

# Awareness of Green Marketing Practices and Its Relationship to Consumer Behavior in Food Service Industry

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**Abstract:** *The study aimed to measure the awareness of the graduate students on the green marketing practices of the food service industry in Iba, Zambales, and its relationship to consumer behavior. Descriptive and inferential methods were used as the questionnaire checklist was the main tool in data gathering using the 5-point Likert scale. Green marketing practices focused on the 4P's of the marketing mix - product, price, promotion, and place. Findings revealed that respondents are somewhat aware of the green marketing practices of the food service industry; while consumer behavior of respondents was described as strongly agreeing in terms of product whereas agreeing on price, promotion, and place. Profile variables have no effect on the responses of the respondents. Hence, there is a significant relationship between the respondents' awareness and consumer behavior, which implies that the food service industry's green marketing must be implemented to provide more information and give more choices to switch over to a green lifestyle. It is essential that strategies and policies in relation to green marketing practices be developed and implemented so as to guide and help the food service industry towards a green change for a more sustainable environment.*

**Keywords:** green marketing, green marketing practices, consumer behavior, marketing mix, food service industry

## 1. Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The Earth has enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed". This signifies the challenges that the world is facing right now. Resources are limited and human wants are unlimited (Nandini and Deshpande, 2011). Needless to say, people need a more sustainable approach that will uphold responsibly to their needs today and for tomorrow. Sustainable consumption and production is a challenge to countries like the Philippines which in spite of having abundant natural resources is still one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a group of 1,300 independent scientific experts from countries all over the world under the auspices of the United Nations, concluded there's more than 95 percent probability that human activities over the past 50 years have warmed our planet, thus resulting to global warming.

Several international institutions like United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Asian Productivity Organization (APO) have been very active in initiating projects regarding sustainable consumption and production in Asia and the Pacific which includes the Philippines for development and to alleviate poverty and address environmental issues (Green Journal, 2011). Pursuant to the Philippine Constitution, the government came up with progressive legal mechanisms to protect the country's resources through Republic Act (RA) 8749, or the Clean Air Act of 1999, RA 9275, or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004; RA 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

In August 2012 the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) reported that it collected as much as 1,800 tons of trash of mostly plastic bags and wrappers, consistent with waste audits conducted by Greenpeace and EcoWaste Coalition in 2006 and 2010 showing that more

than 70 percent of waste in the Manila Bay consists of plastic bags and packaging. According to Green Choice Philippines – the Eco-labeling program of the Philippines, the evolving fast-changing lifestyle in the Philippines has made convenience food a more preferable option, where 5 out of 10 Filipinos are now eating in quick-service restaurants. As a result, the food and beverage sector today dominates a huge 47% share in the country's business industries and contributes a considerable 37% total employment in the wholesale and retail industry. However, along with its significant contribution to the country's growth, is the alarming increase in significant food-related and environmental issues. Foodservice industry creates an increasing impact to the environment with their huge solid waste generation, wastewater, and energy consumption.

Realizing their image was at stake, some food service providers have changed their attitudes towards environmental and nutritional issues and implemented certain improvements in favor of a healthier environment and healthier foods. However, it is questionable whether these food service providers engage in green practices out of Corporate Social Responsibility or in an attempt to attract more customers and boost sale (Schubert, 2008).

Businesses and consumers today are confronted with the biggest challenges of protecting and preserving the earth's resources as well as the environment. Evidence indicate that people are concerned about the environment and are changing their behavior accordingly; as a result, there is a growing market for sustainable and socially responsible products and services. They have become more concerned with the natural environment and are realizing that their production and consumption, purchasing behavior will have a direct impact on the environment (Khan, 2010).

With the Filipino people realizing and experiencing the effect of various environmental problems, their awareness, as well as their knowledge towards these certain problems, is becoming more profound. Yet, mere awareness and knowledge are not enough. Taking the initiatives to do

something should be done in more responsive and more participatory ways. If consumers will shift the demand market to green products and services, producers and marketers will eventually cope with it and in due course, will start the green economy towards sustainable development (Green Journal, 2011).

