



Restaurant Industry and Its Contribution Towards a Sustainable Society: Role Analysis

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing awareness that the future sustainability of our society, including maintaining our high standard of living, requires us to take environmental impacts into account along with social and economic considerations. Now, we are not only increasingly aware of the need to protect and repair the environment for its own sake, but we appreciate the close relationship between the health of our environment, people and the economy.

The purpose of this study is to explore the real view of restaurant industry; it is a conceptual paper, exploring into the current status and possible model practices in restaurant industry that will help restaurant industry as well as society to move towards sustainability.. Design of the study is exploratory, and source of data is available secondary data as well as in depth survey of literature.

KEYWORDS : Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Practices, Restaurant industry, Barriers to Sustainability

Introduction

Awareness of sustainability issues continues to grow, and the influence of sustainability on consumer behavior and product choices continues to evolve. Sustainable development practices are emerging as a key product attribute influencing customer decisions.. Demand for organic foods is growing at 25% per year. People are buying natural cleaning products and recycled paper goods these days. But what about the restaurant industry? Last year, almost 30% of all meals (and 40% of food dollars) were eaten away from home. There are over 500,000 food service establishments in the country, including almost 200,000 full-service restaurants. The industry employs one in every three retail workers and consumes one-third of all retail electricity use. The opportunities to reduce the environmental footprint of the food and restaurant industry are enormous. The restaurant and food retail sector is positioned at the end of the supply chain, and in direct contact with customers as well as society. Therefore brand image and company reputation are particularly valuable assets to food and restaurant industry. The Government is committed to encouraging and assisting the food and restaurant industry to capitalize on the potential that can be realized from the continued development of improved environmental and social sustainable practices and public reporting.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the current status of restaurant industry in relation to environmental sustainability.
2. To explore model practices that will need to be followed by restaurants in order to move restaurant industry and society towards sustainability.

Research Plan and design

Realizing the importance of sustainability, the work has been undertaken to explore the model sustainable practices that will need to be followed by restaurant industry in order to move itself as well as society towards economic sustainability and the current reality of restaurant industry in relation to environmental sustainability.

The study is exploratory in nature. It explores information largely through secondary data source.

Approach for the study

In- depth literature review as well as available secondary data from various sources has been used to develop this paper.

1. Current status of restaurant industry in relation to environmental sustainability

A. Procurement:

- **Cleaning Products:** Some chemical substances in cleaning products contain man-made persistent and unnatural substances which cannot be decomposed naturally and are fatal.
- **Paper :** Forests are cut down in order to produce paper, which cause deforestation. The production process also includes usage of some chemical substances which are persistent and cannot be

naturally decomposed off.

- **Meat:** Meat, fish, seafood, etc. are related to animal welfare and land use change for keeping and producing these products resulting biodiversity damage and results in degradation of soil.

Vegetables and Fruits: The increasing purchasing of vegetables and fruit would have

contribution to the violation of over harvesting and more land would be changed into farmland according to rising demand.

- A. **Energy:** Fossil fuels are used for heating systems and operating electrical systems which are hazardous for society.

B. Waste

- **Food Waste:** Decomposing of food waste encourages bacteria and other pathogens which can cause various hazardous effects on health of people and environment as well.
- **Waste Water:** It may contain toxic and persistent substances which may concentrate in nature causing the Degradation of water and soil.
- **Waste Paper:** It mainly affects the environment through litter and can generate greenhouse gases.
- **Packaging:** Plastic packaging cannot decomposed naturally and may got concentrated in nature.

- C. **Water:** Fresh water is a valuable natural resource, which also plays a very important role in the daily operation of a restaurant. Water involved in almost every aspect of food service and is essential for restaurant hygiene. Fresh water is limited, if exploited or degraded, it could become difficult and costly to find fresh sources, as well as energy and chemicals used to abstract, purify, transport and dispose of the water used.

2.Model Sustainable Practices in Restaurants

There are several green restaurant organizations that provide online resources to help restaurateurs adopt sustainable practices. Based on thorough literature review, this study identified green practices that can be utilized in the restaurant industry.

