



Original Research Article

Responsiveness of fast-food chain managers along Far Eastern University (FEU-Manila) towards the implementation of green practices in restaurants

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Environmentally conscious polices are further penetrating the hospitality management industry with every passing year. Hotels and restaurants, even resorts and bars are working to implement green practices. This study empirically examined the different factors that may contribute to the responsiveness of fast- food chain restaurant managers towards implementation of green practices. Adopting the checklist of the Green Restaurant Association and National Restaurant Association through a face-to-face interview with fast-food chain restaurant managers along Far Eastern University-Manila, some meaningful insights were obtained. All of them were concerned about the protection of the environment, but are not fully aware and educated about the current condition in use of green practices in their respective establishments. Aside from inadequate knowledge in applying green practices, another important factor to consider were the demand and purchase of green products. Most of them projected it as an additional cost and same time customers would not demand or pressure them to be an environmentally-friendly company. Now is the time to further explore what we can be done as members of the hospitality management community to follow and implement existing practices and take initiative to develop and sustain green practices.

Key words: Fast-food chain, restaurant managers, green practices, responsiveness, solid wastes management

INTRODUCTION

Fast-food restaurants in developing countries like the Philippines are experiencing rapid expansion in Metro Manila especially near schools and universities. In fact, there are currently many newly opened fast-food restaurants across Metro Manila and even in provinces. Population growth and changes in consumer behaviour has facilitated the prosperity of the fast food industry. In addition, population influxes and changes in the lifestyle, such as preferences for leisure, convenience, and food-away-from-home, women's changing role in the society, the urbanization of families – all contribute to the growth of fast food industries.

As more customers recognize the seriousness of

environmental problems, the consumer choices are becoming more ecologically conscious as they purchase products and services that are environmentally friendly (Han and Kim 2010). To meet the increasing demand for 'green' products and services, many business owners throughout all industries invest enormous efforts into developing and promoting ecologically friendly goods. The focus on the environmentally-friendly phenomenon has urged the restaurant industry to adjust their services as well in order to meet the changing expectations of the customers. Restaurant owners are adopting Green Practice (GP) to their properties by becoming members of green associations, such as Green Restaurant Association (GRA)

and National Restaurant Association (NRA). Most restaurant owners in the United States of America (USA) adopt green practices for their business with the purpose of creating a distinctive image that can differentiate them from their competitors (www.Ahla.com). Therefore, restaurateurs strive to get this competitive advantage by introducing green practices into their restaurants.

In line with the above notion, adoption of an environmentally-friendly management approach is one of the most popular issues addressed in many businesses especially the food and beverage industry. Driven by governmental regulations, changing customer's demand, advocacy by NGOs and international organizations, rising water, energy and waste disposal charges, need to control guests' desire for use of energy, strong advocacy for high environmental values, and need to seek accreditation, the industries' major players have taken the necessary steps to undertake the implementation of green practices. The following were the research questions:

1. What is the background of fast-food chain managers on the different green practices in restaurants?
2. What are the insights and expectations of fast food managers on using green practices as using the standards set by GRA and NRA?
3. What are the barriers or hindrances that may contribute to the responsiveness of fast food chain managers in the implementation of green practices?

Theoretical framework

Currently, the term "green" is used to signify "environmentally-friendly" when in fact; it is much more than that. One of the most important aspects that should be understood about green practices is that the range of the term "green" is broad and varying based on perspective. From an economic management point of view, Gupta and company (2007) defines "greening" as corporate environmental performance in meeting stockholders' expectations. The researcher views environmental management as a tool to fit into a social and ecological system. Green practices are further defined as environmentally friendly management principles in which executive levels convert natural resources into better outputs or products.

