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Agricrafture to Instagram: Decoding Greenhost's Authentic Sustainability Marketing in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

The intersection between sustainability, ethical marketing, and digital transformation presents both opportunities and challenges for the hospitality industry. This qualitative study with a single-case study design examines Greenhost Boutique Hotel in Yogyakarta as a model of sustainable and ethical marketing in the digital era. Data were collected through content analysis from three sources: the hotel's official website, the @greenhosthotel Instagram account, and national and international media coverage. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns of ethical digital marketing communication and strategies for building green trust. Grounded in ethical marketing theory, sustainable knowledge management, and open innovation, this study highlights the implementation of authentic practices by a boutique hotel in a developing country that goes beyond mere greenwashing. The findings reveal that Greenhost employs a multi-faceted approach that integrates environmentally conscious operations, community empowerment, cultural preservation, and strategic digital storytelling. Its recognition as one of the Top 5 Sustainable Hotels in the Wonderful Indonesia Awards 2025 validates its commitment. This study contributes to the sustainable hospitality marketing literature by demonstrating the effectiveness of digital platforms in communicating ethical values and fostering authentic engagement with environmentally and socially conscious consumers. The Greenhost case illustrates that sustainability, when authentically embedded in business operations and communicated transparently, becomes a competitive advantage rather than a marketing gimmick. This study also identifies the role of integrated communication and open innovation as crucial catalysts in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical implementation in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Sustainable marketing, ethical marketing, digital marketing, green hotel, sustainable knowledge management.

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Introduction

The global hospitality industry faces increasing pressure to adopt sustainable practices while simultaneously navigating the complexities of digital transformation (Guerra-Lombardi et al., 2024; Salem et al., 2026). Consumers, particularly younger generations, increasingly demand transparency, environmental responsibility, and ethical business conduct from the hotels they choose (Fei et al., 2024;

Zhao et al., 2024). This shift has prompted hotels to integrate sustainability into their core strategies, moving beyond superficial greenwashing toward genuine environmental and social responsibility (Salem et al., 2022).

Simultaneously, digital marketing has become essential for hotels seeking to reach and engage with environmentally conscious consumers (Ahmad & Gharde, 2026; Belias et al., 2023). Social media platforms, websites, and digital content serve as primary channels for communicating sustainability commitments, showcasing eco-friendly practices, and building trust with stakeholders (Yang et al., 2024; Ru-Zhue et al., 2026). However, the effectiveness of sustainable marketing depends heavily on authenticity, as consumers are increasingly adept at detecting inconsistent or exaggerated environmental claims (Lv et al., 2024; Manthe et al., 2025).

Ethical marketing is the practice of marketing commodities and services while adhering to moral standards and ideals, encompassing marketing strategies that are responsible toward consumers, the general public, and the environment. Dastane et al. (2026), in their bibliometric review, identified that ethical marketing encompasses various domains including privacy, relationship marketing, marketing strategy, social responsibility, consumer ethics, social marketing, and sustainability. Recent developments show that technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and data analytics have significantly influenced the ethical marketing landscape, demanding that marketers navigate ethical dilemmas in their marketing strategies (Tan & Jari, 2023).

This study examines Greenhost Boutique Hotel in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, as a case study in sustainable and ethical marketing in the digital era. Greenhost presents a compelling example of a hotel that has embedded sustainability into its operational core while leveraging digital platforms to communicate its values and engage with diverse stakeholders. Since its establishment in 2014, the hotel has developed a distinctive identity as an eco-conscious hotel (Greenhost Hotel, 2014). Greenhost Boutique was also nominated for the Wonderful Indonesia Award in the Sustainable Hotel Category in 2025. Although not yet a winner, Greenhost continues to evolve through evaluation and improvements in its governance practices. Despite its location not being on the main road of Yogyakarta, unlike its competitors, Greenhost has become iconic in its current location (Greenhost Hotel, 2014; Kemenpar.RI, 2025).

Research on sustainable knowledge management (SKM) in the digital era has also become increasingly relevant. Shrivastav et al. (2025) found that SKM has grown exponentially, with four main themes emerging: technological interventions in SKM, human-centered approaches, ethical dilemmas and digital gaps, and knowledge obsolescence and information overload. This research reveals the dark side of SKM, including algorithmic bias, knowledge gaps, and ethical dilemmas, which are critical challenges that organizations must address in their digitalization journey.

Furthermore, open innovation has been identified as a critical source of competitive differentiation in the hospitality industry (Shin & Perdue, 2022). Research by Alhassan et al. (2025) found that small and medium-sized hotels (SMEs) in Ghana utilize various sources for open innovation, including customer feedback, staff suggestions, competitor analysis, manager observation, collaborative meetings with competitors, and public surveys. These findings highlight the importance of learning from diverse sources to identify opportunities for product, service, and process innovation.

Research on communication interventions to promote sustainability adoption shows that strategically targeted communication can activate existing motivational drivers among stakeholders (Lewin et al., 2026). The study also found that effective communication approaches can overcome various implementation barriers that have hindered the adoption of sustainable practices in the hospitality industry. Multi-channel approaches combining digital communication and face-to-face interaction proved most effective in driving behavioral change and implementing sustainability actions (Lewin et al., 2026). These findings demonstrate that a combination of diverse communication strategies can bridge the gap between good intentions and concrete action in implementing sustainability in the hospitality sector.

