



**Sustainable Practices in Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg:  
Guest Satisfaction and Brand Loyalty**

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## Abstract

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<p>This bachelor's thesis examines how sustainable practices at the Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, a hotel in the heart of Aalborg, Denmark, affect customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Growing consumer consciousness of environmental responsibility served as an inspiration for this thesis, positioning sustainability as a critical determinant of visitor preferences and choices in the hotel sector. The aim of this study was to identify the eco-friendly measures that guests appreciate the most, evaluate the hotel's communication of these efforts, and establish if these acts result in increased visitor pleasure and loyalty.</p> <p>The study's theoretical framework was based on John Elkington's Triple Bottom Line model, which takes into account economic, social, and environmental sustainability. It also included ideas of brand loyalty and customer satisfaction that were taken from marketing and hospitality literature. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to offer an extensive overview of the subject. The main target group represents both business and leisure travelers, mostly from Scandinavian countries. For three weeks in the spring of 2025, hotel guests were given a customer survey both online and physically. Open-ended, multiple-choice, and Likert-scale items were all included in the survey. Webropol and Excel software were used to examine quantitative responses, applying statistical techniques including averages, percentages, and frequencies. To find common themes in the visitor input, thematic coding was used to understand the qualitative replies.</p> <p>The results demonstrated that visitor experiences are greatly influenced by sustainability, with eco-friendly toiletries, linen reuse initiatives, and locally produced meals being highly valued. The majority of respondents said that the hotel's environmental initiatives had a good effect on their stay and that they were very likely to recommend or return. Even while most respondents thought the hotel did a good job of communicating its sustainability initiatives, mostly through the website and personnel, many of them recommended increasing awareness through better social media presence and in-room instructional items. The study's practical implications for future strategy development at Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg and other environmentally aware hospitality enterprises include the conclusion that visible, meaningful, and well-communicated sustainable activities may increase visitor happiness and loyalty.</p>
<b>Key words</b> Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, sustainability, sustainable practices, customer satisfaction, brand loyalty

## Table of Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Sustainability .....	5
2.1	Sustainability in Denmark .....	6
2.2	Triple Bottom Line in Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg .....	7
3	Effects of Green Practices on Guest Satisfaction and Loyalty .....	14
4	Brand Loyalty .....	17
5	Methodology .....	19
5.1	Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg .....	19
5.2	Research method .....	21
5.3	Implementation of Data Collection .....	23
5.4	Data Management .....	24
5.5	Data analysis .....	25
6	Results .....	26
7	Discussion .....	35
7.1	Suggestions .....	36
7.2	Validity and reliability .....	37
7.3	Personal learning and development .....	37
	References .....	39
	Appendices .....	43
	Appendix 1. Sustainable reminders .....	43
	Appendix 2. Survey .....	44

# 1 Introduction

Nowadays, with increasing awareness of environmental effects and responsible tourism, the global hotel industry has started prioritizing sustainability more and more. Denmark is considered one of the happiest and safest countries in the world. It is also one of the countries that pays huge attention to sustainability and eco-friendly practices. The sustainable approach is about finding local and organic items, cutting down on waste, using less energy and water, and implementing the right sustainable tourism practices (Rilatt, 2024). The hospitality sector is facing increasing pressure to adopt sustainable practices to meet customer expectations and reduce its environmental impact. Hotels, which consume very high amounts of energy, water, and resources, have the responsibility to find innovative solutions to operate in an environmentally friendly manner while maintaining the quality of their service. The challenge is to find a balance between economic goals and environmental responsibility, and it is very important to understand how sustainability influences guest decision-making processes and guest satisfaction. (Chemmanur & Fenech, 2024.) Although 68% of the hotels in Copenhagen alone have an eco-certification, therefore it is simple to choose wisely. Denmark is the birthplace of Green Key, a worldwide eco-label given to lodging establishments that pledge to sustainable practices (VisitDenmark, 2024). In my opinion, Denmark, as a leader in green practices, is an ideal environment to explore this topic, especially at Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, where I can use practical and real-life examples to enrich the analysis.

Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, which had been under the ownership of Deutsche Hospitality and transitioned to Marriott International on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, prioritizes integrating environmentally friendly practices throughout the hotel. (CoreHospitality, 2024.) Even though the brand is changing, the concept, idea, and values remain very similar. In order to provide an even better guest experience in the future, this strategy shift aims to integrate the worldwide standards and enlarged resources of the Marriott family with the local assets of the old Zleep brand (Marriott International, 2025). Both leisure and business tourists make up the majority of the hotel's customers.

My bachelor's thesis aims to investigate how Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg's sustainability initiatives affect customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. The hotel, which is situated in the heart of Aalborg and incorporates a number of eco-friendly efforts, is a suitable topic to examine the rising significance of environmental responsibility in the hospitality sector. The purpose of this study is to find out which sustainable activities are most appreciated by visitors, evaluate the hotel's communication of these practices, and ascertain whether these efforts result in satisfied customers and return business. The study aims to offer practical insights that might help the hotel's future

sustainability strategy and increase customer loyalty, especially among eco-aware tourists, by answering the primary research topic and related sub-questions.

My bachelor's thesis is research-oriented, with the intention of obtaining empirical data through a visitor questionnaire. Moreover, I will analyze the sustainability topic and sustainability in Denmark. Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg may also benefit from this bachelor report by offering an overview and analysis of its sustainability approaches that not only lower their environmental impact but also increase customer retention by understanding the influence of sustainable practices on guest satisfaction and brand loyalty. Despite Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg's very good efforts to implement sustainable practices, there is still space for improvement in understanding the direct impact of these efforts on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important factor in the hospitality industry, but there is little research on the extent to if, and if yes, which guests value and prefer these green initiatives when deciding where to stay.

This can lead to not knowing which initiatives should be prioritized in the future. Not all practices may have the same impact on customers because some may be perceived as important and others as less relevant to their overall experience. This makes it difficult to determine which initiatives can bring the greatest positive impact in terms of guest satisfaction and which of these initiatives have a smaller impact on the decision-making of hotel guests. The goal of this project is to be able to evaluate whether some of these initiatives have the potential to improve the customer experience and, additionally, drive customer loyalty to keep coming back to Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg.

I will start by identifying and evaluating the most popular sustainable strategies that Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg has adopted. With many hotels implementing programs like energy efficiency, waste reduction, and the use of recyclable materials, sustainability is a major factor in Denmark's hospitality sector. Remarkably, almost two-thirds of Denmark's energy is derived from sustainable sources, and within the next three years, Copenhagen wants to become the first carbon-neutral capital in history. (CNCA, 2024.) Second, using information from a survey, I will assess how sustainable measures affect Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg's patron happiness. Nowadays, most consumers prioritize eco-friendly practices when making judgments about what to buy, making sustainability a basic expectation (Webolutions, 2023). In recent years, domestic tourism has also increased as more Danes opt to visit domestically and boost their local economies (Nordic Cooperation, 2025). This stage will involve investigating the particular sustainable initiatives that Danish hotel patrons appreciate the most. Lastly, I will look at how sustainability initiatives affect brand loyalty, specifically if guests are more inclined to recommend or stay at a hotel because of its dedication to environmental responsibility. Even though Denmark is a global pioneer in

sustainability, personal preferences and decision-making processes may differ, and not everyone gives sustainability or green certifications priority when selecting lodging.

I chose to write and analyze this topic mainly because I am very interested in sustainability overall, specifically the hospitality sector's sustainability. I like to learn about eco-friendly and sustainable solutions and how these can affect today's modern hotel industry. Moreover, I am curious about its impact on customers and whether guests care about the planet and emphasize sustainability when choosing accommodation for themselves. Furthermore, Denmark is known as a leader in green practices and initiatives, which makes it a very good opportunity for me to develop my bachelor's thesis about this topic. The hospitality sector is facing increasing pressure to adopt sustainable practices to meet customer expectations and reduce its environmental impact. Hotels, which consume very high amounts of energy, water, and resources, have the responsibility to find innovative solutions to operate in an environmentally friendly manner while maintaining the quality of their service. The challenge is to find a balance between economic goals and environmental responsibility, and it is very important to understand how sustainability influences guest decision-making processes and guest satisfaction. Denmark, as a leader in green practices, is an ideal environment to explore this topic, especially at Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, where I can use practical and real-life examples to enrich the analysis.

Research Question:

How do sustainable practices in Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg influence guest satisfaction and brand loyalty?

Sub-questions:

1. What aspects of sustainability are most valued by the hotel guests?
2. In what ways do guests who prioritize sustainability show stronger loyalty to Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg because of its eco-friendly initiatives?
3. How does Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg communicate its sustainability efforts to guests?

Table 1. Overlay Matrix

<b>Sub-questions</b>	<b>Theoretical Frame- work (chapter)</b>	<b>Survey questions</b>	<b>Results (chapter)</b>
What aspects of sustainability are most valued by the hotel guests?	2.2	5 & 6	6
In what ways do guests who prioritize sustainability show stronger loyalty to Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg because of its eco-friendly initiatives?	3 & 4	4 6 & 7 8 11	6
How does Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg communicate its sustainability efforts to guests?	2.2 4	9 & 10 12 13	6

## 2 Sustainability

Sustainability is a broad concept that has evolved significantly over the years. It is frequently described as the capacity to satisfy current demands without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own. This definition was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission in its 1987 report, "Our Common Future", which played a key role in shaping global discussions on sustainable development. (European Union, 2024.) Sustainability today is not only about environmental but also social and economic dimensions that must be balanced in creating long-term strategies and decisions that not only consider profit but also the impact on society and nature. According to Sharpley, sustainability means using resources in a way to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Sharpley explains that it involves a balance between development, environmental protection, and the distribution of benefits. (Sharpley, 2009.)

Environmental sustainability focuses on conserving natural resources, reducing pollution, and protecting our ecosystems. It refers to practices that ensure that the natural environment continues to be able to provide the resources needed for future generations. (Greengage, 2025.) According to Stefan Schaltegger (2012), environmental sustainability is closely connected to the management of environmental impacts, including energy consumption, waste generation, water consumption, and the depletion of natural resources. Companies that follow the principles of environmental sustainability are trying to reduce their carbon footprint, use renewable energy sources and minimize waste.

