

Laura Favretto

The Responsible Diner. Do Consumers really care about a restaurant's sustainable practice?

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**The Responsible Diner:
Do consumers really care about a restaurant's
sustainable practice?**

Laura Favretto

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
BA (Hons) Hospitality and Business Management

London Southbank University

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Abstract

This paper considers the values and perceptions of diners' in relation to the concept of sustainability and presents an analysis of impact on their decision-making process when eating out at restaurants. From the literature review it appears that the context of sustainability has evolved gradually throughout human history; however only a few studies have been conducted with regards to diners' choice towards sustainable restaurants despite recent studies suggesting that more consumers are avoiding goods that leave a large footprint on the environment. The aim of this dissertation is therefore to discuss in critical terms whether a restaurant's "green" practice impacts on customers' behavioural intentions and to analyse if consumers' attitude to dining out has changed towards a more responsible approach in the restaurant environment. A survey of 417 restaurant diners from three casual and three fine dining restaurants within Greater London and seven interviews with relevant industry stakeholders revealed relevant information on the topic under discussion leading to an indication of whether diners really care or not about a restaurant's sustainable practice; this also included an investigation of whether customers are aware of the environmental issues related to the restaurant industry and if they are concerned about it. Those diners that expressed concern were asked to indicate which environmental issues they are most interested in. Lastly, this research examined the factors that influence consumers towards a more sustainable commitment. A range of recommendations are provided based on the findings from the literature review and primary data. Ultimately, this dissertation offers a basis for future discussion on how the restaurant industry could encourage its diners to take a more responsible approach.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Restaurants form part of one of the leading commercial sectors in the world, the Hospitality and Tourism industry. As such, it has been identified as a significant contributor to the UK economy providing jobs to thousands of people. Although its influence to the UK economy is pronounced, it still contributes to environmental issues such as climate change and food waste. As a result increasingly more restaurants are changing their businesses into a more sustainable practice (SRA, 2013a).

The sustainability concept has been around in some form since the earliest civilisations. Humans in ancient times were already valuing the environment (Javonavić, 2012). Nevertheless, the word sustainable develops from the Latin term “sustinere” which means “to sustain, support, maintain and preserve” (Grober, 2012, p.19). Since its inception the concept has advanced progressively throughout human history, incorporating additional values. As such, there are numerous interpretations of sustainability, this is because for each individual the concept has a different value (Sidiropoulos, 2013; Robinson, 2004). Even so, the most common description used by people originated since the beginning of the 1970s, when professionals recognised that humankind’s activities were challenging the environment. “Our Common Future” created by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, defined sustainability as a “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Sloan et al., 2009, p.3). Many know this statement as the “Brundtland Report”, named after