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Assessing the Impact of Green Practices on Consumer Perceptions in Ghanaian Restaurants: A Comprehensive Review

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This comprehensive review examines the impact of green practices on consumer perceptions in Ghanaian restaurants. It aims to understand how eco-friendly initiatives influence customer satisfaction and behavior, addressing a significant gap in current academic literature. The review analyzes existing studies on green practices in the hospitality industry, focusing on consumer demand for environmentally friendly cuisine. Key findings indicate that implementing sustainable practices not only enhances consumer satisfaction but also provides a competitive advantage for restaurants. This study underscores the importance of sustainability in the food service sector, particularly within the context of Ghana.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As companies prioritize environmental sustainability, cooperation may lead to a more sustainable and environmentally aware future by enhancing ecological knowledge and inspiring individuals and organizations to make meaningful contributions (Ismail et al. 2023). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) World Organization address several cross-cutting issues. The primary emphasis of SDG 14 is to advance sustainable production and consumption, with the aim of achieving these goals by 2030. The restaurant industry is severely lacking in environmental protection. According to Fechner et al. (2023), restaurants not only use a lot of water and electricity, but they also generate a lot of waste, including food scraps, plastic, and pollution. Restaurants throw out a shocking amount of food every year. Almost 390,000 tons of food are at stake in the United States alone. An adequate recovery of this trash could feed the hungry for roughly 643 million people (Cochran et al., 2018).

Roy et al. (2022) report that we discard about 40 billion pieces of non-biodegradable cutlery annually. Roman et al. (2020) and Liu (2021) found that the majority of this disposable plastic silverware ends up in the ocean, where marine animals mistake it for food. There has been a rise in environmentally conscious eating out, with consumers increasingly supporting restaurants that prioritize sustainability (Bacig & Young, 2019; Moon, 2021). In light of these changes and their consequences, there has been a worldwide surge in studies examining the effects of restaurants on the environment and initiatives to address these issues. How about we switch roles? Is there a way for eateries to reduce their impact on the environment? Here, "green" means a restaurant's design and operation that puts an emphasis on being energy efficient and sustainable (Huber, 2002).

The problem of restaurants' environmental unsustainability has also attracted more attention from the academic community. Recent review studies on hotel sustainability (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2019; Kim et al., 2017) provide evidence of this. Kim et al. (2017) conducted a particularly significant review of green hospitality practices. This appears to be a relatively new area of study, as only fifteen studies (or 10.5% of the total) addressed green restaurant-related issues.

Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019), who evaluated sustainability studies focusing on restaurants up to 2015, also highlighted these patterns. But none of the evaluation studies zeroed in on the ways in which eateries harm the planet. This study seeks to investigate on the impact of green practices on restaurants on consumer perception in Ghana.

2. GREEN PRACTICES IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

2.1 Green Branding

Danciu (2022) argues that the term "green branding" refers to the efforts made to promote products and services that consumers associate with being environmentally conscious. According to Bombiak (2024), green firms are on the rise because of changes in society, including more people thinking about and talking about environmental concerns, more people using the internet and social media, and new ways of teaching and parenting. Furthermore, Bombiak (2024) asserts that consumers' sense of agency and decision-making ability influence these factors. As a result, consumers align their buying patterns with their environmental values.

The American Marketing Association uses the more generic term "green marketing" to describe the practice of advertising products and services with the intention that they would not harm the environment (Danciu, 2022). "Green marketing" is defined by Li and Kallas (2021) as "the effort of firms to produce, promote, and recycle products in response to environmental concerns," lending credence to this claim. However, the converse is true when it comes to green branding; this idea is defined as the umbrella term under which green marketing falls. An easily identifiable and widely disseminated "green" brand identity a set of characteristics and services aimed at lessening a company's negative influence on the environment is the key to satisfying customers. Customers must effectively communicate the "green" marketing aspects of eco-friendly products to ensure their commercial viability (Nabilla, 2019).

