, p 7.). Smith, Kemp & Duff describes the relationship between SMEs and the environment:

"Although SME`s make an important contribution to the economy both nationally and locally, they fall behind their larger counterparts in terms of environmental activity. However, SMEs are both concerned about the environment and are willing to address their environmental responsibilities " (Merritt, Smith and Kemp, as cited in Smith, Kemp & Duff, 2000, p. 34).

Research provides us with the evidence that SME´s are in fact an important part of business worldwide and a sector that we need to prioritize to become more sustainable. They account

for such a large percentage of enterprises, but at the same time account for a large percentage of value creation. We can see that they are important in the economy and the social-perspective, and we need to get them more on board in the environmental aspect as an entire sector and not just individual SME´s in developed countries.

1.3.3 Sustainable Development and the Three Pillars; The Norwegian Context

The famous definition of sustainable development states: "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UNESCO, n.d.). The intention of sustainable development is building and reaching the goal of a sustainable planet. However, it is important to underline that the word *sustainability* is understood and mentioned as a long-term goal, which is crucial to improve our way of living in order to create a healthy planet. *Sustainable development*, on the other hand, are the specific processes and pathways undergone to reach the result of a sustainable world. Sustainable development is therefore the means, whilst sustainability is the objective.

The world faces many challenges based on geography, demography, political views, etc. Challenges in one place are often connected and impact each other. To address the root of the problems we need to locate these interdependencies. This will again provide us with a long-term solution (UNESCO, n.d.). Sustainable development is viewed through the lens of three core elements: social inclusion, economic growth, and environmental protection (UN System Staff College, 2017). They all interconnect and it is therefore crucial that we view them as such. This means that economic growth may not be possible to solve before social aspects are met. Sustainable development would for example not be possible if the planet has no more resources left. In the end, they all depend upon each other.

It is also suggested that there are linkages between the three existing pillars. The social and economic pillars shall together be equitable. The economic and the environment should be viable, and environmental and social should be bearable. Bearable meaning that it can sustain the same amount of consumption level over a long period of time. (Barile, Quattrociocchi, Calaberese & Iandolo, 2018, p. 2).
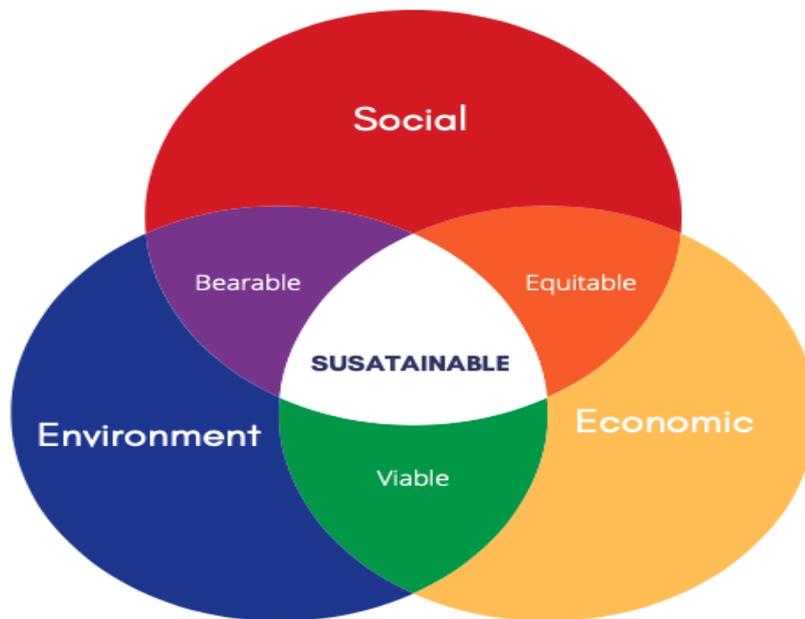
Figure 1. The three dimensions of sustainable development

Norway, like most countries, has a long way to go to become sustainable. Arguably, Norway's most pressing issue to date is cleaning up their act. In fact, Norway had the second highest individual consumption rate in 2017 per capita in Europe (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2019). According to statistics by Earth Overshoot Day, by April the 12th 2021 Norway would already consume their part of resources (Earth Overshoot Day, n.d.). Put into context, this equals a consumer use of 3,4 planets in total, if all countries were to consume the same amount as an individual in Norway in a year (NRK, n.d.). Another survey based upon data from organisations such as The World Bank Group, OECD and UNESCO Institute of Statistics, investigated 7 main areas to determine the best quality of life in a country. Depending on factors such as stability (economic and political stability; balanced budget, the unemployment rate etc), rights (legal system and civil rights), safety, health services, climate (weather) and costs and expenses, the countries scored between 1-100 per area. Norway is featured in at number 15, having scored over 90 on all areas except climate, costs and expenses (WoldData, 2020). This survey suggests that Norway meets the requirements for a safe society with well-integrated health infrastructure and equally a stable wealth. The Norwegian government also launched a working-plan for the EU partnership 2020. The plan

opens by highlighting Norway's most pressing issues, which includes giving its full support to green initiatives and promising to be an active and relevant partner to the EU in this work. It also articulates that with green measures comes more jobs, and they want to help Norwegian businesses to seize these opportunities (Regjeringen, 2021).

All aspects of the three pillars are important. Though, Norway's most pressing issue is argued to be climate change and diminishing consumption rates. To become sustainable, Norway needs to work on the environmental pillar to become bearable and viable in the future.

2. Literature Review and Theory

In this chapter we will investigate literature reviews and theories that will help us answer our research question. We will present and reflect on literature relevant to the SDGs and SMEs. We review the literature to establish what the previous research can do for our paper and what our research can add to the existing knowledge. Based on an extensive search of literature connected to the SDGs and SMEs, these topics have been reviewed: 1) green marketing, 2) interpretation, 3) nudging, 4) brand awareness, and 5) consumer behaviour. Within the topic of consumer behaviour, we present Grunert´s theory of six barriers to sustainable consumption.

2.1 Previous literature

This section will present and review existing literature relevant to the SDGs; preferable in the combination of a SME context. It is important to reflect on already known research to establish what this thesis can add to already existing literature. This section will provide a review on three published research articles that are thought to be relevant and add insight to our own research paper.

Verboven and Vanherck propose that there are no existing tools linking SDGs with SMEs in the current market. The SDG Compass developed by the UN, GRI and WBCSD focuses

primarily on large corporations and neglects the SMEs that eventually account for the majority of all businesses today. The article utilizes the Sustatool to help SMEs implement sustainability in daily practices (Verboven & Vanherch, 2016, p. 165). It focuses on *how* to implement sustainable measures in a small and medium enterprise by integrating an existing tool on the market.

The second existing literature investigates *small hotels and responsible tourism practice: hoteliers' perspectives,* and is set out to understand responsible tourism among owners of small budget hotels in the Johannesburg region, South Africa. This article, contrary to the first, aims at the tourism and hospitality sector. The article concluded that though small hotel owners have a form of appreciation of responsible tourism this does not necessarily translate to implementing responsible measures in their business strategy. It suggests a "Best Responsible Tourism Model" which can help small hotels implement responsible measures in their daily practises, and furthermore suggests a development of a "responsible tourism app" that can help small hotels communicate with other stakeholders to implement responsible practises (Musavengane, 2019, p. 786). The third literature article also discusses hotels but introduces the idea of involving the guest in green practises regardless of the guest's wittingness in doing so or not. Croonen examines hotels in Amsterdam; how they take part in sustainable practises and how they engage guests to participate in this work (Croonen, 2020, p.7). The article provides two different strategies for implementing sustainability successfully in a hotel; (1) convince the gustes to voluntarily take part in green practices and (2) implement green practises without the guest noticing (Croonen, 2020, p. 7).

There is little to no research to be found on the topic of SMEs communication of SDG initiatives and measures in already existing literature. In general, few researchers have looked into the link between the global goals and SMEs. Our research paper will introduce a new perspective of the use of SDGs in SMEs in a Norwegian context. It will recommend further research into areas of communication in a B2C relationship, and presents a more holistic view on how to reach the SDGs by engaging - not only public sectors and businesses in SDG work - but also consumers to participate in the process. The next sub-chapter will provide an overview over relevant theoretical frameworks.

2.2 Green Marketing

The concept of green marketing has been defined by several researchers in various academics, however it seems to be a broad term that is hard to find a universal definition on. Historically green marketing has emerged from the increased interest in environmental issues and sustainable development, which have led to a new way of approaching marketing (Meler & Ham, 2012, p. 136). Previously there have been three key elements of marketing; consumer orientation, integration of marketing principles for the entire business and profit maximization (Meler & Ham, 2012, p. 136). However, as the interest for the environment and sustainability increased, a fourth and new element were implemented. In a marketing perspective, the companies should not just focus on the customer's wants and needs, but also the interests of the society and the environment. This led to a fourth element, a social marketing concept that has been described as social well-being. Green marketing can thus be seen as a way of marketing oneself and one's product with the intention of meeting the customers' wants, both in terms of quality and price, while at the same time taking the environment into consideration. A common used definition is given by Polonsky 1994

"Green or Environmental Marketing consists of all activities designed to generate and facilitate any exchanges intended to satisfy human needs or wants, such that the satisfaction of these needs and wants occurs, with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment" (Polonsky, as cited in Polonsky, 1994, 7th paragraph under subchapter "What is green marketing").

The authors Jothikumar and Baby explain green marketing in a broader way "Green marketing is the selling of products that are implicit to be environmentally secure. It includes an extensive variety of activities, including product modification, changes to the production process, sustainable packaging, as well as modifying advertising." (Jothikumar & Baby, 2021, p. 26). This definition takes into consideration that it is a physical product that is being exchanged, however in a tourism and hospitality context the product might as well be a form of service. The characteristics of such services are that they often are produced at the same time as they are consumed, the service will never be exactly the same and it cannot be stored for later (Berry; Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, as cited in Punitha & Rasdi, 2013, p. 85).

