

Role of Online Advertising in Promoting Sustainable Hospitality Practices: A Study on Hotel and Customer Engagement

Dr. Rashmi Phirake

Assistant Professor, Dept. of MBA, AISSMS Institute of Management, (Affiliated to Savitribai Phule Pune University), Pune, Maharashtra, India

Abstract

The hospitality industry is increasingly integrating sustainability into its operations as hotels respond to environmental concerns, changing customer expectations, and responsible tourism practices. This study examines the role of online advertising in promoting sustainable hospitality practices, with particular emphasis on hotel and customer engagement. Online advertising platforms, including social media, search engines, hotel websites, and digital campaigns, enable hotels to communicate initiatives related to energy conservation, waste reduction, water management, sustainable sourcing, and community participation. The study explores how sustainability-oriented advertising can enhance customer awareness, influence perceptions, encourage responsible consumption, and strengthen engagement with hotel brands. It also considers the importance of credibility, transparency, interactive communication, and green messaging in shaping customer responses. The study concludes that strategically designed online advertising can serve as an effective communication mechanism for promoting sustainable hospitality while strengthening customer engagement, brand reputation, and competitive positioning. It provides useful implications for developing customer-centric digital sustainability communication strategies in the hospitality sector.

Keywords: *Online Advertising, Sustainable Hospitality, Hospitality Industry, Customer Engagement, Digital Marketing, Green Marketing, Sustainable Practices, Hotel Industry*

Submitted: June 20, 2026

Revised: July 29, 2026

Accepted: August 14, 2026

Published: August 25, 2026

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.22107080](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22107080)



1. Introduction

The hospitality industry has undergone significant transformation as environmental sustainability has become increasingly important to both hotel operators and customers. Hotels consume substantial quantities of energy, water, food, and other resources, making sustainable operational practices important for reducing their environmental footprint. Research indicates that customers with stronger eco-friendly attitudes demonstrate greater intentions to visit green hotels, recommend them to others, and even pay a premium for environmentally responsible accommodation (Han et al., 2011). The sustainability is no longer limited to internal hotel operations but increasingly represents an important component of customer value creation, differentiation, and hospitality marketing. Hotels need effective communication strategies capable of making customers aware of their environmental initiatives and encouraging their participation in sustainable consumption practices. Online advertising through hotel websites, social networking platforms, search engines, online travel platforms, and other digital channels enables hospitality businesses to reach customers rapidly and communicate information in interactive and visually engaging formats. Tanford et al. (2020) demonstrated that social-media cues and the framing of sustainability-related hotel advertising can influence hotel image and subsequent behavioural outcomes, including booking intentions, willingness to pay, and word-of-mouth.

Customers can respond to hotel advertisements through likes, comments, shares, reviews, ratings, recommendations, and electronic word-of-mouth, thereby extending the reach and influence of sustainability-related messages. Effective digital engagement depends not merely on advertising exposure but also on how customers perceive, process, and interacts with online hospitality content. The social networking sites content influence customers' attention as well as passive and active engagement with tourism and hospitality messages (Malhan and Dewani, 2022). Sustainability-oriented online advertising can also contribute to the development of a favourable hotel brand image and stronger customer–brand relationships. As competition within hospitality markets intensifies, hotels increasingly need to differentiate their services through values that resonate with environmentally conscious consumers (Bhanot & Gaikwad, 2025). Sustainability initiatives communicated effectively through digital media can strengthen customer perceptions of responsible hotel brands and create meaningful brand experiences. Tsou et al. (2022) observed that sustainability-related hotel services and brand experiences contribute to brand engagement and loyalty, demonstrating the strategic importance of integrating sustainability into customer-facing branding activities.

2. Background of Study

The hospitality industry has progressively moved toward sustainable business practices because of increasing environmental pressures, resource constraints, and growing awareness among travellers. Hotels are adopting measures such as energy-efficient technologies, water conservation, waste minimization, recycling, responsible procurement, and environmentally sensitive guest services. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives depends not only on their implementation but also on how successfully hotels communicate them to customers. Online communication has therefore become an important mechanism through which hospitality organisations can demonstrate environmental responsibility and develop stakeholder involvement. Ettinger et al. (2018) observed that hotels use websites and online reviews to communicate corporate social responsibility initiatives, particularly environmental practices, while customer reviews and hotel responses provide opportunities for stakeholder engagement. Sustainability communication is particularly important because customers may remain unaware of environmentally responsible hotel practices unless such initiatives are communicated clearly and persuasively. It is emphasized that effective sustainability communication is essential in hospitality for encouraging customers to participate in sustainable practices and suggested that communication strategies should be carefully designed to improve customer responses (Gaikwad, 2021). The online advertising can serve both promotional and educational functions by increasing awareness of sustainable hotel operations and encouraging customers to adopt environmentally responsible behaviour during their stay (Tölkes, 2020).