Social sustainability concerns the social impact of business practices, focusing on equity, fair working conditions and community development. It emphasizes that businesses ensure that their activities promote positive relationships and contribute to social well-being. John Elkington has emphasized that for businesses to be truly sustainable, they must also take into account social dimensions such as workers' rights, community involvement and poverty reduction. (UW Online Collaboratives, 2022.) Sustainability in this sense also includes respecting workers' rights, promoting gender equality and contributing to local communities through investment in education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

Economic sustainability focuses on the ability of a business to remain profitable over the long term while minimizing negative impacts on society and the environment. Dyllick and Hockerts (2002) discuss how economic sustainability can be achieved through innovative business models that reduce environmental impacts while still generating economic value. Companies that integrate sustainability into their business models typically find that they are more resilient and flexible in the

long term because they can anticipate future environmental or social risks (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002).

All of these aspects, environmental, social, and economic sustainability are closely connected and linked and must be balanced in order to achieve true sustainability. The key objective is to ensure that businesses engage in activities that benefit not only their profitability but also society and the environment. Frameworks such as carbon footprinting or ecological certification are increasingly being used to assess the sustainability of businesses in these areas. Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg also focuses on getting and maintaining various sustainable certificates, which prove its involvement in various sustainable practices.

## **2.1 Sustainability in Denmark**

Denmark is one of the countries where sustainability in hospitality plays a big role and many companies and hotels implement initiatives such as energy efficiency, waste reduction and reusable materials. Currently, sustainable energy sources account for around two-thirds of Denmark's power, and in the next three years, Copenhagen wants to become the first carbon-neutral capital in history. (Green City Times, 2024.) Denmark is a leader in sustainability, with a focus on renewable energy, green urban planning and innovative eco-friendly solutions. Also, the Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg makes sure to measure energy, heat and water consumption to avoid overconsumption. Denmark also excels in the use of wind energy and plans to completely eliminate fossil fuels by 2050. The city of Copenhagen is an example of sustainable urbanism, promoting cycling and public transport. Denmark supports a circular economy with minimal waste and maximum recycling. Danish companies excel in eco-innovations such as water management and renewable energy sources and additionally, education and public campaigns put a lot of emphasis on the commitment to sustainability. (Denmark.dk, 2025.)

After decades of remarkable and sustainable work, Denmark has developed a green energy infrastructure that provides more green energy and a cleaner daily living. Denmark is ranked as number one in the Environmental Performance Index 2022 because of all of these initiatives. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2022.) When it comes to sustainability in the hospitality sector, in 2024, hotels all around Denmark, from well-known towns like Copenhagen to growing locations like Aalborg, adopted eco-friendly procedures by obtaining Green Key certifications and making investments in renewable energy sources. High-end tourists were drawn to boutique hotels with Scandinavian style, and a national push to decentralize tourism increased interest in rural and second-city locations. Guest satisfaction was further increased by technological innovations like smartphone check-ins and artificial intelligence-driven services. The hospitality industry in Denmark is an excellent representation of how contemporary hotels can combine environmental stewardship with first-

rate service and genuine cultural experiences, even in the face of challenges like inflation and competition from rental properties. (FallzHotels, 2025.)

## **2.2 Triple Bottom Line in Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg**

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model, introduced by John Elkington in 1994, is a framework for measuring a company's sustainability based on three pillars: People, Planet, and Profit. Elkington, a British entrepreneur, and sustainability expert argued that businesses should not focus solely on financial profit but should also consider their social and environmental impact. TBL encourages organizations to expand their motivation to include a wider range of performance metrics that address social, and environmental responsibility, and economic viability. (Elkington, 2004.) The model has been widely adopted across industries as a way to evaluate sustainable business practices. The goal is to promote the long-term sustainability of businesses while promoting corporate responsibility to all stakeholders, not just shareholders. By assessing the company's performance through TBL, businesses can focus on creating strategies that benefit the environment, society, and the economy. This is making this framework a key tool for integrating sustainability into business strategy and decision-making. (Elkington, 2004.)

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model is designed to measure a company's commitment to sustainability in three key areas: people (social), planet (environmental), and profit (economic). Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, part of Marriott International group, shows how a hospitality business can integrate sustainable practices into its operations, benefiting not only the environment but also society and profitability.

### **1. People (Social Sustainability)**

Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg focuses on social sustainability by creating a positive impact on its employees, the local community, and guests. These practices have a goal to increase guests' awareness of their environmental impact.

Sustainability, worker welfare, and community engagement are all highly valued at Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, which makes sure that its activities comply with both Danish labor laws and ethical travel practices. By actively promoting fair labor standards, the hotel guarantees that all workers enjoy competitive pay, a secure workplace, and chances for advancement. (Marriott, 2024.) In order to improve the hotel's entire commitment to environmental responsibility, staff members are also trained in the value of sustainability. This enables them to incorporate eco-friendly practices into everyday operations.

In addition to internal regulations, Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg is committed to promoting a sustainable tourist industry and helping the neighborhood. The hotel places a great priority on acquiring organic and locally sourced goods, especially for its breakfast buffet, which guarantees that guests will eat fresh, high-quality food while simultaneously lessening the environmental effect of long-distance food transportation. The hotel also works with local tourist providers and neighboring sites to encourage visitors to visit the area in a way that promotes local culture and small businesses. (HRewards, 2024.)

Furthermore, Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg promotes sustainability among guests by providing eco-friendly messages in rooms, such as reminders to turn off lights, reuse towels, and return key cards for reuse. (Appendix 1) These modest but significant efforts guarantee that visitors actively support the hotel's sustainability objectives while also reinforcing eco-friendly behaviors.

To sum it up, the hotel shows a significant commitment to sustainability by including ethical labor standards, local economic assistance, and guest interaction activities. In addition to strengthening brand loyalty among eco-aware tourists, these initiatives establish the hotel as an inspiration in the area for responsible hospitality.

## 2. Planet (Environmental Sustainability)

The environmental dimension of the TBL model focuses on minimizing negative impacts on nature. Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg integrates the following innovative eco-friendly practices to achieve this goal. (Marriott, 2024.)

By incorporating resource-efficient techniques and sustainable building into its everyday operations, the hotel is dedicated to maintaining environmental responsibility as a fundamental component of its brand. The hotel's environmentally friendly architectural design, which has green roofs that efficiently manage rainwater by absorbing surplus precipitation, lowering heat absorption, and assisting in regulating inside temperatures, is one of its main sustainability projects when it comes to sustainable construction. These characteristics minimize the hotel's carbon footprint while improving the local urban habitat, promoting both energy efficiency and environmental conservation. (HRewards, 2024.)

The hotel has made investments in cutting-edge energy-efficient technology to further optimize its energy use. It uses smart HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems that automatically modify temperature settings depending on real-time occupancy and exterior climatic conditions, as well as LED lighting, which uses a lot less power than conventional bulbs. These

innovations make sure that energy use is as low as possible without sacrificing visitor comfort. (Marriott, 2024.)

Waste minimization is a top goal at Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, in addition to energy saving. Practical measures have been taken by the hotel to reduce food waste, such as providing meals in tiny portions in recyclable packaging or, if feasible, employing package-free serving techniques. Through the Too Good To Go initiative, which permits leftover breakfast products to be sold rather than thrown away, the hotel works to further minimize waste. As stated online: "Too Good To Go is a social impact company on a mission to inspire and empower everyone to fight food waste together. Our app is the world's largest marketplace for surplus food. We help users rescue good food from going to waste, offering great value for money at local stores, cafes and restaurants." (Too Good To Go, 2024.)

Furthermore, Figure 1 explains the Four Points Flex hotel's partnership with Too Good To Go, a service that aims to reduce food waste. The service buys and sells food from businesses that would otherwise throw it away. The hotel sells leftover food after the breakfast buffet closes, which not only reduces food waste, but also allows the buffet to be fully stocked with fresh pastries and cakes until closing, creating a more welcoming atmosphere and breakfast for guests. Customers can purchase food through the Too Good To Go app, which shows a description of the food available and the time frame in which they can pick it up. Sales are activated daily based on a schedule. The boxes can be sold either on a fixed schedule or on a daily basis, and this option may be more suitable given the unpredictable amount of food that is going to be left over every day. (Figure 1)

## Read about the Importance of Refilling the Buffet

The buffet must continuously be refilled and kept nice and inviting. The last guest must have the same impression of the delicious and varied buffet as the first guest had. Adjusting the refill is important, making sure that we minimize food waste and not make the last guest feel that they are receiving “leftovers”. This is best done by replacing the large breadbasket with a smaller one, making it still appear full.

Be aware of how much bread is baked at the start of breakfast. When you know your guests well, you will be able to estimate how many pieces of bread are needed per day and how much you need to bake before breakfast starts. You bake continuously through breakfast time, so you must keep an eye on what is needed. In this way, all guests get fresh bread/cakes and at the same time, we minimize waste.

[Go to next Procedure](#)

Figure 1. Too Good To Go at the breakfast

During breakfast, guests are asked to prepare their raw eggs in the egg cooker, so the hotel can avoid food waste. This way, they do not have to prepare cooked eggs for an unpredictable number of guests during the day. Figure 2 shows what needs to be placed on the breakfast buffet for customers to use the self-service boiling station. Therefore, the consumption can be controlled a little more. This reduces food waste and is consistent with the circular economy's tenets, which advocate those resources be used to their maximum potential rather than being thrown away.

## Eggs

We serve eggs raw to be prepared by the guests. This way they can decide for themselves if the egg should be boiled soft, medium or hard.

The following must be placed on the buffet:

- The egg cooker (the temperature must be set on one line below 90 degrees)
- A bowl with fresh eggs is placed on a cooler with a sign that says "Raw Eggs". The eggs cannot be stacked in the bowl. All eggs must touch the bottom of the bowl to secure a cool temperature. Make sure to check the cooler during the breakfast service - it may be necessary to change the cooler if it gets too hot during service.
- A bowl with metal egg holders
- A bowl with cold water for cooling the prepared eggs
- A tong for the fresh eggs, reducing salmonella risk
- Four small bowls for salt, pepper, teaspoons and egg timers (if needed)
- Egg cups
- A sign with how to boil the eggs. The sign can be found on the K-drive and MyZleep ((k:drev->Marketing->Afdeling-samlet->infoark->pdf->æggekoger)

Figure 2. Eggs Preparation during breakfast

Additionally, by moving away from single-use plastic bottles, the hotel is actively attempting to decrease plastic waste. For example, all plastic straws were removed, so they can minimize the use of plastic. When it comes to the use of plastic bottles, there are no plastic bottles sold at the hotel, soda is only sold in glass bottles. Four Points Flex by Sheraton also installed a water fountain in the reception area so guests are able to get fresh water without having to purchase a water bottle, enabling visitors to stay hydrated in an environmentally responsible and sustainable way. This small yet efficient adjustment promotes a cleaner, greener environment and drastically lowers plastic pollution.