The task for a company aiming at providing services to customers is to implement green practices into their daily operation. Croonen describes green marketing in a hotel context as containing efficient creation, communication and delivery of green value through among other things products of service offering (Croonen, 2020, p. 23). This can be done by highlighting the hotel's green attributes, such as the hotel rooms, green award or different organic ingredients in their food selection on for example the internet (Chen, 2014, p. 917). This is something that is related to the entire tourism and hospitality industry, as the internet is the most common context in which green marketing appears (Croonen, 2020, p. 23). The platform can be used to communicate information about green measures conducted by the hotel, to current or previous customers but also to potential new customers (Croonen, 2020, p. 23). Research has even provided evidence that 90% of tourists like to stay in hotels that give attention to the environment (Punitha & Rasdi, 2013, p. 86). If, on the other hand, the customer finds out that this is fake news, the trust of the organization will be affected (Bhaskaran, Polonsky, Cary & Fernandez, 2006, p. 688). Unfortunately, it has happened that a product or a company has through their advertisement called themselves green or sustainable, when this is not necessarily the case. This concept can be referred to as *green washing*. Richard Dahl explains the concept of green washing as advertisement and labels that promise more environmental benefit than what they can deliver (Dahl, 2010, p. 247). According to a survey conducted on green marketing in Australia almost all of the products that claimed to be green or labeled environmentally friendly were to some extent responsible for greenwashing (Tiwari, Tripathi, Srivastava & Yadav, 2011, p. 21). Even so, there exists some measures businesses and tourists can look out for to avoid green washing. In Norway it is emphasized that one can trust companies that use established labeling or certification in their business strategy (Miljøfyrtårn, 2021). For a company to be able to utilize such certification they have to perform various measures and requirements, as well as pay a given number depending on the size of the company and what type of certification it is. This scheme will help to weed out companies that have deliberately or undeliberately taken a part of greenwashing (Miljøfyrtårn, 2021).

2.2.1 Benefits of Green Marketing

Although green marketing can result in some negative impacts such as green washing, the concept can also contribute to positive impacts and benefits for both the company itself and the environment. An article written by Vilkaite-Vaitone & Skackauskiene points out that the benefits of green marketing can be categorized in three different aspects; social, environmental and commercial benefits (Vilkaite-Vaitone & Skackauskiene, 2019, p. 59). They also argue that the majority of previous research is done on the commercial benefits, rather than environmental and social (Vilkaite-Vaitone & Skackauskiene, 2019, p. 60). Figure below shows benefits highlighted in the article by Vilkaite-Vaitone & Skackauskiene. (2019, p. 59-60).
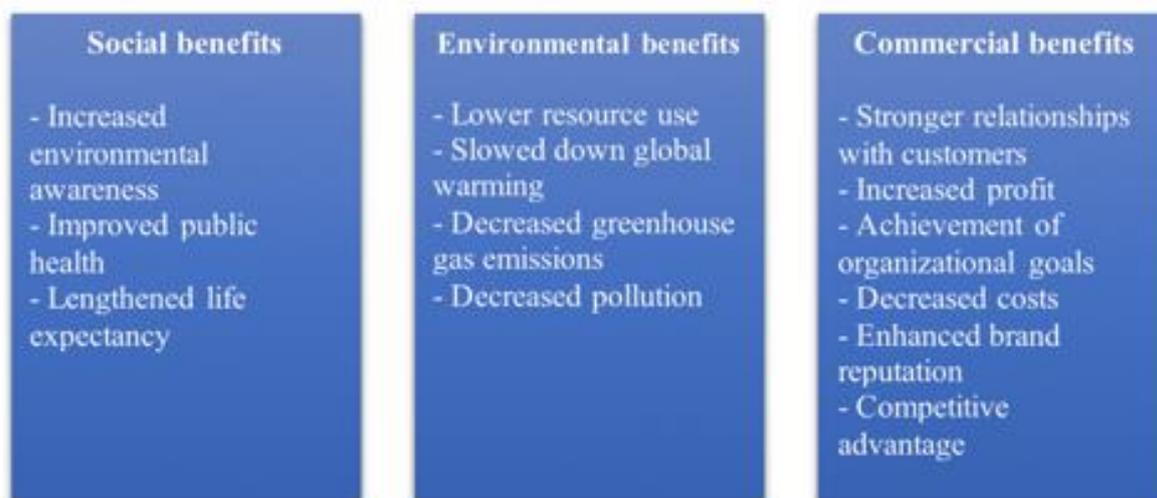
Figure 2. Three dimensions of benefits from green marketing

2.2.1.1 Social Benefits

The article describes the social benefits as the area in which there exists the least amount of research, however this is also an important aspect to consider. As the figure suggests, an impact of green marketing is increased environmental awareness, which can be connected to education and learning about sustainability. The more companies that use green marketing in their strategy, the more people will generate information and knowledge about the concept. Vilkaite-Vaitone & Skackauskiene also highlights improved public health, which is connected to the consumption of particular green products, that ultimately will lead to lengthened life expectancy (Vilkaite-Vaitone & Skackauskiene, 2019, p. 59-60).

2.2.1.2 Environmental Benefits

The environment can be seen as the most important part of green marketing. Companies can create products, strategies and activities to show that they take responsibility for their environmental impacts. Still, as the article points out, environmental outcomes have not received as much attention as commercial benefits (Vilkaite-Vaitone & Skackauskiene, 2019, p. 59-60). This may indicate that companies care more about creating competitive advantages from green marketing, rather than actually caring for the environment. The benefits highlighted in the article is lower resource use, slowed down global warming, decreased greenhouse gas emissions and decreased pollution (Vilkaite-Vaitone & Skackauskiene, 2019, p. 59-60).

2.2.1.3 Commercial Benefits

Commercial benefits are as mentioned the aspect that has been researched the most, and perhaps because of the competitive advantage green marketing can give to a company. The article emphasizes several aspects, for example stronger relationships with customers. This finding is supported in the article *To green or Not to green: The influence of Green Marketing on Consumer Behaviour in the Hotel Industry*, which have found that green marketing actions incentive direct conative behavior that will make customers recommend hotel to friends and family, and indirectly gain trust and loyalty (Mele, Gomez & Garay, 2019, p.12). Another interesting benefit is increased profit and decreased costs. The authors Mishra and Sharma argue that an advantage of green marketing is that it ensures sustained long-term growth and profitability, and that it saves money in the long run, even though initially it costs more money (Mishra & Sharma, 2014, p. 81). At the same time a study conducted by Aysel Boztepe found that people are willing to pay more for environmental-friendly products (Boztepe, 2012, p. 17).

Another benefit is enhancement of brand reputation. In the consumer market, there has been a shift towards a more sustainable behavior which has led to an increasing demand for greener products and production (Miljøfyrtårn, 2021). Companies aim to achieve the requirements and needs the consumer may have, which also means that they need to focus on sustainability and a greener business. Companies that meet these requirements will be able to establish a good reputation that can benefit the customers, the company and especially the environment

(Eneizan, 2016, p. 3). According to Eneizan in the same article "Businesses have increasingly focused on sustainability, given the capacity of sustainable practices to strengthen reputation, boost employee morale, realize cost savings, and benefit the environment" (Wanjohi, Gachoka, Kihoro & Ogutu, as cited in Eneizan, 2016, p. 6). A good reputation may also make a company attractive in the job market, and potentially attract employees with the same sustainable values. All of these different benefits can contribute to strengthening a company's competitive advantage. A company can take advantage of the sustainable strategy they are implementing, Dinuk Arseculeratne & Rashad Yazdanifard argue that if this is done right the benefits can contribute to "...reduction in cost of production, fostering positive image about brands and the business as a whole, positioning of product in the mind of customer would make it a top of the mind recall product and increased consumer satisfaction" (Arseculeratne & Yazdanifard, 2014, p. 136).

2.3 Interpretation

The most common definition of interpretation is that of Tilden "Interpretation is an educational activity aimed at revealing meanings and relationships to people about places they visit and things they see and do there" (Tilden, as cited in Ham & Weiler, 2012, p. 36). As the definition suggests, interpretation is an approach of communication that goes further than just facts and figures, but extends to ideas and relationships (Roberts, Mearns & Edwards, 2015, p. 2). Newsome, Moore and Dowlling describes that the importance of interpretation is embraced through communicating ideas and enriching visitor experience (Newsome, Moore & Dowlling, 2002, p. 239). With regard to communication the authors Dumbraveanu, Craciun & Tudoricu has explained that in the process of interpretation three components are necessary; The adresser, the message to interpret and the recipient (Dumbraveanu, Craciun & Tudoricu, 2016, p. 60). By looking at interpretation in a tourism context, the message will vary according to the situation, whether it is a waiter at a restaurant, a guide at a museum or in some kind of attraction. In the original work of Tilden (1957), he describes interpretation in tourism as techniques that need to be designed to accommodate visitor needs, attitudes and expectations. At the same time, he believes it is important to relate

to the person being conveyed by interpretation, as it is much more effective (Tilden, as cited in, Newsome et al., 2002, p. 240).

The book *The Routledge Handbook of Tourism and Sustainability* has by looking at previous literature on interpretation of tourism practice categorized the functions of interpretation in four main areas; interpretation as (1) visitor management, (2) visitor experience, (3) tool for tourism development and (4) encouraging more sustainable lifestyles (Moscardo, 2015, p. 295).

The function that will be the main focus in the next section of this paper is interpretation in the tourism context as a tool for encouraging more sustainable lifestyles. This can be seen as a response to those who argue that tourism contributes to negative impacts, and becomes a part in the marketing process of encouraging more responsible and sustainable actions (Moscardo, 2015, p. 299). Although interpretation can be useful in encouraging values, knowledge and attitudes to sustainable lifestyle, this task is easier said than done. Previous research has suggested that people who usually engage in sustainable actions at home, do not see the same need to take part in such activities while they are on holiday (Moscardo, 2015. P. 299)(Barr & Prillwitz 2012, p. 798).

Nevertheless, there are theories based on the implementation of interpretation to create awareness and increased sustainable behavior. An article written by Ballantyne, Packer & Falck are examining the visitor's memories of their experience and how they can contribute to long term change in conservation behavior (Ballantyne, Packer & Falck, 2011, p. 1243). Although this article is aimed toward wildlife tourism, one can draw similarities to interpretation in a general tourism context. The authors have discovered four levels of visitor response (Ballantyne, Packer & Falck, 2011, p. 1247). (1) Sensory impressions, which is a process of what the visitor saw or heard in relation to the experience, and the participants reported memories that mainly focused on the sensory impression. Secondly, the participant also reported (2) emotional affinity. This response involves the feeling of the experience, and what emotional response the visitors experienced. Continually, the participants responded with a reflective response (3). This response did not just include thinking and reflecting about the experience, but simultaneously showed a further cognitive process. This cognitive process

would act as a link between seeing and acting. Furthermore, the article presents a fourth response, the behavioral response (4). The participants report that they have taken specific actions about wildlife tourism experience, in addition they have seen the importance for such actions. The finding reported that 7% of the participants actually reported new environmental behavior as a result of the visit, while 11% reported heightened awareness of the need for this kind of action (Ballantyne, Packer & Falck, 2011, p. 1249).