The research questions guiding this study are: (1) How does Greenhost Boutique Hotel integrate sustainability and ethical principles into its marketing strategy? (2) What digital marketing approaches does Greenhost use to communicate its sustainability commitments? (3) How does Greenhost's sustainable marketing approach engage with various stakeholders, including guests, local communities, artists, and business partners? (4) What factors facilitate and hinder the implementation of sustainable marketing at Greenhost?

Literature Review

Sustainable and Ethical Marketing in the Hospitality Industry

Sustainable marketing represents a paradigm shift from traditional marketing approaches that prioritize short-term profits toward strategies that balance economic, social, and environmental considerations (Odoom, 2025; Zaragoza-Saez et al., 2024). This shift is driven by increasing consumer awareness of the environmental and social impacts of business activities, as well as stricter regulatory demands in various countries. In the hospitality sector, sustainable marketing encompasses communicating environmental practices (e.g., energy conservation, waste reduction, water management), social responsibility (e.g., community engagement, fair labor practices), and ethical business conduct (Guerra-Lombardi et al., 2024; Patwary et al., 2024). Effective implementation of sustainable marketing requires holistic integration of all three dimensions, rather than merely as an add-on approach separate from core business strategy.

Dastane et al. (2026), in their bibliometric analysis, identified thirteen clusters that form the intellectual structure of ethical marketing, including privacy, relationship marketing, marketing strategy, social responsibility, consumer ethics, advertising, social marketing, sustainability, culture, Islamic marketing, consumer behavior, education, and marketing research. These clusters are interconnected, forming a nomological network that illustrates the complexity and multidimensionality of ethical marketing as a field of study. These findings indicate that ethical marketing has broad influence across various domains and continues to evolve alongside technological changes and shifting social values. The development of digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence and data analytics, has expanded the scope of ethical marketing by introducing new dilemmas that require serious attention and regulation.

Research shows that consumers increasingly value sustainability when making hotel booking decisions (Fei et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2026). However, a gap often exists between consumers' stated environmental concerns and their actual willingness to pay premium prices for sustainable accommodations (Chua & Han, 2022; Yim et al., 2026). This attitude-behavior gap underscores the importance of effective marketing communication that translates sustainability commitments into perceived value for guests (Lv et al., 2024; Manthe et al., 2025). Hotels that can bridge this gap through authentic and transparent communication strategies have a greater opportunity to convert consumers' good intentions into concrete actions, while simultaneously building long-term loyalty and trust.

Digital Marketing and Sustainability Communications

Digital platforms have transformed the way hotels communicate their sustainability efforts (Ahmad & Gharde, 2026; Yang et al., 2024). Social media, websites, and user-generated content enable hotels to share their sustainability stories, showcase eco-friendly practices, and engage with environmentally conscious consumers (Ru-Zhue et al., 2026; Belias et al., 2023). Research shows that effective digital sustainability communication requires authenticity, transparency, and consistency across all channels (Odoom, 2025; Manthe et al., 2025). Instagram has emerged as a particularly powerful platform for sustainable hospitality marketing due to its visual nature and ability to showcase eco-friendly design, local culture, and authentic experiences (Ahmad & Gharde, 2026; Yang et al., 2024). Hotels can use Instagram to share

behind-the-scenes content, highlight sustainable practices, and build communities around shared environmental values (Ru-Zhue et al., 2026).

Ethical Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement

Ethical marketing extends beyond environmental sustainability to encompass social responsibility, fair business practices, and stakeholder engagement (Al-Omoush et al., 2026; Salem et al., 2022). In the hotel context, ethical marketing involves transparent communication, honest representation of services, fair treatment of employees and suppliers, and genuine community engagement (Guerra-Lombardi et al., 2024; Patwary et al., 2026). Stakeholder theory suggests that hotels must balance the interests of various stakeholders—including guests, employees, local communities, suppliers, and the environment—to achieve long-term success (Freeman, 1984; Farmaki et al., 2026). Sustainable marketing, therefore, requires engagement with diverse stakeholders through inclusive and participatory approaches (Al-Omoush et al., 2026).

Sustainable Knowledge Management in the Digital Era

Sustainable knowledge management (SKM) is a strategic approach focused on the continuous creation, sharing, and utilization of knowledge assets to achieve long-term organizational success (Venkitachalam & Willmott, 2017). Shrivastav et al. (2025) found that the literature on SKM has grown exponentially, highlighting the importance of integrating sustainability into organizational knowledge practices, particularly through digital transformation. Their research identified four main themes in SKM in the digital era. First, Technological Intervention, which integrates advanced technologies such as AI, blockchain, and IoT into knowledge management practices.

Second, Human-Centered Approaches to SKM, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing user needs and experiences while fostering sustainable practices. Third, Ethical Dilemmas, Digital Gaps, and Knowledge Inequality, highlighting the complex relationship between unequal digital access, ethical issues, and resulting gaps in knowledge management practices. Fourth, Knowledge Obsolescence and Information Overload, reflecting the complexity and evolving dynamics of knowledge management amid rapid technological advancement. Shrivastav et al. (2025) also highlight the dark side of SKM, including algorithmic bias, knowledge gaps, and ethical dilemmas arising from digitalization. These findings are relevant to the Greenhost context, where the hotel must navigate ethical challenges in managing sustainability knowledge while leveraging digital platforms for marketing communication.

Open Innovation and Sources of Knowledge of Innovation

Open innovation is characterized by the deliberate exchange of knowledge both inward and outward to strengthen internal innovation efforts and expand the reach of innovations created within the organization (Chaudhary et al., 2022). Research by Alhassan et al. (2025) identified six sources of open innovation used by SME hotels in Ghana. These sources of open innovation include customer feedback, staff suggestions, competitor analysis, manager observation and input, collaborative meetings with competitors, and public surveys.