To conclude, by incorporating energy-efficient technology, waste reduction programs, and sustainable building materials, Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg is making significant strides toward ecologically conscious hospitality. By improving the entire visitor experience and lessening the hotel's environmental impact, these initiatives strengthen the brand's dedication to sustainability and long-term ecological care.

### 3. Profit (Economic Sustainability)

Economic sustainability ensures that the company remains profitable while balancing social and environmental responsibilities. Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg integrates the principles of TBL into its business strategy to maintain long-term profitability.

At Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, sustainability is not only an environmental effort but also a calculated and economic strategy that helps the hotel and its visitors. The hotel can drastically reduce operating expenses while keeping up a high level of service by incorporating waste-reduction techniques and energy-saving technologies. Reduced water and energy use is achieved by actions like encouraging visitors to reuse towels rather than asking for needless laundering and employing eco-friendly laundry services for linens and towels. By lowering utility and resource costs, these programs not only help the hotel achieve its environmental objectives but also guarantee long-term financial viability. (Appendix 1)

Furthermore, the demand for sustainable lodging is rising in the hotel sector as environmental concerns get more attention on a worldwide scale (JamieWakeTravel, 2025). Eco-friendly hotels are becoming more and more popular, and the hotel has positioned itself to draw in these eco-aware customers. The hotel attracts clients who are prepared to pay more for sustainable housing by providing an eco-friendly stay. The hotel benefits from this change in consumer behavior, which guarantees its relevance and appeal in a travel sector that is becoming more environmentally sensitive.

The Four Points Flex hotel in Aalborg uses sustainability as a competitive edge in addition to drawing eco-conscious tourists. Among the hotel's many distinguished green certifications are the DGNB accreditation, a recognized benchmark for sustainable construction standards, and the Bronze Organic Cuisine certification, which attests to its dedication to employing premium, organic food components (HRewards, 2024.) These certifications set the hotel apart from rivals in the Aalborg area and further solidify its position as a leader in sustainable hospitality. These achievements and certificates give Four Points Flex by Sheraton a competitive advantage in the Aalborg area when it comes to the interest of green customers and guests who have an interest in sustainable practices.

This hotel in Aalborg enhances its brand image and financial stability by incorporating cost-effective sustainability measures, attracting eco-conscious visitors, and obtaining green certifications. Its dedication to sustainability ensures ongoing success in a changing and cutthroat industry while simultaneously promoting environmental preservation and solidifying its position as a pioneer in sustainable hospitality.

By integrating the Triple Bottom Line framework, Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg shows how a business can be socially responsible, environmentally conscious, and economically profitable. The hotel's practices such as sustainable building design, energy-efficient systems, and community engagement, demonstrate its commitment to all three pillars of sustainability. This approach not only benefits the environment but also increases the hotel's competitiveness in the growing market of ecologically conscious travelers. (HRewards, 2024.)

### 3 Effects of Green Practices on Guest Satisfaction and Loyalty

Guest satisfaction is the experience that business visitors have at the establishment, which is exemplified by the satisfaction that is gained from meeting the requirements, desires, and expectations of the guests. Comparing the hotel's service to that of its competitors is another way to gauge guest satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is an important factor in the hospitality industry, and therefore, hotels, restaurants should tailor their strategy and plans according to several aspects. For instance, hotels have to adapt to the quickly shifting expectations, tastes, and behaviors of their guests. Repeat business will be given to properties that can provide a memorable experience through distinctive features, individual touches, and excellent customer service. (Amadeus, 2025.) Very common factors that may influence customer satisfaction are, for example, long wait times for check-in, unfriendly personnel, dirty rooms, and delayed housekeeping response times are all instances of unpleasant experiences that impact the overall visitor experience.

Based on the article "Effects of Green Practices on Guest Satisfaction and Loyalty" by Mihaela-Simona Moise, Irene Gil-Saura, and Mária-Eugenia Ruiz-Molina (2018.), it is shown that sustainable practices in hotels have a significant positive impact on guest satisfaction. This research focuses on the relationship between green initiatives and tourist satisfaction, as well as the guests' willingness and motivation to return to the hotel and spread positive recommendations. (Moise, et al., 2018.) According to this article, hotels that implement environmentally friendly measures, such as saving water and energy, recycling, and using eco-friendly products, increase guest satisfaction. These measures not only contribute to protecting the environment but also increase the hotel's rating by visitors. Guests who perceive these measures as part of quality service are more willing to recommend the hotel to others and return to it in the future. An important finding is that satisfaction with hotels' green practices has a direct impact on guests' willingness to spread positive word-of-mouth (or word-of-mouse) and impacts their decision to visit the hotel again. Similarly, the findings show that satisfied guests are more likely to share their positive experiences with others, which can contribute to improving the hotel's image and attracting new customers. (Moise, et al., 2018.)

Guest satisfaction with sustainable practices is often stronger among business guests than among leisure guests. Although the perception of sustainability in hotels is positive, it was found that guests' intention to stay at the hotel again was stronger when it comes to business travelers than among those traveling for leisure. This difference may be due to the higher education and income of business guests, who are more focused on environmental measures and their impact on society or nature, and due to the different expectations of the two groups - business travelers have higher demands for professionalism and responsibility, while leisure guests may be more focused on comfort and relaxation. In relation to implementing sustainable practices, hotels should

communicate these initiatives clearly and effectively to increase guest awareness and strengthen their engagement in green measures. Hotels should also ensure that their green measures do not negatively impact guest comfort, ensuring that eco-friendly approaches become a valuable addition to the overall experience. (Moise, et al., 2018.)

Another important aspect is that sustainable practices in hotels contribute to strengthening relationships with guests, which in turn leads to increased loyalty and repeat visits. Guests who perceive hotels as environmentally responsible are more likely to return, which is important for the long-term stability and success of the business. Research findings show that green practices, such as using renewable energy, reducing water and energy consumption, or using organic products, are highly valued and often considered a factor that increases guest satisfaction. (Moise, et al., 2018.)

In addition, guests who participate in a hotel's green initiatives, such as recycling programs or using public transportation, tend to feel more committed to protecting the environment, which further supports their satisfaction. This type of engagement can create a sense of social responsibility that guests appreciate, and this can be decisive in their decision to stay at the hotel again. Research also suggests that guests who are willing to support hotels with green initiatives are often willing to contribute financially to these initiatives. This type of behavior is important because guests tend to perceive green hotels as providing better quality and responsible service, which influences their overall stay evaluation. (Moise, et al., 2018.)

In this regard, hotel businesses should take this difference into account when developing marketing strategies. Green practices should be communicated effectively so that guests understand and appreciate them, which can lead to an improved hotel image and increased competitiveness. Focusing on green practices can also attract new guests who are looking for environmentally responsible accommodation. Similarly, hotels should actively seek feedback from guests regarding their perceptions of green initiatives to ensure that their sustainability efforts are met with positive reviews. It is also important for hotels to regularly update their green policies and practices based on current trends and guest demands.

Research suggests that hotels that focus on sustainability can create a strong emotional connection with their guests. This connection can be key in building loyalty behaviors, leading to more frequent visits and positive feedback and reviews. Furthermore, satisfied guests are usually more likely to invest in long-term partnerships with responsible hotel chains, which can lead to stable revenues for the business. Implementing sustainable practices in hotels is important not only for environmental protection but also for business success. Hotels that invest in green measures and communicate them effectively not only gain greater guest satisfaction but also a stronger image as

responsible accommodation providers, leading to increased customer loyalty and satisfaction. (Moise, et al., 2018.)

When it comes to measuring guest satisfaction, it is a key aspect of success in the hospitality industry. As an article from Main Street Hospitality states, customer satisfaction is not just about meeting expectations but also exceeding them. Guests must leave a hotel feeling taken care of, which leads to more referrals and repeat visits. The first step in measuring guest satisfaction is to collect feedback through surveys. Post-stay surveys are common, and it is important to keep them brief and include open-ended questions to encourage valuable qualitative feedback. In addition, online reviews have become another important tool that provides immediate insight into guest experiences. These reviews allow hotels to quickly respond to any negative experiences and adjust their services to meet guest expectations. (Main Street Hospitality, 2024.) Based on this article, I made a decision that two of the most effective and relevant ways to measure guest satisfaction and collect data are through a post-stay survey and post-stay reviews.

Another tool is guest behavior analytics, which uses technology to track guest bookings and preferences during their stay. This way, hotels can tailor their services to the specific needs of their guests, leading to a better experience and satisfaction. Employee feedback is also very valuable, as happy employees are key to creating a positive guest experience. The article also mentions the importance of proactively addressing issues before they become complaints. Hotels that can anticipate and resolve issues can significantly improve the overall guest experience. To improve guest satisfaction, it is important to also invest in personalized services, such as customizing rooms and offering specific services. Employee training is another key factor, as empathetic and well-trained employees create a positive impression. Innovation is another factor that supports guest satisfaction - technologies such as contactless check-in or smart rooms increase convenience and safety during the stay, and it can also make their check-in process faster. (Main Street Hospitality, 2024.)

Measuring guest satisfaction should be an ongoing process that helps to continuously improve services and gain guest loyalty as well. As this article shows, there is no single way to measure guest satisfaction, but a combination of different methods provides a comprehensive picture of their experience. Hotels that effectively use data analytics and regularly respond to feedback can ensure high levels of satisfaction that lead to long-term success. (Main Street Hospitality, 2024.)