Organizations and consumers should have a responsibility towards environmental issues and by purchasing of green products they participate in this process. Although the reasons to participate in green activities and their commitment to the environment is different, the green consumer has a vital role in helping the environment (Suplico, 2009). The adoption of green marketing practices by many companies has made a remarkable impact on the environment by planning for sustainable conservation of natural resources and making our environment protected. Although the government and many private companies have been making an effort to bring about a green mindset among the people and promote green products, a lot still needs to be done to make green products truly viable and workable. Activeness about green marketing by government, companies, customer, and society as a whole should be amplified as environment should be the top management priority. Moreover, the responsibility for environmental protection should be communal driven efforts. The environment and society are looking forward to practices from the companies who have not yet implemented (Abdullah, et al, 2016).

## 2. Objectives

The main objective of this study is to measure the degree of awareness of the students in the Graduate School of the Ramon Magsaysay Technological University on the green marketing practices of the food service industry in Iba, Zambales and its relationship to their behavior.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

- How to describe the degree of awareness of the respondents on the green marketing practices of the food service industry in Iba, Zambales in terms of:
  - Product;
  - Price;
  - Place; and
  - Promotion?
- How to describe the degree of consumer behavior of the respondents about the green marketing practices of the food service industry in Iba, Zambales in terms of:
  - Product;
  - Price;
  - Place; and
  - Promotion?
- Is there a significant relationship between awareness and consumer behavior on the green marketing practices of the food service industry in Iba, Zambales?
- Based on the results, what suggestions this study will offer to the green consumers and green food service industry?

## 3. Methodology

Descriptive and inferential methods were used as the questionnaire checklist was the main tool in data gathering using the 5 - point Likert scale. Statistical measurements used include frequency distribution, relative frequency, weighted mean, and standard deviation. The ANOVA and t - test were utilized in testing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The Pearson r was used to measure the relationship between awareness and consumer behavior.

Using the stratified random sampling, from the students of the Graduate School of RMTU in 2nd trimester SY 2017 - 2018, three hundred thirty - six (336) of the population was given a survey questionnaire of which two hundred seventy - two (272) was retrieved. This is 40.48% of the population which can be considered more than enough as the sampling size of the study.

To achieve the objectives of the study, a survey questionnaire was developed based on the findings of the literature review. The researcher formulated the survey questionnaire to collect the needed data for this research. Items in the questionnaires were derived from the different research studies related to the current study, expressed in general aspects that easily understood by the respondents.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 1) Degree of awareness of the respondents on the green marketing practices of the food service industry

**Table 1:** Awareness of the Respondents on the Green Marketing Practices of the Food Service Industry

Green Marketing Practices	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Product	3.28	Somewhat Aware
2. Price	3.08	Somewhat Aware
3. Promotion	3.18	Somewhat Aware
4. Place	3.28	Somewhat Aware
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>Somewhat Aware</b>

*Legend: 5.00 – 4.20 Extremely Aware, 4.19 – 3.40 Moderately Aware, 3.39 – 2.60 Somewhat Aware, 2.59 – 1.80 Slightly Aware, 1.79 – 1.00 Not At All Aware*

It can be gleaned from Table 1, the awareness of the Respondents on the Green Marketing Practices of the Food Service Industry. In terms of product, price, promotion, and place the respondents were “Somewhat Aware” on the green marketing practices of the food service industry with an overall weighted mean of 3.21. This implies that respondents have knowledge about green marketing practices.

Results are in line with the study of Suplico (2009) when asked about the extent of awareness of green marketing, 55.56% replied that they have medium awareness. This means that they are aware of green practices.

In contrary, in the study of Maheshwari (2014), the paper identified that consumers are not exposed enough to green product marketing communication and suggested greater use of marketing and brands to promote and sell products that are environmentally friendly and function effectively.