2.4 Nudging

Nudging can be "...understood as a soft push toward behavior that is judged to be desirable by individuals or policy makers but that has not been fully adopted." (Thaler and Sunstein, as cited in Kurz, 2018, p. 318). Soft pushes can be seen as small changes in a decision environment, but that the set of alternatives and the financial aspect remain the same (Thaler and Sunstein, as cited in Kurz, 2018, p. 318). Nudging consists of different methods you can perform to integrate such small pushes toward behavior "change" (Lehner, Mont & Heiskanen, 2016, p. 168) describe that nudge tools include default, warning of various kinds, change the layout and features of different environments, remind people of their alternatives and pay attention to social norms and framing to change behavior. However, there are two main criteria that must be met for nudging to be an effective tool (Filimonau, Lemmer, Marshall & Bejjani, as cited in Croonen, 2020, p. 24). The first criteria is that the concept of nudging is voluntary and that people should have the opportunity to freely choose to participate. The second criteria highlight that nudging should not require any extra effort for the decision maker and it should not create too many distractions.

Nudging in the context of our thesis can be seen as a tool that is attractive because of the generally low cost in implementing the concept and the potential to promote economic or other goals (Sunstein, 2014, p. 584). The concept is also relatively easy to implement as it does not require a lot of resources. Maud Croonen argues that nudging fits well in the hotel industry as it does not focus on increasing a person's knowledge or change the person's values, but rather enable certain behaviors and decisions (Croonen, 2020, p. 24) We can draw parallel to the example given by Sunstein, "Informing people about their electricity use, and

how it compares to that of their neighbors, can produce the same increases in conservation as a significant spike in the cost of electricity" (Sunstein, 2014, p. 584). This is something that can be transferred in relation to sustainable consumption. A study conducted by Verena Kurz found that nudging could be a useful tool to reduce meat consumption. The experience was based on changing the menu order and enhancing visibility of vegetarian dishes, which found that the change led to vegetarian dishes being sold by on average six percent more (Kurz, 2018, p. 317). Several other researchers have found the similar relation between nudging and sustainable consumption (Sunstein, 2014) (Loschelder, Siepelmeyer, Fisher & Rubel, 2018).

2.5 Brand Awareness

Keller coins that brand awareness refers to whether consumers can recall or recognize a brand, or simply whether or not consumers know about a brand. It is the brand name that provides the memory in the consumers mind, this leads to the consumers linking the related brand knowledge to the brand name, and this leads to brand equity (as cited in Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012, p. 92-99).

It is known that brand awareness has a significant impact on the consumers decision-making. This means that consumers usually choose brands they have a relation to as a decision factor. In other words, a known brand is more often chosen by the consumers and this leads to that brand performing better in the marketplace than the smaller, lesser-known brands (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012, p. 92-99).

Earlier research has found that a consumer with a positive perception of a brand is most likely to develop a greater willingness to purchase a product and seek out products from that brand in stores (Chan, Ng & Luke; Fleck, Korchia & Roy; Luijten & Reijnders; Tantiseneepong, Gorton &White; Thwaites, Lowe, Monkhouse & Barnes, as cited in Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015, p. 277). Brand association is the information on what the customer thinks about the brand, either positive or negative. The higher the brand associations in the product, the more the consumer will remember them and develop a loyalty towards the brand. Brand loyalty is related to whether a consumer's repetitive buying behavior is done with a positive motive. As

mentioned before, brand awareness is how the consumers associate the brand with a particular product. The consumers receive brand awareness by being exposed to the brand via marketing channels like television or social media platforms (Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015, p. 276-292).

The result of the research showed which factors influenced brand equity among young consumers. Results showed that among young consumers, brand awareness had the strongest effect. This means that marketers and practitioners should put more effort and emphasis on brand awareness, and this by using new technology such as social media platforms like Instagram, Snapchat and Youtube (Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015, p. 276-292).

2.6 Consumer Behaviour

A research by Strong suggests that "The role of consumerism in achieving long-term sustainability lies in the fundamental decision-making power of the individual consumer" (Strong, 1997, p. 33). Although businesses have been appointed responsible to promote and act sustainable, consumers also play an important role in choosing the sustainable options over non-sustainable products and services. The businesses have a responsibility in providing/supply the market with sustainable options, whilst the consumer has the responsibility in obtaining/demand such.

Assuming that tourists and consumers in general are interested in sustainable development and reaching the global goals; it is important that the sustainable products are communicated to the tourist/consumer as well. In many instances, a sustainable supply chain, production or service provision is not visible for the consumer as is. This calls for a communication between the supplier and the consumer, where the sustainable aspect is communicated to the consumer. This is why we have different labels and certificates to expose the sustainable products and services from the non-sustainable options (Grunert, 2011, p. 207).

However, we cannot assume that all tourists/consumers are interested in sustainable products and services or learning about measures to gain and obtain a sustainable development. The

question is (1) whether tourists are genuinely interested in sustainability, and consequently (2) how they can be educated to seek sustainable options and support sustainable development. Firstly, there have been many consumer researches and individual surveys undergone to try and establish whether tourists/consumers do consider sustainability an important issue. One survey done by International Business Machines (IBM) looked into consumer habits and found that 40% of the respondents shop with their values in mind, and additionally 13% buys from brands that they find trustworthy and fit their lifestyle. Subsequently, 57% of the recipients were willing to change their habits to reduce negative environmental impact, and over 70% say they find it important that brands offer "clean" products. 71% of the people surveyed that thought traceability is very important said they were willing to pay a premium for brands that provide it (Haller, Lee & Cheung, 2020, p. 3). Downscaling to a Norwegian context, Orkla, a Norwegian conglomerate, operating in the Nordic countries and the Baltics issued a survey on consumers' view of sustainability (Gram & Bryhn, 2019). The results show that Norwegian recipients show a higher interest in information about recycling waste, nutritional content, and climate interference expressed on the product packaging, than our neighbouring countries. The survey also reveals that 1 in 3 people trust that smaller companies are more climate-friendly than their larger counterparts. The research also concludes that Orkla and other companies have an important job ahead in making it easier for people to make conscious choices. And that through offering sustainable products and contributing with good information they want to show that they take sustainability seriously (Orkla, n.d.). The area of sustainability, and consumers' interest in sustainability is widely researched, and there are many different opinions and results on the area. However, many conclude that there is a significant interest in sustainability from the consumers perspective and that they are putting more pressure on businesses to provide sustainable options (Butler, 2018)(Johannessen, 2020)(Rosmarin, 2020).

2.6.1 Grunert's Theory of Six Barriers to Sustainable Consumption

Grunert's in 2011 articulate in his paper about *Sustainability in the Food Sector: A Consumer Behaviour Perspective*:

"In order for an eco-label to lead to more sustainable behaviour, it is not enough that consumers are exposed to it in the shop. Consumers need to perceive them, need to attach some form of understanding to them, and make inferences on what they mean for themselves. They need to enter their decision-making, where the label information may be traded off against other criteria. (…) The whole process will be affected by whether consumers are aware of the label and its meaning and find it credible, and whether their basically positive attitude to sustainability translates into motivation to choose sustainably at the time of purchase." (Grunert, 2011, p. 208).

He exposes six barriers to sustainable consumer food choice. He explains a hierarchy of effects and potential barriers the consumer goes through prior to purchasing a product or a service. The theme of the barriers is to stress the importance of communicating sustainability, and the paper concludes that eco-labelling is one effective way to do this. Grunert also emphasizes that eco-labelling is not enough; the consumers need to understand the label and they must find it credible. "Consumers must find the label a reliable help in making sustainable choices and they may need to be reminded of their good intentions when doing their shopping (…)" (Grunert, 2011, p. 217).
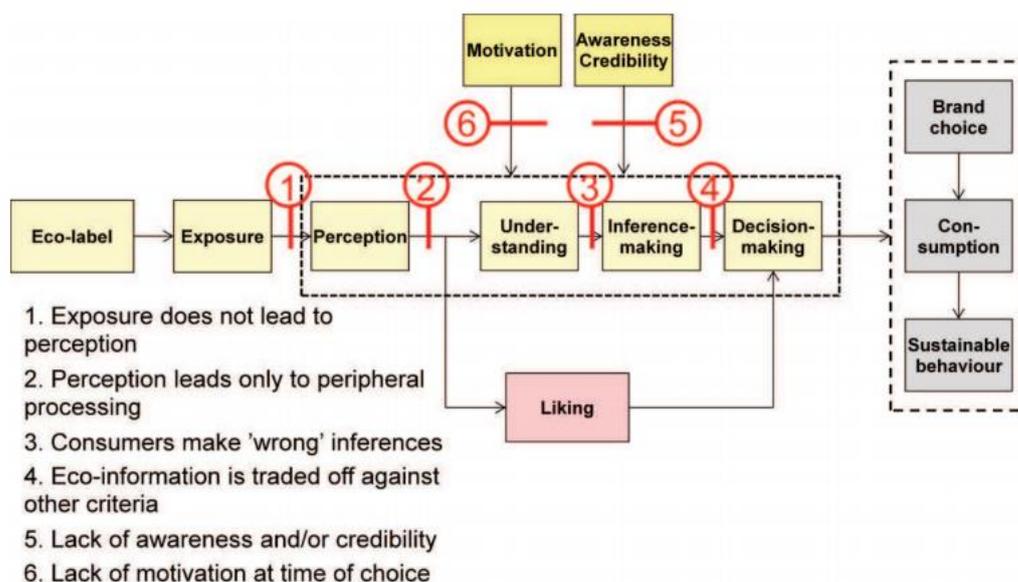

Figure 3. Hierarchy of effect of eco-labels and potential barriers

The model shows a typical map from when a consumer is exposed to an eco-label, and all the stages leading up to the purchase and choosing the sustainable option. It is then outlined six

barriers that can prevent the consumer from making the sustainable choice. These are crucial factors for businesses to remark when communicating sustainable options to the customer.

1. <u>Exposure does not lead to perception:</u> The label or the message is not noticed by the consumer. Most likely because we act out of habits (Grunert, 2011, p. 209-210).

2. <u>Perception leads only to peripheral processing:</u> Lack of knowledge may lead the consumer to be less motivated to process the message, this is called peripheral processing. Central processing is the opposite. Peripheral processing may alter the decision-making process, though without understanding the label or message. A research by Juhl and Poulsen (cited in Grunert) showed that in some cases being aware of a label made them use it 29% in their decision-making progress, while only 9% used in their decision-making progress when they had no awareness of the label (Grunert, 2011, p. 212).

3. <u>Consumers make "wrong" inferences:</u> If the consumer sees the label and subsequently tries to understand it but draws the wrong conclusion about the product. This can lead to disappointment and avoidance of the label in future purchases if the product is discovered to have been projected with traits it does not hold (Grunert, 2011, p. 214).

4. <u>Eco-information is traded off against other criteria:</u> different criteria (like function, looks, comfort, etc) compete in the mind of the consumer, and are traded-off against each other.