## 4 Brand Loyalty

The term "brand loyalty" describes the mental and emotional attachment a consumer forms to a certain brand, which leads to a sustained preference and recurring purchases over time, especially in the face of rivals providing comparable goods or services. It depends not only on product satisfaction but also on the relationship and trust that the brand develops with the customer. Even when alternatives may provide benefits like reduced costs or promotions, brand loyalty frequently results in consumers advocating for the brand, promoting it to others, and refusing to switch. Kotler and Keller (2016) define brand loyalty as a strong resolve to continuously purchase or return a favored good or service in the future, even in the face of external factors and promotional campaigns that may otherwise lead to switching behavior. In addition to guaranteeing consistent profits for companies, a solid base of brand loyalty serves as a hedge against market rivalry and economic volatility.

In order to succeed in the long run in the hospitality sector, brand loyalty is a crucial component of company strategy (Arshad, 2023). However, the biggest international hotel companies prioritize building a brand-based competitive advantage and give brand marketing and brand management a lot of attention. Additionally, the expansion of hotel brands, the introduction of new ones, and the building of new properties under existing brands are all influenced by the growth of the global hotel business and growing competition. (Mahasuweerachai, 2015.)

Brand loyalty has been examined using behavioral, attitudinal, and multidimensional approaches in the literature. Brand loyalty is linked to repeat business in a behavioral approach, whereas attitudinal loyalty is linked to the preferences, dedication, or buying intentions of the customer. In this regard, a brand-loyal customer is more likely to favor a certain brand and want to purchase it on subsequent occasions. (Filho, et al., 2020.) Brand loyalty should be differentiated from mere recurrence of buying behavior in a multifaceted way.

Loyalty is an essential and exclusive value in everyday life, not only when it comes to friendships or family relationships but also as a significant brand asset. Repeat buying of a product, service or experience from one brand is a result of a strong connection or bond built between customer and business. Loyal customers tend to return to their preferred brand they are devoted to and emotionally invested in. It can be the same hotel brand they stayed at before, purchasing the same product or different products from the exactly same brand they have already tried. Additionally, as Jennifer Rowley (2013) noted, loyal consumers are less price sensitive, and in this regard, loyalty may result in specific marketing advantages like cheaper campaign costs, more new clients, and an improved standing in the market. Positive word-of-mouth promotions and less vulnerability to a competitor's offer are further marketing advantages. Additionally, referrals from devoted clients, particularly those that aid in bringing in new business, raise the value of the client who contributes to the

business. Given generally predictable sales and a steady income stream, a devoted client makes a substantial contribution to the company's revenue growth. (Abbas, 2025.)

When it comes to Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, emphasizing the hotel's dedication to sustainable practices mentioned earlier, it may show that sustainable initiatives and client retention are beneficially related. Additionally, it is critical to consider the function of Marriott Bonvoy, the company's loyalty program. Guests can receive prizes for participating in this program at different locations, which may increase their brand loyalty. Also, Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg engages in the Marriott Bonvoy program, which enables visitors to earn and use points while visiting. Therefore, visitors may improve their travel experiences by signing up for Marriott Bonvoy, which offers a range of perks and points according to membership level (Marriott Bonvoy, 2025). As well as a loyalty program, all Four Points Flex by Sheraton hotels in Denmark offer 20% off accommodation rates for stays of two nights or longer from Thursday through Monday. Since Four Points Flex by Sheraton has now established 14 sites around Denmark, this discount is associated with the celebration of the new brand and this discount is valid from February 17, 2025 till April 28, 2025. (Marriott Bonvoy, 2025.) Especially in the competitive hotel sector, loyalty programs are an effective way to foster long-term client retention and brand loyalty. They offer organized benefits and rewards that not only promote continual reservations but also strengthen the bonds between customers and the company (Bonhak Koo, 2019).

## 5 Methodology

Firstly, after I concluded I wanted to work with a specific hotel in Aalborg, I had to find out what I wanted to analyze and find out according to my study. I decided to focus on sustainability and its impact on hotel guests. Then, I created a research question and sub-questions to help me obtain answers to this topic. After consideration, conducting research by using a survey was the best alternative in terms of reliability and importance of my study. The primary research topic examines how the hotel's sustainable practices affect client satisfaction and brand loyalty, and each question is thoughtfully crafted to support it. Furthermore, by determining which sustainability activities customers appreciate the most, whether sustainability affects their loyalty, and how well the hotel communicates its sustainability programs, the survey directly answers the study's sub-questions.

### 5.1 Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg

Before the hotel was bought by a new company, the previous name of the brand was Zleep Hotels and it was a hotel chain founded in 2003 and had between 201-500 employees. "Zleep Hotels is a hotel brand that focuses on being the best hotel supplier for the many. Our Danish roots are visible in our Scandinavian profile, and it is important to us that quality, service and design live up to our guests' expectations. We commit ourselves to living up to Zleep Hotels' standards and never compromising on our values. We provide quality stays at great rates. All Zleep hotels are designed to accommodate both social living and privacy. We take full responsibility for our impact on the environment, and we care about people – customers, colleagues and business partners". (Marriott, 2024.)

The Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg is a hotel built in 2019, boasting a very central location next to Aalborg's main bus and train station. Additionally, it is within walking distance of the city center. The hotel features 126 rooms designed in a minimalistic Scandinavian style, and the entire establishment reflects a Nordic aesthetic. Brand Four Points Flex by Sheraton is very clear about showing its value. As mentioned on the website of the hotel group Marriott International with German roots, "Our core values make us who we are. As we change and grow, the beliefs that are most important to us stay the same". (Marriott International, 2025). More specifically, their values are quality, environment, great rates and living as well as people.

"We have been leading the category but needed a new way to unlock new value potential for our hotels. We found the best fit through Four Points Flex by Sheraton, giving us access to immediate brand recognition through affiliation with Marriott Bonvoy and its well-established Four Points by Sheraton brand. This deal moves our hotels into the midscale segment and accelerates the

benefits offered to guests. We're truly delighted to make this historic deal with our trusted partners at Marriott," says Peter Haaber, CEO of Core Hospitality – Zleep Hotels. (CoreHospitality, 2024.)

The first very important value is a high focus on quality, meaning the hotel's rooms are designed with simplicity, functionality, and comfort in mind. A high-quality bed serves as the focal point of each room, ensuring a restful sleep for guests. Additional amenities include premium bedding, minimalist bathroom designs, and large flat-screen TVs in all renovated rooms. The company recognizes that the guest experience begins well before check-in and extends beyond check-out, therefore, the company continually invests in innovative IT solutions. These advancements, such as self-check-in machines, facilitate a seamless and enjoyable stay from start to finish. (HRewards, 2024.)

Commitment to sustainability is the next value used by the hotel Four Points Flex by Sheraton. The company places a high premium on environmental responsibility. They strongly seek to limit food waste via thoughtful planning and packaging, and they give priority to organic items to promote healthy choices. Recycling activities are in place to optimize resource recovery, and energy-saving solutions are favored throughout restorations. The business also demands the same sustainability standards from its suppliers and only employs eco-friendly materials in its operations. (HRewards, 2024.)

The business guarantees competitive pricing without sacrificing quality by putting strategic approaches and organized buying methods into practice. Efficiency is maintained while operating costs are decreased through the use of local specialists and efficient cost control. Online reservation platforms improve accessibility and let visitors get the greatest deals. The business is able to offer reasonably priced choices while upholding good service standards thanks to ongoing technological advancements. (HRewards, 2024.)

The last main value the hotel advertises and pays a big attention to is living. This company's hotels are meant to offer a warm and inviting environment that helps visitors feel at home. The hotel caters to each guest's specific needs, whether they are for productive work, social engagement, or a peaceful reading space. The organization makes sure that every stay is both efficient and restful by striking a balance between privacy and community. Through a combination of comfort, quality, and sustainability, the company strives to offer guests an unforgettable experience. (HRewards, 2024.) One of the Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg's core values is sustainability. The team and management place a strong emphasis on ensuring that the hotel operates sustainably while caring for both people and the planet. Later in this project, I will further discuss these initiatives.

Four Points Flex by Sheraton offers value-conscious travelers hotel experiences in strategically convenient locations, built on the principles of reliability, simplicity, and value in both design and customer experience. The brand targets midrange travelers who are practical planners and prioritize features that make both business and leisure trips easier. The renovated hotels will emphasize these fundamentals by providing sincere and friendly service, clean and comfortable rooms, breakfast, and free Wi-Fi to ensure an efficient and relaxed experience at an affordable price. Sustainability and other hotel values create the hotel brand and picture. (CoreHospitality, 2024.)

As stated, Four Points Flex by Sheraton is a company dedicated to creating a great environment for guests. Also, the slogan “Our dedication to the customer shows in everything we do” (2025) is a headline on one of Marriott’s main pages referring to values. Replacing traditional receptionists with a team of hosts and hostesses shows the concept of hostmanship, which is a passion for creating a pleasant, proactive, and informal atmosphere. The goal is to make every guest feel welcome and valued.

When it comes to a target group, guests who have recently stayed at the Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg make up the study's target group. The necessity to obtain firsthand information from people who have personal involvement with the hotel's sustainable activities justifies the selection of this group. The research target audience has been classified into 2 groups: business guests, who travel due to their job-related activities, meetings, company visits and leisure tourists, who decided to visit a city concerning its history, culture and relaxation. Both business and leisure travelers will have access to the poll in order to guarantee a representative sample. This will enable an examination of whether various visitor categories have varying perspectives on sustainability initiatives. Given that cultural and demographic aspects might influence expectations regarding sustainability, it is essential to comprehend the viewpoints of both local and foreign visitors. In my study, I did not include guests who simply came for breakfast or coffee in the morning because they had not spent the night in their room and so were not exposed to the hotel's sustainable practices for the duration of their stay.