2.2 Green Hospitality Industry

To determine the root of hotel guests' desires to remain at environmentally conscious establishments, Elhoushy and El-Said used

Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (1991) in their 2020 research. According to their findings, there was a positive correlation between customers' intentions to stay in eco-friendly hotels and attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The researchers also found no statistically significant difference between the paths followed by eco-activists and non-activists.

Lima et al. (2019) determined the green practice tendency of American and Indian restaurant clients via an analysis of consumer psychology. The results showed that American consumers cared more about restaurants' efforts to be socially and environmentally responsible, and that this care translated into a 10% increase in willingness to pay for these measures. However, Indian clients prioritized their health more, leading to a 10% or more increase in menu items. Any restaurant manager worth their salt may immediately put this study's findings to use. When adopting environmentally friendly methods, restaurant owners should keep cultural issues in mind for maximum profit. The primary focus of Braik et al. (2023) was on managers' attitudes towards environmentally friendly processes. They investigated if there was a correlation between restaurant managers' propensity to charge for environmentally friendly initiatives and their participation, preferences, and attitudes towards such actions. Distinct from previous green studies, this one aimed to understand hotel managers' perspectives on environmentally responsible practices.

In addition, their study provided new insight into the ways in which managers' mental factors influence pricing decisions about environmentally friendly procedures. Researchers found that managers' preferences and level of participation in socially responsible activities significantly influenced their willingness to charge more for these practices.

However, managers' stance against GP had little impact on their willingness to implement socially acceptable actions, such as price increases. This study provided a solid theoretical foundation for eco-conscious restaurants. According to them, there are many different aspects to green practices, such as caring for people's health, the environment, and society overall. Several marketing studies have shown that green practices may be a big part of social concern, but this doesn't mean that research on green practices should cover non-green social

concerns like fair human resource processes. Researchers need to reevaluate GP categories and come up with a definition of green practices for future studies. Draper (2019) conducted research to examine the impact of hotels' environmental practices on customers' propensity to make reservations.

A modified environmental behavioral model (Monus, 2020) included customers' knowledge about environmental issues, attitudes toward environmental strategies, and perceived self-efficacy to measure their intention to purchase a night at a hotel that practices green practices. We found a positive connection between three environmental behavioral model factors and purchase intent. Attempting to identify which environmentally beneficial activities may inspire consumers to act was the distinctive feature of this study. Researchers set out to learn, for the first time, how hotel customers really felt and expected environmentally friendly practices and regulations. Quantitative proof of the methodology is required before the results can assist operators in developing customer-centric service designs. It uses a single question to predict the positive correlation between consumers' sentiment toward various eco-friendly practices and their propensity to act (Monus, 2020).

2.3 Green Restaurant

The demand for healthy, sustainable, and ecologically friendly products and services is on the rise, making it imperative for businesses across all sectors to adopt green practices if they want to stay in business (Alagarasamy et al., 2021). The study by Parsa et al. (2020) makes this point clear. Kim and Hall (2020), Levitt et al. (2020), and Pillai et al. (2021) are among the sources that state that "green practices" are actions that contribute to the preservation or reduction of Earth's natural resources. Restaurants utilize a lot of power compared to other types of companies. Blum (2020) reports that, compared to the average office building, restaurants use almost twice as much energy per square foot.

According to studies (Parsa et al., 2020; Pillai et al., 2021), the restaurant industry has taken environmental sustainability very seriously as a solution to this problem. To lessen environmental impact, implement energy-saving measures, source locally or organically grown products wherever possible, provide nutritious menu items,

discourage the use of single-use plastics and cups, train employees to be environmentally conscious, recycle and compost, and cut down on water and power use (Lima et al., 2019). A "green restaurant" is one that makes an attempt to reduce its environmental impact; some of these eateries even go to certifications to prove it (Kwok, Huang, 2019). A few examples of green restaurant certifications are GenGreen, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), Green Seal, and Certified Green Commercial Kitchen. Those certification programs and organizations may provide restaurants with guidance and assessments as they strive to become more environmentally friendly. According to research by Gandhi et al. (2023), diners attribute higher quality to eateries that have earned green accreditation.