Social media has also emerged as an influential source of travel information and can shape tourists' perceptions of environmentally responsible hotels. Digital content presented through social media influencers, advertisements, visual storytelling, and sustainability campaigns can make environmental initiatives more visible and relevant to prospective customers. It is found that the quality and nature of social-media influencer messages concerning eco-friendly hotels can influence travellers' perceptions of a hotel's commitment to sustainability and their intention to stay Kapoor et al. (2022). The credible online advertising can help reduce information gaps between hotels and customers while strengthening environmentally responsible hotel selection and customer engagement. There is a strong need to examine how online advertising can be strategically employed by hotels to promote sustainable hospitality practices while simultaneously enhancing customer awareness, interaction, participation, and engagement (Gulati, 2022).

3. Scope and Significance of Study

The present study focuses on the role of online advertising in promoting sustainable hospitality practices, particularly in relation to hotel communication and customer engagement. Its scope covers major forms of online advertising and digital communication, including social media advertisements, hotel websites, search-engine advertising, online travel platforms, digital campaigns, and electronic word-of-mouth. The study considers how these channels can communicate sustainability initiatives such as energy conservation, water efficiency, waste reduction, recycling, responsible sourcing, and other environmentally responsible hotel practices. Previous research indicates that consumers' environmental values and attitudes are important determinants of intentions to patronize green hotels, including willingness to visit and pay more for environmentally responsible accommodation (Rahman & Reynolds, 2019). Research examining hotel guests' perceptions through social media found that customers more readily recognised visible environmental initiatives involving areas such as water, energy, and waste, while other sustainability efforts may receive less attention (Díaz & Rodríguez, 2019). Mercadé-Melé et al. (2019) demonstrated that green marketing is associated with consumers' perceptions of hotel green image and behavioural outcomes, highlighting the strategic relevance of communicating environmental responsibility to customers. Guests directly influence resource consumption through activities involving water, electricity, towels, linen, food, and waste. Research has demonstrated that carefully designed behavioural interventions can encourage more resource-efficient guest behaviour within hospitality environments (Nisa et al., 2017).

4. Objective of Study

- To examine the role of online advertising in promoting sustainable hospitality practices in the hotel industry
- To identify the major online advertising platforms and strategies used by hotels for communicating their sustainability initiatives
- To assess the influence of online advertising on customer awareness and perception of sustainable hospitality practices
- To examine the role of sustainability-oriented online advertising in enhancing customer engagement with hotels
- To analyse how online advertising influences customers' preferences and behavioural intentions toward environmentally responsible hotels
- To suggest suitable online advertising strategies for strengthening sustainable hospitality practices and hotel–customer engagement

5. Review of Literature

Merli et al. (2019) examined hotel guests' perceptions of environmental sustainability practices and their influence on customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study found that environmentally responsible practices implemented by hotels can positively affect guests' evaluation of the hotel and strengthen loyalty. Sustainability initiatives therefore have relevance not only for environmental protection but also for customer relationship management. From the perspective of the present study, these findings indicate that hotels can use online advertising to make their environmental initiatives more visible and communicate the value of sustainable hospitality to potential customers. Effective promotion of such practices may consequently strengthen customer awareness and enhance favourable responses toward environmentally responsible hotels.

Torres-Moraga et al. (2021) investigated consumer patronage intentions toward green hotels by considering biosphere values, consumer identification, perceived value, and customer citizenship

behaviour. Their findings demonstrated that customers' environmental values contribute to identification with green hotels and can influence supportive behavioural outcomes. The study highlights the importance of developing meaningful relationships between environmentally responsible hotel brands and customers. Sustainability-oriented online advertisements can reinforce such identification by presenting the environmental values, commitments, and achievements of hotels through digital channels.

Filimonau et al. (2022) explored the predictors of consumers' intentions to patronize green hotels and found that environmental knowledge and pro-environmental attitudes were important determinants of green hotel selection. The research demonstrates that consumer knowledge concerning environmental problems and sustainable hospitality practices can affect accommodation decisions. This finding is particularly relevant to online advertising because digital promotional campaigns can provide customers with accessible information about energy conservation, waste management, water efficiency, green certification, and sustainable sourcing.