Green restaurants can be defined as "new or renovated structures designed, constructed, operated, and demolished in an environmentally friendly and energy-efficient manner" (Lorenzini, 1994). Service is intangible in nature, but the restaurant operations depend on the physical components and these tangible aspects of service products are believed to have a major impact on environment (Ismail et al., 2010). According to Gilg, Barr and Ford (2005), green restaurants focus on reducing, reusing and recycling commonly known as the three R's. Green restaurants also focus on energy and efficiency or the two E's. Then in a

study made by Johnson (2009), engaging in green practices can have significant implications for a restaurant in terms of cost management, market differentiation, as well as environmental protection.

When restaurants engage in green practices, such practices must be aimed at effectively reducing the environmental and social problems that arise directly or indirectly from their operations (Carbonara, 2007). For example, the adoption of an environmentally friendly management approach helps to reduce solid waste, water consumption, energy consumption, and air pollution. The purchase of eco-friendly products such as sustainable food, nontoxic cleaning and chemical products, and bio-mass agricultural waste products not only helps the restaurant to build a good corporate image, it also expands green practices vertically in the supply chain. For example, it encourages farmers or manufacturers to embrace green practices in order to supply green products to be used in such restaurants. Hence, it contributes to the economic growth and provides various job opportunities to the nation, and serves as a "win-win" situation for all parties (Ismail et al., 2010).

In general, a restaurant's green practices involve the practice of using biodegradable products, saving energy and natural resources actively, purchasing energy saving equipment, reducing and recycling waste, and engaging in environmental protection programs (Schubert, 2008).

The GRA and NRA are both a non-profit organizations in the USA that provides convenient and cost-effective ways for restaurants to become more environmentally responsible (GRA, 2011). The GRA offers three types of certification options for existing restaurants, new builds, and events and listed seven concepts as the environmental guidelines that cover a wide spectrum of different green practices. The seven environmental guidelines are as below:

- (a) Energy efficiency and conservation;
- (b) Water conservation and efficiency;
- (c) Recycling and compositing;
- (d) Purchasing sustainable, local, and organic foods;
- (e) Pollution prevention;
- (f) Use of non-toxic and chemical products; and
- (g) Sustainable furnishings and building materials (only apply to new builds)

Conceptual Framework

The main objective of this paper was to propose a conceptual framework to examine how fast food chain restaurants along FEU Manila respond towards green practices as set by GRA and NRA. This study empirically examined the level of knowledge that may contribute to the responsiveness of fast food chain managers towards the implementation of environmentally friendly practices. This leads to the development of the conceptual framework, which is represented in Figure 1.

