

Sustainability in Foodservice: The Role of Local Foods

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My Research Background

- 2012-2014: Local foods and green restaurant practices in fast food and upscale casual dining
- 2014: Local foods in a University setting and WTP; local foods in upscale casual dining and behavioral intentions
- 2015: McLocal- perceptions of local food use in fast food
- 2016: Local foods marketing
- 2017: Overview of foodservice research and trends- sustainability, green, CSR; local foods and food tourists
- 2018: Authenticity of foods, both internationally and U.S. regionally

Sustainability Defined

- Avoidance of the depletion of natural resources in order to maintain an ecological balance
- Environmental sustainability in restaurants refers to processes that enable an organization to reduce its environmental impact and support its local community.
- Food sustainability means that there is a system or collaborative network for food production that enhances a community's environmental, ecological, social and economic values of a community and region.

Environmental Concern

- “The degree to which people are aware of problems regarding the environment and support efforts to solve them and/or indicate the willingness to contribute personally to their solution” (Dunlop & Jones, 2002, p. 485)
- Studies have shown that being environmentally concerned is related to green behavior and WTP (Laroche et al., 2001)

Green Practices

- Being environmentally responsible and utilizing practices that minimize the damage done to the environment, things such as saving water, energy, and reducing solid waste (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007)
- Restaurants have been major consumer of energy, water, and other natural resources, so they have been feeling pressure to be more responsible (Schubert et al., 2010)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- Business approach that contributes to sustainable development by delivering economic, social and environmental benefits for all stakeholders.
- Environmental sustainability initiatives, direct philanthropic giving, ethical business practices, and a focus on economic responsibility

Possible Sustainable Behaviors in Restaurants

- Using local foods
- Sustainable purchasing practices
- Purchasing environmentally efficient equipment
- Recycling
- Positive environmental record
- Practicing green initiatives (saving water, energy, lowering waste)
- Green restaurant certification
- LEED certification for buildings

Foodservice Industry

- Global economic impact of foodservice industry is very large- in the U.S. alone, foodservice is projected to generate more than \$863 billion, more than 4% of GDP
- Over 1 million individual locations in the U.S. alone
- One of the biggest users of energy, non-recyclable products, harmful chemicals, and increasing carbon footprint through transportation of products
- Customers have been aware of these issues and are paying attention to them

So What?

- Image and Doing the right thing (of course)
- These concepts are a trend in current society
- There are relationships between personal practices and what people look for in their restaurants
- Saves money (depending on what the practices are)
- Local foods can highlight local areas- authenticity
- WTP is increasing with the trend, so prices could be higher and offset any expenses

Current Social Issues

- Sustainability
- Ethical Sourcing
- Taking Care of Those In Need
- #MeToo and Toxic Restaurant Culture
- Technology Taking Over
- Data Collection & Usage
- Consumer Experiences & Co-Creation



Top Food Trends 2018

- New cuts of meat
- **House-made condiments**
- **Street food-inspired dishes**
- **Ethnic-inspired breakfast items**
- **Sustainable Seafood**
- Healthful kids' meals
- Vegetable Carb substitutes
- Uncommon herbs
- **Authentic ethnic cuisine**
- Ethnic spices



Top Beverage Trends

- Alcoholic Beverages
 - Culinary Cocktails
 - **Locally Produced Wine/Beer/Spirits**
 - **Craft/Artisan Spirits**
 - Onsite Barrel-Aging
 - **Regional Signature Cocktails**
- Non-Alcoholic Beverages
 - **House-Made/Artisan Soft Drinks**
 - Cold-Brew Coffee
 - Gourmet Lemonade
 - **Locally/House Roasted Coffee**
 - Specialty Iced Tea



Top 10 Concept Trends

- **Hyper-local**
- Chef-driven fast casual concepts
- **Natural ingredients/Clean menus**
- **Food waste reduction**
- Veggie-centric/Vegetable-forward cuisine
- **Environmental sustainability**
- **Locally sourced meat & seafood**
- **Locally sourced produce**
- Simplicity/Back to basics
- **Farm/Estate-branded items**



Local Foods

- One of the components tied to green practices, sustainability and corporate responsibility
- Can lower carbon footprint of restaurants by lowering transportation emissions
- There has been an increase in the number of farmer's markets and the use of local foods on independent restaurant menus
- There has also been an increase in the use of local foods even in small chains



Local Foods

- Research shows that there is a link between education and desire for local foods and sustainability practices
- Also a link between importance of environmental concern and interest in sustainability and green restaurant practice desire of customers in upscale restaurants



Trends in Research

- There is a concept called greenwashing that customers are aware of-overstating green practices or relevance
- Effective and honest communication can help organizations promote what they do, ie. Chipotle's, Panera Bread
- Positive relationship between people's personal green practices and the desire to eat at restaurants promoting these practices



Trends in Research

- Consumers will pay more in chain restaurants using local foods and social/community benefits and freshness/taste were the two biggest motivators
- In a university setting, marketing local foods caused an increase in sales and willingness to pay more (up to 10%) which had not been found consistently in other settings



Future Directions

- After more than a decade of research in the green restaurant practices and sustainability, more needs to be done in local foods as this topic has gained broad appeal
- Assess perceptions now in the areas of: local foods, meal kits, impacts of sustainability initiatives with organizations
- Authenticity of foods related to local foods
- Younger generations are more educated and motivated by impacts of global warming and environmental issues

Research

- Female vs. male respondents and higher educated people were more likely to be interested in green restaurant practices, including use of local foods
- Theory of Planned Behavior has been used as a model to assess the use of and adoption of green or sustainable practices
- Restaurant owners and managers with a positive attitude and perceived behavioral control adopt green practices at a higher level (Chou et al., 2012)
- Innovative organizations are more apt to adopt sustainable practices

Research

- Food tourists seek food as one of the highlights of their travel and local and authentic foods are preferred
- Authenticity has been studied primarily related to ethnic foods, but more recently U.S. regional foods and local foods are being studied to assess customer perceptions
- Higher education levels and income are related to willingness to pay more for sustainable products in restaurants
- Local foods are still highly valued because of their help in lowering carbon footprints of restaurant organizations, more perceived healthfulness