2.4 Green image of Restaurant Company

The public's perception of a firm is critical since it reveals the extent to which the company differs from rivals. Many studies have shown that a business's public image influences the public's impression of it (Sekarsari, 2018). The public impression of brands is particularly crucial in the food service industry, as clients cannot evaluate restaurants based on intangible traits prior to their dining experience. Physical cues, such as the restaurant's name or décor, have a significant impact on the image that customers get of the establishment. Psychology sometimes refers to imaging, a novel method of receiving and storing information from numerous senses in working memory, as "mental picturing" (Wyer, 2017).

The terms, definition of store image in marketing, Bonfier et al. (2022) first used the term "image" to describe "the way in which the store is defined in the shoppers' minds, partly by its functional attributes and partly by an aura of psychological factors". as the field of shop image evolved, researchers began to focus more on the concrete and real-world factors that contribute to customers' perceptions of a company's image. The public's perception of a store's attributes is its image, according to Gotlieb (Gotlieb, 2018). The following year, Shamsher (2021) followed Gotlieb's definition of image, defining shop image as the customer's perception of a store based on particularly salient attributes. Shamsher (2021) argues that the most noticeable aspects of a shop, as well as the importance people place on such elements, make up the store's reputation. A restaurant's "green image" is the impression it

gives to potential consumers about how eco-conscious the business is.

Shamsher (2021) and Sekarsari (2018) assert that the importance of a restaurant's green practices in determining its greenness may influence its perceived green image. Gutart et al.'s (2023) study on corporate image in marketing also found that environmentally conscious behaviors shape a company's reputation. According to Rybaczewska et al. (2020), "the public's perception of a company as a whole" is one way to describe a company's "corporate image" in marketing research. This overarching impression is based on a multitude of factors related to a company and its characteristics. These include the company's reputation and brand, the variety of products and services it provides, its physical layout, and its guiding principles. Rybaczewska et al. (2020) investigated customer views of service industry companies to identify the elements that influence these views. The researchers discovered five factors that influence consumers' perceptions of a service business's corporate image. The entire process consisted of five components: the business persona, community status, service quality, physical space, and communication ease. The research shows that people's impressions of a firm are mostly based on its reputation.

Guitart et al. (2023) assert that companies' green activities and other forms of social responsibility have long shaped their reputations and images. Furthermore, marketing studies have shown that these actions greatly affect customers' opinions of a company's character, reliability, and devotion (Lima et al., 2019). Eco-friendly policies and practices, at least in principle, could somewhat influence a company's public image. However, in light of the current social climate, where customers are looking for products and services that are less harmful to the environment, there has been an effort to become green. Another difficulty they have encountered is the need for companies to demonstrate a greater understanding of the environmental catastrophe. Given the growing public concern about environmental issues, a company's representatives who appear indifferent could significantly harm the company's brand.

2.5 Green Restaurant Attributes

A "green" eatery is one that goes the extra mile to help the environment by not using any harmful methods. Looking for a few telltale signs allows one to characterize this type of restaurant and its

Table 1. Green restaurant attributes and indicators

Source	Category	Indicators
(Nimri et al., 2021; Chen, Peng, 2018)	Food-focused attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organic foods (free from pesticides, fertilizers) ● Locally grown
	Environment-focused attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recycled materials ● Use of renewable energy ● Energy-efficient bulbs ● Low-flow toilets, sensor faucets.
	Administration-focused attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Green certification ● Employee training ● Community activities
(Saira Ghulam Hassan, 2021)	Green foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local foods ● Organic certified foods ● Healthy meal prepared ● Dishes are made out of fruits and vegetables than meats.
	Green environment and equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regular maintenance of equipment. ● Use of sunlight ● Compost kitchen waste
	Green management and social responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Avoid disposable tableware ● Market green concepts ● Advise customers to take away leftovers ● Consumer education ● Poster to encourage customers to be green

regular activities. Saira Ghulam Hassan (2021) and Chen Peng (2018) are only two of the studies that have given insight into the factors that contribute to an eco-friendly restaurant. The following Table will highlight these indicators.