These sources correspond to three open innovation processes: outside-in (customer feedback, public surveys, competitor analysis), inside-out (staff suggestions, manager observation), and coupled (collaborative meetings with competitors). The findings of Alhassan et al. (2025) show that the outside-in process is the most popular. However, SME hotels were also able to leverage inside-out and coupled processes despite limited resources. The study also found that SME hotels in Ghana overcome open innovation barriers by seeking low-cost, easily accessible sources of knowledge. This is relevant to the Greenhost context, where a hotel with limited resources must find innovative ways to identify opportunities for innovation and sustainable marketing.

Communication Interventions for Sustainability Adoption

Lewin et al. (2026) investigated how targeted communication interventions influence sustainability implementation within the tourism sector. The study determined that communication interventions activate existing motivational drivers and facilitate the overcoming of implementation barriers, leading to higher adoption levels. Notably, concern regarding guest behavior emerged as a novel barrier to sustainability implementation.

The study tested five distinct communication interventions: three digital and two in-person formats, all delivering identical content. The digital interventions comprised informational video links, a step-by-step implementation handbook, and a link for booking one-on-one online consultations. The in-person interventions consisted of a keynote presentation and small-group workshops. Findings indicated that multi-channel approaches proved most effective, highlighting the role of tailored communication in bridging the intention-action gap within sustainable tourism practices (Lewin et al., 2026).

These findings are directly relevant to Greenhost. Where the hotel employs diverse communication channels, including its website, Instagram, and collaborative partnerships with various stakeholders, to communicate its sustainability commitments and foster stakeholder engagement.

Method

Case Design

This study employs a qualitative approach with a single case study design to examine the sustainable and ethical marketing practices of Greenhost Boutique Hotel. The selection of a single case study design is based on the consideration that this methodology is highly appropriate for exploring complex and contemporary phenomena within their real-world context (Yin, 2014). Greenhost was selected as the case because the hotel is a pioneer in implementing the Agricrafture concept and has received national recognition for its sustainability commitment, making it an information-rich case worthy of in-depth analysis.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through content analysis of three relevant secondary data sources. First, digital documents in the form of the hotel's official website (greenhosthotel.com), which includes the Our Story, Sustainability, Explore, and Awards pages. These pages provide detailed information about the hotel's philosophy, sustainability practices, and the recognition it has received. Second, social media content, specifically the hotel's Instagram account (@greenhosthotel). This study examined 15 posts and reels published during the 2024-2026 period. These posts cover various operational aspects of the hotel, including sustainability initiatives, community engagement, artistic collaborations, and guest experiences. Third, media coverage consisting of three news articles discussing Greenhost's activities, including the hotel's sustainability commitment (Harian Jogja, 2022), eco-friendly hospitality experience (Metro TV, 2026), and art exhibition collaboration (Radio Kota Perak, 2024).

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the thematic analysis procedures developed by Braun and Clarke (2022), encompassing the stages of familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme identification, and interpretation of findings. The analysis focused on identifying patterns related to sustainable marketing, ethical communication, and stakeholder engagement. This approach aligns with the recommendations of Alhassan et al. (2025) for qualitative research in the context of hospitality innovation. To enhance the validity and credibility of the findings, this study employed data source triangulation by comparing findings from multiple sources (website, Instagram, media coverage). Additionally, analyst triangulation

was conducted by involving discussions among researchers and relevant stakeholders in the interpretation process, as recommended by Shrivastav et al. (2025) in qualitative data analysis.

The Case Hotel

Greenhost Boutique Hotel is a boutique hotel located in Prawirotaman, Yogyakarta, established in September 2014. Greenhost was founded by Paulus Mintarga, an architect and landscape consultant, together with his partners Ananda Soewono and Santo. The hotel embraces the Agricrafture concept, a neologism that combines agriculture and craftsmanship. The Agricrafture concept serves as the foundation of its brand identity. Greenhost is recognized as one of the pioneers of eco-friendly hotels in Indonesia and has received various accolades, including nomination as one of the Top 5 Sustainable Hotels in the Wonderful Indonesia Awards 2025 (Greenhost Boutique Hotel, 2025; Kemenpar.RI, 2025). The hotel has successfully integrated sustainability practices across various operational aspects, including energy and water management, plastic waste reduction, rooftop hydroponic farming, and collaboration with local communities, artists, and MSMEs. Thus, Greenhost represents a representative case for examining the implementation of sustainable and ethical marketing in the digital era within the context of the Indonesian hospitality industry.

Results

Sustainability as Core Brand Identity

Greenhost Boutique Hotel has positioned sustainability as the centerpiece of its brand identity since its establishment in 2014. The hotel's website articulates this commitment clearly, stating that Greenhost Boutique Hotel is an eco-conscious boutique hotel in Prawirotaman, Yogyakarta, offering modern amenities with a touch of local culture, value, and hospitality. Now recognized as a 4-star hotel, Greenhost upholds a strong commitment to sustainability and responsibility—both for the environment and the local community (Greenhost Hotel, 2014).

The hotel's philosophy is encapsulated in the Agricrafture concept, a distinctive blend of agriculture and craftsmanship that reflects Yogyakarta's cultural heritage (Greenhost Hotel, 2014). This concept manifests across various operational aspects, including the rooftop hydroponic farm that supplies fresh vegetables for the hotel's farm-to-table dining concept (Metro TV, 2026). As explained by Marcom Leader Dita Retno, since its establishment in 2014, Greenhost Hotel is not merely a hotel known for its modern green and sustainable concept, but also continues to realize itself as a hotel with various tangible initiatives involving environmental aspects, art, and local community empowerment (Metro TV, 2026).