2) Consumer behavior of the respondents on the green marketing practices of the food service industry in Iba, Zambales

Table 2: Consumer Behavior on the Green Marketing Practices of Food Service Industry

Green Marketing Practices	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Product	4.33	Strongly Agree
2. Price	4.05	Agree
3. Promotion	3.42	Agree
4. Place	4.13	Agree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Legend: 5.00 – 4.20 Strongly Agree, 4.19 – 3.40 Agree, 3.39 – 2.60 Undecided / Neutral, 2.59 – 1.80 Disagree, 1.79 – 1.00 Strongly Disagree

Table 2 shows the consumer behavior on the green marketing practices of the food service industry in terms of product, price, promotion, and place. Respondents “Agree” on the green marketing practices of the food service industry with an overall weighted mean of 3.98. Results revealed that respondents positively responded when asked about the green marketing practices of the food service industry

The findings indicate that the respondents are concerned with the environment and believe that buying and/or using green products can help resolve environmental issues. By considering the effect of green marketing mix upon consumers’ behavior and the effect of satisfaction upon their loyalty, it can be assumed that companies can create competitive advantage in their organization through taking steps in making green marketing part of their overall marketing strategy (Chang and Fong, 2010).

According to Miller and Layton (2001), this concern may lead to a higher level of environmental consciousness and

green product purchasing behavior. It is likely that if an individual has a greater concern towards the environment, in general, he/she would most likely purchase green products. It is therefore expected that consumers who are environmentally conscious are more likely to purchase products and services which they perceive to have a positive (or less negative) impact on the environment.

3) Significant relationship between awareness and consumer behavior of the respondents on the green marketing practices of food service industry

Table 3 shows that at  $r = 0.5345$ , there is “Moderate Correlation” between awareness and consumer behavior of the respondents on the green marketing practices of food service industry in Iba, Zambales. Further test using the two - tailed t - test in testing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance, the  $t_{computed} = 10.932$  is greater than

Table 3: Level of Correlation Between Awareness and Consumer Behavior of the Respondents on the Green Marketing Practices of Food Service Industry in Iba, Zambales

Particulars	Value
Pearson Sample Correlation Coefficient (r) between Awareness ( <i>independent</i> ) and Acceptability ( <i>dependent</i> )	0.5345
Descriptive Rating	Moderate Correlation
Coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ )	0.2857
$t_{computed}$	10.392
$t_{critical}$ at 0.05 level of significance (two - tailed)	1.980
degrees of freedom	270
Decision	Reject Ho ( $t_{computed} > t_{critical}$ )

the  $t_{critical} = 1.980$ . Thus the decision is to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ). There is a significant relationship between awareness and consumer behavior of the respondents.

The results clearly show that the core idea of green marketing is to create awareness among people on the environmental issues and how consumers would be helping the environment if they switch to green products/services. Food service industry’s green marketing must be implemented to provide more information to people and also gives more choices to switch over to a green lifestyle.

Aligned with the result on the overall study of Sivesan, Achchutan, and Umanakenan (2013), green marketing

practices are positively associated with customer satisfaction. And also, dimensions in the green marketing practices as green issues in product, price, promotion, and place have the significant relationship with customer satisfaction

Agyeman (2014) also argued that there is a positive relationship between the factors and consumer buying behavior for green products. He said that quality and price of the product and environmental concerns play a vital role when it comes to the actual purchase of the green products. He recommended that green marketers should make strategies after the proper understanding of the segment market and plan marketing mix strategies accordingly.

Rakhsha and Majidar (2011) studied the effects of the green marketing mix on the satisfaction and loyalty of customers of a dairy company in Iran. It was concluded that green marketing mix has a significant effect on consumer behavior.

The study of Rather and Rajendran (2014) reveals that most of the consumers with respect to high to the average level of green product awareness show high to medium level of green buying behavior and consumers having the awareness to a small degree and not at all show low green buying behavior. Hence there is an urgent need to make consumers aware of green products in order to speed up the green buying behavior among all consumers to save this world for future generations. Rashid (2009) has identified that when consumers are aware of eco - labels they react more positively towards knowledge of green marketing and the purchase of green products.

#### 4) Suggestions this study will offer to the green consumers and green food service industry

One problem we're facing right now is the current human consumption levels are too high and are unsustainable. There is a need for green marketing and a need for a shift in the consumer's behavior and attitude towards more environments - friendly lifestyles. For an effective and holistic sustainable marketing approach, the four Ps, product, price, place, and promotion, should be based on sustainability principles and should align with the overall marketing strategy.

