

MARKETING FUNDAMENTALS

Designing the Extended Marketing Mix (7 Ps) for Sustainable Hospitality

A Strategic Marketing Report on Six Senses

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Detailed Project Report

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Executive Summary

Sustainable hospitality has moved from being a specialist part of the tourism market to becoming a wider business and marketing issue. Guests increasingly want comfortable and memorable experiences, but many also expect hotels to take responsibility for energy, water, waste, local communities and the places in which they operate. This creates an important marketing challenge: a sustainable hotel cannot rely only on environmental claims. It has to make sustainability visible in the guest experience while still delivering the comfort, service quality and emotional value associated with hospitality.

This report examines the extended marketing mix, or 7 Ps, in sustainable hospitality, using Six Senses as the main industry case. The assessment brief requires attention to Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process and Physical Evidence, together with experience marketing, service design, distribution and pricing trade-offs, and an integrated matrix for market development. Six Senses is a useful case because sustainability is built into its positioning rather than treated as a separate campaign. The company states that its hotels use third-party GSTC certification and reports initiatives covering local sourcing, plastic reduction, regenerative projects, energy, water and guest engagement. Its 2025 impact reporting also provides measurable examples, including avoided plastic bottles, compost production and community participation (Six Senses, 2026a, 2026b).

The report argues that the strongest sustainable hospitality strategy is one in which the seven elements reinforce one another. A sustainable product needs a pricing model that communicates value rather than simply adding a green premium. Distribution needs to balance direct relationships with the reach of online travel agencies. Promotion needs evidence, not vague environmental language. People and processes have to make the promise real during the service encounter, while physical evidence makes an intangible service easier for customers to understand. The final section proposes a practical 12-month market-development plan, budget framework and KPI system for a hypothetical Six Senses-style sustainable hospitality offer. The recommendations are designed to be realistic for a premium hospitality business and to connect sustainability with customer satisfaction, loyalty and long-term brand value.

1. Introduction

Marketing in hospitality is different from marketing a physical consumer product because the customer is purchasing an experience that is produced and consumed largely at the same time. A hotel room can be photographed and described before booking, but the actual value of the service is experienced through interactions with employees, the condition of the property, the booking process, food, atmosphere, comfort and the memories created during the stay. This makes the management of the complete customer experience particularly important.

The traditional marketing mix is commonly described through four variables: product, price, place and promotion. Services marketing extends this framework by adding people, process and physical evidence. The resulting 7 Ps are particularly relevant to tourism and hospitality because customers judge both the core service and the environment in which it is delivered. Bitner's (1992) servicescape framework, for example, explains how physical surroundings can influence customers and employees and can support wider organisational and marketing objectives. In a hotel, this means that architecture, lighting, signage, room design, natural materials, cleanliness and even the way staff move through the property can become part of the marketing experience.

Sustainability adds another layer to the marketing problem. Hotels use significant amounts of energy and water, create waste and operate through large supply chains. At the same time, travellers are becoming more aware of the environmental and social consequences of tourism. Booking.com reported in its 2025 sustainability research that 93% of global travellers surveyed wanted to make more sustainable travel choices and 58% said they were actively changing their travel habits. The same research showed increasing attention to the effect of tourism on local communities (Booking.com, 2025a, 2025b). These figures should not be interpreted as proof that every guest will pay a premium for sustainability, but they do show that the subject has become commercially relevant.

The purpose of this report is therefore to investigate how the 7 Ps can be integrated for sustainable hospitality. The analysis focuses on Six Senses as a real-world luxury hospitality example and then develops a practical integrated matrix that could be applied to a sustainable

premium hotel or eco-resort. The report considers the customer perspective as well as the operational perspective, because a sustainability promise is only valuable in marketing terms when the business can consistently deliver it.

2. Sustainable Hospitality and the Marketing Challenge

Sustainable hospitality can be understood as an approach that attempts to balance economic performance with environmental responsibility and social value. In practice, this may include reducing energy consumption, managing water carefully, reducing single-use plastics, sourcing food locally, supporting local employment, protecting biodiversity and contributing to community projects. However, sustainability is not automatically a source of customer value. A guest may support the idea of sustainability while still expecting a comfortable bed, reliable Wi-Fi, good food, privacy, efficient service and a high standard of cleanliness.

