

Understanding Generation Y' Perceptions and Purchase Intentions Related to Green Practice in Foodservice Operations

Theodosia C. Nathalia

Hospitality Management

Pelita Harapan School of Hospitality and Tourism

Banten, Indonesia

theodosia.nathalia@uph.edu

Yustisia Kristiana

Travel Industry Management

Pelita Harapan School of Hospitality and Tourism

Banten, Indonesia

yustisia.kristiana@uph.edu

Abstract

Purpose – The use of green practices in the foodservice industry has become an interest area in in the world of travel, tourism, and hospitality. Many foodservice operators have accepted the importance of promoting environmental awareness to create competitive advantages. The foodservice industry is one of the biggest consumers of energy. The paper aims to examine generation Y' perceptions, sustainability and purchase intentions on green practice in order to help determine strategies regarding the future management of green initiatives.

Design/methodology/approach – The study used a convenience sample of consumers of the restaurant. The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement to a variety of statements about the use of green practices, sustainability and purchase intentions in the foodservice industry. The survey also asked respondents to indicate their demographic profile. Respondents are generation Y who were born 1981-2000. The data were analyzed by using SPSS.

Findings – The results revealed that generation Y believed that they have the knowledges about green practices and sustainability but they would still like to know more about it. They also expressed preferences related to restaurants that are environmentally friendly and use environmentally safe products.

Originality/value – This study found that gender influenced generation Y' perceptions about purchase intentions to the green restaurants.

Keywords Sustainability, Green Practices, Consumer Perception, Purchase Intentions

I. INTRODUCTION

Foodservice industry is one of the important components in the tourism product and currently many of them apply the green practices. The use of green practices in the foodservice industry has become an interest area in in the world of travel, tourism, and hospitality. Many foodservice operators have accepted the importance of promoting environmental awareness to create competitive advantages. Hospitality businesses could negatively influence the sustainability of the local environments in which they operate through their overconsumption of natural resources. The foodservice industry is one of the biggest consumers of energy. According to the Energy Information Administration, restaurants use almost three times the energy of the average commercial building per square foot. In addition, restaurants utilize an immense amount of water and other nonrenewable resources

like natural gas and petroleum. Those businesses which have recognized the issue and started to implement changes in their everyday operations are commonly called “green” or “sustainable” businesses [2].

Green practices refer to actions that protect the environment and/or products made with little environmental harm because they are produced in an environmentally and ecologically friendly way [3, 4]. As a way of assuming their environmental responsibility, the restaurants are expected to be subjected to green trends. As an important issue, we cannot ignore the consumers' growing understanding of the effect of food consumption on health [5], together with increasing environmental awareness throughout society, which has resulted in a growing trend of green restaurants.

Each generation has unique expectations, experiences, generational history, lifestyles, values, and demographics that influence their buying behaviors. In Indonesia, generation Y is the biggest population. Table 1 below shows population of generation Y in Indonesia:

TABEL I. POPULATION OF GENERATION Y IN INDONESIA, 2015

Age Group	Population
15-19	22.107.723
20-24	21.467.771
25-29	20.830.304
30-34	20.459.299
35-39	19.838.306
Total	104.703.403

Source: Statistics Indonesia (2016)

Generation Y have better spending power and are savvy consumers. In the foodservice industry, generation Y is the key market segment due to their eating habits, lifestyle and also adventurous in trying new food [6]. The paper aims to examine generation Y' perceptions, sustainability and purchase intentions on green practice in order to help determine strategies regarding the future management of green initiatives.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Generation Y

Generation Y also known as Millennials, are people born between 1980 and 1995 or and 2000 according to another group of scientists [7]. Generation Ys are civic-minded and socially conscious individuals [8], and consumers who want quality goods, brand loyal, and willing to pay more for brand names [9]. Generation Y is important for marketers because of the impact that they have on their families' purchase decisions [10]. A previous study focusing on generation Y consumers' found that the majority (77%) of generation Y claimed that they care about the environment. Generation Y will favor companies that show a demonstrated commitment to sustainability and social improvement [11].

Green Practice in Foodservice Industry

Green restaurant is a restaurant with new or renovated structures designed, constructed, operated, and demolished in an environmentally-friendly and energy-efficient manner [12]. GRA [13], a national non-profit organization that promotes "Creating an environment Sustainable Restaurant Industry" provides a convenient and cost-effective way for restaurants, manufacturers, distributors, and consumers to become more environmentally responsible. These suggest green initiatives in the following areas:

- Water efficiency;
- Waste reduction and recycling;
- Sustainable furnishing and building materials;
- Sustainable food: restaurants purchase sustainable organic and local family farms;
- Energy: using more energy-efficient equipment, offsetting energy usage, and generating on-site renewable clean sources of energy;
- Disposables: restaurants should use products that are made from bio-based materials, or materials that have been previously recycled and made into these new products;
- Chemical and pollution reduction.