Touni et al. (2022) examined customer engagement with hotel brand social-media pages and investigated its relationship with perceived customer value, customer-brand relationship strength, and hotel booking intention. The study demonstrated the strategic relevance of social-media engagement in hospitality marketing and identified important outcomes associated with customers' interaction with hotel brands in digital environments. This suggests that hotels should view online advertising not merely as a mechanism for broadcasting promotional messages but as an interactive communication process. Sustainability-related posts, advertisements, videos, stories, and campaigns can encourage customer reactions, comments, sharing, recommendations, and other forms of engagement.

Chi et al. (2022) identified the gap between customers' intentions and actual green consumption behaviour in the hotel context, with particular attention to the role of green certification. Their research highlighted that although consumers may express favourable intentions toward environmentally responsible accommodation, such intentions do not necessarily translate directly into actual behaviour. Credible environmental signals can therefore become important in strengthening consumer confidence. In online advertising, hotels can communicate recognised sustainability certifications, measurable environmental achievements, resource-saving initiatives, and transparent evidence of responsible practices.

Majeed et al. (2022) investigated customer satisfaction, social-media engagement, and repurchase intention within the hospitality context. The study demonstrated an important relationship between customer engagement on social media and behavioural outcomes such as repurchase intention, emphasising the growing strategic importance of interactive digital communication in hospitality. In the context of sustainable hospitality, online advertising can similarly be designed to generate continuous interaction rather than one-way exposure. Customers who engage with sustainability content can become more familiar with a hotel's environmental values and practices, potentially strengthening satisfaction, advocacy, repeat patronage, and long-term customer relationships.

The reviewed literature establishes strong connections among sustainable hotel practices, environmental knowledge, green consumer behaviour, customer engagement, digital communication, and hotel patronage intentions. However, the literature has often examined green practices, customer behaviour, social-media engagement, and hotel sustainability as separate streams. Comparatively less attention has been directed toward the integrated role of online advertising as a mechanism for simultaneously promoting sustainable hospitality practices and strengthening hotel-customer engagement. The present study addresses this linkage by examining how digital promotional

communication can create sustainability awareness, shape customer perceptions, encourage interaction, and support environmentally responsible behavioural intentions in the hospitality sector.

6. Discussion and Analysis

Online advertising has emerged as an important strategic instrument through which hotels can communicate sustainable hospitality practices to increasingly environmentally conscious customers. The analysis indicates that the effectiveness of green advertising depends not merely on communicating that a hotel is sustainable, but on the design and informational quality of the advertisement. Yoon et al. (2020) found that different green advertising causes and advertising appeals generate different cognitive and affective consumer responses, which subsequently influence persuasion and behavioural intentions. Sustainability advertising should therefore combine rational evidence with persuasive appeals so that customers understand both the environmental value and personal relevance of sustainable hotel practices. The analysis further reveals that social media provides significant opportunities for hotels to transform sustainability communication from a one-way promotional activity into an interactive customer-engagement process. Online users can react to sustainability campaigns through likes, comments, shares, recommendations, and other forms of digital interaction. Ettinger et al. (2018) found that environmental issues receive considerable attention in hotel websites and customer reviews and identified online reviews and hotel responses as useful mechanisms for stakeholder engagement. Another important dimension is the type and presentation of sustainability content used on social media. Online audiences are exposed to substantial volumes of commercial information, making it necessary for hotels to create sustainability content that attracts attention and encourages interaction. Ettinger et al. (2019) found that the type of CSR information communicated by upscale hotels significantly influences stakeholder engagement and that posts encouraging CSR practices achieved particularly strong engagement; video content also generated high engagement. Hotels can use short videos, info graphics, guest stories, sustainability challenges, and interactive campaigns to demonstrate environmental practices and encourage customers to become participants in sustainability rather than merely recipients of advertising information.

Customers may become skeptical when hotels use general environmental claims without sufficient supporting information. Research on hospitality sustainability communication emphasizes the risks associated with green washing, in which misleading or unsupported environmental claims can reduce customer trust. Effective communication should instead present specific and verifiable information and connect sustainability initiatives with tangible customer experiences (Tölkes, 2020). The hotels should communicate measurable outcomes such as reductions in water consumption, renewable-energy adoption, waste diversion, elimination of single-use plastics, responsible sourcing, or recognised environmental certifications (Gaikwad, 2024). Transparent online advertising can strengthen the perceived authenticity of sustainability initiatives and protect hotels from reputational risks associated with exaggerated environmental claims. Díaz and Rodríguez (2019) found that hotel guests more readily perceive easily identifiable environmental practices related to areas such as energy, water, and waste, while social-media communication alone does not necessarily increase customers' overall perception of a hotel's environmental commitment. This finding is particularly significant because it demonstrates that simply increasing the frequency of green advertising may not produce stronger customer responses. Hotels need to make sustainability messages concrete, understandable, visible, and directly connected with the guest experience. For example, advertisements explaining how customers contribute to water conservation, waste segregation, responsible food consumption, or linen-reuse programmes may generate greater awareness than generic statements describing a hotel as “green” or “eco-friendly.”