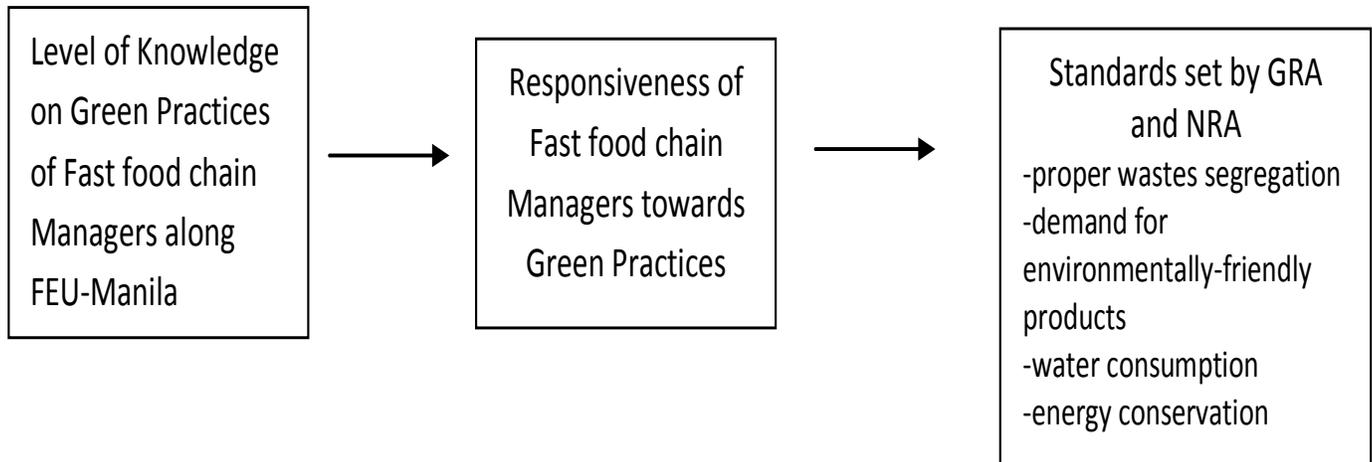


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

This paper would discuss four basic green practices as required by GRA and the NRA), both are U.S. based hospitality institutions, in which the Hotel and Restaurant Association of the Philippines (HRAP) follows the guidelines.

Literature Review

The Earth's resources are limited and competition is global; hence, environmental issues have become important. Raising the social responsibility of businesses is an inevitable trend. Both consumers and investors are beginning to see more clearly the relationship between business performance and environmental quality (Hu et al., 2000). In fact, conventional literature most often explains the motivations of green practices in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or awareness at the management level (Brown, 1996). While CSR and awareness are imperative factors, evidence from previous studies have identified three major motivations for green practices within the hotel industry.

Nevertheless, there is a growing amount of evidences indicating the interest of researchers within the green restaurant context recently. Hu and company (2010) investigated the effects of consumers' knowledge of restaurant's environmental friendly practices, environmental concern, and ecological behaviour on consumers' intention to patronize a green restaurant. The results from the study indicated that the effects of all these three variables on consumers' intention to patronize a green restaurant were found significant. More specifically the studies of Schubert (2008) and Tsen (2006) had explored the consumer attitudes towards various areas of green practices in restaurants.

In the service sector, the studies from Han et al. (2010) and Tzchentke et al. (2014), analyzed the intention to visit,

to recommend, and willingness to pay more for the green hotel. The researchers also conducted a study from the customer satisfaction perspective to examine its influence on the behaviour intention to revisit the green hotel. Intention to revisit a restaurant which engages in green practices and the intention to revisit a certified green restaurant were based on the conditions when the green restaurants are absent in the market.

Ismail and company (2010) empirically examined the internal and external drivers and barriers that may contribute to the responsiveness of restaurateurs towards implementation of environmentally friendly practices. Restaurateurs, perhaps like most individuals are concerned about the environment, but are not fully aware and educated about the present condition of the environment. Inadequate knowledge coupled with intermittent green supply chain has resulted into a half-hearted commitment towards the preservation of the environment

Only limited research on the study of green practices has been done in the hospitality industry in the Philippines, especially in the restaurant industry. Studies regarding environmentally friendly practices have not been extensively done. Also, despite the fact that many business owners believe that the image of companies can be improved through executing green practices and that an improved image can eventually affect the customers approach behaviour, there has not been a study that has attempted to examine the image effect of green practices.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Participants

At first there were ten fast food chain restaurants that were surveyed along FEU-Manila. But worth mentioning are the

Table 1. Profile of Fast-food chain Restaurant Managers

Branch Manager	Type of food Being served	No. of years as Manager	No. of staff or crew	Mean	Interpretation ²	Rating ¹
J	Filipino-American	4	12	3.66	Most often practiced	
C	Filipino-Chinese	5	10	3.03	Slightly practiced	
G	Filipino-Italian	3	8	3.03	Slightly practiced	
K	Filipino-Italian	2	11	4.17	Most often practiced	
M	American	3	11	4.17	Most often practiced	

¹based on the Checklist of Green Restaurant Association (GRA)

²Rating scale used is as follows: 1.0-1.50 Never practiced; 1.51-2.50 Not so often practiced; 2.51-3.50 Slightly practiced; 3.51-4.50 Most often practiced; 4.51-5.00 Always practiced

five fast-food chain restaurant managers who responded and participated in this study. A fast food chain restaurant or also known as Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) is characterized both by its fast food cuisine and by minimal table service. They are usually part of a restaurant chain or franchise operation, which provides standardized ingredients and/or partially prepared foods and supplies to each restaurant through controlled supply channels. The profiles of all restaurant managers are simplified and presented in Table 1.