Recent studies founded that when restaurants are faced with environmental innovations, they will place great emphasis on economic and positive benefits that are associated with observable resource savings [14]. Environmental practices in the service industry are positively related to performance through the mediating effect of enhanced consumer satisfaction and loyalty [15]. In other words, restaurants could cater to the relatively new interest for eco-friendly practices by consumers with the consequence of increasing consumer satisfaction and loyalty. The latter one will then ultimately lead to increased performance in the market, hence a sustainable advantage over competitors. With these results in mind it should be only a logic consequence for restaurant owners and managers to engage in green practices.

Sustainability

Relevant studies have shown that consumers had experienced a green restaurant, and nearly 40 per cent of them had dined at the environmentally friendly restaurant at least once a month, most of them had difficulty with defining a green restaurant [16]. Substantial proportion of consumers participating in the researches appeared to be aware of eco-friendly foods and purchase the foods, although they perceived price as a barrier [17, 18].

A 2010 study on consumer perception of green restaurants suggests that restaurants' green practices are often unnoticed by the consumer because they are happening in the back-of-the-house and consequently do not provide the same level of engagement as other industries. Consumers of the globally branded restaurant do appreciate the use of local products [19]. Although not purely consumer-focused, a study of manager attitudes towards green practices in restaurant industry, concluded that engaging in green practices can lead to strengthened consumer relations and increased harmony with the community [20].

Purchase Intention

Intention is subjective judgments about how a person will behave in future and it is usually serves as dependent variable in many service research and satisfaction models [21, 22]. Consumers that received an excellent and memorable experience from the restaurant will form a favorable behavioral intention such as recommending the restaurant to others, spread positive word of mouth or become a loyal consumer will ultimately lead to revisit intention [21, 23]. The relationships among knowledge of green practices, personal green behavior, the willingness to buy green products or use green businesses and in some cases pay a premium price for those products has been well documented in the literature [1, 24, 25, 26].

Consumers' concern for the environment has been shown to be a good predictor for having positive purchase intentions for green products or products from companies employing green practices. There is a positive, significant relationship between a consumer's ecological behavior and their intention to patronize a green restaurant [1, 27].

TABLE II. PERSONAL AND LIFESTYLE CHARACTERISTICS BY GENERATION

	Veterans (1922-1945)	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	Generation X (1965-1980)	Generation Y (1981-2000)
Core Value	Respect for authority Conformers Discipline	Optimism Involvement	Skepticism Fun Informality	Realism Confident Extreme fun Social
Family	Traditional Nuclear	Disintegrating	Latch-key kids	Merged families
Education	A dream	A birth right	A way to get there	An incredible expense
Communication Media	Rotary phones One-on-one Write a memo	Touch-tone phones Call me anytime	Cell phones Call me only at work	Internet Picture phones E-mail
Dealing with Money	Put it away Pay cash	Buy now, pay later	Cautious Conservative Save, save, save	Earn to spend

Source: Fairleigh Dickinson University Magazine (2005)

Based on the literature review, the conceptual model proposed is:

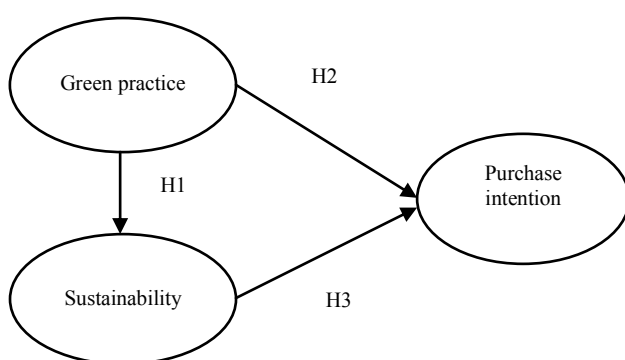


FIGURE I. STRUCTURAL MODEL

The proposed hypotheses are:

- H1 : The green practice has a positive impact on sustainability
H2 : The green practice has a positive impact on purchase intention
H3 : The sustainability has a positive impact on purchase intention

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used a convenience sample of consumers of the restaurant. The population in this study was generation Y, who were born 1981-2000. The data collected data through a structured questionnaire based on the review of relevant literatures and an overview of the theories. Indicators were used to explain the construct in research model by using Likert

Scale 1 – 6. Respondents were asked to answer the questions in the questionnaire regarding the green practice, sustainability and purchase intention. Each variable is operationalized in order to do the statistical analyses. The sources of each adapted indicators are presented in Table 3.