5. <u>Lack of awareness and/or credibility:</u> there is a dissonant between attitude and behaviour. The consumer may have a positive attitude towards the label or message but is not willing to act on it (attitude-behaviour gap) (Grunert, 2011, p. 215).

6. <u>Lack of motivation at time of choice:</u> consumers may have positive attitudes towards sustainability, though the attitude is not strong enough to be accessible in memory to be remembered at the time of a choice. It is dormant ("forgotten") at the time of the behaviour. Only when the attitude is "active" at the time of purchase will it influence behaviour (Grunert, 2011, p. 216-217).

This model is used when understanding the consumer's road to purchasing "food", and all the barriers to look out for as a provider. Though, the model can also be transferred and used in

other contexts as it essentially locates the crucial stages of a consumer's decision-making process and suggests how to work around these.

3.0 Methodology

The methodology chapter outlines how we obtain knowledge to ensure that our research results are scientific and valid. Firstly, research design is presented describing how we will go on further in the chapter. Secondly, we briefly touch into our choice of method, qualitative design. Thirdly, secondary data and qualitative techniques are outlined, and we reflect on how we use these in our research. Fourth, we describe our sample selection, the assessment of the sample, and the sample size. Fifthly, the data collection and the implementation of the interview, where we shed light on the semi-structured interviews. Finally, the quality of the research is presented as we take a closer look at our research reliability and validity, in addition to describing some of our research ethical guidelines.

3.1 Research Design

When answering our research question, it is paramount to acquire the fitting research design which will provide the guidelines for choice of method, selection process and data collection. The choice of research design depends on multiple criteria, Gripsrud, Olsson and Silkoset points at the extent of knowledge from previous research on the topic and the ambition of analysing and explaining correlations within the research question (Gripsrud, Olsson & Silkoset, 2017, p. 47). Our research question seeks to answer *how the UN Sustainable development goals can help Norwegian SMEs to create awareness about sustainability to their guests.* The question reveals a "how" wording indicating that the question is trying to explain causes for the research variables (Grenness, 1997, p. 79). A "how" question can imply that the research design is exploratory. Other typical signs for an explorative design is lack of prior literature on the specific topic; making it hard to correctly formulate the research question (Grenness, 1997, p. 79).

Considering our aim for this paper we want to reveal and understand an uncharted territory of literature, explaining how one variable can affect and make use of another. To investigate this we find the exploratory design to be the most relevant as it often makes use of techniques to understand and interpret a phenomenon, and to gain a better insight into the topic.

3.2 Choice of Method

Qualitative research is found to be a fitting strategy for this paper as it is used frequently in exploratory research where they aim to describe a subject, rather than measuring it (Survey Monkey, n.d) Similarly qualitative research is considered to be a fitting strategy as it dives into the subject to find information about humans' thoughts, attitudes and motivations (Survey Monkey, n.d). By using qualitative research as a strategy, we can gain in-depth knowledge about SMEs attitudes towards the global goals, and gain insight into how they can be implemented in the SMEs overall strategy.

3.3 Secondary Data and Qualitative Techniques

When dealing with an explorative research design there are two methods of gathering data. The first one is called desktop data analysis and the other is qualitative techniques.

3.3.1 Desktop Analysis and Secondary Data

Desktop analysis, much like secondary data collection, is often used to gather information concerning a subject in a cheap and quick manner. We will be using the terminology secondary data for this paper going forward. Secondary data is used to assemble prior research on the given topic and can contribute to give a first insight and give ideas to one's own data collection and analysis (Gripsrud et al, 2017, p. 49).

In this paper, secondary data collection has been used to gather information about elements and subject matters that are covered in the introduction and theory section of the paper. As the design of the research question is explorative, finding valid and relevant primary data is intricate to the border of unattainable (Gripsrud et al, 2017, p. 69). In gathering this data we are therefore questioned with the relevance of the provided information for our paper topic. To make sure that the sources and data we use from secondary authors are indeed credible and reliable, the collected information (1) is no more than ten years of age and (2) taken from secondary sources that are trustworthy. The secondary data is based primarily on bibliographic databases, including scientific articles and e-books. Other sources would be formal websites with logistics, such as NHH, NHO and SSB. We have also decided to include some numbers from institutional organizations and research institutes. In the use of big data from online websites we investigated their relevance and reliability and concluded if their validity or not; and naturally only included those we found valid.

3.3.2 Qualitative Techniques

There are several different qualitative techniques related to explorative design. One of the most common is in-depth interviews. These are conducted when the main goal is to investigate personal experience, opinions, and such (Gripsrud et al, 2017, p. 115). In-depth interviews demand time and resources as the standardised interview lapse is around one hour. As well as the amount of work that goes into decoding and analysing the answers is significant. Positives with conducting an in-depth interview is the amount of influence the mediator has on the "conversation" and the quantity and elaboration of information the interview object can give (Gripsrud et al, 2017, p. 116).

Creating an in-depth interview, it is important to determine how the interview shall be conducted. In a qualitative method typically there are *degrees of control* over the interview. For example, in an unstructured interview the interview is thoroughly planned with little control over the respondent's answers. In a semi-structured interview, the degree of control is somewhat larger. The interviewers develop an interview guide where questions and themes of interest are covered. In this type of interview, the interviewer can also ask follow-up

questions to the respondents answer if found useful (Grenness, 1997, p. 142). In other words, there is less structure in the direction of the interview, but it can also create new insightful information that would otherwise be neglected in an unstructured interview.

For our paper, we constructed an interview guide with informatics about the participants' anonymity and their general rights when contributing with information to our paper. The interview objects were given this guide a few days before the interview was to take place. Furthermore, the directory included the themes that would be covered in the interview question, without exposing the specific questions. We concluded that this was the right approach, as we seek spontaneous and honest answers, which could be compromised if the respondent knew of the questions beforehand.

The actual questions presented were prepared to cover the topics suitable to answer the research question for this paper. The initial questions were modified with the help of and also subsequently approved by our supervisor. In the construction of the questionnaire, we started off with more generalised questions with the intention of warming-up the interview object and getting them to feel more comfortable. From here, the questions got more specific or "sensitive" to the topic of the paper. In some cases, we saw it useful to ask follow-up questions as the questionnaire was prepared in a way that made this necessary and possible.

3.4 The Sample Selection

In a qualitative research study, the aim is to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon, and therefore it is important to identify participants that can contribute with relevant knowledge about the topic that is being explored. (Gripsrud, et al., 2017, p. 165). The process of selecting participants for a research project heavily depends on the research question, and how it is formulated. In our research project we have applied what can be categorized as an assessment sample in a non-probability sample (Gripsrud, et al., 2017, p. 176). By applying a non-probability sample, the participants are strategically selected by us rather than through a random selection process, meaning that the research project cannot be seen as representative for the entire population. However, this does not mean that our project

is without relevance, it merely means that we cannot generalize the rest of the population on the basis of our findings (Grenness, 1997, p. 134).

3.4.1 Assessment Sample

In our research project we used an assessment sample- strategy, as our research project seeks to answer a specific problem between two variables. In an assessment sample it is the researchers job to decide the elements and criteria that should be represented (Gripsrud, et al., 2017, p.176). We have identified four elements we considered necessary to be fulfilled when choosing which companies that could participate in our project. Our research question is aimed towards small and medium sized enterprises and how they can use the UN Sustainable Development goals to create awareness about sustainability to their guests. The first criterion is based on the angle of the research question which seeks to answer how the *SME`s* can create awareness, which indicates that we need the element of SME`s to be represented in our sample. Our second criterion is that we want participants that to some degree is conveying sustainability on their platforms (website, social media etc.). This criterion is included because we want to get in touch with people who to a certain extent have prior knowledge of sustainability. At the same time we felt that the thesis is aimed at disseminating sustainability, and a company that does not disseminate sustainability would not be relevant in our research project. The third criterion is that the participant is a supplier in the tourism sector. Our thesis is respectively in the subject tourism and hotel management, and the participants should have a connection in the tourism industry. Our fourth criterion is the location of the participants. We decided to narrow down the country of Norway, to one specific region; Rogaland. The region offers a diverse tourism- and hospitality industry with beautiful destinations and nature. The criterion was also influenced because of the convenience for us researchers as we are studying in the region ourselves.

The purpose of a research project is to say something about the population the sample is collected from (Gripsrud et al., 2017, p. 177). However, as we have mentioned our project is a non-probability sample where the research cannot be seen as representative for the entire population. We would like to argue that in light of our sample process, the result can to some degree be categorized as representative. Based on our criteria we contacted dozens of

companies that were suitable for our research. Unfortunately, due to the current situation many of the companies were closed or had a minimum number of employees and resources available to contribute to our research project. With this in mind, our sample process was to a certain extent random as we only arranged interviews with the companies that accepted our request.

3.4.2 Sample Size

The current pandemic did affect our selected elements, as we realized that the criteria to convey sustainability on their platform fell through due to low amount of positive responses. As a result, the companies that are included in the research project were not the companies that conveyed sustainability in the highest degree on their platforms, however we believe that this provided our research with a new set of perspectives. We wanted to interview five different companies on the basis of our available time and resources, and found this amount to be fitting to get a better in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Simultaneously, we found this number to give us representatives from several parts of the tourism- and hospitality industry. This resulted in the research project having five participants.

3.5 Data Collection

The interviews were semi-structured, and this type of interviews are used extensively in research. Semi-structured interviews are focused on the responses from the participants. The framework of the interviews gives flexibility to the responses, this is because the participants are free to respond openly to the questions and the researcher, us, can probe these responses by asking follow-up questions. When using semi-structured interviews, the participants are asked the same question in the same order, this makes that the data collected are comparable (McIntosh & Morse, 2015, p. 1-2).

As mentioned, we chose to interview 5 different companies in the hospitality industry from Rogaland. The method we chose to work with was qualitative research, and this led us to conduct in-depth interviews. We conducted the interviews by visiting the different companies or having the interview done over the phone. Two of the companies had the time to meet with us face-to-face and we had the chance to both talk with them and get a feeling of the company by them giving us a tour of their facilities. Two of the other companies did not have the chance to meet with us but were very eager to have the interview over the phone. The last company could not meet us nor had the chance to have the interview over the phone because of Covid-19, but they still wanted to contribute and were kind enough to answer the questions over email. We chose to have one interviewer and two to take notes. By having the same person interview all the companies we were able to get as similar responses as possible. The interviewer was prepared and knew the questions by heart and were able to come up with follow-up questions quickly, this helped with getting thorough responses. After each interview the notes were compared to make sure we got all the information.