This creates a central marketing tension. If sustainability is communicated as sacrifice, customers may associate it with inconvenience or lower quality. If it is communicated only as a luxury lifestyle image, there is a risk that the environmental claim becomes superficial. A more effective approach is to integrate sustainability into the actual service design. For example, refillable drinking water can be presented as a convenient and attractive part of the stay rather than simply as a restriction on bottled water. A garden can supply the restaurant while also becoming an experience for guests. Local employment can improve authenticity while strengthening the relationship between the property and its destination.

Research supports the connection between green hotel practices and customer responses, although the relationship is not identical for every market. Merli et al. (2019) found that guests at an ecolabel-awarded hotel recognised environmental commitment and that this was associated with satisfaction and loyalty. More recent research has also reported positive relationships among hotel green practices, willingness to pay, loyalty and satisfaction (Singh et al., 2025). These findings suggest that sustainability can contribute to customer value, but they do not mean that every sustainable initiative automatically creates loyalty. Quality, trust, perceived value and the overall service experience still matter.

Six Senses illustrates the attempt to make sustainability part of the complete guest proposition. The brand describes sustainability as a core part of its identity and reports programmes including plastic reduction, local community support, regenerative funding, energy efficiency, organic gardens and guest education through Earth Labs. As of December 2024, Six Senses states that its hotels were GSTC certified through third-party audits, with an exception for properties not operating before 2024 (Six Senses, 2026a). This is strategically important because independent certification can make a sustainability claim easier for a customer to evaluate.

3. Experience Marketing and Service Design

Experience marketing focuses on the feelings, memories and meanings associated with consumption rather than only on functional product attributes. This is especially relevant in hospitality because guests usually remember a combination of physical surroundings, service interactions, food, activities and emotions rather than a single product feature. Sustainable hospitality can therefore use sustainability as part of experience design instead of treating it as an operational back-office activity.

For example, a resort can create a farm-to-table dinner where guests learn about the local ingredients, meet the people involved in production and then experience the food in the restaurant. A nature walk can connect biodiversity protection with recreation. A refill station can be designed attractively and explained through a simple story about reducing packaging and transport. These experiences give a practical meaning to sustainability. The guest is not simply told that the hotel is sustainable; the guest can see, use and participate in elements of the system.

Service design is equally important. The customer journey starts before arrival, continues through booking and check-in, and extends after departure. At each stage there are opportunities to reduce friction. The booking website should clearly explain sustainability features without overwhelming the customer. Pre-arrival communication can offer transport information and local experiences. At check-in, staff should be able to explain the hotel's sustainability practices naturally rather than delivering a long scripted speech. During the stay,

guests should have simple choices. After departure, the hotel can provide a short impact summary or invite guests to remain connected.

The key issue is consistency. If an attractive sustainability message is followed by slow service, poor cleanliness or unclear charges, the positive effect is weakened. Green positioning therefore cannot compensate for poor basic service quality. Recent research on green hospitality similarly points toward the importance of combining environmental value with satisfaction, trust and the overall service experience (Merli et al., 2019; Singh et al., 2025).

4. Analysis of the Extended Marketing Mix: 7 Ps

4.1 Product

In sustainable hospitality, the product is more than the room. It includes accommodation, food and beverage, wellness, activities, transport support, digital services, customer service and the overall destination experience. A sustainable hotel should therefore design the product around a clear value proposition: the customer receives a high-quality hospitality experience while the hotel's operations attempt to reduce environmental and social impact.

Six Senses uses wellness and sustainability together in its positioning. Its properties include initiatives such as Earth Labs, gardens, local sourcing and guest programmes. The brand's sustainability reporting describes on-site water bottling, plastic reduction, composting and regenerative projects. In 2025, Six Senses reported avoiding more than 2.59 million plastic bottles by refilling its own drinking water and producing 142,365 kilograms of compost (Six Senses, 2026b). These operational activities can become product attributes when they are translated into visible and meaningful guest experiences.