1) Recycling and composting:

There are many waste products which are recyclable in restaurants. They are paper, glass, plastic, metal, cardboard, and aluminum. Composting food waste helps to reduce the amount of waste and it improves the quality of the soil. These are possible sustainable practices in restaurants regarding recycling and composting:

- Recycle paper, plastic, cardboard, glass, and aluminum at the back of the store.
- Provide recycling bin in store(Self-service restaurant setting).
- Conduct food waste composting programs.

2) Energy and water-efficient equipment:

Energy and water efficient equipment can be applied in various areas

in a restaurant -kitchen, dining area, washrooms and restroom. Here are a few examples:

- Use flow restrictors on faucets, low-flow toilets, and water-less urinals.
- Only serve customers water upon request.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with longer lasting CFL light bulbs or LED.
- Replace exit lights with LED's.
- Use motion detectors for lights in the restroom.
- Use of a system which monitors and controls comfortable temperatures efficiently with the HVAC(Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning) system.
- Keep the entrance door closed or use a double entrance door.

3) Eco-friendly cleaning supplies:

Non-toxic cleaning supplies are safe for the environment and people in the following

examples:

- Use of environmentally friendly cleaners for dishes, and linen.
- Use of environmentally friendly cleaners for tables and floors.

4) Serving ware and packaging:

Recycle service wares are made of post-consumer waste sources. These wares can reduce the amount of waste. Also, they can save natural resources, such as trees.

- Use of take-out containers that are biodegradable (paper) or recyclable instead of using Styrofoam.

5) Menu sustainability:

Organic food is raised by non-toxic pesticides and fertilizers and made without genetic engineering. Locally grown foods reduce the amount of air pollution associated with transportation which uses fossil fuels. Therefore, restaurant managers should be sure to:

- Offer local ingredients on the menu.
- Offer organic food on the menu.
- Offer fish and seafood harvested sustainably and free of harmful pollutants.
- Avoid genetically modified foods.

Sustainable development practices from these sources were developed for restaurateurs. Other practices for the back of the house were excluded, for example using energy efficient lighting within storage and kitchens. This study considered sustainable development practices that customers are exposed to.

Discussion and Conclusion

Miles and Covin (2000) indicated that there are two theories that

explain why companies invest in developing superior environmental performance: (1) the "slack resources" theory (Graves & Waddock, 1994) and (2) the "good management" perspective of competitive advantage (Russo & Fouts, 1997). The first theory "slack resources" proposes that the company that has sufficient assets tends to allocate discretionary resources for socially responsible practices, such as environmental enhancements. This investment is designed to develop and enhance competitive advantage through reputation, image, and long term cost savings (Miles & Covin, 2000; Miles & Russell, 1997). In other words, by executing superior sustainable performance, the restaurant industry attempts to obtain a better image and reputation, which may lead to more successful outcomes in the future. Good management theory suggests that restaurants that have innovative management tend to seek out emerging sources of competitive advantage such as new environmental practices to better satisfy customers. Managers concern about the realization of superior environmental performance, which indicates customers' recognition of green image of the restaurant through the restaurant's sustainable practices (performance) because they believe that gained realization of such performance in public would give a distinctive advantage that intensifies their competitive power.

It is found that there is an increasing concern regarding the restaurant industry's contribution not only to the economy but also in how they impact the environment and society. It is felt that there should be more attention placed on how to decrease these impacts on environment and society. Because these impacts can affect small communities and contribute to global issues. After viewing different global effects of restaurant industry, It was realized that in present study some of the issues could not be even touched. Various issues like transportation of goods in restaurants directly contribute to increasing levels of Carbon di oxide, and the produce and products used contribute to degradation of the environment, as well as increasing concentrations of harmful substances in the biosphere. Most products have a lot of packaging and waste materials that contribute to expanding landfills when not recycled. Thus, the study concluded that the restaurant industry, like all others, is currently operating in a way that contributes to the un-sustainability of our society, but can strongly contribute in being a role model of other industries in taking our society towards sustainability.

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