

# Sustainability marketing and communication

## Vienna Tourist Board

### 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023

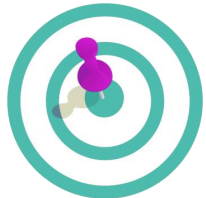
---

Prof. Xavier Font  
University of Surrey  
[x.font@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:x.font@surrey.ac.uk)

 @xavierfont

 /xavierfont

# You sustainability marketing and communication plan, in five steps



WHO DO I TELL?



WHY DO I TELL?



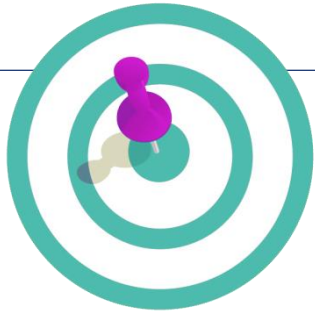
WHAT DO I TELL?



WHERE DO I TELL?



WHEN DO I TELL?



# WHO DO I TELL?

Many stakeholders want to hear about your sustainability messages, for but different reasons

Be clear who you have written your messages for, so you can speak to their needs

## Who is your target audience?

- A. Corporate client HQ
- B. Corporate visitor
- C. Leisure visitor
- D. Neighbour/resident
- E. Staff
- F. NGO
- G. Hotel's head office
- H. Investor
- I. OTA
- J. Destination authority
- K. Media
- L. Potential employees

## What is the risk?

1. Will seek for sustainable products, call out greenwashing
2. Will use information to inform choice when presented
3. Expect you are already doing it- hygienic factor
4. Will avoid purchasing from you because you

Good news! Everyone says we love sustainability 😊

# In search of more sustainable stays

There is no doubt sustainable travel is important to global travelers, with over four in five (81%) confirming this to be true for them. Half (50%) of global travelers say that recent news about climate change has influenced them to make more sustainable travel choices, and the desire to travel more sustainably is growing:



Encouragingly, awareness and visibility of more sustainable stays continues:



of global travelers intend to stay in a sustainable property at least once in the coming year

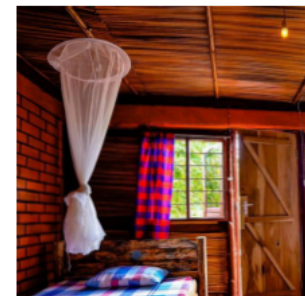


of global travelers have stayed in a sustainable accommodation at least once over the past year and the reasons vary:

**41%**  
wanted to help reduce their impact on the environment

**33%**  
wanted to have a more locally relevant experience

**31%**  
believed sustainable properties treat the community better



## The stats you need to be careful about

---

46% don't want to think about being green - they want to relax

33% believe sustainability claims are often ways to save money and/or reduce service

15% think a hotel run sustainably will be less comfortable than one without green credentials

How do you respond to these?

## Bad news! We are all hypocrites ☹️

### Behaviour locus

- We **morally justify** flying in order to do our job, ironically often to teach others how to be sustainable
- We **sanitise language** by saying that we are just *popping over* to the Leuven for a conference
- **Exonerative comparison** allows us to identify other people in the room that flew further than us

### Agency locus

- We **displace responsibility** by blaming flying on our employers, the conference organisers, the need to attend conferences in order to do our job
- We also **diffuse responsibility** by saying that all other sustainability experts are also flying (probably to the very same conference).

### Outcome locus

- Limit our moral obligation by **minimising, ignoring or misconstruing** the impacts of flying
- The recipients of the negative impacts from flying are **depersonalised, marginalised** and potentially even **blamed** for their destiny
- The messengers of bad news are **derogated and discredited**

- Higham, J. & Font, X. (2020) Decarbonising academia: confronting our climate hypocrisy, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 28(1) 1-9.