For a market-development strategy, the product should be organised into layers. The core product is rest, escape, wellbeing and enjoyment. The actual product includes rooms, food, facilities and service. The augmented product includes sustainability experiences, local activities, digital concierge support and community-linked programmes. This structure prevents sustainability from replacing the core hospitality offer. Instead, it adds meaning to it.

4.2 Price

Price is one of the most sensitive parts of sustainable hospitality. Sustainable hotels can face higher costs because of certification, renewable energy, local sourcing, specialist staff or investments in efficient equipment. At the same time, customers compare hotel prices easily through online platforms. A hotel therefore needs to communicate why its price represents value rather than assuming that customers will pay more simply because the property is green.

A useful approach is value-based pricing. Instead of charging a separate 'sustainability fee', sustainability should be integrated into the overall experience and value proposition. Premium packages can combine accommodation with wellness sessions, local experiences, sustainable dining or private transfers. This makes the customer pay for a broader experience rather than for an abstract environmental claim.

Price can also be adjusted through demand-based pricing, seasonal packages and direct-booking benefits. The hotel may offer flexible cancellation, breakfast, wellness credit or a local experience to customers booking directly. Care is required because excessive discounting can weaken premium positioning. Similarly, large price differences between the hotel's own website and OTAs can create customer frustration. The pricing strategy should therefore be transparent and consistent enough to maintain trust.

4.3 Place and Distribution

Place refers to how customers access the service and how the service is distributed. For a luxury sustainable resort, distribution includes the hotel's own website, online travel agencies, global distribution systems, travel agents, tour operators and direct relationships. Online travel agencies such as Booking.com and Expedia provide visibility and access to customers who may not know the property. However, reliance on intermediaries can reduce the hotel's control over the customer relationship and increase distribution costs through commissions.

Direct booking has a different strategic value. When a customer books directly, the hotel can collect first-party customer information with appropriate consent, communicate before arrival, offer personalised experiences and develop repeat relationships. OTAs remain useful for discovery and international reach, particularly for new customers. The practical answer is

therefore not to eliminate OTAs but to manage channel roles. OTA listings can create awareness and first bookings, while post-stay relationship management can encourage future direct bookings.

Sustainability can also influence distribution choices. Digital documents, mobile check-in and local transport information can reduce paper and improve convenience. Hotels can highlight credible sustainability certification in distribution listings so that customers can identify relevant properties more easily. Booking.com states that it is prioritising third-party certifications in its sustainability approach, illustrating the growing importance of trusted sustainability information in digital distribution (Booking.com, 2026).

4.4 Promotion

Promotion should explain the experience and provide credible evidence. Sustainable hospitality is particularly vulnerable to greenwashing if marketing language is vague. Words such as 'eco', 'green' or 'responsible' have limited meaning when they are not supported by specific actions or measurable information.

Six Senses provides a useful example of evidence-based communication. Its public sustainability material explains particular initiatives, including plastic reduction, community programmes, local gardens and measurable environmental indicators. The brand also reports that its regenerative impact funds receive 0.5% of total property revenue, alongside other income sources, for locally relevant social and environmental projects (Six Senses, 2026b). Specific information gives customers something concrete to understand and reduces the risk of sustainability becoming only a visual theme.

Promotion should use several channels together. The hotel website can provide detailed information for customers who are actively researching. Social media can show behind-the-scenes activities, local producers, staff and guest experiences. Email can personalise offers for existing customers. PR can communicate measurable projects. Partnerships with responsible travel organisations can reach customers who already have an interest in sustainable tourism. The tone should remain inviting rather than judgemental; guests should feel that sustainable choices improve their holiday instead of feeling that they are being

lectured.

4.5 People

People are central to the hotel experience because employees deliver much of the service. Reception staff, housekeeping teams, chefs, spa therapists, activity guides and managers all influence how the brand is perceived. Sustainability therefore needs to be part of employee training and organisational culture, not simply a marketing department responsibility.

