

## Drivers of Green Practices Adoption: A Proposed Conceptual Framework

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**Abstract:** With respect of the increasing environmental issues, there is a need for businesses from various industries including foodservice industry to make an attempt of being green. In Malaysia, green fast food restaurants is a growing niche. Being green is a strategy to differentiate one from other competitors in the industry. Being green also indicates positive response towards consumers' demand for environmental friendly organizations. In foodservice industry however, green practices appear to be less adopted. Most literature on green practices investigates the subject matter from consumers' rather than from organization's perspective. This study provides a conceptual framework on the adoption of the drivers of green practices for fast food restaurants with institutional theory as its underlying base. In this study, perceived internal (normative pressure) and external drivers (coercive pressure and mimetic pressure) are considered the drivers. Normative pressure is represented by two dimensions (pressure from employee and manager's attributes), coercive pressure by two dimensions (regulatory pressure and customers pressure) whereas mimetic pressure by competitors pressure. The results from the findings are expected to give indications whether the internal and external factors are the drivers for the adoption of green practices for fast food restaurants in Malaysia.

**Key words:** Green practices, Institutional Theory, coercive pressure, normative pressure, mimetic pressure

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### INTRODUCTION

Hospitality and tourism industry has been marked as one of the largest and growing industry in the world (Sulaiman and Haron, 2011). As a continuous growing sector, hospitality has its social responsibility in contributing to environmental issues and climate change as natural resources and physical environment are the most precious assets in that industry (Kasim, 2009). The hospitality industry includes hotel, foodservice, hospital, airlines, etc. as its component (Line and Runyan, 2011). Foodservice industry in Malaysia is identified as one of the growing industries in hospitality (Lee *et al.*, 2012). It is exposed to enormous amounts of energy, water and other resources and also producing large amounts of waste and generating different types of pollution in its daily operation. Malaysia is marked as one of the ecologically rich destination (Siti-Nabiha *et al.*, 2011). If foodservice organizations are not taking appropriate measures then the natural resources and physical environment as its precious assets in the country will be destroyed. The adoption of green practices within the foodservice organizations is one alternatives taken to solve this problem as can be seen from other countries like Taiwan (Chou *et al.*, 2012; Wang, 2012) and United States (Jang *et al.*, 2011). The question is if the adoption of green practices has been proven in other countries and United States should similar practice be adopted by

foodservice organizations in Malaysia? Related to this question is What will be the drivers for green practices adoption for foodservice organizations in this country then? To answer these questions, this study will explore possible drivers for the green practices adoption in foodservice organizations, i.e., both internal and external drivers. It is hoped that the results can motivate relevant foodservice organizations to play their roles to incorporate the green practices in their daily operations.

**Foodservice industry in Malaysia:** In Malaysia, the government is highly involved in promoting green initiatives for all industries. For years, it has been searching for alternative sources of energy with less harmful effects towards the environment to be used in the country. The 10th Malaysia Plan states the need to develop a better way of handling resources in keeping up with the increasing demand of resources (energy, water, gas, etc.) for the industries. Examples include the need to develop alternative sources of energy and reductions on water usage which is very true for the foodservice industry in the country.

According to Euromonitor International (2011), consumer foodservice in Malaysia is classified into six segments, namely cafes/bars, full service restaurants, fast food, 100% home delivery/takeaway, self-service cafeterias and street stalls. Table 1 shows the number of outlets by each segment from 2006 to 2010 with fast

Table 1: Total outlets of foodservices by segments in Malaysia 2006 to 2010

Segments	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
100% Home delivery/Takeaway	170	177	189	207	215
Cafes/Bars	4,464	4,669	4,804	4,894	5,081
Full-service restaurants	9,010	9,434	9,717	9,742	9,946
Fast food	1,988	2,312	2,574	2,743	2,953
Self-service cafeterias	220	240	258	268	284
Street stalls	10,114	10,417	10,645	10,756	10,862
Total consumer foodservice	25,966	27,249	28,187	28,610	29,341

Euromonitor International (2011)

food displays the highest growth (8%) in terms of number of outlets from 2009 followed by self-service cafeterias (6%). In addition, the Market Analysis Report in 2011 shows a significant increase on the number of transactions in consumer foodservice industry over the period of 2005 to 2009 at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 6.80% with a record of 38.92% in absolute growth. Fast food is also recorded the fastest growth segment (CAGR of 11.64%; absolute rate of 7.40%) followed by the cafe and bar segment (CAGR of 7.93%; absolute rate of 46.47%). In this report, fast food is expected to be the fastest growing segment of the foodservice industry with a CAGR of 3.47% and an absolute growth of 14.60% for the period between 2010 to 2014.

The importance of fast food restaurant as the fastest growing segment of the foodservice industry in Malaysia added by the fact that restaurant is the retail world's largest energy user (Lee *et al.*, 2012), it is only fair if the government is emphasizing on the providers to take serious efforts in adopting green practices to further reduce down the energy consumption.