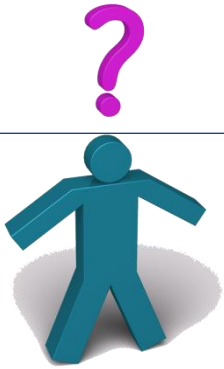
1. Deny the threat of climate change
2. Realign tensions arising from travel
3. Apportion blame for the impacts of travel,
4. Increase demand, particularly with respect to threatened destinations
5. Dismiss value of threatened behaviour

## Consumerism

Individuals value their perceived freedom to make choices and why they react negatively to any threats to their freedom







# WHY DO I TELL?

Be clear what response or change that you are hoping for from your customers

## What is your objective?

And why haven't you thought about this already?

1. To make customers feel good (you do the work, they do not change)
2. To raise awareness and change behaviour (be gentle, they are having fun)
3. To improve satisfaction
4. To get repeat customers
5. To generate recommendations
6. To increase expenditure of current customers
7. To get first time customers (the hardest- do it last)

Target- and measure- one objective only per action

What is the behaviour change that you seek with this message?

SUSTAINABLE VIENNA

## Vienna's green museums

They're world-famous, unique – and green! Sustainable museums in Vienna are noted for their resource-efficient and environmentally friendly work and ...



## Let's start by understanding why you are NOT telling

Companies greenhush, to not seem incompetent



- Font, X., Elgammal, I. and Lamond, I. (2017) Greenhushing: the deliberate under communicating of sustainability practices by tourism businesses, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25(7) 1007-1023.



## But yes, other companies greenwash

25% of what you communicate is not happening

To gain legitimacy

To create public commitment to act

There used to be little comeback, actually

But few media and customer voices make a lot of noise

And recent legislation in UK, Europe, Australia is tightening things up

[Greenwashing: CMA puts businesses on notice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

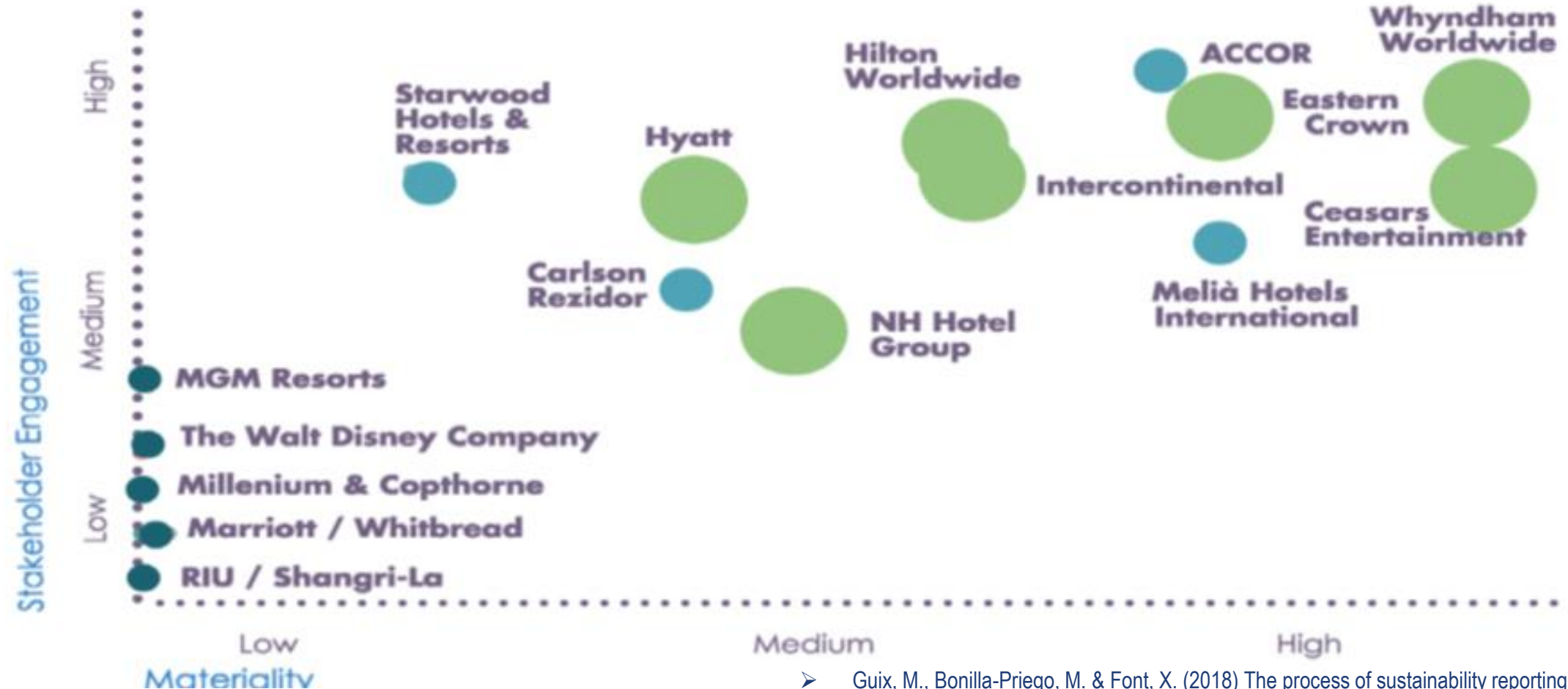
Solution? Do not use the S word, but communicate experiences to customers