Six Senses reports that hosts receive climate-change training and that employees can become Sustainability Heroes. This connects staff development with the sustainability proposition (Six Senses, 2026b). A similar approach could be applied in another sustainable hotel by giving employees practical knowledge about waste separation, energy management, local culture, biodiversity and responsible purchasing. Importantly, training should also cover customer communication. Staff need to explain initiatives in simple language and answer questions without sounding defensive or scripted.

Employee wellbeing also matters. A sustainability strategy that depends on exhausted or poorly supported employees is unlikely to create consistent service quality. People should therefore be included in the social side of sustainability through fair employment, training, development opportunities and recognition. This can strengthen internal culture while improving the consistency of the external brand experience.

4.6 Process

Process describes how the service is delivered. In hospitality this includes booking, payment, arrival, check-in, room allocation, housekeeping, food service, complaint handling, checkout and after-sales communication. Sustainable process design should make environmentally responsible behaviour simple for both employees and guests.

Examples include digital check-in, paperless invoices, refillable water systems, smart energy controls, linen-reuse choices and food-waste monitoring. However, process changes must be designed around customer convenience. Asking guests to reuse towels can be acceptable when the option is clearly communicated, but it should never become an excuse for inadequate

housekeeping. Sustainability should reduce waste without reducing the perceived quality of service.

Process also influences trust. If a hotel claims that it sources locally, staff should know which suppliers are involved. If it claims to reduce waste, there should be operational data behind the statement. Measurement therefore becomes part of service design. A hotel can track energy per occupied room, water use, waste diversion, guest satisfaction and participation in sustainability activities. These measures can then inform management decisions and future marketing communication.

4.7 Physical Evidence

Hospitality is intangible, so customers use physical evidence to judge quality before and during consumption. This includes architecture, interior design, uniforms, signage, room amenities, website images, restaurant presentation, certificates and even small details such as refill bottles or reusable packaging. Bitner (1992) demonstrates why the physical environment is strategically important: surroundings can influence customer and employee behaviour and support marketing objectives.

For sustainable hospitality, physical evidence should make the brand promise believable. Natural materials, local artwork, visible gardens, refill stations, energy displays and carefully designed information can communicate sustainability without making the property feel basic or institutional. The challenge is to avoid creating a 'theme park' version of sustainability. Premium guests may expect sophisticated design, so sustainability should be integrated into aesthetics rather than displayed as a collection of signs.

Physical evidence also extends to digital touchpoints. The booking website, mobile confirmation, online room images and post-stay communication are part of the service environment. If the website presents an elegant sustainable experience but the booking process is confusing, the brand promise becomes inconsistent. The physical and digital evidence therefore needs to communicate the same positioning.

5. Direct Booking Versus Online Travel Agencies

Distribution is one of the most practical challenges in hospitality marketing. Online travel agencies provide search visibility, comparison and booking convenience. They can be particularly useful for reaching international customers who are unfamiliar with an individual hotel. Their weakness from the hotel's perspective is that the intermediary controls much of the customer interface and the hotel pays a commission for the booking.

Direct booking gives the hotel greater control over communication and customer data, subject to privacy requirements. It also creates opportunities to sell experiences, upgrades and future stays directly. However, a hotel cannot assume that customers will move to direct booking simply because the hotel asks them to. The direct channel needs a clear value proposition: flexible conditions, personalised offers, loyalty benefits, added experiences or better information.

A balanced strategy is therefore more appropriate. OTAs should be treated as acquisition and discovery channels, while the direct website should become the relationship channel. Performance should be measured by channel profitability rather than room revenue alone. Relevant metrics include acquisition cost, commission cost, conversion rate, average daily rate, cancellation rate, customer lifetime value and repeat booking rate.

6. Integrated 7 Ps Matrix for Market Development

The following matrix translates the analysis into an actionable strategy for a premium sustainable hotel. The objective is to attract environmentally aware travellers without narrowing the market so much that sustainability becomes the only reason to book. The intended segment includes couples, wellness travellers, affluent leisure customers and experience-seeking guests who value comfort and are interested in responsible travel.