3.6 Research Quality

In any research project it is important to be critical when it comes to the quality of the research. One way to measure the quality is to look at the degree of reliability and validity of the research. The terms say something about how well one measures one or more phenomena (Gripsrud et al., 2017, p. 61), and if this measurement is trustworthy. In the following section, we have taken a closer look at our research reliability and validity, in addition described some of our research ethical guidelines.

3.6.1 Reliability

Reliability in research means whether the measures will lead to the results being performed so exact that they are trustworthy (Grenness, 1997, p. 113). It is about the confidence that is given an instrument of measurement. To accurately capture information that is offered by the

informants it is important to have an effective means of recording data from the interview. There are many ways to record the information given in interviews, some record every interview with consent (Mosely, 2013, p. 24). To make our research more reliable we chose to have one interviewer and two secretaries. It was the same interviewer for each interview and the same ones that wrote down the responses. This made sure that we got as similar responses as possible and the same understanding of the responses. After each interview we sat down to compare notes and to talk over how we understood the responses.

The relationship between reliability and validity is that the result of the research can both be reliable and valid, but a result can be reliable but not valid, but never valid without being reliable (Grenness, 1997, p. 114).

3.6.2 Validity

Validity can be described as how well you manage to measure what you actually intended to investigate (Gripsrud et al., 2017, p. 61). The book *Introduction to the theory of science* explains validity as a concept that seeks to answer what the research is trying to reveal, and whether it provided information about what was formulated in the problem statement (Grenness, 1997, p. 110). Validity can be divided into two categories; external and internal validity. External validity is used to measure if the research can be generalized for the rest of the population and not only the samples conducted (Dahlum, 2021).We have already discussed whether our research can be representative for the rest of the population in section 3.4.1 assessment sample.

Internal validity can be described as to what extent the result is valid in relation to the phenomenon you are investigating. Our research is based on a theoretical framework that forms the basis of our interview guide and the question we asked the five SMEs. We constructed the question we used in our interviews according to our research question, with the intentions to get responses we could use when answering our research question. At the same time, the RQ has a common thread throughout the thesis, as it intends to link both the theoretical and the empirical research. Even so, in qualitative research it can be difficult to

measure the degree of validity as the study is based on empirical answers that can be troublesome to checking the reliability of the facts presented (Grenness, 1997, p. 111). But at the same time, our research project can be seen in light of an explorative design with the aim of investigating a phenomenon. We believe this design is fitting as we saw it necessary to use empirical data in order to answer the research question.

3.6.3 Research Ethics

In research as well as in everyday life human's dignity, rights and welfare shall be protected (World Health Organization, n.d.). To make sure that this practice is being observed the Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics have written some guidelines to protect the participants in research. Some important aspects of the guidelines that include participant rights relevant to our paper are: voluntary informed consent, confidentiality (anonymity) and good reproduction practice (Torp, 2019).

Voluntary informed consent means that the participant should be properly informed about their part in the research and for them to give their consent about potential consequences of participation (Torp, 2019). To make sure that these rights were upheld, we issued out a protocol which included information such as the background for the paper, who is responsible, the volunteering nature of the participation, the participants privacy and storage of personal information, as well as what will happen to the information at the end of the research project. The protocol also stated that they could at any time withdraw from the project without any consequences. At the end of the protocol the overall theme of the questions the participant would be answering was established to make sure that they felt prepared for the interview. **See appendix A.**

Confidentiality or anonymity speaks of the rights to personal information being treated confidentially (Torp, 2019). We decided to treat the participant anonymous as their identity would not be important for our paper. The participants were informed about their anonymity before the scheduled interview, and all use of information taken from the interviews will be reproduced in an anonymous way in the actual research paper.

Good reproduction practice means that the participant has the right to be referred to in a correct manner (Torp, 2019). We used notes as our way of gathering information during the interview, and we only wrote word for word what was expressed by the participant, not adding additional information at any point.

4.0 Analysis

In this section we will be analyzing our qualitative research findings. We interviewed five businesses in the tourism sector located in Rogaland. Four out of five of our businesses worked with sustainability in their business strategy, while one worked with the promotion and communication of the importance of sustainable development. Having one business purely focused on communicating the SDGs was quite insightful, as it gave a new dimension to our understanding of business operations. The analysis covers 4 main points: 1) the businesses knowledge of the SDGs, 2) sustainability in the businesses, 3) communication of sustainability, and 4) challenges and responsibility. In the end we also present other findings in the interview that are relevant to our research question.

4.1 Knowledge of the SDGs

To understand and establish what the tourism and hospitality businesses knew about the topic of our paper, the UN's sustainable development goals, we decided to ask them questions related to the latter. In the interview, all five businesses express a basic understanding of what the SDGs are and their aim. Three of the five specifically link them to climate and environment, as well as economic differences and social issues. Five out of five believe the global goals to be relevant to their work. For some of the businesses, however, they have not thought about their specific relevance to the work they do. When being asked about the relevance of the SDGs to their work, many realise that they are indeed working with the goals directly through different measures and strategies. One business even stating that they "use

them in interaction with guests". Another business, B3, explains that they work with them indirectly through their certification and recycling plan.

One business (B1) we interviewed showed a higher understanding of the sustainable development goals. They knew about the 17 goals and the sub-goals and explained that they have looked into all the goals and found the one that is more relevant to them as a business.

The reason behind their wider understanding of the SDGs can be explained or have a relation to the fact that they had participated in the sustainable conference for a couple of years. Here they looked closer into how the SDGs could be implemented and used in the business model, and focused less on the theory behind them: "We do not need to read all of the SDGs to understand that we need them, but I understand that the UN have embodied them [...] They made them from a basis of common understanding for all".

While some of the businesses were enthusiastic about their environmental strategies, B5 was happy to talk about their use of local providers of food, furnishing and partnering with local dry cleaners. They also spoke about their initiative to create a good working-atmosphere and offer training to their staff. "We feel like we do a lot of things right. We strive to build something that will last". Others refer to certifications as a way of working towards sustainability. B3 mentioned that through their work towards getting certified they need to work on changing behaviour. Some examples being simple "improvements" like changing out their lightbulbs for more sustainable versions.

As covered in the introduction to this research paper, the word sustainability has arguably been polluted and especially in the world of business. However, we believe these small adjustments suggested by the interview participants to be with good intentions. We did not expect the businesses to go sustainable in the scale of the word, therefore we use improvement or adjustment as a better way of understanding and explaining their initiatives.

Business 2 is focusing on communicating climate changes to their guests/tourists. They expressed that they did not work exceedingly to change their internal behaviour towards sustainability, but they feel a need and a responsibility to communicate global issues to their

visitors. They explicitly used the SDGs when conveying climate change and environmental issues. Also, arguing that all the goals are important for sustainable growth, they said that they were focusing more specifically on just the environment aspect of the global goals. B2 is also promoting climate on their official webpage.

Lastly, B4 added that they work extensively with the SDGs, so much so that they do not even think about it in their daily routines. There might be more to say, but they might do more than they even manage to remember or think about. From the interview material it is easy to disclose that many of the companies feel like they are making a difference in their efforts towards sustainable development, but they all conclude that they can also be doing more. Going forward some of them express a wish to work even harder towards a more sustainable business model, with one even saying that: 'I think we all know that the change towards sustainability is here to stay, and I definitely believe that the businesses which are able to implement sustainable solutions are going to be victorious, and have a real head start on all others'.

4.2 Sustainability in the Business Strategy

The representatives from the businesses were asked what they think about when they hear and what they associate with the word sustainability? Some of them answered as a business and some of them answered as individuals. The businesses had different points of view on the word sustainability. Most of the businesses said that they thought about climate and environment and some of them said that they connected the word with the SDGs and the work that they promote. One of the businesses said something that really resonated with us, they said that sustainability is some form of golden life rule about how we should act and behave on earth. One of the businesses also talked about how we need to stop focusing on getting richer, because the richer we get the greedier we become, and we cannot be greedy with the world's resources. All the businesses talked about how sustainability talks about more than just the environment, it talks about both the climate but also about the people on the planet and their well-being.

The businesses were also asked about how they feel that their thoughts on sustainability is reflected in their business values. In addition to this they were asked if they work with sustainability and if they have any specific measures or if they have any certifications. B1 is all about being self-sufficient, they reuse water, and they also use solar panels. It is not clear if this really reflects the business' values. B2 wants to contribute with knowledge about the SDGs. They say that their operations are not climate focused, but they are hoping to become an Eco-lighthouse, which is a climate certification in Norway. For B3 it is important to be an Eco-lighthouse. They also focus on the local community and they want to help the weaker ones in the community. They have a partnership with NAV to be able to help with that. They have also taken an interest in maintaining a clean shoreline. B4 is also an Eco-lighthouse, and they keep track of their emission, consumption, waste, and social values. They are also focused on leaving the least possible imprint. B5 has not linked their values to sustainability but they are focused on having respect for their employees, guests, and the building.

4.3 Communication of Sustainability Towards Guests

The businesses were asked about how they could promote and raise awareness around the SGDs for their guests. B1 did not consider promoting the SDGs at this point in their work. They are announcing a new object and want to start highlighting more green measures when they start marketing the new object. B2 is the business with the biggest focus on promotion and raising awareness. B3 is as B1 not big on promoting sustainability. They want to work on their storytelling from a sustainable point of view as they mean that the business has a responsibility to promote sustainable work. B3 also wants to encourage the local community and other communities to take part in one or several clean-up operations. B4 has used signage around their property to show and tell the guest how they can contribute to a more sustainable stay. This signage can be everything from spending less resources to not throwing trash in nature. B4 also wants to look into better ways to promote sustainability to save them from using an unnecessary amount of paper.

Before the interviews we investigated the business's websites and social media platforms, we wanted to see if they used these platforms to promote sustainability. B1 focuses more on

direct communication, and they do not have a big social media presence but want to become better at this. They have won a climate award and saw that this created a lot of buzz. B2 is as B1 not very present on social media. They as a business are not present, but they see engagement from their employees. B3 is, as the other businesses, not very present on social media but they want to show what they do, especially that they have a climate certification. B4 uses social media to market that they are an Eco-lighthouse and to inform and show the work they do on their property. B5 has not seen a reason to promote sustainability through social media as it is not in their values, even quoting: "Walk the talk - we do not feel the need to promote that we operate sustainably to our guests". However, investigating their Social Medias they promote their use of local suppliers which is a form of being sustainable. After the interview all the businesses said that they want to be more present on social media and promote sustainable work through these platforms, but the current situation shows no action. We hope they will keep their word.

4.4 Challenges and Responsibility

The interview objects were asked to explain what *they feel is the most challenging when working with sustainability in their business*. The businesses articulated various issues when working with sustainable development, with none of them expressing to struggle with the same issues.