## **5.2 Research method**

The study may be separated into qualitative and quantitative methods based on the kind of information that is being investigated, which is why it was decided to combine both of these methods in this study. It is also known that a combination of these techniques is mixed-method research that incorporates both approaches' benefits. (Taherdoost, 2022.) Qualitative research often employs a small sample size and offers a micro picture of the study subject. On the other hand, quantitative research employs bigger data sets and takes a macro perspective. Another important distinction between the two study approaches is that, whereas the qualitative approach is more subjective in

its problem-analysis procedures, the quantitative approach employs statistically rigorous tools. (Streefkerk, 2019.) Therefore, a mixed-methods approach will be used for my research project, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

In my thesis, the main goal is to find out how sustainable practices influence customer satisfaction and brand loyalty at Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg. I used a mixed-methods approach, this study combines qualitative and quantitative research techniques to thoroughly examine how sustainable practices at Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg affect guest satisfaction and brand loyalty. The benefit of mixed-methods research is that it may capture both the scope of quantifiable patterns and the depth of individual experiences, leading to a comprehensive understanding of the study topic. In order to investigate complicated human behaviors and motives, qualitative research often adopts a naturalistic and interpretative approach, utilizing empirical data including case studies, personal narratives, and open-ended survey answers. (Taherdoost, 2022.) Open-ended questions incorporated within the consumer survey were used to gather qualitative data for this research. By implementing questions “why” and “how,” I give respondents the ability to describe how, why, or what they were experiencing, feeling, and thinking at a specific moment or during their stay in the hotel Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg.

At the same time, the research incorporates a quantitative element to examine visitor attitudes and actions quantitatively. Aliaga and Gunderson (2002) define quantitative research as “explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)”. Surveys are one of the most popular ways to carry out quantitative research since they facilitate the possibility of obtaining structured information from many participants. A structured customer satisfaction survey with multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions was the main quantitative instrument used in this study to gauge satisfaction levels, the significance of sustainability in hotel selection, and the possibility of repeat business and referrals. In addition to this, the quantitative component, which has its roots in the tradition of experimental inquiry (Mohajan, 2020), entails gathering numerical data from secondary sources like user reviews and ratings from travel websites like Booking.com and TripAdvisor as well as from closed-ended survey questions. The hotel's sustainability initiatives were linked to trends seen in ratings related to overall experience, cleanliness, value for money, and service quality. This mixed-method technique improves the study's validity and offers a deeper, more nuanced examination of how sustainable hospitality practices encourage customer loyalty and a favorable brand image by combining story and statistical data.

### 5.3 Implementation of Data Collection

As the main research method for gathering data, I decided to work with a structured survey, which guarantees effective and quantifiable findings. The survey was available only for visitors who booked at least one night in the hotel, to freely complete in the hotel lobby. To boost engagement, an online version could also be shared via the hotel's social media accounts. Therefore, both digital and print versions of the survey have been accessible. However, a QR code directing to an online survey has been shown at the reception. The survey is intended to be brief and interesting, with a focus on important facets of sustainability-related guest pleasure and brand loyalty. The survey uses a Likert scale to assess how people feel about the hotel's green initiatives, how beneficial they are seen to be, and how much of an impact they have on future reservations. This method was justified since it is simple to use, effective at gathering data, and capable of reaching a large audience. The survey was made available to visitors at their convenience, which guarantees that the answers are genuine and representative of actual experiences. In order to protect visitor privacy and ethical research requirements, responses are anonymized and kept securely.

To create a profile of the respondents, the survey starts with demographic questions. The guest's nationality is recorded in the second question, whereas the first asks if they are visiting for business or pleasure. These inquiries are essential for determining if various visitor demographics such as domestic vs foreign tourists or business versus leisure travelers perceive and appreciate sustainability initiatives differently.

Next, the questionnaire focuses on how guests choose hotels based on sustainability. When choosing accommodation, a Likert-scale question is used to rate the importance of sustainability, with responses ranging from "Not important at all" to "Extremely important." This reveals information on visitors' overall perceptions of sustainability and whether or not it has a big impact on their choice of accommodation. In order to ascertain whether or if guests who place a high value on sustainability are more likely to remain faithful to Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, it is directly related to the sub-question on guest loyalty.

Furthermore, multiple-choice question in the survey asks respondents to choose the top three sustainability efforts they value most, such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation, locally produced food, and eco-friendly toiletries, in order to better understand guest preferences. This enables the hotel to emphasize its commitment to sustainability in the future by determining which practices are most important.

By asking visitors if they were informed and by what means, the survey examines how well the hotel conveys its sustainable initiatives. This aids in identifying areas for development as well as the

best communication techniques. Guests are asked if they would suggest the hotel based on its sustainable policies and to describe their reasons in order to evaluate the influence of word-of-mouth. Last but not least, an open-ended question asks visitors for ideas on how hotels may improve their sustainability promotion, providing qualitative information to improve message and interaction tactics.

After conducting a survey in the Webropol tool, it was time to print a QR code, which was created from the web link leading to the survey in Webropol and placed in the hotel's reception lobby. Also, to ensure sufficient replies, receptionists were told to remind guests about the survey at the time of check-in. The customer survey was carried out at Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg for 3 weeks from the 25<sup>th</sup> of March to the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2025. After 10 days, while the survey was active, I received 27 answers. Given the poor response rate, I made the decision to encourage hotel staff to post a QR code in each room in the hopes of receiving more replies. This way, guests could complete the survey while unwinding in their rooms. Thankfully, by the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2025, I had managed to get a total of 62 answers. Finally, the data has been thoroughly evaluated and analyzed using graphs.

#### **5.4 Data Management**

Additionally, I had to take into account whether research permission from the company, in my case the hotel, and personal data needed to be processed. I visited a hotel, Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, where the front office manager signed permission and allowed me to gather data from the customers. As I mentioned before, the survey was anonymous and no personal data had been collected, therefore, no GDPR was needed. However, I had to write a Participant Information Sheet, which was attached to the survey's introduction, where I stated no personal data would be collected to make sure that participants feel comfortable and answer honestly. On top of that, the purpose of the study, how the research data is processed and destroyed, and the researcher's contact details were mentioned in the sheet, which is a crucial step in the context of research integrity. When it comes to data processing, I informed all gathered data will be used specifically for my academic research and will be published in the Theseus online library without individual or personal details. Following the survey's introduction, a consent form was included with a question that respondents had to respond to with a "yes" in order to proceed. The rule was incorporated in the survey creation process to instantly terminate the questionnaire in the case that customers choose to answer "no."

## 5.5 Data analysis

In accordance with the mixed-methods research methodology used for this thesis, a variety of quantitative and qualitative techniques were employed to examine the data gathered from the Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg customer survey. As stated by Creswell and Clark (2017), mixed-methods research is most beneficial when quantitative data reveals broad patterns and qualitative data provides a more specific understanding of respondents' viewpoints.

The survey for my thesis was created in the Webropol tool with a recommendation and tool provided by Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. All quantitative data from the questionnaire were descriptively analyzed, collected and arranged by using Webropol software. Also, Webropol automatically creates a basic report from the answers and conducts diagrams and figures in it to visualize the analysis, which can then be used in the report. Furthermore, thematic analysis, a qualitative technique that entails coding and clustering related concepts to find recurrent themes of sustainability choices and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2019), was used to examine open-ended responses. After exporting the raw data, the data from open-ended questions was copied to Microsoft Excel to make it clearer and organized for the reader. As you can see in Chapter 6 below, results were illustrated with the help of bar charts and pie charts to make information more readable and easier to understand, as confirmed by Bryman (2016), who emphasizes the importance of visuals in facilitating the comprehension and evaluation of information from surveys.

The significance of sustainability to visitors, the most valuable sustainable practices, and the probability of returning or recommending the hotel were all examined using statistical analysis, including percentages, frequencies and averages. Furthermore, some comments were manually retrieved and classified using thematic coding, which identifies and groups repeated areas. For example, replies referencing reusable soap dispensers, smart thermostats, or food waste reduction were categorized with applicable topics such as eco-friendly bathroom toiletries or food waste. This type of inductive coding formed significant guest feelings into obvious categories and connected them to the sustainable activities that visitors valued the most.

## 6 Results

The survey consisted of 14 different types of questions, and the first question asked for consent to this study. The questionnaire was made up of versatile questions and the form contained multiple-choice questions, Likert-scale questions, open-ended questions and questions where participants had to choose only one answer. In open-ended questions, there was no minimum or maximum number of possible answers; in multiple-choice questions, the number of possible answers had to be assessed on a scale of 1 to 5. Every question was marked as mandatory in order to get as many responses as possible. The questions were intended to find out the meaning of the Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg sustainable practices and its impact on customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. In other words, how they proceed with these efforts, if these sustainable initiatives are important to them, and if they are willing to revisit the hotel regarding these practices. As I mentioned before, 62 responses were received in total.

First, the respondents' reasons for traveling were defined in the second question, which questioned if they were going for employment or pleasure. More than one quarter (32%) of the participants were leisure tourists, while the majority (68%) were business travelers. (Figure 3). Given that the hotel is well-known for holding business conferences and housing mostly businesspeople for work-related reasons, it was anticipated that the majority of survey respondents would choose business.