Research design

The main objective of this study was to investigate the responsiveness of fast-food chain managers towards the implementation of environmentally-friendly practices: a qualitative approach through face-to-face interviews was considered the best method for the data collection process.

The interview composition was a partially structured face-to-face interview where the researcher posed a few predetermined questions called interview guide, but has considerable flexibility concerning follow up questions. This type of interview has a series of questions that are in general form of an interview schedule, but is able to vary the sequence of questions and focus predominantly on open questions about a specific situation or event that is relevant to and of interest to the researcher (Bryman, 2004).

Research Instruments and Procedure

The research instrument was adopted from the GRA checklist since there is no available local instrument that can be used to gather data. The first part of the instrument (Checklist on Green Practices) was designed to gather information about the fast food chain restaurant manager. Then the remaining part was designed to measure the different green practices of managers in their fast food chain. A five-point Likert scale was used to determine the green practices of managers, the terms included “5” = always practiced, “4” = most often practiced, “3” = slightly practiced, “2” = not often practiced, “1” = never practiced. Before the instrument was administered it was content

validated by restaurant managers and an HRM instructor. Due to time constraint, reliability test was not measured, this is one limitation of this study. The remaining part of the questionnaire was designed to collect qualitative data in the form of open-ended questions regarding issues such as the actual implementation of their knowledge on the different green practices and its barriers or hindrances. The researcher used guided questions based on the NRA about the green practices of restaurants in the USA. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science, SPSS version 16. Quantitative data were represented by mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages.

RESULTS

For the purposes of this study, green practices in the restaurant industry are divided into the following three operational areas (Green Restaurant Association, 2011): (1) energy conservation, (2) water usage, and (3) pollution prevention. These are the areas of operations that the majority of restaurants currently embrace, and are in accordance to studies on green practices in the hotel and restaurant industry.

Frequency and percentages are shown in Table 2 above on the awareness of fast-food chain managers involving different green practices. Majority of them (100%) are aware of energy and water conservation but they were not aware on proper recycling and being committed to green practices. But when asked about its application, most of them said green practices are ‘weak’ in fast food chain since it is just a franchise business and they follow orders from higher management.

The next set of questions sought how they sustain green practices. Majority of the answers related to training and motivating employees. Then when asked by the researcher on the value or worth in the company, all of them answered that it has to consider some cost apprehensions like viability, capital and cost effectiveness.

Aside from these green practices set by the NRA, it was expected that fast food chain managers would mention some Philippine laws on the environment like R.A. 9493 (Solid Waste Management Act of 2003), Clean Air Act, Clean

Table 2. Awareness of Fast food chain Restaurant Managers on Green Practices

No.	Statement	Frequency	Percent
1	Reduce Water Consumption	5	100%
2	Reduce Energy Consumption	5	100%
3	Observe Waste Segregation	3	60%
4	Use Environmentally Friendly Cleaning Supplies	1	
5	Change to Biodegradable Products where Possible	1	20%
6	Use of Energy Efficient Lighting	4	20%
7	Education and Training Employees on being Green	3	60%
8	Buy Local and Organic Products	1	20%
9	Recycle food scraps, cardboards, paper, glass, metal and plastics	0	0%
10	Stay Committed on being Green	0	0%