The hotel's sustainability practices are comprehensive and systematically implemented across all operations. Building materials incorporate recycled materials, with approximately 80% of structures left unpainted to allow natural breathing, and only water-based paints used where painting is applied (Greenhost Hotel, 2014). Products are predominantly sourced from local markets and vendors to support the local economy while reducing the environmental impact associated with transportation. A greywater recycling system filters bathroom water for landscape irrigation, and lobby areas operate without air conditioning to minimize greenhouse gas emissions (Greenhost Hotel, 2014). The hotel operates entirely free from single-use plastics, with bottled water replaced by water dispensers and plastic amenities phased out gradually (Greenhost Hotel, 2014).

These findings align with the identification by Shrivastav et al. (2025) of effective sustainable knowledge management practices, wherein organizations integrate sustainability principles into their core operations. Greenhost demonstrates how knowledge about sustainable practices is not merely stored but consistently applied across all operations.

Digital Marketing and Sustainability Communication

Greenhost strategically utilizes digital platforms to communicate its sustainability commitments and engage with stakeholders. The hotel's website serves as a comprehensive information hub, with dedicated pages detailing its sustainability philosophy and practices. The Sustainability page outlines specific initiatives across building materials, purchasing policies, water management, energy conservation, waste recycling, and the elimination of single-use plastics (Greenhost Hotel, 2014). Meanwhile, social media platforms, particularly Instagram, function as primary channels for visual storytelling about sustainability. The hotel's Instagram content consistently reinforces its eco-conscious identity through various approaches:

Educational Content: Posts and reels educate followers about the hotel's sustainable practices. For instance, a reel featuring a hydroponic class in collaboration with Bumi Journey emphasizes that beyond a mere learning session, a meaningful experience in embracing a greener lifestyle is created. At Greenhost, sustainability is not merely cultivated but lived (Greenhost Hotel, 2026). This educational approach aligns with the findings of Lewin et al. (2026) that effective communication interventions activate motivational drivers and help overcome implementation barriers.

Behind-the-Scenes Transparency: The hotel shares authentic glimpses into its operations, including the hydroponic farm, sustainable design elements, and eco-friendly practices. A reel titled "Expectation vs Reality" challenges conventional hotel expectations. The expectation is that it is just another boutique hotel in the city. The reality is a space where sustainability meets comfort, art blends with everyday life, and every corner invites guests to slow down and be present (Greenhost Hotel, 2026k). This transparency reflects the ethical marketing principles identified by Dastane et al. (2026), wherein honesty and openness serve as the foundation of consumer trust.

Fun Facts and Brand Personality: The hotel employs engaging formats to share its sustainability philosophy. One reel states: Did you know? At Greenhost Boutique Hotel, sustainability is not a trend—it is our lifestyle. Concrete meets greenery, design meets responsibility, comfort meets consciousness. That is our concept. That is Greenhost (Greenhost Hotel, 2026). This type of communication activates the emotional and cognitive drivers identified by Lewin et al. (2026) as key to sustainability adoption.

Recognition and Validation: The hotel shares the awards it has received, including its nomination as one of the Top 5 Sustainable Hotels in the Wonderful Indonesia Awards 2025 (Kemenpar.RI, 2025). This external validation enhances credibility and reinforces the hotel's sustainability positioning, aligning with the findings of Dastane et al. (2026) regarding the importance of third-party recognition in ethical marketing.

Greenhost's multi-channel communication approach—combining its website, Instagram, and collaborations with partners—reflects the findings of Lewin et al. (2026), who demonstrated that multi-channel approaches are most effective in driving the adoption of sustainability practices. The use of diverse channels enables the hotel to reach different audiences and reinforce sustainability messages through multiple touchpoints.

Community Engagement and Local Empowerment

Greenhost's sustainable marketing extends beyond environmental practices to encompass social responsibility and community engagement. The hotel actively collaborates with local communities, artists, and small businesses. Such active collaboration creates an ecosystem of shared value that reflects the principles of open innovation (Alhassan et al., 2025).

Artistic Collaborations: Greenhost regularly hosts art exhibitions featuring local artists, providing a platform for creative expression. An exhibition entitled Indonesia Bebas Berkarya (Indonesia Free to Create), held from November 2024 to January 2025, showcased 20 artworks by Indonesian artists (Radio Kota Perak, 2024). General Manager Vivie Elizabeth stated that Greenhost Boutique Hotel is proud once again to serve as a platform for Nusantara artists to exhibit their work, noting that this exhibition felt special as it served as both the closing exhibition of 2024 and the opening exhibition of 2025 (Radio

Kota Perak, 2024). Similarly, the Expressions of Art and Sustainable Living exhibition, organized in collaboration with Alur Artcommunity from June 9 to July 9, 2026, created space for local artists to create, express, and share their perspectives on sustainability through various inspiring paintings, which were also available for purchase by art enthusiasts (Alur_artcommunity, 2026). The exhibition's philosophy reflects Greenhost's approach that sustainability is not merely about protecting the environment, but about how we continue to create positive impacts that can grow, develop, and benefit the lives around us (Alur_artcommunity, 2026). This artistic collaboration represents a form of open innovation coupled process, wherein the hotel and artists engage in two-way knowledge exchange to create shared value (Alhassan et al., 2025).

