

Consumers' Perception on Green Practice Restaurants: Some Insights from a Developing Nation

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The shift of consumers' perception for dining at green practice restaurants contributes in changing their behavioural pattern. More empirical research into this green movement is deemed necessary to advance the body of knowledge. Accordingly, this study aims to examine consumers' perception of green practice restaurants in a developing nation. A structured self-administered questionnaire was distributed among 350 publics in the northern state of Malaysia. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed to run a descriptive analysis. Results revealed that consumers' have a positive perception for dining at green practice restaurants. The belief that dining at green restaurants helps to protect the environment and to stay healthier. Hence, restaurateurs must minimise energy usage and waste by using organic, biodegradable or recycled products. Direction for future research is also furnished.

Key words: *Green Product, Green Practice, Green Restaurant, Green Experience, Green Behaviour, Perception.*

Introduction

Green refers to “actions that reduce the impact on the environment, such as eco-purchasing or recycling” (Wolfe & Shanklin, 2001, p. 209), while green restaurants being defined as “new or renovated structures designed, constructed, operated, and demolished in an environmentally friendly and energy-efficient manner” (Lorenzini, 1994, p. 119). A green restaurant heavily focuses on the tenants of reduce, reuse, and recycle, as well as sustainable energy and efficiency (Gilg et al., 2005) which certified by recognised green restaurant certification. Green Restaurant Association (2011) noted that green restaurants practice “water efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, sustainable furnishings and building

materials, sustainable food, energy, disposables, and chemical and pollution reduction”. This good practice aids to improve company image, evoke customer interest towards a greener lifestyle and increase satisfaction (Llach, Perramon, Alonso-Almeida, & Bagur-Femenias, 2013).

The shift of consumers’ perception of dining at green practice restaurants contributes to changing their behavioural pattern. In the United States, 65% of consumers willing to pay extra in the restaurants that serve organic and locally grown food, 10% more to dine at a green restaurant, and 20% would pay more rather than eat green (Galindo, 2007). Green practice restaurants contribute to preventing pollution and minimising the usage of natural resources, emissions effluents and waste. More empirical research into this green movement is deemed necessary to advance the body of knowledge. Accordingly, this study aims to examine consumers’ perception of green practice restaurants in a developing nation. The ensuing section is structured as follows. The literature review is discussed in the next section. Next, the methodology employed is explained, followed by data analysis. The discussion of findings and conclusion are provided in the final section.

Literature Review

Customer belief that dining at green restaurants will help to protect the environment and increased the profit of the business depends on how that the manager can focus on creating an innovative dining atmosphere to increase customer satisfaction, loyalty enjoyment of the dining space (Hornig, 2013). As customers heavily recognise the seriousness of environmental problems, their product choices are becoming more ecologically conscious whereby they incline to purchase products and services that are environmentally friendly (Janga et al., 2011). Indeed, they prefer to dine at green practices restaurant than a regular restaurant.

The importance of green practices aspects in a green restaurant applies in the reduction of the usage of chemical fertiliser, and higher usage of agricultural produce fertiliser and serving more nutritious food in a restaurant (Janga, Kimb, & Bonn, 2011; Rashid & Spreckelmeyer, 2012). However, the green practice is essential to be practiced due to the increases waste in restaurants which is started from recycling and composting the food to reduce the waste besides increases the soil nutrition. In addition, green practice includes the usage of energy and water-efficient equipment in restaurants is available like such in restaurant kitchen, dining area, and restroom. Restaurant and community should be practiced use eco-friendly cleaning supplies and packaging that content of non-toxic cleaning supplies and packaging that is safe to be use. The main practice of green protocols in a restaurant is started from menu sustainability which serves organic food that is both non-toxic and fertiliser free or free from pollution from chemical substance to their customer (Wang, 2012).



Methodology

Quantitative research was employed in this research via the distribution of a structured self-administered questionnaire to 350 publics in the northern state of Malaysia. Data collection was executed over a period of two weeks in November 2019 by using a convenience sampling technique. Of this, 300 questionnaires were usable for analysis of data, leading to 86% response rate. This sample size is deemed adequate as it surpassed 100, the recommended value by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2010). Table 1 details the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Of the total respondents, more than half was males (65%), and the balance was female (35%). In terms of age distributions, 56.7% of the respondents aged less than 30 years old, close to 30% aged between 31 and 40 years old, while 13.6% of the respondents aged more than 41 years old. More than three-quarter of the respondents (84%) pay a visit to a green restaurant more than six times per month, and the balance visits less than 6 times. Indeed, they mostly willing spent more than RM100 for this purpose and was motivated by exposure to mass media. Green food leading the type of green product purchased in the past three-month, followed by a recycled paper bag, green living products, and eco-stationary.