The table above summarizes the many studies that have detailed restaurant-related green practices and indicators. The major objectives of the aforementioned indicators may vary in nomenclature, but they frequently include using safe and environmentally friendly materials, managing waste, water, and energy, providing sustainable food, and supporting green education. A greater consumption of fresh, organic foods and a higher percentage of meals including fruits and vegetables are two examples of the food-related indicators shown in the table. Some examples of environmental considerations in resource management are recycling to reduce trash production and switching to water- and energy-efficient light bulbs and faucets. Environmental education, municipal community development, and green certifications are all important administrative qualities. Sustainable furniture and design are two further signs that may not be immediately obvious. There are a number of forward-thinking restaurants that

prioritize sustainability. Some of the world's most recognizable brands include McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, Subway, and Starbucks. One example is Starbucks, which is renowned for its water-using technology, environmentally friendly packaging, and energy-efficient light bulbs (Jeong, 2024).

With the goal of improving environmental sustainability, cutting carbon emissions, controlling water and energy consumption, and opening their first LEED-certified green restaurant in 2007, Subway made these efforts (Nimri et al., 2021). As a result, the company's electricity expenses fell by 60%. Starting in 2013, McDonald's has begun investing in electric mobility projects. The fast food company plans to eliminate all emissions from its operations and waste reduction efforts by the year 2030, as reported by Singh et al. (2023). Other restaurants have made efforts to reduce the environmental impact of their suppliers, as reported by Wolfson et al. (2022). Both Chipotle Mexican Grill and Starbucks promote the use of more natural and organic foods in their "Food with Integrity" credos (Mohammed et al., 2021).

Domino's allows for recycling of all its packaging. Silo restaurants in other countries, such as the

UK, get their food from local farms and use composting on-site (Limb, 2021). Haoma turns food leftovers into fertilizer or fish food, whereas Bangkok gathers rainfall for later use (Limb, 2021). Also committed to supporting local Brazilian businesses, Corrutela buys in bulk to cut down on plastic. A number of Egyptian eateries, from fast food joints to more sophisticated spots, use eco-friendly and non-plastic alternatives for their straws, takeout containers, and other packaging and material needs. In the restaurant business, green methods provide the same benefits as green management.

Research by Parsa et al. (2020) on the dynamics of eco-conscious restaurant patrons supports the idea that green practices may boost a business's competitiveness, consumer loyalty, and brand image (Kwok, Huang, 2019). Research suggests that when workers are aware of the company's eco-friendly initiatives, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and remain loyal to the brand (Assaker, 2020). Businesses that focus on providing a service are particularly vulnerable to this.

2.6 Green Consumers

Environmental concerns are gaining more and more attention from the general public, and consumers are looking for more sustainable options (Elhoushy, El-Said, 2020). According to Singhal (2016), more and more Americans are concerned about the planet's condition. A whopping 77% of Americans are concerned about the environment, up from 62% only two years ago. Almost 80% of Americans now buy environmentally friendly items, either often or sometimes. Only 12% of Americans consider themselves "real greens," while 68% consider themselves "light greens," according to research by Nguyen-viet and Thanh Tran (2024). To better understand "green customers" and their habits, several researchers in environmental studies have sought to collect demographic and psychographic data. The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) lays forth the common view and knowledge of eco-conscious buyers.