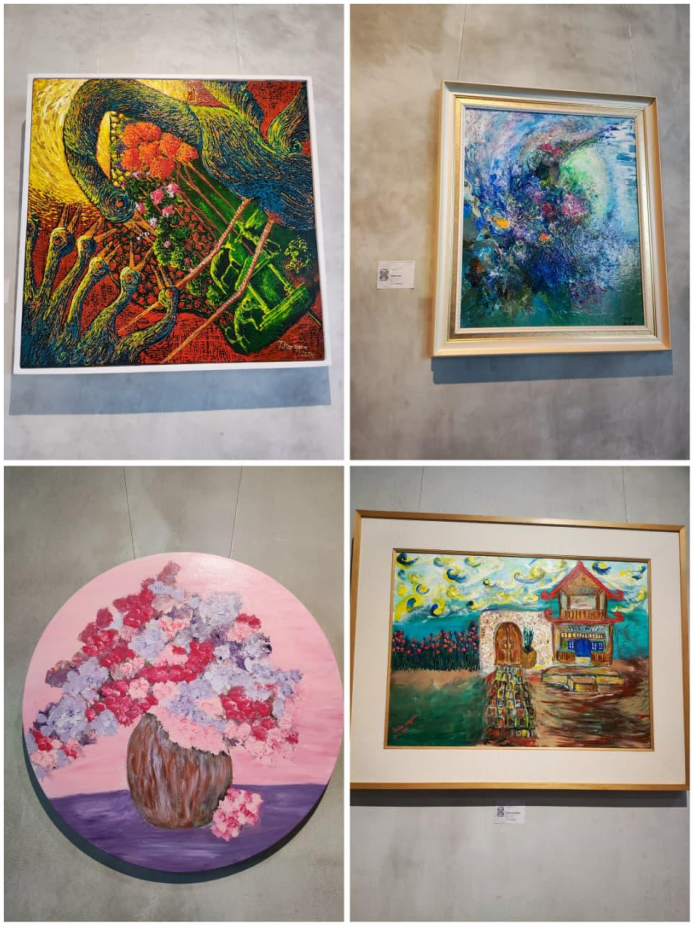


Figure 1. Art Exhibition on Sustainable Living at Greenhost

This exhibition featured four paintings by local Yogyakarta artists. Painting 1 (top left) is entitled Loh Jinawi by Tono Haryanto. Painting 2 (top right) is entitled Happiness by Yulita Yoe Yoe. Painting 3 (bottom left) is entitled Blush Bouquet by Retno Aris. Painting 4 (bottom right) is entitled Kedai Kopi di Bukit (Coffee Shop on the Hill) by Indira Bunyamin. These four paintings demonstrate active collaboration between Greenhost and the artistic community in Yogyakarta in voicing sustainability themes through the medium of visual art.

Community Waste Management: Greenhost collaborates with the local community in Prawirotaman on waste bank management (Harian Jogja, 2022). HR Corporate Krishna Prima Atmaji explained that the hotel always strives to synergize with the surrounding community and elevate local potential by providing space for MSMEs and artists to exhibit (Harian Jogja, 2022).

This engagement reflects the principles of ethical marketing that emphasize social responsibility and community welfare (Dastane et al., 2026). Greenhost's commitment to waste management is also evident through various creations from recycled materials that serve as decorative elements throughout the hotel.

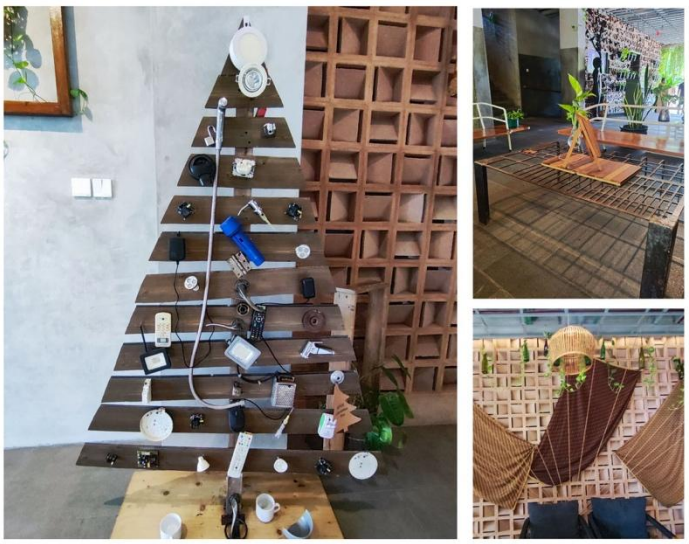


Figure 2. Recycle Decoration from Community Waste

This collage features three creations from recycled materials adorning various corners of Greenhost. The first photo shows two special bins at the hotel's entrance: one for e-waste (electronic waste such as used batteries, phones, and charger cables) and another for bottles and cans. The collected waste is sorted and reprocessed into hotel decorations. The second photo displays a Christmas tree made from stacked wood adorned with recycled items such as flashlights, bidets, AC remotes, and cheese graters, along with used glass bottles transformed into hanging lanterns in the hotel's audit area. The third photo shows a waiting table in front of the reception desk crafted from recycled iron materials. These three creations demonstrate that waste can be transformed into aesthetic elements that reinforce Greenhost's sustainability narrative.

Educational Initiatives: The hotel offers educational experiences for guests, including hydroponic classes in collaboration with Bumi Journey. These experiences transform sustainability from an abstract concept into a tangible participatory activity (Greenhost Hotel, 2026). This educational approach aligns with the recommendations of Lewin et al. (2026) that communication interventions should activate motivational drivers and provide practical knowledge for implementation.