TABLE III. VARIABLES AND OPERATIONAL INDICATORS

Variables	Indicators
Green Practice [28]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizing recycling throughout the restaurant Not using Styrofoam to-go cups and containers Serving organic food and drinks Using energy efficient lighting Recycled wood furniture Recycled paper products Organic cotton staff uniforms Purchasing local foods Composting as a means of waste disposal Low-flow toilets in the restroom Utilizing non-toxic cleaners Motion sensors for lights Offering filtered tap water Automatically operated faucets
Sustainability [29]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability is equivalent to being green or eco-friendly Sustainability is beyond being green or eco-friendly Embedding green in foodservice operation Sustainability is initiative that helps foodservice operation implement conservation practice
Purchase Intention [30]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Food quality Service quality Price Location Local products are used in meal preparation Restaurant architecture and ambiance Environmental record Nutritious food Existence of recycling bins for consumer or employee use Types of service

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

In this study, the respondents were divided in socio-economic profile including gender, age, marital status, education level and occupation as illustrated in table below. Female respondents represent 69 percent (n=121) while the male is 31 percent (n=67) respondents of this study. Table 4 shows most of the respondents age falls between 16-19 years old which amounts to 52 percent (n=91). Meanwhile, 34 percent (n=59) of the respondents age falls between 20-24 years old, 10 percent (n=18) respondents are age between 25-30 years old, and 4 percent (n=7) respondents are more than 30 years old. Based on the figure, it shows that majority generation Y that has been involved in this study are among those who age 16-19 years old. Most of them are the university students and the respondents of this study were achieved as it is focusing on generation Y. Table shows that 86 percent (n=150) respondents are single and 24 percent (n=25) are married. As shown in Table 4 also shows that the majority of respondents are from high school with 61 percent (n=106), respondents whilst bachelor degree 32 percent (n=56) respondent. Certificate/diploma holder 6 percent (n=10) respondents, and 1 percent (n=3) respondents hold master degree. The majority of respondents are student with 54 percent (n=95), employed for wages 23 percent (n=40), self-employed 22 percent (n=38) and other 1 percent (n=2).

TABLE IV. RESPONDENT PROFILE

Description	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	67	31
Female	121	69
Age		
16-19 year	91	52
20 -24 year	59	34
25-30 year	18	10
More than 30 year	7	4
Marital Status		
Single	150	86
Married	25	24
Educational Level		
High School	106	61
Certificate/Diploma	10	6
Bachelor Degree	56	32
Master Degree	3	1
Occupation		
Employed for wages	40	23
Self-employed	38	22
Student	95	54
Other	2	1

Reliability Analysis

Reliability test was performed to measure the internal consistency of the scale used in this study. The minimum value requirement of Cronbach Alpha is 0.70 [31]. Table 5 shows the Cronbach Alpha values of the study variables, ranging from 0.90 to 0.98, all of which exceeds the recommended level of 0.70.

TABLE V. RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Variables	n	Cronbach Alpha
Green practice	14	0.98
Sustainability	4	0.90
Purchase intention	10	0.95

Descriptive Statistics

Table 6 provides a summary of the descriptive statistics for green practice in foodservice industry (GP), sustainability (S) and purchase intention (PI). As regards the measure of central tendency (mean values) of these factors, it appears that most of these values cluster around point four (somewhat agree) on the instrument scale and low standard deviation value (below 1.00). It is indicating that most of the respondents have a positive perception and relatively consistent regarding the green practice in foodservice industry, sustainability and purchase intention.

TABLE VI. A SUMMARY OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
GP1	175	1	6	4.41	0.954
GP2	175	2	6	4.33	0.948
GP3	175	2	6	4.35	0.965
GP4	175	2	6	4.35	0.958
GP5	175	2	6	4.33	0.917
GP6	175	1	6	4.38	0.962
GP7	175	1	6	4.40	0.994
GP8	175	2	6	4.37	0.967
GP9	175	1	6	4.42	0.985
GP10	175	2	6	4.41	0.898
GP11	175	2	6	4.36	0.923
GP12	175	2	6	4.38	0.975
GP13	175	2	6	4.38	0.908
GP14	175	2	6	4.37	0.931
S1	175	2	6	4.38	0.975
S2	175	3	6	4.56	0.855
S3	175	1	6	4.42	0.985
S4	175	2	6	4.41	0.898
PI1	175	3	6	4.86	0.931
PI2	175	3	6	4.87	0.932
PI3	175	3	6	4.56	0.855
PI4	175	3	6	4.54	0.927
PI5	175	3	6	4.76	0.909
PI6	175	3	6	4.84	0.883
PI7	175	3	6	4.76	0.909
PI8	175	3	6	4.60	0.851
PI9	175	3	6	4.64	0.796
PI10	175	3	6	4.60	0.851
Valid N (listwise)	175				

Regression Analysis

The output for green practice as independent variable and sustainability as dependent variable (H1) shows the calculation of adjusted R square of 0.918, meaning 91.8% variable of green practice can be explained by the variable of sustainability, while the rest (8.2%) is explained by other variables. The output for green practice as independent variable and purchase intention as dependent variable (H2) shows the calculation of adjusted R square of 0.669, meaning 66.9% variable of green practice can be explained by the variable of

purchase intention, while the rest (33.1%) is explained by other variables. The output for sustainability as independent variable and purchase intention as dependent variable (H3) shows the calculation of adjusted R square of 0.613, meaning 61.3% variable of sustainability can be explained by the variable of purchase intention, while the rest (38.7%) is explained by other variables.