Font, X. Walmsley, A., Cogotti, S. McCombes, L. and Häusler, N. (2012) Corporate social responsibility: the disclosure-performance gap, *Tourism Management*. 33: 1544-1553.

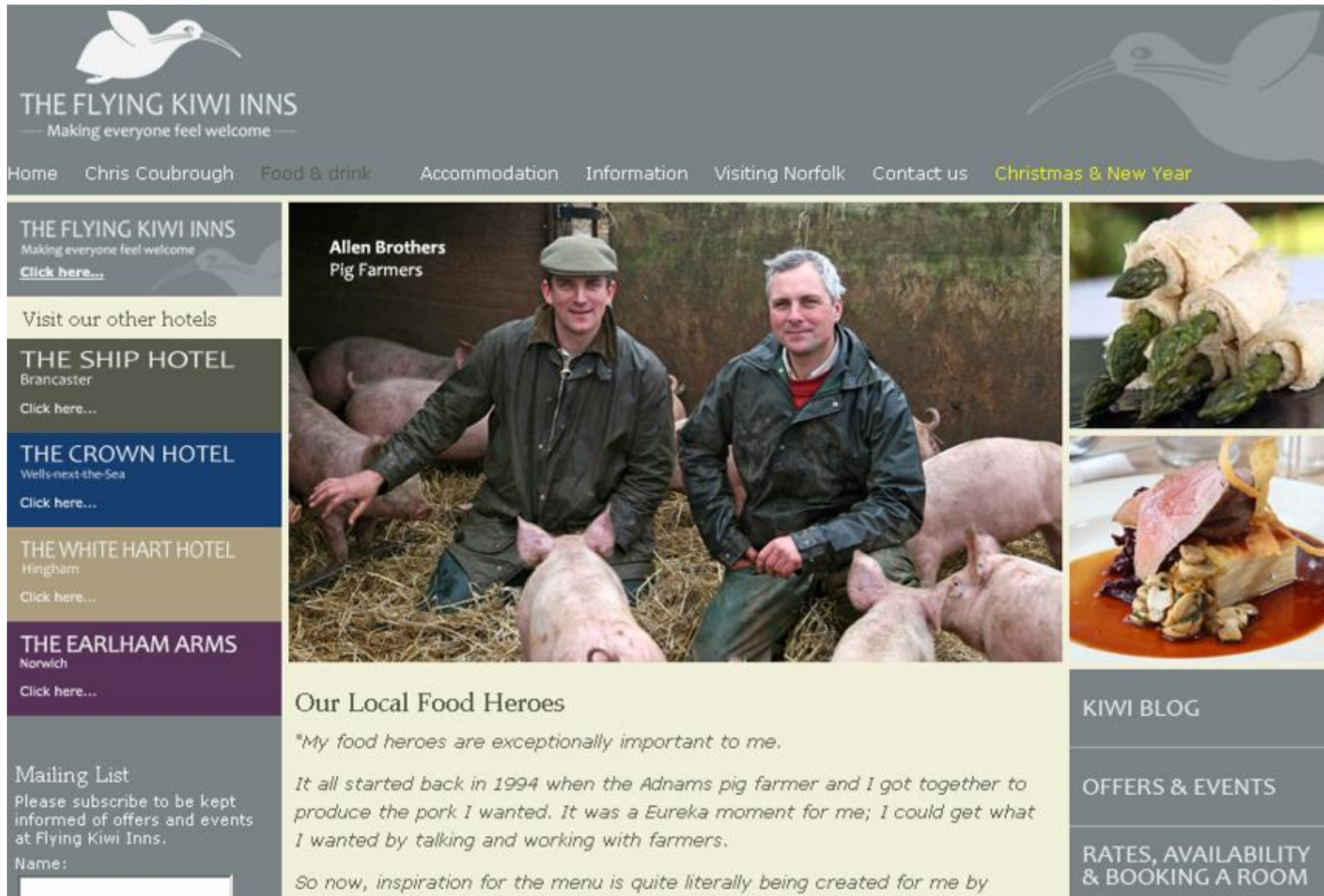
# Often your communication is immaterial to your stakeholders