Support for Local Tourism: Greenhost promotes local tourism experiences through the hashtag initiative #TravelwithGH. This promotion encourages guests to explore cultural villages such as Kampung Wisata Purbayan in Kotagede. One post describes a cultural village where history, local wisdom, and everyday traditions still beautifully thrive, located just a 20-minute drive from Greenhost Boutique Hotel, making it a perfect escape for those seeking culture beyond the ordinary (Greenhost Hotel, 2026).

Partnership and Collaborative Networks

Greenhost actively builds partnerships with various organizations to strengthen its sustainability impact and expand its marketing reach. These collaborations reflect the principles of open innovation and organizational learning identified by Alhassan et al. (2025). The hotel collaborates with Taman Wisata Candi to offer Prambanan Temple entry tickets directly at the hotel, enhancing guest convenience while promoting cultural tourism (Greenhost Hotel, 2026).

In maintaining quality and sustainability standards, the hotel undergoes continuous monitoring for 4-Star Hotel Certification and has obtained two important certifications from LSUP (Tourism Business Certification Institution) PT Putri Kedaton, namely the Certificate of Sustainability of Tourism Service Industry, issued on January 2, 2025, valid for the duration of operations, and the Certificate SNI 9042:2021 (CHSE) concerning Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environment Sustainability, issued on December 23, 2024, valid until December 22, 2027 (Greenhost Hotel, 2026).

Furthermore, the hotel hosts technical guidance sessions on implementing environmental regulations in collaboration with KLH (Ministry of Environment and Forestry) and WWF, demonstrating its role as a sustainability leader in the industry (Kawanpilah, 2024), which aligns with the findings of Shrivastav et al. (2025) regarding the importance of cross-sector collaboration in sustainable knowledge management. The hotel also collaborates with academic institutions, including STIPRAM Yogyakarta, hosting events focused on sustainable tourism branding and visual storytelling (Harian Jogja, 2026), while collaborative events with Poltekpar Makassar further demonstrate the hotel's commitment to educational partnerships (Greenhost Hotel, 2026).



Figure 3. Sustainability Certifications of Greenhost Boutique Hotel

Recognition and Credibility

Greenhost's sustainable marketing is reinforced by external recognition, which enhances credibility and consumer trust. The hotel was nominated as one of the Top 5 Sustainable Hotels in the 4-Star Hotel Category at the Wonderful Indonesia Awards 2025 by the Ministry of Tourism (Greenhost Hotel, 2025; Kemenpar.RI, 2025). The award announcement emphasized that this recognition represents a high form of appreciation for hospitality industry players who continue to demonstrate that guest comfort can go hand in hand with environmental concern (Kemenpar.RI, 2025).

The hotel's website articulates the significance of this recognition, stating that the nomination represents a long-term commitment to integrating sustainability into every aspect of hospitality—from thoughtful architectural design and responsible operations to active support for local communities and creative ecosystems (Greenhost Hotel, 2025). This external recognition functions as a credibility signal that reduces information asymmetry and builds consumer trust, as identified by Dastane et al. (2026) within the ethical marketing framework,

Table 1. Sustainable Marketing Practices at Greenhost

Theme	Key Practices	Evidence	Theory
Sustainability-Based Brand Identity	Agricrafture concept; sustainability embedded in operations	Hydroponic farm, recycled materials, greywater recycling, plastic-free policy	Sustainable Knowledge Management

Theme	Key Practices	Evidence	Theory
Digital Sustainability Communication	Multi-channel sustainability communication	Website, Instagram reels, educational content, sustainability storytelling	Sustainability Communication; Ethical Marketing
Community Engagement and Local Empowerment	Community participation and local support	Art exhibitions, waste bank programs, hydroponic classes, local tourism promotion	Open Innovation; Ethical Marketing
Strategic Partnerships and Networks	Cross-sector collaborations	WWF, KLH, universities, certification bodies, tourism partners	Open Innovation; Sustainable Knowledge Management
Recognition and Credibility Building	External validation of sustainability efforts	Sustainable hotel nomination, certification monitoring	Ethical Marketing

Discussion

Authenticity as the Foundation of Sustainable Marketing

Greenhost's approach to sustainable marketing demonstrates that authenticity is fundamental to effective sustainability communication. Rather than treating sustainability as a marketing add-on, Greenhost has embedded environmental and social responsibility into its core operations, brand identity, and stakeholder relationships. This authenticity is evident in the hotel's comprehensive sustainability practices, spanning building materials, room decorations and interior design, water management, waste reduction, and community engagement, all of which are consistently communicated across digital platforms. These findings align with research emphasizing that consumers are increasingly skeptical of superficial environmental claims and respond more positively to genuine and transparent sustainability efforts (Manthe et al., 2025; Lv et al., 2024).

Greenhost's approach avoids the trap of greenwashing by ensuring that its marketing communications accurately reflect operational realities, as stated by HR Corporate Krishna Prima Atmaji that this concern is not merely jargon or a slogan but is genuinely realized by Greenhost Boutique Hotel (Harian Jogja, 2022). Shrivastav et al. (2025) emphasize that sustainable knowledge management requires integration between social and technical systems, and Greenhost demonstrates this integration through its holistic approach, where knowledge about sustainability is not only stored in information systems but also embedded in organizational culture and daily practices.