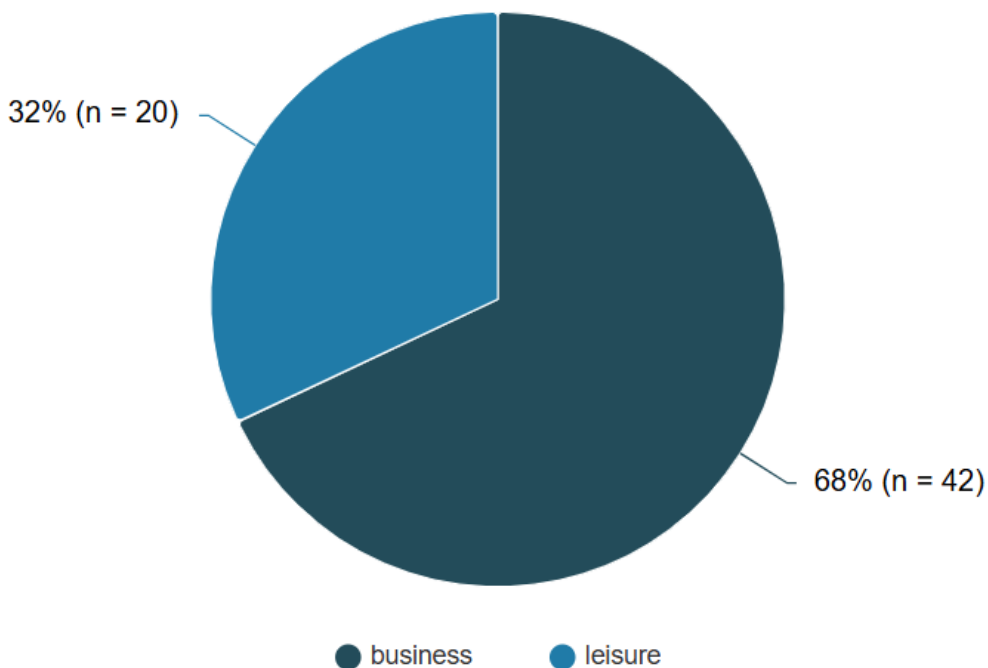


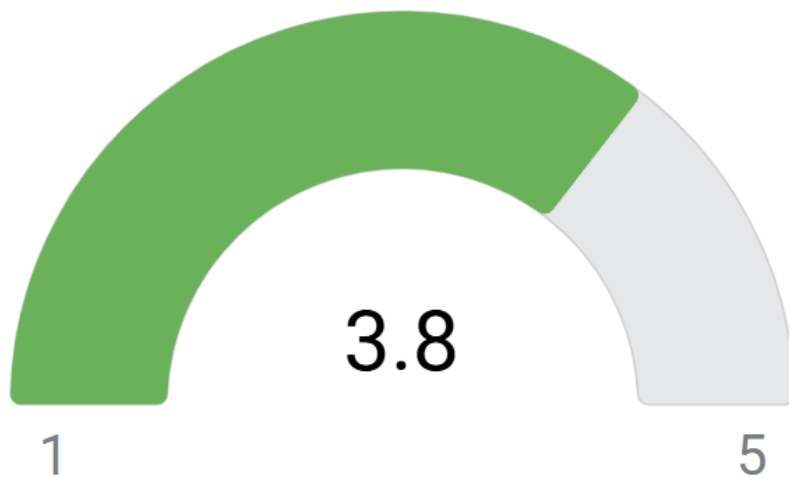
Figure 3. Customers' travel reasons

Second, I displayed the nationalities of hotel visitors who answered my survey. According to 36 participants, the majority of replies were Danish visitors, using terms like "dansk" and "Danmark". (Table 2) This outcome reflects a strong national presence and is consistent with the hotel's local clientele. With ten replies, Swedish visitors made up the second-largest category, followed by Norwegian visitors with six, underscoring the significance of nearby Scandinavian markets. Five responders were German, indicating that the hotel also draws customers from Central Europe. The rest of the participants were from Slovakia, 2 respondents from Poland, and one participant from Japan. (Table 2) This geographic spread shows that, although its core clientele is still Scandinavian, the hotel also welcomes a variety of European and occasionally global visitors, providing a chance to customize sustainable practices and marketing strategies for both domestic and international visitors.

Table 2. Customer nationality

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
Danish	<b>36</b>
Swedish	<b>10</b>
Norwegian	<b>6</b>
German	<b>5</b>
Slovak	<b>3</b>
Polish	<b>2</b>
Japanese	<b>1</b>

In order to better understand the visitors' beliefs, I questioned them in the fourth question how important they think sustainable practices are when choosing a hotel. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 representing extremely important and 1 representing not important at all, the question was constructed. (Figure 4) This question is slightly connected to the 1st sub-question of the thesis.



	Not Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely important	Total	Mean	CES
N	0	2	20	26	14	62	3.8	40
Percent	0.0%	3.2%	32.3%	41.9%	22.6%	100.0%	3.8	64.6%

Figure 4. The importance of sustainability

Most of the respondents (42%) considered sustainability very important, but not extremely important. Extremely important received 14 answers, which made up 23%, which was less than moderately important with 20 responses (32%). Slightly important received only 3%, made up of 2 respondents and not important received 0%. The average value of the answers was 3.8, which means customers consider sustainability important. (Figure 4)

The fifth question was a multiple-choice question, which aimed to determine the most valuable sustainable practices by hotel guests. This question provided an answer to what sustainable efforts customers value the most in the Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg hotel and also provided an answer to sub-question number 2 of this study. Participants were required to select at least one of the nine options available for this question, but there was no upper limit on the number of options.

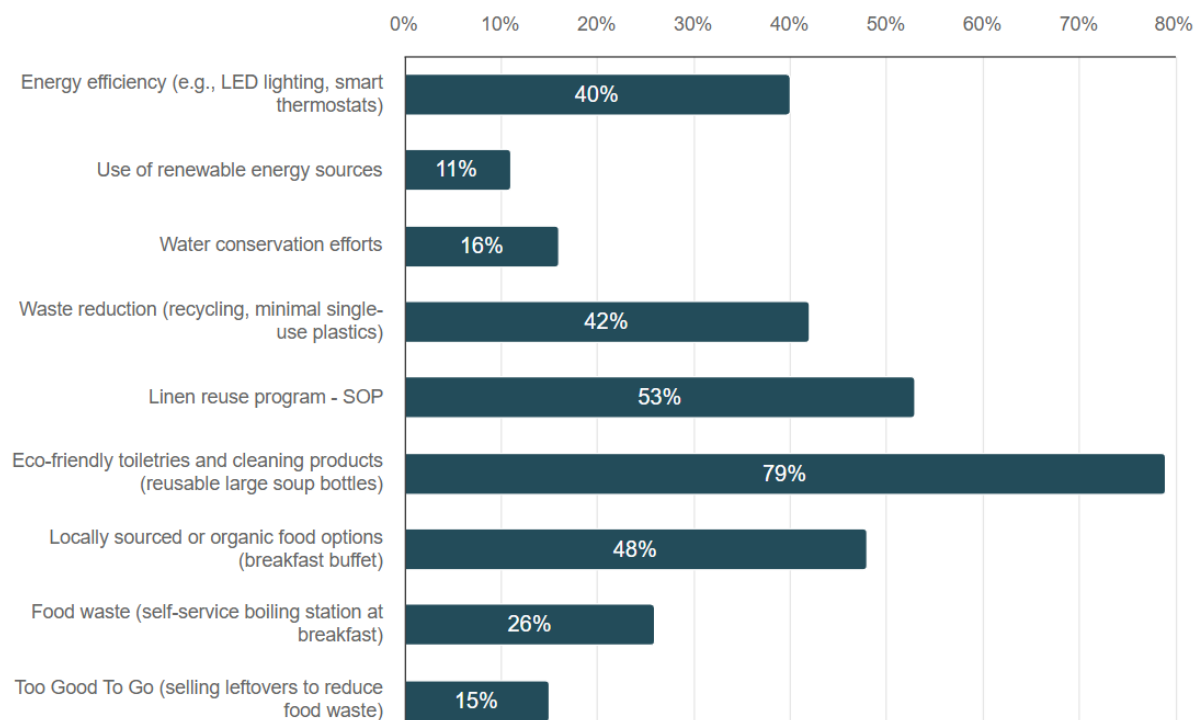


Figure 5. The most valuable sustainable practices

As shown in Figure 5, the most valuable sustainable practice selected by participants was eco-friendly toiletries and cleaning products (79%). The second most popular initiative when it comes to customer value was the linen reuse program SOP (53%). Furthermore, the hotel clientele values locally sourced or organic food options in the breakfast buffet (48%). On the four places, with only a 2% difference, were the waste reduction initiative representing recycling and single-use plastics (42%) and energy efficiency, including LED lighting and smart thermostats (40%). Food waste efforts, such as a self-service boiling station at breakfast, were valued by 16 respondents (26%). The least valuable sustainable practices were water conservation efforts (16%) and collaboration with Too Good To Go to minimize food waste chosen by only 9 respondents (15%). The use of renewable energy sources was shown as the least valuable sustainable practice (11%), which I assume might be due to the fact that these efforts are not visible to guests, since it represents the solar energy the hotel uses, or wind energy from local wind farms, that are very common and popular in Denmark. I received 205 responses in all, meaning that on average, each responder selected at least three sustainable practices from the list of options provided by the question.

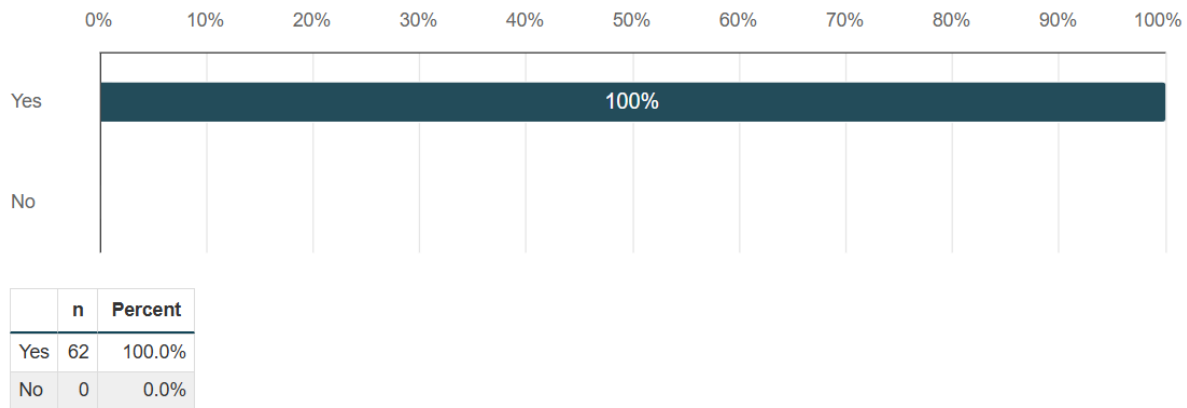


Figure 6. Positive impact of sustainable practices

The next question in my survey was very simple, where participants had to pick between yes or no to answer if sustainable practices positively influenced their overall stay in Four Points Flex by Sheraton. (Figure 6) Since all of the respondents chose "yes," which makes the result 100%, the next question asked why these efforts had a positive impact on their stay. Since this question was open-ended, survey respondents were able to write anything they wanted.