7 P	Strategic objective	Practical action	Example KPI
Product	Combine luxury, wellness and sustainability	Create stay packages including wellness, local food, nature experiences	Package bookings; guest satisfaction
Price	Communicate value while protecting premium positioning	Use premium-based packages, seasonal pricing and direct-booking offers	AUD RevPAR; package revenue
Place	Balance reach with direct relationships	Use OTAs for discovery while investing in the direct website and CRM	Demand CRM; OTA commission; conversion
Promotion	Build trust through evidence	Use measurable impact stories, certification and staff/local engagement	Engagement; website conversion; brand search

7 P	Strategic objective	Practical action	Example KPI
People	Turn employees into service and sustainability ambassadors	Train staff in sustainability, service recovery and storytelling	Training completion; guest reviews; staff retention
Process	Make sustainable behaviour convenient	Digital check-in, refill systems, smart energy controls and smart room choices	Employee/room choice; process time
Physical Evidence	Make sustainability visible and present	Interior design, natural materials, refill stations, certification and deep cleaning	Guest perception; information; satisfaction

The matrix demonstrates that the 7 Ps should not be managed independently. For example, a local food experience begins as a Product decision but affects People through chef and supplier relationships, Process through procurement and waste management, Physical Evidence through restaurant presentation, Promotion through storytelling and Price through the package value. This interdependence is one of the main reasons the extended mix is useful in hospitality.

7. Implementation Plan, Budgeting and KPIs

A sustainable marketing strategy requires a realistic implementation schedule. The following 12-month plan is designed for a premium hotel that wants to strengthen its sustainable positioning and increase direct customer relationships. The figures are an illustrative planning budget rather than a claim about Six Senses' actual spending.

Period	Main activities	Indicative budget (€)	Primary measures
Months 1–3	Customer research, sustainability audit, website content, staff training	25,000 baseline	Baseline satisfaction; direct conversion; traffic
Months 4–6	New sustainable packages, photography/video, OTA optimisation, CRM setup	35,000	Package sales; website conversion; email sales
Months 7–9	Social storytelling, creator partnerships, local experience campaign, PR	70,000	Reach; engagement; bookings; earned media
Months 10–12	Retention campaign, loyalty offers, impact report, performance review	40,000	Repeat bookings; direct revenue; CAC; NPS
Total	Illustrative 12-month market-development programme	200,000	Integrated performance review

7.1 KPI Framework

The KPI system should combine financial, customer, operational and sustainability measures. Using only social-media engagement would not show whether marketing is creating business value. Similarly, measuring only revenue could hide environmental or service problems.

- **Conversion rate:** percentage of relevant website visitors who complete a booking. This shows whether traffic is translating into commercial action.

- **Customer acquisition cost (CAC):** marketing and acquisition spending divided by new customers acquired. CAC should be compared across direct, OTA and campaign channels.
- **Engagement rate:** interactions relative to audience reach on social platforms. This is useful for content evaluation but should not be treated as a financial result on its own.
- **Direct booking share:** proportion of bookings generated through the hotel's own channels. The objective is to strengthen direct relationships without abandoning useful intermediaries.
- **Customer satisfaction and loyalty:** post-stay satisfaction, review scores, repeat booking rate and loyalty enrolment can indicate whether the sustainable proposition is improving the guest relationship.
- **Sustainability KPIs:** energy per occupied room, water per occupied room, waste per guest, plastic avoided, local purchasing share and participation in community projects. These indicators provide evidence for future communication.

A dashboard should review the KPIs monthly, while strategic decisions should be reviewed quarterly. A campaign that produces high engagement but weak booking conversion may need a different call to action. A campaign that generates bookings but attracts customers who are dissatisfied with price or service may indicate a positioning problem. Sustainability data should also be reviewed for accuracy before being used in promotional materials.

8. Strategic Recommendations

First, sustainability should remain integrated with the main hospitality value proposition. Customers should not have to choose between luxury and responsibility. The marketing message should instead show how design, wellness, food, nature and service can create a high-quality experience with lower impact.