Digital Storytelling for Sustainability Engagement

Greenhost's use of Instagram demonstrates the power of visual storytelling for sustainability communication. The hotel's content strategy combines educational content, behind-the-scenes transparency, brand personality, and recognition sharing to create compelling narratives around sustainability. This multi-faceted approach engages followers on emotional, intellectual, and aspirational levels. The #TravelwithGH initiative exemplifies how digital content can promote sustainable tourism by encouraging guests to explore local culture and heritage, such as Kampung Wisata Purbayan, while facilitating access to Prambanan Temple tickets, thereby positioning Greenhost as a gateway to authentic and culturally rich experiences aligned with sustainable tourism principles.

Lewin et al. (2026) found that multi-channel communication interventions are most effective in driving sustainability implementation, and Greenhost adopts a similar approach using various

channels—website, Instagram, partner collaborations, and live events—to reinforce its sustainability messages, activating different motivational drivers across various audience segments. This approach aligns with research on sensory marketing in hospitality, demonstrating that visual content and experiences can effectively communicate brand value and influence consumer perceptions (Zaragoza-Saez et al., 2024). Greenhost's Instagram content creates a sensory experience that allows potential guests to imagine themselves in a space where sustainability meets comfort and art blends with everyday life (Greenhost Hotel, 2026).

Stakeholder Engagement and Value Co-creation

Greenhost's marketing approach extends beyond traditional customer communication to encompass broad stakeholder engagement. The hotel's collaborations with artists, local communities, educational institutions, and environmental organizations create a network of shared value that benefits multiple stakeholders. This approach reflects stakeholder theory principles, emphasizing the importance of balancing diverse stakeholder interests for long-term organizational success (Freeman, 1984; Farmaki et al., 2026). By providing space for local artists, supporting MSMEs, engaging with communities in waste management, and collaborating with educational institutions, Greenhost creates value that extends beyond its immediate commercial interests. The artistic collaboration manifested through the Expressions of Art and Sustainable Living exhibition, featuring works by local artists such as Tono Haryanto, Yulita Yoe Yoe, Retno Aris, and Indira Bunyamin, demonstrates two-way knowledge exchange between the hotel and artists in creating shared value (Alhassan et al., 2025).

The Agricrafture concept, combining agriculture and craftsmanship, embodies this stakeholder-oriented approach by connecting hotel operations with Yogyakarta's cultural heritage while creating opportunities for local farmers, artisans, and community members. The integration of economic, social, and cultural values aligns with research on sustainable entrepreneurship emphasizing triple-bottom-line outcomes (Shahid et al., 2023). Alhassan et al. (2025) found that collaborative meetings with competitors and partners are important sources for open innovation, and Greenhost demonstrates similar practices through its collaborations with various partners, creating an ecosystem where knowledge and resources are exchanged for mutual benefit through mutually advantageous coupled open innovation processes.

Sustainability Communication as an Implementation Catalyst

Lewin et al. (2026) identified that effective communication interventions activate existing motivational drivers and help overcome implementation barriers. Greenhost applies this principle through its communication strategy that emphasizes the practical benefits of sustainability—cost savings, enhanced guest experiences, and external recognition—while addressing potential concerns through transparency and education. A key finding from Lewin et al. (2026) is the emergence of guest behavior concerns as a new barrier to sustainability implementation. Greenhost addresses this through clear communication about its sustainability practices and by involving guests in the sustainability journey through educational content and participatory experiences.

The hotel's commitment to waste management is also manifested through various upcycling creations scattered throughout the hotel area, where electronic waste, bottles, and used cans are sorted and processed into hotel decorations such as Christmas trees from used items, lanterns from glass bottles, and waiting tables from scrap iron. Shrivastav et al. (2025) highlight the importance of addressing the dark side of sustainable knowledge management, including information overload and knowledge obsolescence. Greenhost addresses these challenges through consistent and focused communication, presenting sustainability information in an easily understandable manner relevant to guest experiences.

Balancing Standardization and Localization

Greenhost's marketing strategy demonstrates a sophisticated balance between global sustainability standards and local cultural authenticity. The hotel adheres to internationally recognized sustainability principles—such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and single-use plastic elimination—while simultaneously celebrating and promoting local Javanese culture. This balance is evident in the hotel's architectural design, which incorporates recycled materials and local craftsmanship; its culinary approach, emphasizing local ingredients and traditional flavors; and its guest experiences, connecting visitors with local culture and community.

This localization strategy differentiates Greenhost from standardized international hotel chains while reinforcing its authentic sustainability positioning. This approach aligns with research on international marketing emphasizing the importance of balancing standardization and adaptation (Zaragoza-Saez et al., 2024). By adapting global sustainability principles to the local context, Greenhost creates a distinctive brand identity that appeals to environmentally conscious travelers seeking authentic cultural experiences.

Recognition and Credibility as Marketing Assets

Greenhost's external recognition, including its Top 5 Sustainable Hotel nomination, serves as a powerful marketing asset that enhances credibility and consumer trust. Third-party validation from the Ministry of Tourism provides independent confirmation of the hotel's sustainability claims, reducing consumer skepticism and reinforcing the hotel's positioning.

The hotel's commitment to quality and sustainability standards is further strengthened through the acquisition of two important certifications from the Tourism Business Certification Institution PT Putri Kedaton: the Certificate of Sustainability of Tourism Service Industry, issued on January 2, 2025, valid for the duration of operations, and the Certificate SNI 9042:2021 (CHSE) concerning Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environment Sustainability, issued on December 23, 2024, valid until December 22, 2027.