Table 3. Green Practices under Energy Conservation

Rank	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1	I replace all fluorescent lighting with the more energy-efficient lamps with electronic ballasts	4.80	0.447
2	I monitor your energy (electricity, water, gas) bills to better understand all the ways your restaurant consumes energy	4.60	0.894
3	I use Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) instead of incandescent bulbs in the store-rooms, break rooms, offices, wall sconces, kitchen exhaust hoods, walk-in refrigerators, and other non-dimmable light fixtures	4.60	0.894
4	I check and replace worn or leaky gaskets on refrigerator and cooler doors and drawers.	4.40	0.894
5	I install high Energy Efficiency Factor (EEF) kitchen equipment (i.e. dishwashers, ovens, refrigerators, holding cabinets and steamers).	4.0	0.707
6	I install timers or occupancy sensors on lights and exhaust fan in the bathroom.	3.80	1.00
7	I keep condenser coils clean of dust and evaporator coils free of excessive frost, like freezers and air conditioners	3.80	1.00
8	I remove any unneeded lighting	3.60	0.548

Water Act, PD 984, and PD1568 (Overview and Updates of the Philippine Environmental Laws, 2011).

Responsiveness towards green practices

The ranking and mean values including standard deviation of fast-food chain managers under the category of energy conservation is shown in Table 3 above. The most common ($\bar{x}=4.80$) green practices, as reported by fast food chain managers, were replacing all fluorescent lights with energy efficient lights, monitor all bills, and use CFLs instead of incandescent bulbs. But the not so green practice is that they don't remove unneeded lighting because of occupational safety. Energy conservation is not just about proper lighting, as the result of the survey is extreme, but also the consumption of electricity from different appliances, water and gas. Then also behind from the green practices of restaurant managers are the instillation of sensors and cleaning of condenser coils which can lower

the consumption of electricity. As seen in the table the standard deviations of the first and last rank don't vary in range.

As seen Table 4, the rank and mean values including standard deviation of fast-food chain managers under the category on water usage. The basic green practices that they do is having their own disposal garbage for all liquid waste and checking for any possible leaks in the water pipes. Most of their faucets are continuous-type and not the control-type so it does not restrict the flow of water. According to them, instillation of spray nozzles, pressure regulators, waterless urinal bowls and aerators is quite expensive, this shows in the survey. It is shown that the standard deviation of the first and last statement is the same indicating that the result is not varied in range.

Table 5. shows the rank and the mean values including standard deviation of fast food chain managers under the category on pollution prevention. As seen in the table, most ($\bar{x}=4.80$) of the fast food chain managers communicate

Table 4. Green Practices under Water Usage

Rank	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1	I use garbage disposals for liquid beverages and ice water.	4.60	0.548
2	I find and repair leaks as soon as possible.	4.20	0.837
3	I post signs that encourage water conservation in kitchens and bathrooms.	4.00	1.00
4	I monitor your water bill for indications of leaks, spikes or other potential problems.	4.40	1.00
5	I train kitchen staff to plan ahead so that food can be thawed in the refrigerator rather than under running water.	4.00	1.00
6	I install high efficiency kitchen equipment such as dishwashers and steamers, then I also explore whether the property manager is willing to upgrade to high efficiency toilets.	4.00	1.00
7	I use a pressure regulator to reduce the water volume in the dishwasher.	3.80	1.10
8	I use low flow pre-rinse spray nozzles in the dish room.	3.80	1.10
9	I install high efficiency Water Sense-labeled toilets and aerators on restroom faucets that restrict water from flowing.	3.80	0.548

Table 5. Green Practices on Pollution Prevention

Rank	Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1	I reduce snail mail by removing your company's name from direct mailing lists.	4.80	0.447
2	I reuse the back pages of printed paper.	4.40	0.894
3	I use cloth towels and sponges in kitchens rather than paper towels.	4.20	1.00
4	I wash mats and equipment inside, where the drains go to the sanitary sewer.	3.60	0.548
5	I provide washable utensils and dishes for dining-in and employees.	3.60	0.548
6	I work with your property manager to implement a commercial food scrap recycling program.	3.60	0.548
7	I purchase recycled content paper products with a high post-consumer recycled-content (100% is ideal).	3.20	0.447
8	I ensure that all employees and customers have easy access to recycling containers.	3.20	0.447
9	I regularly clean your grease trap or interceptor.	2.80	0.837
10	I use take-out containers that can be composted (paper) or recycled (plastics and polycoated paper).	2.60	0.548
11	I avoid products with excess packaging and eliminate individually wrapped items.	2.60	0.548
12	I buy products in returnable, reusable, or recyclable packaging and reuse packaging materials from incoming shipments.	2.40	0.548