Only 18 of 50 largest hotel groups in the world produce CSR reports- and they do not respond to stakeholder expectations



- Guix, M., Bonilla-Priego, M. & Font, X. (2018) The process of sustainability reporting in international hotel groups: an analysis of stakeholder inclusiveness, materiality and responsiveness, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26(7) 1063 – 1084.

# Start small, with customer benefits: taste and trust




The Flying Kiwi Inns website features a dark grey header with a white kiwi bird logo and the text "THE FLYING KIWI INNS — Making everyone feel welcome —". A navigation menu includes "Home", "Chris Coubrough", "Food & drink", "Accommodation", "Information", "Visiting Norfolk", "Contact us", and "Christmas & New Year".

The main content area is divided into several sections:



- THE FLYING KIWI INNS**: Making everyone feel welcome. [Click here...](#)
- Visit our other hotels**
- THE SHIP HOTEL** (Brancaster): [Click here...](#)
- THE CROWN HOTEL** (Wells-next-the-Sea): [Click here...](#)
- THE WHITE HART HOTEL** (Hingham): [Click here...](#)
- THE EARLHAM ARMS** (Norwich): [Click here...](#)

**Our Local Food Heroes**

**Allen Brothers Pig Farmers**



*"My food heroes are exceptionally important to me. It all started back in 1994 when the Adnams pig farmer and I got together to produce the pork I wanted. It was a Eureka moment for me; I could get what I wanted by talking and working with farmers. So now, inspiration for the menu is quite literally being created for me by*



**KIWI BLOG**

**OFFERS & EVENTS**

**RATES, AVAILABILITY & BOOKING A ROOM**

**Mailing List**  
Please subscribe to be kept informed of offers and events at Flying Kiwi Inns.  
Name:



## And Vienna has plenty of local food heroes



Gregor Hoffmann - © Niko Havranek



Bedruthan Steps Hotel (Cornwall) explains to customers at the point of booking that they encourage guest donations to responsible causes (while highlighting that the hotel also does their bit).

£5 opt-out donation per booking:

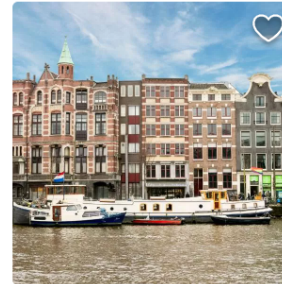
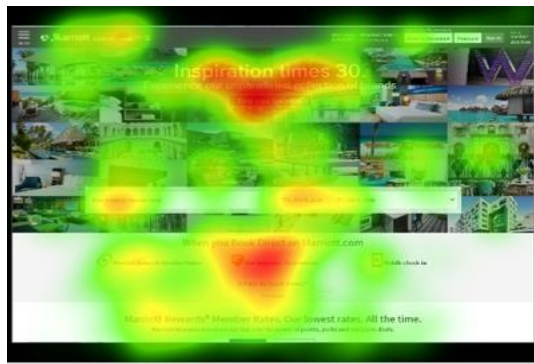
- Option 1: Carbon offsetting
- Option 2: Surfers Against Sewage
- Option 3: Community Fund



# Ecolabel provides reassurance, but customer benefit message is central



**Eye-tracking: visual processing and attention captured by a special eye tracking camera**



## Eden Hotel Amsterdam ★★★★★

Amsterdam City Centre, Amsterdam · [Show on map](#) · Metro access

Travel Sustainable property

Situated in the heart of the city centre, Eden Hotel Amsterdam offers warm-coloured rooms and free WiFi. The famous Rembrandt Square is right around the corner.