These findings align with research on the role of certifications and awards in sustainable marketing (Salem et al., 2022; Boller et al., 2025). Eco-certifications and awards signal to consumers that a hotel's sustainability claims have been verified by credible external bodies, reducing information asymmetry and building trust. Greenhost strategically leverages this recognition across its digital platforms, using it to reinforce its sustainability messaging and differentiate itself from competitors.

Implications for Sustainable Hospitality Marketing

The Greenhost case offers several implications for hotels seeking to integrate sustainability into their marketing strategies. First, sustainable marketing must be grounded in genuine operational practices, as superficial claims without substantive action are likely to be exposed and can damage brand credibility, as found by Alhassan et al. (2025) that successful SME hotels integrate learning from various sources into their operations. Second, visual platforms like Instagram offer powerful channels for communicating sustainability commitments through authentic, engaging content that showcases real practices and impacts, with multi-channel approaches combining digital media and face-to-face interaction proven most effective (Lewin et al., 2026).

Third, sustainable marketing should extend beyond customer communication to engage employees, local communities, artists, suppliers, and other stakeholders in value co-creation, as collaboration with diverse partners enables access to varied knowledge sources for innovation (Alhassan et al., 2025). Fourth, third-party recognition such as awards and certifications can enhance credibility and build consumer trust in sustainability claims, functioning as credibility signals that reduce consumer skepticism (Dastane et al., 2026). Fifth, sustainability marketing should connect global environmental principles with local cultural authenticity to create distinctive, meaningful brand identities, reflecting

sustainable knowledge management that integrates local and global knowledge (Shrivastav et al., 2025). Finally, effective communication interventions activate motivational drivers by emphasizing the practical benefits of sustainability—cost savings, enhanced guest experiences, and competitive advantage (Lewin et al.,2026).

Conclusion

The Greenhost Boutique Hotel case study demonstrates how sustainability and ethical marketing can be effectively integrated in the digital era. Greenhost has proven that sustainability is not merely a marketing add-on but rather the foundation of brand identity embedded in core operations, organizational culture, and stakeholder relationships. This holistic approach enables Greenhost to avoid the trap of greenwashing because every sustainability claim communicated accurately reflects the hotel's operational reality. Consumer trust can only be built when companies are genuinely sincere and transparent, especially as consumers are increasingly adept at detecting superficial environmental claims.

Greenhost strategically utilizes digital platforms to communicate its sustainability commitments through authentic and educational visual storytelling. Instagram serves as the primary channel that combines educational content, operational transparency, brand personality, and external recognition to create narratives that engage audiences on emotional, intellectual, and aspirational levels. The multi-channel approach integrating websites, social media, partner collaborations, and live events proves most effective in reinforcing sustainability messages and reaching diverse audience segments. This strategy aligns with findings that effective communication interventions activate motivational drivers and help overcome sustainability implementation barriers.

Stakeholder engagement becomes a critical pillar in Greenhost's business model, extending beyond traditional customer communication. Collaborations with local artists, communities, educational institutions, and environmental organizations create a shared value ecosystem that benefits multiple parties. The Agricrafture concept, combining agriculture and craftsmanship, successfully connects hotel operations with Yogyakarta's cultural heritage while creating economic opportunities for local communities. The integration of economic, social, and cultural values reflects the triple-bottom-line approach characteristic of sustainable entrepreneurship.

Greenhost also demonstrates a sophisticated balance between global sustainability standards and local cultural authenticity. The hotel adheres to international sustainability principles such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and single-use plastic elimination while simultaneously celebrating and promoting Javanese culture through architectural design, culinary offerings, and guest experiences. External recognition through the Top 5 Sustainable Hotel nomination and certifications from credible institutions further strengthens credibility and consumer trust in the hotel's sustainability commitment.

The Greenhost case offers valuable lessons for the hospitality industry seeking to integrate sustainability into their marketing strategies. Sustainability must begin with a coherent philosophy rather than merely a checklist of green features, and be embedded into core operations through systemic integration rather than an add-on approach. Industry players need to engage stakeholders as genuine partners, embrace educational roles, and build regenerative business models. In doing so, Greenhost proves that authentic sustainability communicated transparently becomes a sustainable competitive advantage, not merely a marketing gimmick, amid the increasingly complex challenges of the hospitality industry.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and analysis presented in this discussion, the following are strategic recommendations that Greenhost Boutique Hotel may wish to consider in order to strengthen its position as a pioneer in sustainable marketing in the digital age:

1. Strengthen digital storytelling through interactive and immersive content on Instagram Stories, Reels, and virtual or augmented reality to provide a rich digital exploration experience before guests arrive.
2. Develop structured sustainability education programs such as urban farming certification, creative recycling workshops, and regular sustainability tours to create sustainability ambassadors while generating additional revenue.
3. Expand collaborative networks with artists, creative MSMEs, and educational institutions through artist residency programs, sustainable MSME incubation, and collaborative research to enrich the shared value ecosystem.
4. Develop an integrated sustainability impact measurement system encompassing environmental, social, and economic metrics to strengthen credibility and enhance stakeholder trust.
5. Strengthen positioning as a regenerative business model through urban greening programs, critical land restoration, and cultural conservation by allocating a percentage of profits to these initiatives.
6. Deepen circular economy implementation through partnerships with circular suppliers, product take-back programs, and waste processing systems that generate value-added products and new revenue streams.
7. Build a sustainability-based loyalty program that provides incentives for guests through an integrated mobile application to encourage behavioral change and strengthen emotional connection with the hotel's mission.

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