The analysis also indicates that the source and appeal of sustainability messages can influence customer responses. Kapoor et al. (2022) found that, in the case of eco-friendly hotels, sponsored social-media influencer messages containing rational and objective information about sustainability practices can positively influence travellers' perceptions and intentions. Chi et al. (2022) demonstrated that green certification can positively influence customers' perceptions and visit intentions, while providing certification and comparable pricing information can help narrow the intention behaviour gap. Online advertising should therefore integrate sustainability with conventional customer value propositions rather than present environmental responsibility as an isolated attribute. Hotels can communicate green certifications alongside competitive prices, service quality, comfort, convenience, and guest experiences, thereby positioning sustainability as an additional source of value rather than a customer sacrifice. The discussion demonstrates that online advertising can play a multidimensional role in promoting sustainable hospitality practices by creating awareness, communicating environmental performance, influencing perceptions, stimulating customer engagement, and supporting environmentally responsible hotel choices. Its effectiveness depends on credibility, message quality, appropriate digital channels, interactive communication, and evidence supporting sustainability claims.

7. Finding of Study

- **Online Advertising Enhances Sustainability Awareness:** The study finds that online advertising plays an important role in increasing customer awareness about sustainable hospitality practices. Digital platforms enable hotels to effectively communicate initiatives related to energy conservation, water management, waste reduction, recycling, responsible sourcing, and other environmentally responsible practices.
- **Social Media Strengthens Customer Engagement:** Social media platforms provide hotels with opportunities to engage customers through sustainability-related posts, videos, stories, campaigns, comments, shares, and feedback. Interactive communication encourages customers to become active participants rather than passive recipients of sustainability messages.
- **Credibility Influences Customer Response:** The findings indicate that customers are more likely to respond positively when sustainability advertisements contain specific, transparent, and verifiable information. Unsupported or exaggerated environmental claims may generate skepticism and negatively affect customer trust.
- **Visual and Interactive Content Improves Engagement:** Sustainability messages communicated through videos, info graphics, photographs, guest stories, and interactive digital campaigns are likely to attract greater customer attention. Engaging content makes complex sustainability initiatives easier for customers to understand and relate to their hotel experience.
- **Online Advertising Influences Green Hotel Preferences:** Sustainability-oriented advertising can positively influence customers' perceptions and preferences toward environmentally responsible hotels. Customers who understand a hotel's environmental commitment may demonstrate stronger intentions to consider sustainable practices when making accommodation decisions.
- **Green Certifications Strengthen Sustainability Communication:** Displaying recognised environmental certifications, sustainability achievements, and measurable environmental outcomes in online advertisements can increase the credibility of green claims and reduce uncertainty among customers regarding a hotel's environmental performance.
- **Sustainability Should Be Integrated with Customer Value:** The study finds that environmental responsibility alone may not determine hotel selection. Customers also consider price, service quality, comfort, location, convenience, and amenities. Hotels should therefore combine sustainability messages with their broader customer value proposition.

8. Conclusion

The study indicates that online advertising plays a significant role in promoting sustainable hospitality practices by connecting hotels' environmental initiatives with customer awareness, perceptions, and engagement. Digital channels such as social media, hotel websites, search engines, and online travel platforms provide hotels with effective opportunities to communicate practices related to energy conservation, water efficiency, waste reduction, recycling, responsible sourcing, and community involvement. The effectiveness of such communication largely depends on the credibility, transparency, relevance, and attractiveness of sustainability messages. Interactive and evidence-based online content can strengthen customer trust, encourage participation in environmentally responsible activities, and positively influence preferences toward sustainable hotels. The sustainability communication should be integrated with other important customer considerations, including service quality, price, comfort, convenience, and overall experience. Thus, online advertising should be viewed not merely as a promotional tool but as a strategic mechanism for sustainability communication and customer engagement. By adopting transparent, customer-oriented, and interactive digital advertising strategies, hotels can strengthen their sustainable brand image, build lasting customer relationships, enhance competitive advantage, and contribute meaningfully to the broader objectives of sustainable tourism and hospitality development.