Very good 8.2  
2,818 reviews

Location 9.4

Show prices

### Travel Sustainable measures

These are the steps this property has taken to provide more sustainable and environmentally friendly travel:

#### Waste

- Recycling bins available to guests and waste is recycled
- The property makes efforts to reduce their food wastage
- Water cooler/dispenser
- Single-use plastic miniature shampoo, conditioner, and body wash bottles not used
- Single-use plastic stirrers not used
- Single-use plastic straws not used
- Single-use plastic cups not used
- Single-use plastic cutlery/plates not used

#### Water

- Water-efficient toilets
- Water-efficient showers
- Option to opt-out of daily room cleaning

#### Energy and greenhouse gases

- Most food provided at the property is locally sourced
- Most lighting throughout property uses energy-efficient LED bulbs
- Offsets a portion of their carbon footprint
- Key card or motion-controlled electricity

#### Destination and community

- Invests a percentage of revenue back into community projects or sustainability projects
- Tours and activities organised by local guides and businesses offered
- Local artists are offered a platform to display their talents
- Provides guests with information regarding local ecosystems, heritage and culture, as well as visitor etiquette

#### Triple Room

3 single beds

#### Quadruple Room

4 single beds

#### Superior Double Room

1 large double bed

#### Superior Twin Room

2 single beds

**Travel Sustainable**  
This property is part of

**Extra health & safety**  
This property has  
See health & safety details

**5 reasons to choose**

**Prices you can't beat**

Show prices

Show prices

Show prices

Show prices

ble. [Read more](#)

or bookings online



# WHAT DO I TELL?

Be clear about the impression you want to create –  
with your sustainability policy, photos, text...

## Who benefits from the actions you plan to communicate?

---

Let's classify your sustainability actions first, according to the most immediate beneficiary

1. Your business saves money
2. Your customer will have a better experience
3. The planet and society

## Can you match target audiences and sustainability communication benefits?

1. **Fun/participation**- what can I do?
  2. **Cultural immersion**- get to know the real destination
  3. **Better service**- make me feel special!
  4. **Trust/risk**- we are here for you
  5. **Empathy**- we think alike
  6. **Modern**- eco-technology
  7. **Status**- Look at me
  8. **Ethical**- good potential employer, reliable partner, low risk investment
  9. **Guilt alleviation**- Don't worry, we take care of it
  10. **Hygienic factors**- we comply with the law/ RFP T&Cs
  11. **Out of jail card**- Reputational risk basics are covered, we are not the slowest gazelle
- A. Corporate client HQ
  - B. Corporate visitor
  - C. Leisure visitor
  - D. Neighbour/resident
  - E. Staff
  - F. NGO
  - G. Hotel's head office
  - H. Investor
  - I. OTA
  - J. Destination authority
  - K. Media
  - L. Potential employees

Sustainability needs to contribute to their key purchasing attributes, not compete with them

Redesign your offering, and communicate it better

QUALITY  
PRICE  
LOCATION  
CONVENIENCE  
NOVELTY  
RISK...