According to IISD, "green consumers" are people who support companies that share their values, buy eco-friendly goods and services, and accept responsibility for their own activities and their impact on the environment. They place an excessive amount of importance on being

ecologically sensitive and frequently wish that environmental protection was easier. They are eager to learn, yet rather ignorant when it comes to environmental issues. Additionally, the IISD assumed some general characteristics regarding the demographics of eco-conscious customers. This generation's youth is shaped by their younger siblings. Customers who are environmentally sensitive tend to be well-off, and women in particular tend to have more discretionary spending than men (Singhal, 2016).

Several studies used additional demographic characteristics, such as degree of education and place of residence, to further distinguish environmentally conscious consumers from conventional ones. Studies (Miller, Galunets, 2023; Sidonio et al., 2024) have found a correlation between higher education and increased environmental awareness and engagement. Those with more education also tend to be more environmentally sensitive and active. Miller and Galunets (2023) and Sidonio et al. (2024) suggest that people's residential area may influence their environmental awareness. People living in cities tend to have fewer favorable views on environmental issues. Moser (2015) emphasized the importance of psychographic metrics in identifying environmentally sensitive customers in their study on environmental segmentation. Psychographic factors, as opposed to demographic ones, provide a more accurate and useful picture of eco-conscious spending, say the researchers. Importantly, they discovered that consumers' beliefs in their personal ability to make a difference in environmental problems (PCE) were the strongest predictors of ECCB. Perceived customer effectiveness (PCE) refers to the degree to which a product or service satisfies a client's demands, according to Moser (2015). It judges a consumer's capacity to contribute to environmental preservation. It is often thought that this is one of the most important factors contributing to the decrease in eco-conscious customers' motivation to take action.

According to studies conducted by Marde and Verite-Masserot (2018), shoppers who score higher on the PCE scale are more likely to make sustainable purchasing decisions. The study's findings highlight perceived customer effectiveness (PCE) as the most important metric for identifying environmentally conscious buyers. This study could classify green clients by determining their PCE levels.

2.7 Restaurant Green Practices and Consumer Intention

The expanding corpus of consumer behavior research and the current trend toward green management have allowed for extensive study of customers' intentions about environmentally conscious behavior (Namkung and Jang, 2017). Due to the hesitancy customers sometimes have when purchasing environmentally friendly products, which often cost more than usual, it is essential to examine consumers' patronage intentions among several components of eco-friendly behavioral intents. The academic world still hasn't agreed on a definition for patronage intention, a seemingly simple statement that describes buyers' intentions to purchase eco-friendly things.

This means that consumers' intentions to eat out will reflect their willingness to purchase environmentally friendly items (Assaker, 2020; Bekar et al., 2020; Shapoval et al., 2018). While studies have looked at customers' intentions to patronize eco-friendly restaurants, nobody has asked if they are willing to pay more for green products and services (Popovic et al., 2020; Jain et al., 2022). Researchers often use environmental behavioral intention, a composite variable that encompasses customers' inclination to pay a premium for items that are environmentally friendly (Assaker, 2020). Despite the fact that the impacts of green practices on customers' behavior represent the patronage intention of consumers who commit to purchase or revisit green restaurants, there is a lack of research on customer patronage intention and empirical studies to determine the effects of each green practice on the variable of customer intention to purchase green products (Tahier et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2021).

2.8 Consumer Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

Kakici et al. (2019) measure customer satisfaction by how well the product or service meets the client's expectations both before and after the purchase. A broader assessment of customer satisfaction includes an examination of customers' emotions, as stated by Kakici et al. (2019). Brown et al. (2016) found that customer satisfaction increases revenue and is a key factor in customer loyalty. The previous study by Khan and Minhaj (2021) also showed that happiness boosts good intentions. Since customer feedback describes the continued customer association for

the firm's sustainable growth, research focuses on consumer satisfaction (Colicev et al., 2018).