Two of the organisations mentioned politics as one aspect of sustainable development they found extra onerous. One of the businesses felt that financial means are important for small businesses that are trying to take a greener approach to their business model, however, experience little or no help from the government in doing so. They believed that it should be easier to gain and secure financial means for businesses that request and fulfil the requirements to do so. Another of the businesses, B2, pointed out the role the Norwegian politicians have when setting an example. The participant explained that they believe the politicians to mirror the people. "The politicians need to be supported in the tough choices towards sustainability – it has to come from the people".

For many of the small and medium businesses the amount of available resources is a pressing issue. Many SMEs struggle with scarce resources and a lack of infrastructure to implement sustainable strategies. Business 3 discusses the issues of convincing their owners of the value of sustainable implementations and justify the resource usage that goes towards sustainable "adjustments" and making them understand that it will reward them in the future. The same business also stated that there are too many directions within sustainable development and that it is necessary to narrow them down, and "pick your battles". They believe that biting over too much will take them nowhere, and only picking a few things will get them further. For SMEs resources do not come in bucket loads, and it can therefore be hard to see the value changing model structures if they do not see the profit of this straight away.

Not only is it important that the guests are exposed to a transparent supply chain and sustainable options are communicated to them, it is important for a business to business (B2B) relationship as well. If a restaurant can promote sustainable food options, they need to know that their partners and suppliers are holding up certain standards of production that pleases them. B4: "We need to investigate our suppliers and product providers to make sure we select the right product; having the environment in mind". The same business also reveals their biggest challenge to be information collection of their consumption usage. All of the businesses struggle with different aspects of working with sustainability, either if the challenge lies outside of the business itself (government) or within the structure of the business.

None of the SMEs we spoke to mentioned the guests as a hurdle for working with sustainable development. As one of the businesses mentioned, the politicians are no braver than their people. The businesses got questioned about *who wears the responsibility of acting sustainably and who should be the one to set the standards; the organisations or the customers*. Surprisingly, they all believe themselves as a business to be the responsible party. Three out of five explained that everyone has the responsibility. Nevertheless, they all believe that the standard is set by the supplier side. Though, many of the businesses add that influence from the public is important, and that the consumer has a responsibility to demand change. B4 commented that: "We as an organisation have the responsibility to act sustainable and have this in focus; with this comes the responsibility to facilitate the guests to make smarter choices that are sustainable". Another business put forward the idea that:

"I do not think we need 100 [people], maybe just 10 for the businesses to see that the guests do care. If the customers ask questions then I believe that the businesses would want to get better at it and promote it more".

The five SMEs take on the responsibility to act sustainable, and put forward choices that will help the customers make the "right" choices. Still, many believe, even though they do not state it as a challenge. B5 in contrast stated that: "The consumers ask questions and care about their local products". Though, many of the businesses conclude that demands need to be set by the consumers going forward, as well.

4.5 Other Findings

In addition to our structured question, there was a common topic that constantly emerged during our interviews. Three out of five respondents reported that they had experienced a difference in behaviour and attitudes towards sustainability based on age, or more explicitly; generations. The common precipitation among the participants was that younger generations generally sat higher demand for sustainability measures than the older generations. We would like to point out that during the interviews, it was clarified that the term younger generations was used to describe people who can be categorized as generation z and younger. One respondent stated «The younger generation have much more demands regarding sustainability, and they have higher expectations regarding our food and the service to a greater extent than perhaps 1 or 2 generations above them". Our findings from the interview also suggest that the majority of people demanding more options in relation to vegan/vegetarian and local food is in general the younger generation.

Although this was a topic we initially did not intend to investigate, we found this information to be interesting as several businesses to some extent had the same experience. The interviews also detected that the participants highlighted the importance of the younger generations as they are the future, with one business stating "The younger generations are our future, which means that sustainability is just going to become more and more important. Sustainability has definitely come to stay". Some of the participants also talked about the role

of the younger generations in the years to come regarding sustainability in businesses, with one stating "For future generations sustainability will be natural, and they will quickly distinguish the people who care from the people that only use big words". Similarly, three out of five respondents believed that sustainability would in some way give the company competitive advantages. This was due to the fact that the younger generations are now starting to enter the market, both as customers and employees and will value sustainability measures in a different way than the older generations. One even stated it directly "Sustainability will give competitive advantages for customers and for recruiting employees".

Our findings from the five interviews we conducted suggest that younger people care more for sustainability measures than the older generations. However, the result is based on five SME´s in Rogaland and cannot be validated as a representative source of information for the entire SME community. Therefore, we would like to emphasize that this should be investigated further as it has been shown from our research that there might be a significant relation between age and interest of sustainability.

5.0 Discussion

This discussion is based on the literature and theory reviewed, together with the responses from the interviews that were conducted. With the SDGs and SMEs as a main point the discussion will be on 1) SDGs as a communication tool, 2) significant findings in our qualitative research, here with sub chapters on a sustainable business strategy or sustainable promotion and communication in a B2C relation. 3) Tool and techniques to create awareness, here we discuss the use of green marketing, interpretation and nudging as communication tools.

5.1 SDGs as a Communication Tool

In 2015, the United Nations launched 17 goals to secure peace and prosperity for all. These are common goals which are adopted by all United Nations members; developed countries as

well as developing countries. The sustainable development goals are built around three pillars/dimensions: social inclusion, economic growth and environmental protection. They are, as mentioned earlier, interconnected and interdependent. In Norway, many of the social and economic benefits are secured through healthy infrastructure, laws and regulations. Norway's arguably biggest challenge moving forward is therefore managing the consumption rate and down-scaling our resource usage.

In our interviews with five businesses operating in the Norwegian tourism and hospitality sector, many mentioned the use of certification as a way of working towards sustainable development. The most common are the environmental certifications which provide strict rules and regulations for product handling, such as waste management, energy usage, demands towards suppliers, etc. The measures go beyond the Norwegian legislation (Visit Norway, n.d.). The certifications are a good way to authenticate green practices and avoid scenarios of greenwashing. George A. Akerlof developed a theory in 1970 called the "lemon theory" that looked into the lack of quality information in a consumer market. A consumer is not able to secure quality products if this is not communicated to them. As a consequence, the "less favorable" options in the market will do better than the quality product (Bø, Gripsrud & Nygaard, 2018, p. 122-123). As a response, certifications and brandings can be used to communicate quality and in our case separate sustainable products from non-sustainable products.

However, these certifications require a certain amount of economic capacity and for the smaller businesses this can be troublesome. Many of the certifications connected to the Norwegian market are expensive to attain and obtain, as well as they demand an abundance of specified requirements to fulfill them. Another issue with the certifications in the business sector is the geographical range. The certifications are often local or nationally bound, and the knowledge does not exceed beyond country limits. Even the knowledge within the B2C relationship is weak. Norwegian citizens might recognise the logo, but they do not know what they mean. In other words, the certifications are more recognised in a B2B situation and not in B2C exchange. In the case of our qualitative research we learned that the businesses found the Norwegian certifications to be the most attractive to them, even though there exist certifications that are more internationally known. For an international tourist coming to

Norway not knowing what the certifications stand for and what they aim to do. It is therefore imperative for the businesses to communicate the meaning of the certifications as a quality stamp they should look out for and use in their decision-making process.

The SDGs are a set of common goals that all 193 members of the United Nation are strongly advised to work towards. The goals consider all aspects surrounding people, profit and planet. The Norwegian certifications all fit under the SDG umbrella towards sustainable development. The SDGs are internationally recognised and go beyond national borders, which means that all people should have an understanding of what they are. Therefore, it can be seen as a great communication tool for tourists visiting different countries and continents as they should all be able to identify the SDG logo. In this thesis we do not believe that the SGD can be used in line or replace certifications, but rather be seen as a communication tool that can help the SMEs to create awareness about sustainability to their guests.

5.2. Significant Findings in our Qualitative Research

Our research question is "*How can the UN Sustainable Development Goals help Norwegian SMEs to create awareness about sustainability to their guests/tourists?"*. To fully explore and answer our research question we constructed an interview protocol targeting knowledge of the SDGs of small and medium tourist destinations in Rogaland. Based on responses from the interviews there were to main findings that are interesting to discuss further:

1. The businesses either had a sustainable business strategy or they promoted sustainability to the public - they never reported to do both.

2. They act sustainable, but do not promote it.

The two findings overlap, however we intend to discuss them separately as we believe that there are different aspects to them that we want to look into.

5.2.1 A Sustainable Business Strategy or Sustainable Promotion

After having conducted our qualitative research and analysed the answers we found a correlation between all the business participators. The businesses reporting taking sustainable measures within the business strategy, consistently also reported lack of sustainable presence in social media. Subsequently, they all admitted a wish to improve their communication of sustainable measures, but have yet to do so. "We are unfortunately inadequate in communicating sustainability externally, but we are very focused on the matter internally" one business admitted.

In contrast, one business who expressed a frequent use of sustainable promotion through interpretation strategies indicated little use of "green" measures internally in the business model. Our findings suggest that while all the businesses report either working with sustainable development internally or externally, none of them reported doing both. One interview object went as far stating that: "Walk the talk - we do not feel the need to promote that we operate sustainably to our guests". This comment may be directed to companies that talk-the-walk and end up giving false promises and promote falsely to the customers. This concept can be referred to as greenwashing where they promise more than they can deliver. If green washing is detected in a business, it can directly affect their brand reputation and credibility. Oppositely, if green washing behaviour is not exposed the environment becomes the loser.

One of the businesses we interviewed for this research paper primarily focused on the promotion of sustainability and the SDGs. They were not focused on implementing "green" measures in their business strategy. In one way this can come off as hypocritical as they "talk-the-walk" and not work towards reaching the SDG goals. Even so, there is a significant gap between promoting sustainability and wanting to create awareness through techniques like interpretation and "nudging", and promising more than you can deliver. Promoting sustainability and the SDGs should be seen as an equally important measure as other sustainable business strategies; where the end goal is to create responsible travellers and customers.

Contrary to a business only promoting sustainability without taking measures towards it, other businesses are doing a good job internally with implementation of measures and securing themselves certifications. In the case of the business above claiming that they "walk-the-talk" and do not care to promote their sustainable measures. This way of operating can create difficulties in a homogenous market, where the customers cannot tell the difference between businesses who take responsibility and businesses who do not. The consumers need to be communicated with. A tourist cannot be trusted with knowing the company's supply chain without this being communicated to them in some way. To make an informed decision, (1) the tourists need to have knowledge about, for example sustainability and (2) then they need to have the option to choose the sustainable alternative. Only through creating awareness about sustainability will the tourist obtain sufficient knowledge to be able to make an informed decision to support a sustainable business rather than a non sustainable business. In this next section we will discuss the latter and the importance of communication in a B2C relationship.