Second, the hotel should use evidence as a central communication principle. Third-party certification, measurable environmental indicators and transparent descriptions of projects are more convincing than broad claims. This is especially important because customers have become more familiar with sustainability language and may question claims that cannot be verified.

Third, the hotel should use OTAs selectively while strengthening direct relationships. OTA platforms can introduce new customers to the property, while the direct channel can support personalisation, loyalty and lower long-term acquisition costs. The decision should be based on profitability and customer lifetime value rather than on a simple preference for one channel.

Fourth, employee training should be treated as marketing investment. Guests often learn about sustainability through conversations with staff. Employees need enough knowledge to explain the hotel's initiatives, but the communication should remain natural and customer-focused. Staff should also be empowered to solve service problems because sustainability cannot compensate for poor hospitality.

Fifth, sustainable experiences should be developed with local communities rather than simply using local culture as decoration. Partnerships with local farmers, artists, guides, educators and conservation organisations can create authentic experiences while distributing economic value. Booking.com's 2025 research found that many travellers were increasingly conscious of tourism's impact on communities and that 73% wanted the money they spend to go back to local communities (Booking.com, 2025b).

Finally, the hotel should treat sustainability as a continuous improvement process. Customer expectations, technology and environmental conditions change. Annual impact reporting, customer feedback and operational data should therefore be used to refine the 7 Ps rather than treating the strategy as a one-time campaign.

9. Conclusion

The extended marketing mix provides a practical way to understand sustainable hospitality because it connects the customer-facing experience with the operational systems that produce it. Product, Price, Place and Promotion shape the market proposition, while People, Process and Physical Evidence explain how the promise is delivered and experienced. In sustainable hospitality, these elements are closely connected: a claim about responsible travel must be supported by employees, processes, facilities and measurable actions.

Six Senses demonstrates how sustainability can be incorporated into a premium hospitality proposition through environmental programmes, local community initiatives, guest education, wellness and measurable operational practices. Its reported use of third-party GSTC certification and its public impact data provide examples of how a hotel brand can make sustainability more concrete. At the same time, the wider analysis shows that sustainable marketing should not assume that all customers have identical motivations or willingness to pay. Comfort, service quality, price, convenience and trust remain essential.

The proposed 7Ps matrix and 12-month implementation framework therefore focus on integration rather than on a single green campaign. The strategic objective is to create a guest experience in which sustainability feels useful, credible and enjoyable. When environmental responsibility, employee behaviour, service design, distribution and communication reinforce one another, sustainability can contribute not only to responsible tourism but also to customer value, satisfaction and long-term brand relationships.

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Appendix A: Suggested Customer Profile

Primary customer: An internationally mobile leisure traveller, generally an adult couple or small group, with sufficient disposable income to consider premium accommodation. The customer values comfort and wellbeing but also wants the trip to feel meaningful and responsible.

Needs: High service quality, privacy, wellness, attractive design, good food, easy booking and confidence that sustainability claims are credible.

Motivations: Rest, nature, wellbeing, unique experiences, local culture and a desire to travel more responsibly.

Barriers: High price, uncertainty about whether sustainability claims are genuine, inconvenient transport, concern that sustainable hotels may reduce comfort, and limited knowledge of what certification means.

Marketing response: Communicate measurable impact alongside luxury and wellbeing. Provide convenient sustainable choices, transparent pricing, strong digital information and experiences that allow customers to participate without feeling pressured.

Appendix B: Sample 12-Month Campaign Theme

Campaign concept: “Stay Well, Leave a Lighter Footprint.”

Months 1–3 would focus on research and content preparation. Months 4–6 would introduce sustainable stay packages and direct-booking benefits. Months 7–9 would highlight staff, local producers, conservation activities and guest stories through social and PR channels. Months 10–12 would focus on retention, repeat stays and publication of an accessible annual impact summary. Throughout the year, campaign performance would be evaluated against booking, customer and sustainability KPIs rather than reach alone.