Table 1: Socio-demographics Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	195	65.0
Female	105	35.0
<i>Age (years old)</i>		
≤ 20	54	18.0
21 – 30	116	38.7
31 - 40	89	29.7
≥ 41	41	13.6
<i>Frequency of visits to green restaurant per month</i>		
≤ 5 times	48	16.0
6 – 10 times	118	39.3
11 – 15 times	87	29.0
≥ 16	47	15.7
<i>Money spent in green restaurant per month</i>		
≤ RM50	48	16.0
RM 51 – RM 100	81	27.0
RM 101 – RM 150	132	44.0
≥ RM151	39	13.0
<i>Sources encourage to visit the green restaurant</i>		
Friends	103	34.3
Lecturer	48	16.0
Family	37	12.3
Mass Media	112	37.4
<i>Green product purchased in the past three-month</i>		
Organic food	119	39.7
Green living products	46	15.3
Eco-stationary	20	6.7
Recycled paper bag	115	38.3

The questionnaire was designed in three sections. The first section requires the respondents to furnish information regarding demographic profile like gender, and age, while the ensuing section requires the input of personal experiences with green practice restaurants. The final section requires them to supply responses of perception on green practice restaurant regarding the aspects of belief and attitude, the importance of green practices and environment of the green practice restaurant. These items were designed on a 5-point Likert Scale extending from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Data was analysed using descriptive analysis

which was performed via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme version 21.

Data Analysis

Descriptive of Belief and Attitude towards Green Practice Restaurant

Table 2 emphasises the descriptive of respondents' belief and attitude towards green practice restaurant. Out of the four statements put forward, they perceive that it is good for restaurants to protect the environment, with 36% noted strongly agree, 42% agree, and 17% neutral. However, a small portion of respondents (3%) rated disagree, and 1% express strongly disagree on this statement. The next statement that scored higher rate of strongly agree is "Dining at green restaurants will be healthier for me" (32%), followed by the statement "Dining at green restaurants will help to protect the environment" (25%). Besides, when asked whether dining at green restaurants will be more expensive, 19% of the respondents express strongly agree, and 34% rate agree.

Table 2: Descriptive of Belief and Attitude towards Green Practice Restaurant

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
"Dining at green restaurants will help to protect the environment"	7 (2.3%)	25 (8.3%)	65 (21.7%)	127 (42.3%)	76 (25.3%)
"Dining at green restaurants will be more expensive"	2 (0.7%)	40 (13.3%)	99 (33.0%)	103 (34.3%)	56 (18.7%)
"Dining at green restaurants will be healthier for me"	3 (1.0%)	9 (3.0%)	54 (18.0%)	138 (46.0%)	96 (32.0%)
"It is good for restaurants to protect the environment"	3 (1.0%)	10 (3.3%)	51 (17.0%)	128 (42.7%)	108 (36.0%)

Descriptive of the Importance of Green Practice Aspects

Six questions were posed to the respondents to gather input regarding their perception of the importance of green practice aspects. Table 3 details that 80% of them reported that it is imperative for the restaurants to reduce energy usage and waste, 19% disagree with this statement, while 1% has a neutral perspective. Most importantly, respondents heavily uphold this aspect as compared to the other five statements. Besides, the usage of biodegradable or

recycled products is heavily stressed among 73% of the respondents. When asked whether it is important for the restaurant to use organic products, more than three-quarters of the total respondents (77%) responded positively while the balance disagrees. Additionally, they also agree that it is imperative for the restaurants also to serve locally grown food (73% agree and 27% have opposite thought), and donate to environmental projects (71% agree while 29% disagree). There were 67% of the respondents asserted that restaurant needs to pay fees to reduce their ecological footprint.