5.2.2 Communication in a B2C Relation

The second main finding deals with the disconnect between what the businesses report to do with regards to sustainability measures and what they communicate to the tourists. The businesses were asked who has the responsibility to act sustainable and which party should be the one to set the standard. Five out of five interview objects confessed that they as a business have the primary responsibility to be the lighthouse and be in the forefront of sustainable development. One business stated: "We as an organisation have the responsibility to act sustainable and have this in focus; with this comes the responsibility to facilitate the guests to make smarter choices that are sustainable". The overall comment is that the seller side is in the driver seat to secure that the market consists of options that are favorable. Still, the businesses mentioned that if the tourists show interest and set demands for what type of products they want, this will also facilitate work towards creating good and sustainable options on the market.

The initial object of this research paper was to reach out to SMEs in Rogaland who communicated sustainable measures and sustainable philosophy on their webpage and social

media. Due to unforeseen events we had to change tactics and instead reach out to SMEs in Rogaland who did not necessarily mention sustainability on their platforms. This led us to our main finding that all the presented SMEs have implemented a good amount of sustainable initiatives, but are insufficient in communicating this to the public. Without exception the respondents did not see the value in conveying the work they do towards sustainability to their guests, but followed up with expressing that they would like to get better in the future. Interestingly, one of the respondents mentioned that a big challenge for them was the resource use going into checking and securing that the products they choose are "green" and in line with their own sustainability values. It is the same type of decision-making process the tourist goes through when selecting their prefered product and services. If the tourists are not presented with hard facts about the business supply chain and their work with sustainable measures, they may end up choosing other less sustainable options.

As one business mentioned, the companies themselves have the responsibility to facilitate the guests to make smart choices that are sustainable. For this to happen, the communication of what sustainability is and the importance of the subject needs to be addressed. As well as the option for choosing the "right" alternative need to be available to the tourist. Many of the businesses also thought that a pressure from the demand side will be helpful in the shift towards sustainable development. The supply side reflects the demand they see in the market, and if the market demands a change, the businesses will have to take action to meet these expectations. Three out of five businesses brought up the shift in generations as one good reason to change business tactics going forward. They felt that the younger generations showed greater interest in sustainability, in the format of expecting the businesses to provide sustainable options and have the environment in mind when producing services and products. "The younger generations are our future, which means that sustainability is just going to become more and more important. Sustainability has definitely come to stay" is a quote taken from one of the businesses. Another business said in different words that the businesses who are able to implement a sustainable business model will have a clear head-start in the market and in the future.

We would like to suggest that the disconnect between the businesses actions and their lack of communication is an area that should be looked further into. The potential research should try

to understand what is preventing the business from communicating their implementation of sustainability measures to their guests.

In this next subchapter we will look into different tools and techniques demonstrating how SMEs can implement information about the SDGs in their business strategies, to again be able to create awareness about sustainability to their guests, and at the end look into potential barriers to look out for.

5.3 Tool and Techniques to Create Awareness

In the previous chapters we have established that the SDGs should be used as a communication tool to create awareness about sustainability. For this research paper we have developed a model that can help the SMEs communicate sustainability and show their engagement in sustainable development through three different communication techniques. With the help of our main findings we have structured a model which looks into all aspects of sustainability both internally and externally in a business.

Figure 4. A circular communication model for SMEs

The model starts with the SDGs on top. This is thought to be the communication tool as it is an internationally recognised concept that entails all work towards a sustainable planet, including certifications, measures and initiatives in a business. Green marketing is the idea that you need to consider both consumer needs and the environment concurrently, and it functions internally through green initiatives and externally by communicating with consumers (marketing). All measures with the environment in mind fall under green marketing. For our Norwegian SMEs, the environment is arguably the most pressing issue. The majority of our SMEs already perform green initiatives and sustainable measures internally in their business strategy, but fail to market/communicate this externally. Interpretation, nudging and brand awareness are different techniques of conveying sustainability externally, and they fall under green marketing as they are different techniques a business can use. They differ in scope with interpretation claiming most resource usage and brand awareness being the least intrusive technique in a business strategy. The recipient is the tourist who is influenced by the information presented to them through the different tools and techniques mentioned above. Even so, there are different barriers preventing the tourist choosing the sustainable option after being exposed to it through the various marketing techniques. These are called Grunert's barriers and map different crucial stages in a consumer decision-making process from being exposed to the sustainable option, till actually purchasing the product or service; which in this case is the SDG related products.

The SDG as a good communication tool is already presented in the beginning of this chapter as it can relate to all initiatives taken to improve human welfare and environmental impact, and it is universally known. Furthermore, the different steps of the model will be introduced and discussed how they apply to the tourism and hospitality businesses.

5.3.1 Green Marketing as an Overall Business Strategy

All initiatives a business undergoes related to protecting the environment and securing resources for future use are related to the environmental aspect of the three dimensions of the sustainable development goals. A business strategy that has gained attention is green marketing which deals with the implementation of sustainable measures in a business and the

communication/marketing of such initiatives and sustainable development in general. Green marketing is in other words a good way to convey sustainability to the tourist, as it not only speaks of internal initiatives, but stresses the importance of marketing sustainability to the public. In the qualitative research for this thesis, the respondents notice an interest in sustainability from their guests and they especially notice a shift in generations where the younger generations almost expect the business to provide sustainable options. Many noticed that in the future acting sustainable will no longer be a choice but a must. As our main findings suggest, the businesses implement strategies and measures, but almost completely fail to communicate the work they do to their guests. Still, if the businesses do market some of their initiatives, these are often the use of certification logos and no further information of what the certification actually entails. For an international, or even a Norwegian tourist, it can be challenging and time-consuming to attain knowledge about these geographically bound logos.

Research suggests that there are many positives to implementing green marketing in a business. As mentioned in the literature-chapter, the benefits of green marketing can be seen in light of three dimensions; social, environmental and commercial. The benefits regarding the environment will come as a direct side effect of implementing green marketing in their business strategy, such as a decrease in pollution or slowed down global warming. The majority of existing research has looked into the commercial benefits a company can gain from implementing green marketing, with great emphasis on competitive advantages and increased brand reputation. However, little research has been done investigating the social benefits such as increased environmental awareness. In many ways increased environmental awareness can be seen as a commercial benefit in the long- run. This means that if several businesses implement sustainable measures such as green marketing this will generate more knowledge and awareness of sustainability. One outcome of such a case will be that tourists are more aware of sustainability and will take this into account in their decision-making process, and select businesses that take part in sustainable measures. A business that has implemented green marketing into their strategy will have competitive advantages, as tourists have gained knowledge about the importance of sustainability which will lead them to select the sustainable option. In the following section we will look into how the SMEs can

externally communicate with their guests through the use of various relevant communication channels.

5.3.2 Interpretation as a Communication Channel

The concept of interpretation is a unique communication technique that aims to create meaning or a relationship to the experience the tourist takes part in. Thus, the concept is well suited for the tourism and hospitality industry, as they do not only generate products but they also produce services. By using interpretation, a business can teach and enhance a tourist's knowledge through communication, either physically or by using different information tools such as virtual guiding, audiobooks, signs etc. The concept can therefore be considered very resource-intensive because it can be time-consuming, often requires human resources or some sort of continuous maintenance. However, the technique can provide information and knowledge about a topic to a greater extent than many other ways of communicating a message. SMEs can use interpretation as a communication channel to create a greater understanding of a given concept as it not only plays on hard facts but also on the tourists´ emotions. For a business using interpretation as a communication channel for sustainable measures, the SDG can be a useful tool as they take several aspects into consideration and are more applicable due to their universal recognition and holistic picture of sustainability.

Research has provided evidence that tourists who are exposed to interpretation have different kinds of responses after the experience. The responses vary, and range from a purely sensory response where the tourists report memories based on what they have seen and heard, to an emotional response which mainly consists of an emotional connection to the experience. The tourists can also go through a reflection response which can be seen as a deeper cognitive process of reflecting around the message and information interpreted in the experience. Another response can be to actively change one's behaviour on the basis of a message that was interpreted in the experience. It is interesting to look at the different responses the tourist experiences after taking part in an interpretational activity because this says something about to which extent the information that is being conveyed is being perceived by the tourists. In addition, interpretation as a communication channel for the SDGs can initiate a process that

makes tourists more aware of the SDGs but also aware of the sustainability in general. Even so, interpretation is based on creating an emotional or meaningful affiliation to a certain message which can potentially also fade over time. Therefore, a continuous exposure of the SDG will be of importance, such techniques will be discussed in the following sections.

5.3.3 Nudging as a Communication Channel

Nudging as a communication channel for the SDG consists of giving the tourists/guests the alternative to choose options that are sustainable. For this to happen there need to be favorable options made available to the guest at the point of execution. The theory of nudging is practical in a tourism and hospitality setting where it can be used not only at the time of purchasing a product or service, but also when the guests consume it. However, using nudging as a communication tool requires a combination between the latter and informatics. Providing information about a favorable option to the guest and how they contribute to the SDGs by choosing it and then leaving the decision to the guest can be perceived as nudging. Nudging in its natural habitat would subconsciously lead the consumer to choose the desirable option, though adding information about the SDGs can make it into a communication channel, while still keeping the integrity of nudging intact. If you combine the two, you give the guest the chance to decide for themselves so they do not feel that their decision-making is forced by external factors.

Implementing nudges with the combination of informatics in a business strategy can help raise awareness and provide continuous exposure of the SDGs to the guests. Nudging is a good option as it requires little resources and has proven to be quite effective on a guests decision-making process.

5.3.4 Brand Awareness as a Communication Channel

Orkla, as introduced in the theory section, found that Norwegians care more for recycling of bottles and waste than their nordic counterparts. The Norwegian government has stressed the

importance of recycling for many years to the Norwegian people. This may be an indication that continuous exposure of this topic has eventually influenced Norwegians´ attitude and behaviour towards recycling. Arguably all Norwegians would recognise the recycle logo and have a certain association to it. Brand association builds brand loyalty and brand recollection. The higher brand association the bigger chance is that the tourist will remember it and purchase products from the brand out of loyalty. Creating positive associations to a brand by increasing the knowledge towards it, will make the brand perform better in the marketplace as known and trustworthy brands are shown to be more popular. It takes plenty of resources and well-constructed strategies to create a brand that tourists recognise when they see it and develop positive associations towards. It may take years to build a certain amount of trust and loyalty with the tourist. Using the SDG logo can therefore be an easy solution when conveying sustainability to the guests, as the knowledge about the goals should be known to most people who are exposed to it, much like in the recycling scenario. The SDGs stand for sustainable development, and hopefully the tourist who is exposed to the SDG logo can recognise it and associate it with sustainability. Using the logo can therefore be a quick way of showing that the business cares for the goals and possibly work towards them.