through e-mails and other forms of social network. At the same time they have their own printers and for photocopying services, they do it outside since the business is near the University-belt. While operations wise, they use

sponges in cleaning soiled utensils, since paper towels will just add up to their cost. While the restaurant managers said they are low on using reusable and recyclable packaging materials for dine-out orders since most of them

Table 6. Barriers in the Implementation of Green Practices

Rank	Statement	Frequency	Percent
1	Expensive	5	100%
2	No regular training program	4	80%
3	No pressure from customers	3	60%
4	Green supply chain (availability)	3	60%
5	Lack of support from government	2	40%

still used styrofoam, plastic cups and disposable spoon and forks. Lastly, most of them rarely practice using returnable, reusable and recyclable packaging materials.

This Table 6 presents the answers of restaurant managers on the question about the barriers or hindrances in implementing green practice in their respective restaurant. In supporting the above notion, all (100%) fast food chain managers felt it was costly and expensive to implement green practices in their business. At the same time education and training plays a major role in the success of implementing “*green management*”.

Also based on face-to-face interview, fast food chain restaurant managers noted some barriers to change in the system, including weakly enforced environmental laws and regulations, scarce and intermittent green supply chain, non-existence of trade pressure and poor customer and community demand to implement green practices.

DISCUSSION

Due to the nature of the business, fast food chain restaurants fall under commercial wastes generators (Philippine Business for the Environment, 2011). They typically generate solid wastes including paper, cardboard, plastic, wood, food scrap, glass, metals, special wastes and even hazardous wastes. In this case, fast-food chain restaurant owners and managers need to continually look for new and better ways to reduce garbage and save energy without sacrificing cost and overhead expenses, while still meeting customer’s demand.

Proper wastes segregation

It is important that restaurants practice proper wastes segregation, that is separating it biodegradable from non-biodegradable waste products (Grove et. al., 1996). By the year 2025, the daily generated wastes in urban areas of Asia will increase to 1.9 million tons from 760,000 tons in 1999. This is the projection of the World Bank’s East Asia and Pacific Urban Development Sector Unit (EASUR) and it has reported that the increase of solid wastes is as inevitable result of urbanization and economic development, and thus requires a sound Solid Wastes Management (SWM).

It can be suggested that fast-food chain restaurant managers and owners can take the initiative to rethink the

use of plastic containers and other non-biodegradable products. If only customers will be required to bring their own canisters and tumblers when ordering, this will be a big help in reducing solid wastes. Also, restaurant owners can use compostable materials that when exposed in the sun for a few hours will start melting like oxo-biodegradable and bio-plastics. Bio plastic products are usually constituted from corn or potato starch and are known to be 100% biodegradable. When packaging orders for quick service customers, take-out orders or leftovers use packaging constructed from recycled paper board. Other biodegradable options they may want to consider include eco-friendly food packaging made of bagasse, or sugar cane fiber.

Wastes management is not just a government responsibility, but it should be done by each individual. Since one of the common sources of solid wastes are the different types of restaurants, wastes segregation should start from them as well. Recycling is part of solid wastes management method that can be done by avoidance of trash, using materials that are eco-friendly and installing recycling bins for different materials.