Table 3: Descriptive of the Importance of Green Practice Aspects

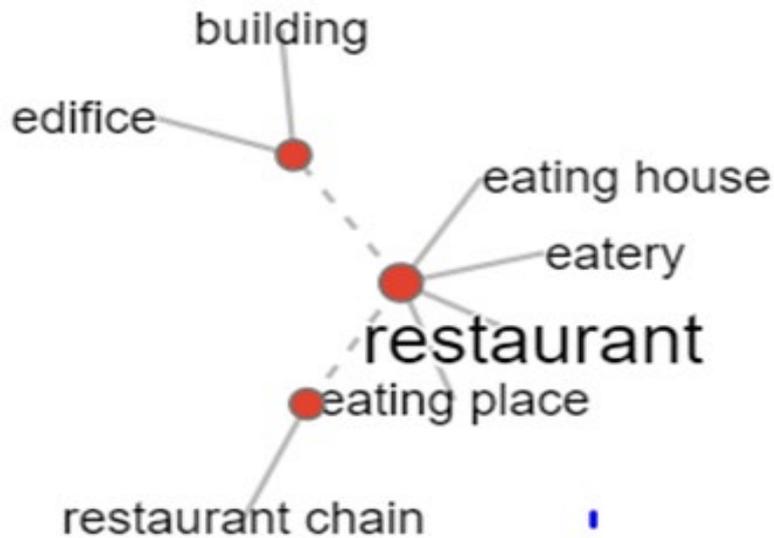
Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
“It is important for the restaurants to reduce energy usage and waste”	47 (15.7%)	10 (3.3%)	4 (1.3%)	143 (47.7%)	96 (32.0%)
“It is important for the restaurant to use biodegradable or recycled products”	60 (20.0%)	18 (6.0%)	3 (1.0%)	142 (47.3%)	77 (25.7%)
“It is important for the restaurant to use organic products”	57 (19.0%)	6 (2.0%)	6 (2.0%)	150 (50.0%)	81 (27.0%)
‘It is important for the restaurants to serve locally grown food”	64 (21.3%)	15 (5.0%)	1 (0.3%)	147 (49.0%)	73 (24.3%)
“It is important for the restaurants to donate to environmental projects”	68 (22.7%)	17 (5.7%)	3 (1.0%)	144 (48.0%)	68 (22.7%)
“It is important for the restaurant to pay fees to reduce their ecological footprint”	81 (27.0%)	15 (5.0%)	2 (0.7%)	126 (42.0%)	76 (25.3%)

Description of the Environment of the Green Practice Restaurant

The description of the environment of the green practice restaurant consisted of three questions (see Table 4). More than half of the respondents (58 %) agreed that the price of eating in green practice restaurant is suitable with the ambience of the restaurant. Besides, when asked whether a green practice restaurant is much more comfortable than a regular restaurant, 55% responded positively. Additionally, there were 43.5% of respondents

Additionally, Figure 2 details that word ‘restaurant’ is associated with words like eatery, eating house, eating place and restaurant chain.

Figure 2: Word Clouds of Restaurant



Discussion

This study examined consumers’ perception of green practice restaurants in a developing nation. Aspects like belief and attitude towards green practice restaurant, the importance of green practice aspects, and environment of the green practice restaurant were the focus of this research. The results of descriptive analysis inferred that consumers’ have a positive perception for dining at green practice restaurants. The beliefs that eating at green restaurants portrays that they concern on the environment to stay healthier. This discovery is aligned to Kwok and Huang (2019)’s study who reported that consumers’ incline to eat at a green restaurant and spend extra efforts to search for a preferred healthy menu.

Conclusion

As green practices are “value-added business strategy,” restaurateurs should continuously execute green initiatives to minimise energy usage and waste by using organic, biodegradable or recycled products. This practice should contribute towards winning consumers’ attention for dining and revisit. Preceding scholars noted that awareness regarding the sustainable impacts on the natural environment is also an imperative aspect for considerations. Another rewarding benefit of green practice is that restaurateurs are opened for enjoying lower operating costs, as highlighted by Susskind (2014).



Future research is suggested to intensify sample size in order to increase the generalizability of the current findings beyond a developing nation setting. Chen, Lehto and Cai (2013) avowed that cross-cultural differences contribute to the development of subjective well-being and influences of green buying behaviour. To gain better understanding on the variables of gender differences a moderating analysis should also be tested. In addition, aspect of users' loyalty (Mohd Suki 2012a, 2013c; Mohd Suki & Mohd Suki 2016), and satisfaction (Mohd Suki 2012b) are also relevant for examination.



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