SUSTAINABILITY



# It's easy to photograph unsustainability





Most hotels with green credentials do not look like this





## But sustainable hotels don't look different

Corporate

Large

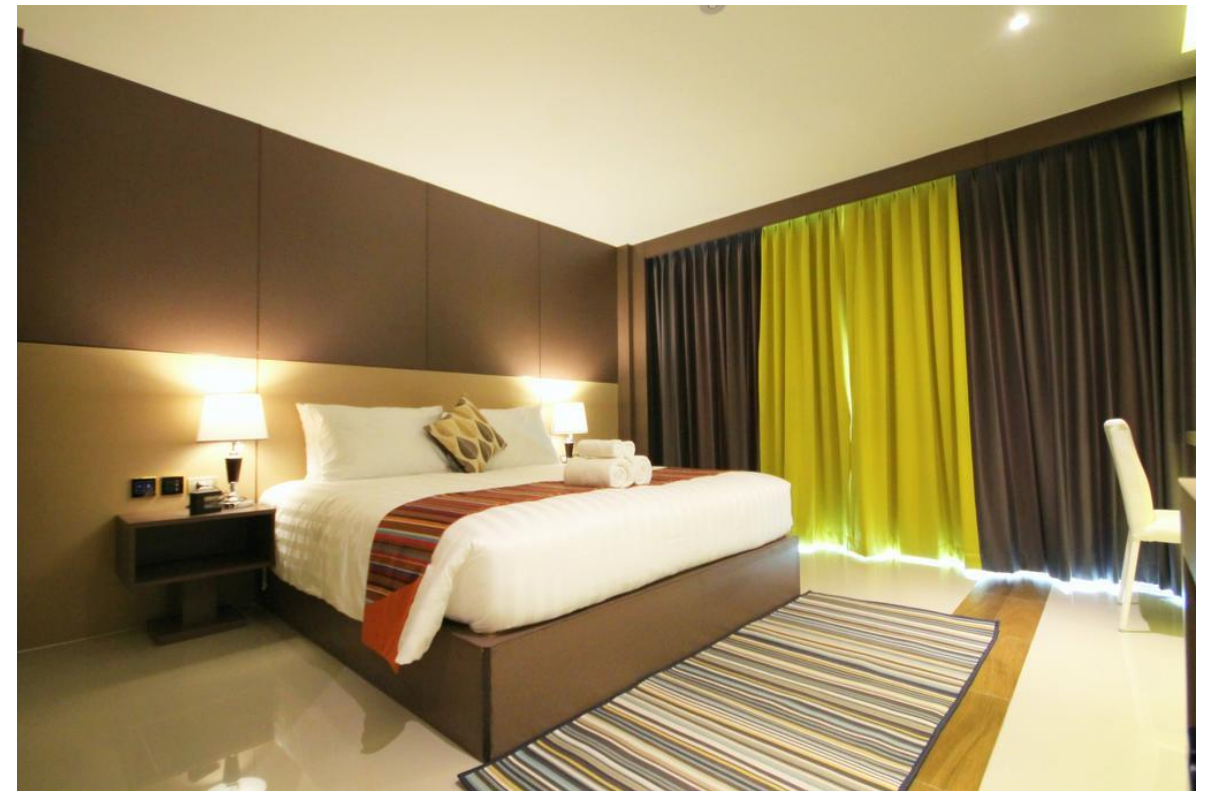
Target business travellers

High customer satisfaction

Above average price

Do not look sustainable

Ask yourself the same question about attractions, transport, and the destination overall



# Why don't you go by bike?





# WHERE DO I TELL?

Integrate sustainability as part of quality through the channels you already use.

1. Certification and awards
2. Online and offline press
3. Your website
4. Social media
5. Online distribution channels



# Best car free holiday page, because you planned everything



## Baby and Toddler Equipment

If you're bringing a baby or toddler, we've got equipment you can borrow while you're here..... [more](#)



## Car hire at Wheeldon Trees Farm Holiday Cottages

Rent our Toyota Prius at Wheeldon Trees Farm - by the hour or by the day..... [more](#)



## Getting to Wheeldon Trees by public transport

... [more](#)



## Hop on the bus

Take a trip on the 442 from our doorstep and it won't cost you a penny !... [more](#)



## Derbyshire Breakfast Baskets

Delicious local produce in your 4 star Peak District holiday cottage when you arrive..... [more](#)



## Food store

Self catering cottages in the Peak District - enjoy fine local food in your own Derbyshire holiday cottage... [more](#)



## Cycling at Wheeldon Trees Farm

We're members of Visit Britain's CYCLIST WELCOME scheme..... [more](#)



## Leave The Car at Home

There are lots of reasons to visit Wheeldon Trees without your car..... [more](#)

# Communicate sustainability as quality and emotionally

Angela proudly won...  
She can't wait to serve it...