Though, the most important factor of brand awareness is that it can contribute to increasing the exposure needed to make the tourist change behaviour. The idea of brand awareness is the more exposure, the more will the brand become favorable in a competitive market. The tourism and hospitality businesses have the unique opportunity to not only promote them through social media, but also through websites, brochures, products, services etc. Hopefully the consumers exposed to the SDG logo will be influenced when choosing between for example different hotels; in the end remembering the SDGs and the need for sustainability, and choose hotels with concurring values.

5.3.5 Grunert's Theory of Six Barriers

Grunert's theory of hierarchy of effects and six barriers are first and foremost related to eco-labelling in a consumer market. However, the model can also be transferred to other contexts where a consumer is exposed to sustainable marketing/communication as the overall theme of

the barriers stressing the importance of communicating sustainability. The model points out two main issues the consumer is faced with when choosing sustainable products or services.

1. The consumers awareness of the label and the meaning of it (pure exposure without initial knowledge is not enough).
2. If they are motivated to choose sustainable options at the time of the purchase.

Under these two categories there are listed six executive barriers for a business to look out for when conveying sustainable products or service, or in a general communication situation with a tourist. Tourists are often going through decision-making processes and do not act out of habit when they are out travelling, contrary to when one is shopping in the local grocery store. Nonetheless, the tourism and hospitality SMEs should make sure the sustainable product and services are communicated properly. Using the channels mentioned above to increase knowledge about sustainability will "nudge" the tourists to use brands known to them in a peripheral process (covered in barrier two). This is when the universal acknowledgement of the SDGs comes in, because if the tourist understands the brand or logo they will be more motivated to choose it. Correct information is crucial when a tourist chooses a product or a service where the SDGs should be globally understood and be a trustworthy brand for the tourists.

Barriers 4, 5 and 6 deals with motivation to choose sustainable options at the time of purchase. If sustainability has not been important to the tourist (possibly because of the lack of communicating the importance of it), the tourist may trade off the sustainable option for criteria that they find more important to them, or they might fall under the grip of an attitude-behaviour gap. Lastly, they may be positive about the sustainable options but this attitude is not strong enough at the moment of the purchase. It is therefore crucial that the tourist is exposed to sustainability and the SDGs often as this helps re-activate the memory; hopefully at the vital time of purchase.

After the businesses have found their communication channel, they should make sure that all these barriers are thought through and try to prevent them from occurring.

6.0 Conclusion

In this thesis we have conducted a qualitative research on five SMEs trying to understand their way of working with sustainable measures and how they communicate this to their tourists/guests. On the basis of specific literature and theoretical framework, we created the foundation of our research question:

How can the UN Sustainable Development Goals help Norwegian SMEs create awareness about sustainability to their guests/tourists?

The RQ inspired four topics creating the basis of our interviews with the SMEs. The topics dealt with the SMEs'extent of knowledge about the SDGs, sustainability in the businesses and the communication of such, and possible challenges and responsibility working with sustainability. Coding and analysing the answers from the four topics lead to a discovery of correlating responses consequently creating the basis for our two main findings. These findings stimulated a discussion on why the SMEs do not convey sustainability to their guests and suggestions on how to do so in the future. The SDGs have been proposed as a communication tool because of their universal recognition as a way of communicating sustainability to guests.

Furthermore, we applied our theoretical framework to develop a model focusing on how SMEs can use the SDGs as a way of communicating sustainability to tourists (see figure 4). The analysis of this research paper has established that the SMEs do perform sustainable practices, but have yet to communicate them, as we have suggested in the context of green marketing strategy. The model proposes suitable communication techniques and channels that can help the SMEs create awareness about sustainability. The techniques vary in scope and resource requirements and can be applied in all tourism and hospitality businesses, and they can be used in a combination with each other, or independently. The model also look into barriers tourists may experience when purchasing a sustainable product. Adding the element of how tourists perceive sustainable products gives the model a top-down and down-up motion, which can help the businesses facilitate for potential pitfalls.

To sum up, in this thesis we have conducted research on how the SDGs can help tourism and hospitality SMEs in a Norwegian context create awareness about sustainability to tourists/guests. The paper encourages businesses to take responsibility for conveying and communicating sustainable measures to guests and it is suggested doing so through different communication channels that engages the tourists to do so. The current pandemic has shown that the three pillars of sustainability are fragile and they depend on each other to succeed. In the current situation, environmental aspects have improved. However, the improvement of this pillar has negatively influenced the development of social infrastructures and economic wealth around the globe. SMEs, which combined make up the majority of the business sector, now have the time to go back to the drawing board and consider their business models and how to act sustainable going forward. "We want to build a Green Europe, which protects our climate and our environment and which creates sustainable jobs [...] This is the opportunity of the century for Europe. A truly historic moment" as the leader of the EU commission expressed under a plenary session in the European Parliament in Brussels, April 2021 (Rosef & Jæger, 2021).

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8.0 Appendix

Appendix A

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt **"FN´s bærekraftsmål blant små- og mellomstore bedrifter"**

Bakgrunn og formål

Vi kommer fra Norsk Hotellhøgskole på UiS, og vi er i gang med å ferdigstille bachelorene våre i reiselivsledelse og hotelledelse. Gjennom studiene våre har vi lært om bærekraftsmålene til FN og tiltak som skal til for å utvikle en mer ansvarlig/ bærekraftig reiselivsindustri. Vi har på bakgrunn av dette bestemt oss for å se på hva industrien gjør med tanke på bærekraft. Vi har valgt å ta for oss bærekraftsmålene (SDG) til de Forente Nasjoner (FN), ettersom disse omfavner store områder som sosiale forhold, økonomiske aspekter og miljøvern. I bacheloroppgaven ønsker vi å se nærmere på hvordan bedrifter i lokalmiljøer i Norge tolker og tar i bruk bærekraftige tiltak.

I tillegg har vi sett nærmere på små og mellomstore bedrifter (SMB), da dette utgjør en stor prosent av bedriftene i Norge. (ca. 99%). Vi har dermed utarbeidet en problemstilling som vi søker svar på gjennom å høre hvordan nettopp SMB forholder seg og arbeider med FN sine bærekraftsmål og andre bærekraftig tiltak, samt hvordan dette arbeidet videreføres til sine kunder/gjester.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Ansvarlig for prosjektet er bachelorkandidater Kristin Amalie Bryggen, Idun Sand og Emma Lunde ved Norsk Hotellhøgskole ved Universitet i Stavanger. Spørsmålene har blitt godkjent av veileder ved Norsk hotellhøgskole.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du og din bedrift blir spurt om å delta på bakgrunn av deres tankegang og promotering av bærekraft på deres nettside og sosiale plattformer. Vi har skjønt at dette er noe som er sterkt knyttet til deres verdier og som dere legger stor vekt på for å nå ut til deres kunder med. I

tillegg er dere en reiselivsaktør i Rogaland som kan kategoriseres som en små/mellomstor bedrift i forhold til EU sitt reglement.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Studien innebærer et digitalt intervju med undertegnede studenter, som vil vare rundt en time. Intervjuet vil bli anonymisert, slik at personvern opprettholdes og informasjon ikke kan bli ledet tilbake til dere. Det vil ikke bli gjort opptak av intervjuet, og det vil bare bli tatt fysiske notater av opplysningene som kommer frem ved intervjuet.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i vårt prosjekt, og du kan på hvilket som helst punkt velge å trekke deg om det er ønskelig. Som nevnt vil alt av informasjon anonymiseres, og intervjuet vil ikke bli tatt opp. Du vil også bli tilbudt å se over våre notater for godkjennelse i etterkant av intervjuet. Det vil heller ikke ha noen konsekvenser om du ønsker å trekke deg, uavhengig av tidspunkt dette skulle skje.

Ditt personvern- hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bemerke at informasjon om deg vil kun bli brukt til formålene som er beskrevet. Vi behandler opplysningen konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregleverket.

- Det er kun personer som er tilstede i intervjuet som har tilgang til opplysningene. Dette innebærer tre studenter, en intervjuer og to referenter.
- Vi vil kun holde notat for oss selv, og dette vil som nevnt også anonymiseres. Hverken navn eller kontaktopplysninger vil oppbevares i tilknytning til prosjektet og heller ikke opptak av selve intervjuet.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er 18.05.2021.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Har du spørsmål angående studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter beskrevet over, ta kontakt med:

- Universitetet i Stavanger ved
  - Student ████████, på epost ████████████████████
  - Student ██████, på epost ████████████████
  - Student ████████████████ på epost
    ████████████████████████
  - Veileder Åsa Grahn på epost (asa.grahn@uis.no)

Spørsmål til intervju

Det er lagt opp til 12 formelle spørsmål i intervjuet, som har i formål å ta opp tre
hovedområder. Disse områdene vil ligge innenfor; (1) temaet bærekraft og FN's
bærekraftsmål, (2) promotering og formidling av bærekraft i din bedrift og (3) generelle
spørsmål om ansvarlighet innenfor bærekraft i reiselivsindustrien.

Appendix B Våre spørsmål under intervju

1. Beskriv litt om hvordan det går for dere som bedrift for tiden, vi tenker i forhold til
   koronasituasjonen.
2. Kan du fortelle litt om visjonen til bedriften – og hva er det viktigste som dere ønsker
   å oppnå?
3. Hva legger du i ordet "bærekraft"?
4. På hvilken måte tenker du at dette gjenspeiler bedriftens verdier kring bærekraft
   begrepet/konseptet?
5. Hvordan jobber din bedrift med bærekraft? Spesifikke tiltak, sertifiseringer?
6. Har du hørt om FN´s bærekraftsmål? Ja, nei, utdyp?
7. På hvilken måte ser du for deg at FN's bærekraftsmål kunne vært et relevant mål for
   din bedrift? Hvorfor, hvorfor ikke?
8. (Hvordan tenker du at dere kunne promotert og skapt bevissthet rundt FN´s
   bærekraftsmål for gjestene deres?)
9. Vi har undersøkt deres nettside og sosiale plattformer, og har derfor noen spørsmål
   angående deres formidling av bærekraft på disse plattformene. Kan du fortelle litt om
   måten dere har valgt å formidle bærekraftige tiltak til gjestene deres på?

10. Hva opplever du som mest utfordrende med å jobbe med bærekraft i din bedrift?

11. Hvem tenker dere har ansvaret for å opptre bærekraftig og ansvarlig? er det kunden? Er det bedriftene? Hvem skal sette standarden?

12. Takk for intervjuet, er det noe du ønsker å tilføye eventuelt ta opp selv?