The current study is a compilation of various aspects related to green marketing practices of the food service industry. It is clearly evident from the review of the literature and the conceptual model that the majority of the consumers still lack 'green' knowledge and because of such low awareness towards green products, organizations are still not pushing towards developing more green products/services nor are they working hard on greening their practices.

However, this is all changing. People are beginning to realize their role and responsibilities towards the environment. Although this change is not happening quickly, it is happening. Businesses are looking towards gaining an edge in the green market industry by trying to re - package their products into a more environmentally friendly product. They are cutting down on extras and wasted materials and turning their operations into more efficient and green operation.

Companies are also starting to educate the masses with an increase in advertising that puts emphasis on green products and how they are more beneficial for the consumers. This kind of green marketing goes a long way in educating the masses and promoting the concept of green products among the people. With more and more consumers willing to pay a little extra towards green products, organizations are taking notice of the demands and behavior and attitude of the consumers.

Green entrepreneurs are creating waves in the country. The emergence of establishments - such as farm to table

restaurants, organic farms, the increase in the number of organic vegetables in supermarkets and the establishment of several wellness centers - are manifestations that Filipinos are already pursuing a green lifestyle (businessmirror.com.ph). Consumers can reduce their negative impact on the environment and make a difference through their purchasing decisions. Green consumers are those who consistently and primarily discriminate product purchases in favor of the environment. Today's green consumers are increasingly demanding greener products from retailers and brands that have adopted green practices throughout the entire supply chain. Green consumerism or green buying behavior is one of the pro - environmental behavior that encourages the purchasing and consumption of products that have minimal impacts on the environment (Mainieri, et al., 2010).

Gaylord Nelson, co - founder of Earth Day and US former senator, once said that "The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for the future generation, whose words of thanks will not be heard". The effects of our little acts today for the environment may not be felt sooner, yet the outcome of our decisions will eventually set its place as our future children and grandchildren take their glimpse of the so - called "Green Planet" (Green Journal, 2011). In this context, green marketing practices of the food service industry and its impact on consumer behavior have the strategic role in developing a sustainable environment.

## 5. Conclusions

This paper has highlighted various aspects of green marketing practices and its relationship to consumer behavior. Based on the summary of findings obtained in this study, the researcher has concluded that the respondents were somewhat aware of the green marketing practices of the food service industry. Respondents were also concerned with the environment resulting in their positive response to the green marketing practices of the food service industry. Green marketing is tools for protecting the environment though it is not easy to adopt it in short run, in the long run, it will have a positive impact not only on the firm but especially to the environment.

This study also confirms that there is an increasing knowledge about green marketing practices which is essential to do the business in an ethical way and avoid greater deterioration of the environment. Due to the benefits of the green marketing practices and the growing awareness of customer environmental protection, one of the current applications of being green in the food service industry is to set up a recycling program and to use more environmentally friendly products in business operation processes. Based on the results of the study, awareness on green marketing practices of the food service industry has a significant impact on consumer behavior, which both has strategic roles in developing a sustainable environment.

## 6. Recommendations

Environmental issues should be included in the education program to help students to know the relation between going green and how changes in consumer behavior could solve



environmental problems. There is a need to spread awareness about the eco - friendly products/services, especially in the food service sector. This increase in the needs of humans has resulted in the increased environmental degradation and the depletion of our natural resources. But if the green marketing variables are used adequately to influence the consumers' mind, the damage can be reduced to minimal levels.

It can be suggested that prices of the green products/services should be kept at an economical level so that even an average income earner can also afford them. The biggest barrier to the purchase of green products is high prices. It is essential that strategies and policies in relation to green marketing practices be developed and implemented so as to guide and help the food service industry towards a green change for the more sustainable environment. Green marketing should not be undertaken by firms as a promotional measure but should be considered as a corporate social responsibility.

The food service industry should keep evolving different principles and practices that help in providing a green environment for future generations to come. The government should highlight the importance and implementation of green marketing practices among food service industry as well as to other sectors of the country. One - to - one communication can help to avoid misunderstanding of the respondents when answering the survey questionnaire. Researchers can immediately explain and justify to respondents whenever they face difficulties, unclear or do not understand the questions asked. This can avoid inaccurate and inappropriate data collection from the respondents due to a simple way of answering the survey without even thinking.

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