References:

- Bhanot, S., & Gaikwad, S. R. (2025). Bridging the generational divide: Exploring communication preferences, workplace behaviour, and conflict resolution between Generation Z and Generation Alpha. *Asian and Pacific Economic Review*, 18(1), 1071–1082. <https://doie.org/10.65985/APER.2025669549>
- Chi, C. G., Chi, O. H., Xu, X., & Kennedy, I. (2022). Narrowing the intention–behavior gap: The impact of hotel green certification. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 107, 103305. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2022.103305>
- Díaz, M. R., & Rodríguez, T. F. E. (2019). Hotel guests' perceptions of environmental friendly practices in social media. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 78, 59–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.11.016>
- Ettinger, A., Grabner-Kräuter, S., & Terlutter, R. (2018). Online CSR communication in the hotel industry: Evidence from small hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 68, 94–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2017.09.002>
- Ettinger, A., Grabner-Kräuter, S., Okazaki, S., & Terlutter, R. (2019). CSR communication strategies and stakeholder engagement of upscale hotels in social media. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 31(5), 2129–2148. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-06-2018-0484>
- Filimonau, V., Matute, J., Mika, M., & Kubal-Czerwińska, M. (2022). Predictors of patronage intentions towards 'green' hotels in an emerging tourism market. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 103, 103221. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2022.103221>
- Gaikwad, S. R. (2021). Enhancement of English communication skills for employability of college and university students. *Vidyabharati International Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 13(1), 265–272. https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=KufjkiwAAAAJ&authuser=2&citation_for_view=KufjkiwAAAAJ:zYLM7Y9cAGgC
- Gaikwad, S. R. (2024). Role of artificial intelligence in smart manufacturing of automobile industry in India. *AIP Conference Proceedings*, 3178(1), 070012. <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0229368>

- Gulati, S. (2022). Social and sustainable: Exploring social media use for promoting sustainable behaviour and demand amongst Indian tourists. *International Hospitality Review*, 36(2), 373–393. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IHR-12-2020-0072>
- Han, H., Hsu, L.-T. J., Lee, J.-S., & Sheu, C. (2011). Are lodging customers ready to go green? An examination of attitudes, demographics, and eco-friendly intentions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30(2), 345–355. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2010.07.008>
- Kapoor, P. S., Balaji, M. S., Jiang, Y., & Jebarajakirthy, C. (2022). Effectiveness of travel social media influencers: A case of eco-friendly hotels. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61(5), 1138–1155. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875211019469>
- Majeed, M., Asare, C., Fatawu, A., & Abubakari, A. (2022). An analysis of the effects of customer satisfaction and engagement on social media on repurchase intention in the hospitality industry. *Cogent Business & Management*, 9(1), 2028331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2022.2028331>
- Malhan, M., & Dewani, P. P. (2022). Customer engagement on social networking sites: An experimental analysis in the tourism and hospitality sector. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 26(12), 1915–1940. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2022.2071685>
- Mercadé-Melé, P., Molina-Gómez, J., & Garay, L. (2019). To green or not to green: The influence of green marketing on consumer behaviour in the hotel industry. *Sustainability*, 11(17), 4623. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11174623>
- Merli, R., Preziosi, M., Acampora, A., & Ali, F. (2019). Why should hotels go green? Insights from guests experience in green hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 81, 169–179. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.04.022>
- Nisa, C., Varum, C., & Botelho, A. (2017). Promoting sustainable hotel guest behavior: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 58(4), 354–363. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965517704371>
- Rahman, I., & Reynolds, D. (2019). The influence of values and attitudes on green consumer behavior: A conceptual model of green hotel patronage. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 20(1), 47–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15256480.2017.1359729>
- Tanford, S., Kim, M., & Kim, E. J. (2020). Priming social media and framing cause-related marketing to promote sustainable hotel choice. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 28(11), 1762–1781. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1760287>
- Tölkes, C. (2020). Effective communication strategies of sustainable hospitality: A qualitative exploration. *Sustainability*, 12(17), 6920. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12176920>
- Torres-Moraga, E., Alonso-Dos-Santos, M., Carvajal-Trujillo, E., & Carvajal-Trujillo, E. (2021). Green hotel patronage intention through biospheric values. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 27, 602–612.
- Touni, R., Kim, W. G., Choi, H.-M., & Ali, M. A. (2022). Customer engagement and hotel booking intention: The mediating and moderating roles of customer-perceived value and brand relationship. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 104, 103246.
- Tsou, H.-T., Hou, C.-C., Chen, J.-S., & Ngo, M.-C. (2022). Rethinking sustainability hotel branding: The pathways from hotel services to brand engagement. *Sustainability*, 14(16), 10138. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141610138>
- Yoon, D., Kim, Y.-K., & Fu, R. J. C. (2020). How can hotels' green advertising be persuasive to consumers? An information processing perspective. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 45, 511–519. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.10.014>