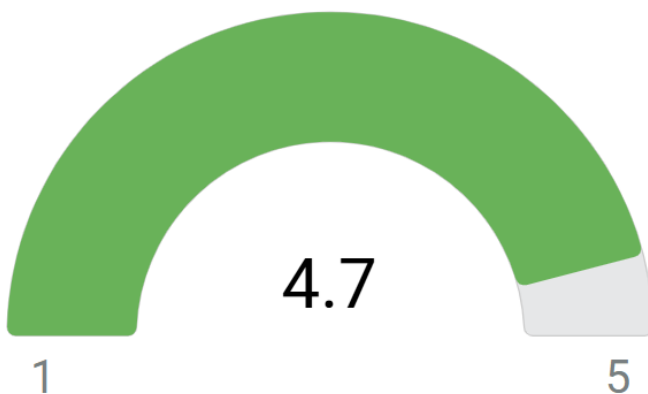
Table 3. Practices that positively influenced guests overall stay

<b>Sustainable practice:</b>	<b>Number of respondents:</b>
Reusable soup bottles	28
High-quality breakfast	26
Linen/towel reuse	12
Smart thermostats	5
Reminders on the walls	15
Water station	5
Single-use plastics	5

To summarize all the answers, as shown in Table 3, reusable shampoo and soap dispensers in the bathrooms were praised by 28 visitors as being both practical and eco-friendly. The smart thermostats, eco-friendly washroom items, and energy-saving reminders (such as shutting off lights) were warmly received and gave visitors a sense of involvement in the hotel's sustainability efforts. Moreover, 26 people commented on how good the breakfast was, particularly the organic and locally produced food selections, the "Too Good To Go" campaign, and the self-service boiling station, which minimized food waste. The hotel's policy of replacing bed linens and towels only upon request, along with the cleanliness of the rooms and the fresh linens and towels, received 12 positive comments for striking a balance between environmental preservation and hygiene. Lastly, the

hotel's usage of glass bottles at the bar and water refill stations, as well as its support of small businesses in the area, were also appreciated by 5 guests. (Table 3) This might also be connected to the fifth question, where these sustainable practices were shown as most valuable by the guests.

The survey's eighth question, which asked respondents if they were inclined to return to the hotel because of its environmentally friendly practices, was designed to use a Likert scale. The scale ranged from 1 to 5, with 5 being very likely and 1 representing not likely. This question received very positive feedback, where 70% of respondents answered very likely, meaning they would most probably return to the hotel thanks to eco-friendly initiatives. 29% received likely, which is a good sign for the hotel since it indicates strong customer satisfaction. This question also provides a solid answer to sub-question number two. Lastly, only one participant responded with neutral, which makes up 1.6% and the overall result of the question received on average 4.7. (Figure 7)



	Not likely	Slightly likely	Neutral	Likely	Very likely	Total	Mean	CES
N	0	0	1	18	43	62	4.7	61
Percent	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	29.0%	69.4%	100.0%	4.7	98.4%

Figure 7. Retention due to sustainable practices

The 9th and 10th questions are connected and helped me find the answer to one of the sub-questions, which was “How does Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, communicate their sustainability efforts to guests?”. In contrast to question number 9, which inquired about the hotel's effectiveness in communicating its sustainable practices, question number 10 aimed to discover how the hotel did so with the help of an open-ended question. Only one respondent answered no, which represents 2%, and the rest of 61 participants chose yes as their answer. (Figure 8)

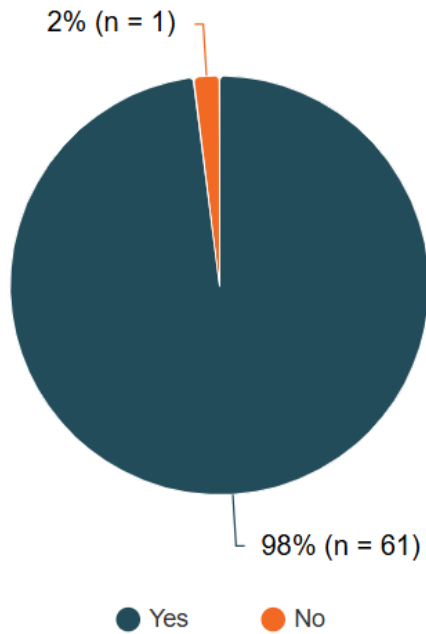


Figure 8. The effective communication of sustainable practices

In question number 10, respondents were asked to write about how the hotel communicated sustainable efforts. As shown in Table 4, the majority of respondents found out about these eco-friendly initiatives through the hotels' website, which made 45 people in total. Staff communicated these efforts and acknowledged 21 hotel guests. Also, 14 people answered that the reception was the place where the hotel communicated and used marketing to inform customers about sustainable practices. Only three people answered that booking confirmation helped them to learn about the initiatives and only one person stated a travel agency. Since it was an open-ended question and there was no maximum limit of choices, participants were able to write more than one way of communicating these efforts by the hotel. (Table 4)

Table 4. Ways of communicating sustainable efforts

website	<b>45</b>
staff	<b>21</b>
reception	<b>14</b>
booking confirmation	<b>3</b>
travel agency	<b>1</b>

When asked about the possibility of recommending the hotel to others, in the eleventh question, all the respondents answered yes, which makes 100%. (Figure 9) The result indicates that every guest who participated in the survey would recommend the hotel because of its environmental and

sustainable efforts. This entirely positive feedback demonstrates how Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg's eco-friendly efforts have significantly and favorably impacted visitor satisfaction and image. This finding implies that sustainability programs have a direct impact on boosting word-of-mouth advertising and brand loyalty.

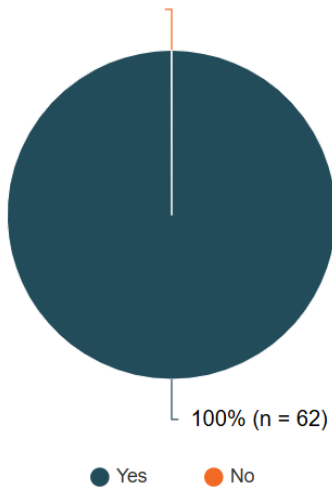


Figure 9. Recommendation to others

To gather more insights to help the hotel possibly gain more eco-conscious customers and maybe improve some of the strategies the hotel already applies, question number 12 was created. The multiple-choice question was chosen, asking how customers learn about a hotel's sustainable efforts before booking. Respondents had 6 options to choose from and select all that applies for them, with option "other" connected with the answer of their choice. However, no one picked that option, therefore, the other 5 options were enough. (Figure 10)

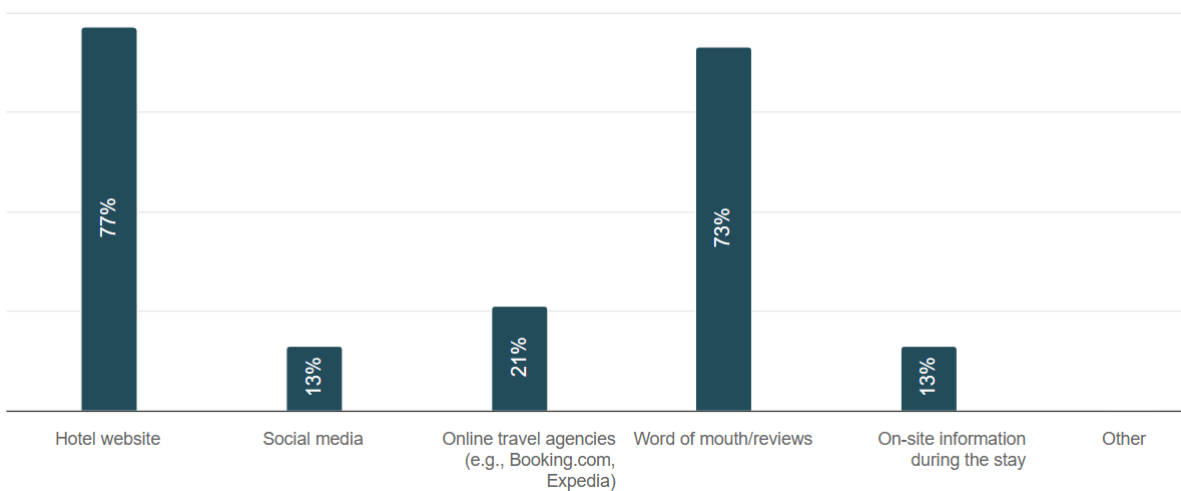


Figure 10. Ways of learning before booking

In this question, the hotel website received 77%, which represents 48 respondents who learn about the efforts in this way. Word of mouth and reviews ended up as the second type of way, with 73% of respondents. Less than one quarter, online travel agencies received 21%. As the least common ways of learning about these practices before booking were social media and on-site information during the stay, both received 13%. (Figure 10)

Lastly, I decided to end my survey with an open-ended question to gather some qualitative data, where question number 13 asked about whether hotels should do more to promote their sustainable initiatives. Since the question was mandatory, respondents had to answer at least something, and the answers were very diverse. I categorized the answers according to themes and wrote down the results with the help of Microsoft Excel. (Table 5)

Table 5. Suggestions for improvement

<b>Category:</b>	<b>Number of respondents:</b>
Social media engagement	23
Advertising and marketing	11
Partnership with travel agencies	3
On-site information	3
maybe/no	31

Table 5 shows that 23 respondents suggest improving social media appearances for the hotel. Advertising and marketing received 11 responses, mentioning clearer booking confirmation emails or posters. 3 survey participants also recommended partnerships with travel agencies or other businesses to help boost the knowledge and visibility of the hotel's sustainability practices. Moreover, 3 people mentioned improving on-site information, putting up prominent signs, or QR codes throughout the hotel to tell guests about the latest environmental projects. However, the largest number of respondents (31) answered maybe and no, expressing a lack of confidence or the conviction that the efforts being made now are adequate.

## 7 Discussion

The aim of the research was to find out how sustainable practices in Four Points Flex by Sheraton influence customer satisfaction and what impact they have on brand loyalty. Furthermore, I wanted to get answers to three sub-questions, which were “What aspects of sustainability are most valued by the hotel guests?”, “In what ways do guests who prioritize sustainability show stronger loyalty to Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg because of its eco-friendly initiatives?”, “How does Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg communicate its sustainability efforts to guests?”. The research was successful as it provided answers to the research topic and its sub-questions.