Teng and Wu (2019) found that when consumers are happy with all of a restaurant's sustainable operations, they are more likely to return, especially if they are motivated to support environmentally friendly and sustainable food services. In a similar vein, Di Vaio et al. (2022) state that a customer's revisit intention is defined as their decision to buy a certain product or service from the same company again. In addition, after a positive experience, customers are more likely to be satisfied and come back (Agnihotri et al., 2020). According to Mao and Lyu (2017), one common result of happy customers is their willingness to come back. Whether or not a customer plans to return to a shop is largely dependent on their prior purchases, decisions, and experiences, say Chiu and Cho (2019). Even more crucial for restaurants, patrons who had their expectations fulfilled are more inclined to come back (Han et al., 2020).

According to Xu and Jeong (2019), consumers are more inclined to return to a green restaurant if it lives up to their expectations of sustainable practices, such as offering an eco-friendly menu, organic food, recyclable goods, energy conservation, and water conservation. Teng and Wu (2019) assert that customers who dine at environmentally conscious restaurants are more likely to engage and satisfy with the restaurant's sustainability initiatives due to their high perceived values.

2.9 Restaurant Green Practices and Environmental Emotional Attachment

Zamman et al. (2024) found that consumers do develop emotional ties to some brands, and that this attachment has a strong impact on customers' actions and loyalty to the brand after they make a purchase, especially when it comes to pro-environmental businesses. Further studies have demonstrated that meeting customers' needs fosters the development of deep emotional connections to the brands and businesses they patronize.

Among them are feelings of belonging (Mazzoli et al., 2024), contentment with a service or establishment, and a positive outlook on eating at restaurants (Wu et al., 2019). Lee (2023) supports this as well, confirming that consumers form deep connections to businesses and

locations that cater to their own needs and reflect their own sense of identity. When consumers see that a restaurant cares about the environment, they have a positive impression of the brand and are more likely to return for future meals.

2.10 Restaurant Green Practices on Environmental Initiatives on Consumers in Ghana

Studies that were carried out by Nuong and colleagues indicate that environmentally responsible hotel development is in the process of gaining popularity. Consumer demand, the level of competition, and the rules and regulations of the government all have an impact on the rate at which environmentally friendly practices are adopted. One of the outcomes will be an increase in the amount of support for environmentally friendly practices, as well as an increase in the amount of praise and recognition given to eco-friendly hotel mentors who encourage the next generation of hotel management. If the government and other organizations were to take more steps to encourage competition, it is possible that smaller hotels might reap significant benefits. Hotels will have economic benefits as a result of a combination of decreased manufacturing costs and an increase in demand for sustainable and environmentally friendly products and services, particularly from consumers who are concerned about the environment.

In accordance with the emphasis placed on the behavioral paradigm in the research that has been conducted, an environmental education program has a higher success rate in bringing about changes in behavior. There were even fewer managers who were actively involved in environmental programs, let alone had even a passing knowledge with them. Only a small number of businesses really put environmental management systems into place. Seminars and workshops should be offered by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to increase the number of people who participate in voluntary activities to protect the environment (Nuong et al., 2022).

3. CONCLUSION

The study was able to investigate on the impact of green practices on consumers, reviewing restaurants in Ghana. Zamman et al. (2024) found that consumers do develop emotional ties

to some brands, and that this attachment has a strong impact on customers' actions and loyalty to the brand after they make a purchase, especially when it comes to pro-environmental businesses. Teng and Wu (2019) found that when consumers are happy with all of a restaurant's sustainable operations, they are more likely to return, especially if they are motivated to support environmentally friendly and sustainable food services. When restaurants in Ghana start using more eco-friendly solutions, they change how their customers feel and what they order. These events increase the likelihood that customers will return and spend more money. In addition, restaurants may stand out in a competitive market by implementing environmentally friendly rules and practices. Consumers are increasingly seeking out companies that are just as concerned about environmental preservation as they are. This harmony serves double duty: it wins over environmentally sensitive customers and helps build trust. Environmentally friendly methods have a positive impact on consumer habits and business operations, sustainability is paramount in the food service sector. There is a rising demand for environmentally friendly cuisine in Ghana, so businesses that make an effort to be green have a good chance of attracting and retaining consumers.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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