Demand and purchase of environmentally-friendly products

Environmentally sensitive options are the major issue in the demand and purchase of green products (Kim and Choi, 2003). Some of the green products include organic fruits and vegetables, organic animals and HALAL or Islam-certified products. However, it boils down to the same laws of supply and demand that apply to these products. As demand increases, so will the number of green alternatives. Manufacturers will begin to see that there is profitability potential in the segment and then begin to shift their resources towards the development and marketing of these green products.

Using biodegradable products is no longer a fashion statement but a genuine global initiative. As more scientists continue to look for more avenues and sources for eco-friendly bio materials, the practice is sure to help minimize further damage to the environment.

Reduce water shortage

Traditionally, in fast food chain restaurants, the dishwasher

tends to hose dirty areas of the plate and cutlery for a thorough clean, but it uses a large volume of water for dishwashing. It can be improved by dry cleaning more carefully and by scraping food residues before hosing to reduce the amount of water needed for final wash-downs. And also soaking dirty utensils can also reduce the amount of water needed for washing up and the time it takes to get items clean. By choosing a dishwasher or other appliance with high EEF rating it can reduce water consumption by as much as 50% (www.energystar.gov).

Water that has been used for washing and cleaning is known as greywater (Greywater Action, 2011). Some greywater (waste water) can be treated and reused for toilet flushing and other approved purposes. Small greywater (waste water) treatment systems can be installed in restaurants which includes a holding tank and filtration system.

Conservation of energy

It is not just efficient lighting that comprises energy conservation, but also the use of highly maintained appliances like freezers, air conditioners, and chillers. Aside from checking and regulating energy bills, restaurant managers need to manage the use of energy and watch its thermostats if it works properly. Example, the air condition unit will force cold air to blow if the room is not yet cold, resulting in higher consumption in electricity bills.

Based on the four major factors towards green initiatives for any hospitality and food service operation, fast food chain restaurant employees should be trained and educated in different green practice operations by the company. Employees must participate in trainings and should be provided with the necessary knowledge and adequate resources for them to carry out the different green practices. It is time to further explore what can be done as members of the hospitality management industry to implement green practices and where possible, take the initiative to develop and sustain it.

Restaurants abroad increasingly recognize the opportunities and imperatives of engaging in more sustainable practices (Hu, et.al 2010). Like the studies conducted by Ismail, et.al (2010) and Han, et.al (2010). The appropriate role of government in maximizing the business role in sustainable development varies depending upon the characteristics of the challenge at hand and the extent to which there are other drivers moving businesses towards more green practice strategies. Government should provide provisions like tax credits, financial incentives and technical assistance for restaurants following green practices.

CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be concluded that fast food chain restaurant managers along FEU-Manila have an adequate knowledge

about green practices, but they are limited in application and use because it is just a franchise business. The responsibility of disseminating green practices cannot be shouldered by the national government or a single organization alone like the Hotel and Restaurant Association of the Philippines (HRAP), but the business community, corporate and private organization and the academia should also resume a more active role in formulating realistic environmental policies and goals.

As stated at the beginning of this manuscript, restaurants abroad increasingly recognize the opportunities and imperatives of engaging in more sustainable green practices. The appropriate role of government in maximizing the business role in sustainable development varies depending upon the characteristics of the challenge at hand and the extent to which there are other drivers moving business towards more green practices strategies.

In response to the result of this research, the researcher would like to suggest that green practices are driven by three important considerations, 'business performance', 'regulation', and 'personal perspectives. It is moderated by two others – 'organizational slack' and 'age'. It has been said that a person has two reasons for doing something – a good reason and a real one. In response to the question on what motivates a business to adopt green practices, it would appear there are three good reasons for going green, a green market, a forced or adopted regulation and a green supply chain.

It could be suggested that the national and municipal government should somewhat increase in fostering green practices throughout the city. Government intervention, including public education, capacity building and support in the local trade and urban area should increase the supply and needs of green products. This paper depicts the responsiveness of fast food chain restaurant managers towards the implementation of green practices in the context of a developing country like the Philippines.

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