F value for green practice as independent variable and sustainability as dependent variable (H1) equal to 1936.663 with a significant level of 0,000 is smaller than 0.005, the regression model can be used to predict green practice and sustainability. F value for green practice as independent variable and purchase intention as dependent variable (H2) equal to 276.419 with a significant level of 0,000 is smaller than 0.005, the regression model can be used to predict green practice and purchase intention. F value for sustainability as independent variable and purchase intention as dependent variable (H3) equal to 142.791 with a significant level of 0,000 is smaller than 0.005, the regression model can be used to predict sustainability and purchase intention.

TABEL VII. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
Green Practice	Sustainability	0.918	1936.663	0.000
Green Practice	Purchase Intention	0.669	276.419	0.000
Sustainability	Purchase Intention	0.613	142.791	0.000

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to explore the generation Y' perception of green practice in foodservice industry, and investigate the impacts of their perceptions on sustainability, and whether it will has an impact on purchase intention.

Through this study, it is empirically verified that the generation Y' perception of green practice in foodservice industry has a positive impact on sustainability. This finding is also supporting the previous studies that indicating younger and better educated members of the public appear to be more concerned about issues of environmental quality and more committed to environmental protection [32]. The most important thing that must be kept in mind is that the positive relationship between the two constructs was arisen from the perception of the generation Y about green practice in foodservice industry. The right understanding from the foodservice management about consumer's services preferences will lead them in determining types of green practice that are going to be applied, and can be discerned by the consumers, specially by generation Y. Based on previous studies, younger people (ages 35 years or younger) tend to consider using organic foods and reducing the ecological footprint of the restaurant as important for a restaurant [5].

The generation Y' perception of green practice in foodservice industry has positive impact of their purchase intention. This finding supports the previous studies that revealed a person's knowledge about an issue significantly influences one's decision making regarding that issue [33]. For example, people's knowledge about green practices and

their own use of them will influence their decision to choose a business that also follows green practices. Moreover, numerous studies have shown that knowledge about the environment generally motivates people to behave in an environmentally-responsible manner and choose businesses that do likewise [34, 35]. A strong relationship between consumers' knowledge of green restaurants, environmental concerns, ecological behaviors and intentions to patronize a green restaurant [35]. The environment was the fourth most important issue, preceded by health insurance, living wages and animal welfare. The most recent trend however, is that consumers want to believe they are doing something good while eating out [36]. A number of studies have looked at the impact of demographic factors and how they relate to the perception of green practices and consumer behavior. The majority of respondents in this study were female, although not included in the hypothesis, gender influenced consumer perceptions about purchase intentions to the green restaurants. Women were more likely to report taking part in "green" shopping, but not in recycling or contributing to environmental organizations [32]. Furthermore, women were more likely to express concern about local and statewide pollution and more prepared than men to pay the regulatory, but not the economic, costs of environmental protection.

The sustainability concept has positive impact to purchase intention. This finding support the previous studies that substantial proportion of consumers participating in the researches appeared to be aware of eco-friendly foods and purchase the foods, although they perceived price as a barrier [17]. Consumer trust in a green brand is an important purchase criterion which positively influences their purchase of green products [37]. Eco-labelling or eco-certification informs consumers about the green characteristics of the product and motivates them to purchase green products [38]. These studies have suggested that reliable information should be provided in a simple and user-friendly way through product labels. This might build consumer trust and encourage more sustainable purchases. Above findings suggest that eco labelling might not have any impact on consumer green purchase behavior if they do not trust the information provided.

Limitation and Future Research

Limitations to this study relates to the number of respondents who are not too many. The limitation also comes from the data that comes from one geographical market, which is Tangerang, Indonesia. Therefore, suggestion for the future research, number of respondents would be more and on various geographical markets might reveal different results.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the result of this study will extend the knowledge about the role of generation Y' perceptions of green practice in foodservice operation that may impacting their perception on sustainability and purchase intention. The knowledge about generation Y' perception regarding the green practice can be a managerial tool to determine level of the importance placed on green initiatives. This study will add more reference on the green practice in foodservice operations.

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