## Welcome to the award winning Bulleigh Park Farm

[BOOK NOW](#)

Hello, we're Angela and Phil Dallyn. Welcome to our award winning South Devon accommodation. You can choose from B&B to self catering holiday cottage and lodge accommodation, all situated within the serenity of Bulleigh Park Farm in Newton Abbot, Torquay.

Angela proudly won the AA Breakfast Award again in 2013, for her delicious traditional farmhouse breakfast. She can't wait to serve it during your stay.

We're nestled in the South Devon countryside, with breathtaking views of the South Devon hills and surrounding natural settings that you can enjoy from the veranda. Immerse yourself in the peacefulness and splendour of engaging walks, which treat you to an abundance of wildlife including rare species of bird, and more. We're just 3 miles away from prestigious destination, the English Riviera, so there's plenty to see and do.

At night, sit back and gaze at the clear starlit skies, and then retire for a warm, relaxing evening in unique, luxury accommodation at the heart of South Devon.

# Nudge users (to return)

**50 THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU'RE 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>**



Sign up online to get your own virtual explorer, plus top tips and extra secret challenges!

### Adventurer

1. Climb a tree
2. Roll down a really big hill
3. Camp out in the wild
4. Build a den
5. Skim a stone
6. Run around in the rain
7. Fly a kite
8. Catch a fish with a net
9. Eat an apple straight from a tree
10. Play conkers

### Discoverer

11. Go on a really long bike ride
12. Make a trail with sticks
13. Make a mud pie
14. Dam a stream
15. Play in the snow
16. Make a daisy chain
17. Set up a snail race
18. Create some wild art
19. Play pooh sticks
20. Jump over waves

### Ranger

21. Pick blackberries growing in the wild
22. Explore inside a tree
23. Visit a farm
24. Go on a walk barefoot
25. Make a grass trumpet
26. Hunt for fossils and bones
27. Go star gazing
28. Climb a huge hill
29. Explore a cave
30. Hold a scary beast

### Tracker

31. Hunt for bugs
32. Find some frogspawn
33. Catch a falling leaf
34. Track wild animals

### Explorer

35. Discover what's in a pond
36. Make a home for a wild animal
37. Check out the crazy creatures in a rockpool
38. Bring up a butterfly
39. Catch a crab
40. Go on a nature walk at night
41. Plant it, grow it, eat it
42. Go swimming in the sea
43. Build a raft
44. Go bird watching
45. Find your way with a map and compass
46. Try rock climbing
47. Cook on a campfire
48. Learn to ride a horse
49. Find a geocache
50. Canoe down a river

 [nationaltrust.org.uk/50things](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/50things)

© National Trust 2013. The National Trust is a registered charity, no. 205546. Please recycle after use.

## Experiment with your communications

### Current message:

Every day, in hotels all over the world, tons of towels are washed and washing powder is used, which contaminates the water. Please decide!

### New best message:

Reuse me tomorrow. Just like at home.

Large towel

38%



49%

Small towel

43%



56%

### Test conducted:

English, German and Spanish text  
 9,790 guests nights

In the test hotel (large)

525,600 guest nights per year

56,474 large towels saved

69,616 small towels saved

129,000 litres of water

3,114 kWh energy savings

1,676 kg CO<sub>2</sub>

€ 13,755 (before cost of living crisis)



Use non-written communication, and make the behaviour easy





## The seasonality of your website

Be your own tourist information centre.

Things to do

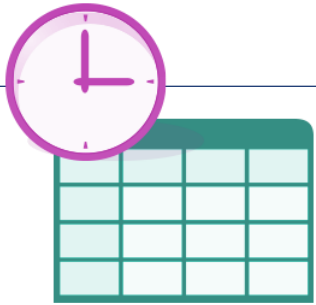
- per season
- for free
- real treats
- when it rains
- from our doorstep

When do photos say I should come next?