In order for the survey's results to be as effective and dependable as possible, it was intended to receive at least 50 replies. However, I got 62 answers, which made my questionnaire valuable and successful. It even exceeded my initial expectations and the limit that was set at the beginning. According to the results from the survey, it becomes evident that a sizable percentage of consumers appreciate eco-friendly procedures, especially those that are obvious, practical, and involve visitors firsthand. The strong preference for eco-friendly breakfast alternatives, smart thermostats, and reusable soap dispensers, for instance, indicates that visitors recognize and appreciate sustainability when it improves their comfort and complies with their own morals.

Additionally, this study demonstrates that sustainability is a marketing benefit as well as an operational objective. A lot of participants said that because of the hotel's environmental initiatives, they might come back or suggest it to others. This highlights the strategic significance of preserving and improving eco-friendly practices by explicitly connecting sustainability with brand loyalty and favorable word-of-mouth promotion. The results also show that the hotel website, staff communications, and tangible signs like food labels or refill stations all have an impact on guests both before and throughout their stay. This indicates that although the hotel's sustainable branding has already acquired some popularity, however, it has further potential for improvement.

With an average relevance rating of 3.8 out of 5, the survey findings clearly show that visitors of Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg indeed care about sustainability. This is consistent with the general awareness of sustainability's increasing importance in consumer decisions, especially in the hotel industry (Moise, et al., 2018.). Although 98% of respondents said that the hotel successfully communicates its sustainable practices, mostly through its website and personnel, the open-ended comments and the information on how customers find out about these initiatives before making a reservation point to areas that might use improvement. The overwhelming preference for the hotel website as the main information source before and throughout the stay highlights how crucial digital communication tactics influencing guests' opinions. The relationship between sustainability activities and brand loyalty, as well as a theoretical approach, which emphasizes that

businesses match with consumers' own values, like environmental responsibility, benefits from increased advocacy, loyalty, and long-term customer involvement, as proposed by Kotler and Keller (2016), is further supported by the fact that a significant majority of respondents (70%) said they are very likely to return to the hotel because of its eco-friendly policies.

Moreover, the Planet and People pillars of the Triple Bottom Line are strongly related to the most valued sustainable activities, which include eco-friendly cleaning and toiletry products (79%), linen reuse programs (53%), and locally sourced and organic food (48%). (Elkington, 2004.) Visitors value concrete initiatives that help local people and reduce their negative effects on the environment. The favorable comments on programs such as the "Too Good To Go" campaign and reusable dispensers demonstrate the effective use of waste reduction techniques, which are a crucial component of environmental sustainability (Schaltegger, 2012).

With 77% of respondents citing the hotel's website as their main source of information about sustainability initiatives, survey participants often emphasized the value of this resource. However, just 13% of visitors discovered sustainable activities on social media. Loyal clients are less price sensitive and contribute indirect marketing advantages like social media impact and good word-of-mouth, claims Rowley (2013). Although the recommendations received in response to the last open-ended question indicate a desire for even more involvement and communication of the hotel's environmental offerings. Because they are less price sensitive and more likely to promote the brand, devoted clients are extremely important assets for organizations, states Abbas. (2025.) This also supports the theory made by Jennifer Rowley (2013) that regular and interesting brand communication may greatly strengthen brand loyalty, hence reducing marketing expenses and creating a solid, long-lasting market position.

## **7.1 Suggestions**

According to the survey results, I came up with several useful suggestions for the Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg. In order to make its sustainable practices more visible before visitors come, the hotel should first improve its communication methods, particularly through internet channels and social media platforms like Instagram. I concluded this from the last open-ended question in my customer survey, where a significant number of people mentioned that the hotel should improve its social media activity (Table 5). Furthermore, I suggest that the hotel include some in-room information cards or similar symbols about practices like employing renewable energy, since they are invisible to visitors and received a lower rating in the survey. For example, to use similar symbols on the walls as they already have with the towel policy in the hotel.

Although I thought about providing rewards to visitors who choose not to participate in daily house-keeping, such loyalty points or modest discounts might improve the visitor experience and further promote ecologically conscious behavior. Even though this recommendation might be a little bit expensive or not that profitable for the hotel, giving customers discounts might improve brand loyalty and customer retention. Finally, to stay in line with changing tastes and keep a competitive edge in sustainable hospitality, the hotel should think about routinely gathering guest feedback through follow-up surveys.

## **7.2 Validity and reliability**

In mixed research methods, reliability and validity are two concepts related to assessing the study findings that incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods. Validity is the level to which the study method has been successful in assessing the intended outcome. For the study approach to be effective, the survey questions must be accurate in order for the respondents to comprehend them accurately and in the same manner that the researcher has (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The survey's questions were thoughtfully crafted for this study to ensure that respondents understood them and that there were no misconceptions, proving the effectiveness of the research methodology. Additionally, it was critical to consider that the questions addressed both the main research topic and its subproblems, and that the questions would provide the answers to these. The validity of the study was successful as the survey was able to address the main research topic as well as all of its sub-questions.

On the other hand, in mixed methods research, reliability pertains to the consistency or reproducibility of the techniques and results. Reliability in the integration of both approaches also entails avoiding bias toward one approach, guaranteeing methodological coherence and alignment across data kinds, and openly interpreting how qualitative insights support or clarify quantitative patterns. (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2016.) Only outside of the vacation seasons, when business travelers predominate, can the findings be replicated at the Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg. A survey carried out over the summer, when the hotel's leisure guests would be the primary target group, would reveal variations. Because various hotels have varied customers and sustainable practices, the study's findings also cannot be applied to other hotels. The customer survey has 62 responders, which is considered a dependable number.

## **7.3 Personal learning and development**

This thesis discusses Danish sustainable activities and the perspectives of consumers about these initiatives. During the research and writing of my bachelor's thesis, I have grown both academically and personally, especially in my comprehension of the function of sustainability in the hospitality

sector. As a person who is interested in sustainability and its relationship to tourism, I decided to concentrate my study on Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg, a hotel that actively implements environmentally friendly practices into its daily activities. Also, in my opinion, sustainability and responsibility are very current and important topics to learn more about, which will be valued in the future labor market. However, working on this report required good time management and self-control. I still enjoyed the whole writing process and research process of the main topic.

Gaining firsthand knowledge of how sustainable techniques are used in an actual hotel environment and how visitors see these initiatives has been one of the most enjoyable parts of this project. I acquired useful skills in questionnaire design, data gathering, and analysis while conducting a consumer survey. Using programs like Webropol and Excel, I learnt how to create insightful questions that support the goals of the study and how to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. My knowledge of mixed-methods research and the value of integrating statistical information with firsthand accounts to obtain a more complete picture of visitor fulfillment and brand loyalty has grown as a result of this approach.

In the context of the hospitality industry, working on this thesis also allowed me to investigate more general theoretical ideas like customer behavior, brand loyalty, and environmental awareness. I learned that, when properly presented and carried out, sustainability is not something special or trendy, but it is a basic demand from customers in today's world. When carefully explained, the customer's decision to buy also has an impact on the overall condition of the world and gives them the chance to bring something to the greater good. Initiatives like reusable toiletries, waste reduction, and the use of locally produced items received favorable feedback from a large number of visitors, which was encouraging and demonstrated that even seemingly insignificant efforts may have a big impact.

Personally, this initiative has increased my desire to work in a field that blends tourism with sustainability. I have learned how to handle an extensive research project, analyze critically, and present findings understandably and expertly. Working with a legitimate hotel brand also made me feel more accountable and relevant, which increased the usefulness and effect of the overall educational process. In summary, my thesis has confirmed my enthusiasm for encouraging sustainable growth in the hotel sector while also assisting me in developing as a researcher. I am glad for the chance to apply my academic interests in the real world, and I intend to keep developing my career by focusing on responsible and mindful tourism.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Sustainable reminders



## Appendix 2. Survey

### **Sustainable Practices in Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg: Guest Satisfaction and Brand Loyalty**

Mandatory questions are marked with an asterisk (\*)

Hello, my name is Zuzana Trepacova and I am a student of Strategic Hospitality Management. This research is being conducted as part of my bachelor's thesis at Haaga Helia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki.

The primary goal of this anonymous survey is to explore how sustainable practices at Four Points Flex by Sheraton Aalborg influence guest satisfaction and brand loyalty. As this survey is anonymous, no personal data will be collected.

The collected data will be processed and analyzed using Haaga-Helia's storage services and analysis software, ensuring data security and confidentiality. The data obtained will be removed upon submission and approval of the thesis no later than 30.06.2025. The final thesis will only contain aggregated and anonymized data, making it impossible to identify any specific replies.

The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your response 😊

If you have any further questions you are welcome to contact me through mail:

bhg812@myy.haaga-helia.fi

**1. I have read the Participant Information Sheet and give my consent to participate in the study in accordance with the research announcement. \***

- Yes  
 No

**2. What type of hotel guest are you? \***

- business  
 leisure

**3. What is your nationality? \***

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**4. How important is sustainability to you when choosing a hotel? \***

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely Important

**5. Which of the following sustainable practices do you value the most in a hotel? \***

- Energy efficiency (e.g., LED lighting, smart thermostats)
- Use of renewable energy sources
- Water conservation efforts
- Waste reduction (recycling, minimal single-use plastics)
- Linen reuse program - SOP
- Eco-friendly toiletries and cleaning products (reusable large soap bottles)
- Locally sourced or organic food options (breakfast buffet)
- Food waste (self-service boiling station at breakfast)
- Too Good To Go (selling leftovers to reduce food waste)

**6. Did the hotel's sustainability efforts positively influence your overall stay experience? \***

- Yes
- No

**7. Why or why not? \***

**8. How likely are you to stay at this hotel again due to its eco-friendly initiatives? \***

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Likely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Likely

**9. Did the hotel effectively communicate its sustainability efforts to you? \***

- Yes  
 No

**10. How did they communicate these efforts? (e.g., website, staff, booking confirmation) \***

**11. Would you recommend this hotel to others based on its sustainable practices? \***

- Yes  
 No

**12. How do you usually learn about a hotel's sustainability initiatives before booking? (Multiple-choice, select all that apply) \***

- Hotel website
- Social media
- Online travel agencies (e.g., Booking.com, Expedia)
- Word of mouth/reviews
- On-site information during the stay
- Other

**13. How? From where? \***

**14. Do you think hotels should do more to promote their sustainability efforts? If so, how? \***