Blog/social media- what to look forward to

Get better photos. Seriously





# WHEN DO I TELL?

You market your company all the time  
Help customers make informed decisions





1. Prior to booking/purchase
2. Between booking and arrival
3. On arrival
4. During the stay/visit
5. After the stay/visit

# Prior to booking/purchase

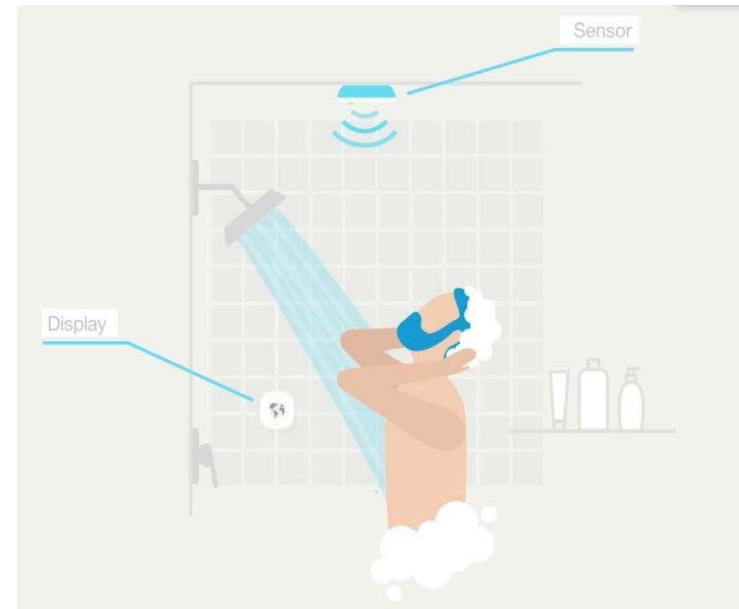
**100% Organic fairtrade coffee & teas!**

calories		small	medium	large
2	<b>Americano</b>	£1.89	£2.09	£2.29
138	<b>Cappuccino</b>	£2.09	£2.39	£2.59
162	<b>Caffè latte</b>	£2.19	£2.49	£2.69
265	<b>Caffè mocha</b>	£2.39	£2.69	£2.89
29	<b>Tea</b>	£1.49	£1.79	£1.99
328	<b>Hot chocolate</b>	£1.99	£2.29	£2.49
		single	double	
1	<b>Espresso</b>	£1.65	£1.89	

Best Flights | Cheapest from £603 | Sort by: ↑↓

	<b>21:50 – 15:10<sup>+1</sup></b> Lufthansa · United	11 hrs 20 min JFK-BCN	1 stop 1 hr 20 min FRA	576 kg CO <sub>2</sub> +33% emissions ⓘ	<b>£603</b> round trip	▼
	<b>20:40 – 12:40<sup>+1</sup></b> Separate tickets booked together · Royal Air Maroc	10 hrs JFK-BCN	1 stop 1 hr 10 min CMN	441 kg CO <sub>2</sub> Avg emissions ⓘ	<b>£711</b> round trip	▼
	<b>22:05 – 16:35<sup>+1</sup></b> Air Europa	12 hrs 30 min JFK-BCN	1 stop 3 hrs 50 min MAD	377 kg CO <sub>2</sub> -12% emissions ⓘ	<b>£725</b> round trip	▼
	<b>22:00 – 11:45<sup>+1</sup></b> Iberia · American · Operated by Iberia for Level Sp...	7 hrs 45 min JFK-BCN	Non-stop	460 kg CO <sub>2</sub> +7% emissions ⓘ	<b>£981</b> round trip	▼

## While you are consuming the product: real time feedback





On site, as part of your experience design



Fresh herbs in the Henriette Stadthotel - © Henriette Stadthotel/supersusi.com

# Enhance your experience, with human to human meaningful communication

London Lancaster Hotel sustainability is behind the scenes

Concierge info:

- limo & taxi companies using hybrid vehicles (geo fuel)
- display and promote cycle hire,
- Jogging map
- Green London attraction brochures

This becomes a route to communicate our much wider and deeper policies and practices.





After the visit: aim for the heart, not the head



## Takeaway points

Sustainability is an abstract concept, that will mean different things to different markets and different products. Play down the S word, unpack it to have 100 different messages

Beware customer scepticism, back up your claims

Work with supply chain and deliver consistently

It's often seen as a "Hygienic factor" by buyers, but wrongly believed to be a USP by suppliers  
Reposition sustainability to signal "Fulfilling authentic experience", using social identity to reinforce sense of belonging and ownership