### WHAT IS GREEN PRACTICES?

The literature notes a variety of opinions on what green practices should consist of Mohindra (2008) for instance is of the opinion that green practices encompass the three Rs: reduce, reuse and recycle. In defining green practices, Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) refer them to the commitment of various sound practices that minimized its negative environmental impacts such as saving energy, saving water and reducing solid waste. Wang (2012) categorizes green practices into two dimensions; one, practices that customers are exposed to (recycling and composting; energy and water efficient equipment; eco-friendly cleaning supplies and packaging; menu sustainability) and two, practices operated for the back of the house (using energy efficient lighting). While the opinions vary, the gist remains the same. Researchers can see that all of them agreed that the practices are practices that one can adopt which can reduce harmful effects to the environment.

In line with the opinions above in this study, green practices refer to practices that can be adopted by fast food restaurant that are able to reduce environmental adverse effects of its facilities and operations. Green practices in this study cover seven categories as determined by Green Restaurants Association (GRA):

- Water efficiency
- Waste reduction and recycling
- Sustainable furnishings and building materials
- Sustainable food
- Energy
- Disposables
- Chemical and pollution reduction

**Why green practices?:** In response to the current competitive environment being green is indeed as a business decision rather than as one of the strategy to attract new customers. It has been proved that adopting green practices benefits firms or organizations in various aspects including human capital. Employees now a days would prefer to research for a company that creating a greener business environment (Environmental Leader, 2012).

The literature acknowledges various advantageous for green practices adoption. The advantageous include business sustainability, costs savings, saving the environment, better firm reputation, etc. Putting all these advantageous together, the significant outcome is green practices adoption can leads to a better firms' performance.

Firms or organizations adopt green practices to help them achieve sustainability in their business operations. However, according to Norton (2010), sustainability is achieved only when the firms or organizations adopt two main green practices consume lesser resource, i.e., energy, materials and water and shift to an economy which mimics the natural environment by consuming resources that without poison economy system, practice recycle activities and consume energy that is renewable. In addition, Manaktola and Jauhari (2007) argue that firms or organizations adopting green practices to protect environment are able to position themselves distinctively in the competitive market place. Thus, an empirical report by Business and Environment in 2008 has also highlighted a significant reduction of between 11 and 15% in monthly energy usage among the restaurant.

Apart from the aforementioned advantageous, firms adopting green practices can opt for green restaurant certification which also provide several benefits such as greater publicity, cut costs, improve staff productivity and

morale, stay ahead from legislation and create a health environment. Thus, restaurants need to fulfill seven categories based on the point awarded before they can earn a certificate and certified as a green restaurant. There are three levels involved for certified green restaurants and it is categorized into two-star, three-star and four-star certified green restaurant. The levels are depending on the total points obtained which will then be evaluated based on the green practices the restaurant adopts. As to date, Malaysia does not have an association which grants green certificate to restaurant that fulfils the criteria of a certified green restaurant. Even though this is the situation, empirical evidence has proven to us that green practices adoption indeed bring significant advantageous for firms or organizations. At this juncture, the research questions put forward in this study are indeed appropriate for the context of study.

#### UNDERPINNING THEORY AND PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

**Institutional Theory:** Institutional theory suggests that organizations are social systems and is used as a theoretical framework to explain why organizations adopt practices, policies and procedures (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977 cited from Scott, 2001).

Institutional Theory conveys how organizations should behave (Hatch, 1997; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 1995) and how organizations takes actions in response to environmental pressures (Grewal and Dharwadkar, 2002; Hoffman, 1997; Scott, 2001) which are beyond their control (Hoffman, 1977). In addition, Institutional Theory also contributes to answer questions concerning the role of institutional influence on social choices (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). Moreover, organizations as based on institutional theory refer not only as production systems but also include social and cultural systems (Scott, 2001). Organization choices and actions are constrained and influenced by social behaviors, norms and value within the environment (Selznick, 1957). Hence, organizations sometimes have the desire and need to adopt and adhere to rules and practices created from environmental pressure which may not be the original intent of the organization.

Based on Institutional Theory, organizations conform to institutional pressures to gain legitimacy which may enhance their survival (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Legitimacy is defined as a perception that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions (Suchman, 1995). In another words, legitimacy is the belief that certain behaviors or practices are

something that everyone in the environment should do. However, Schelling (1978) observes that organizations are under pressure to conform to norms of practices and policies that are isomorphic within the environment in which they operate. Isomorphism refers to the process when organizations begin to modify its organizational characteristics to be similar with others in the direction of increase compatibility with environmental characteristics. Therefore, when organizations adopt practices that are legitimate to the environment, isomorphism is achieved and the survival is often higher (Zucker, 1987). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified two types of isomorphism: competitive and institutional. Competitive isomorphism is most relevant in free and open competition market because it emphasizes market competition, niche change and fitness measure however it does not explain the modern world of organizations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). To complement it, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) revealed that the concept of institutional isomorphism is a more useful tool to understand much modern organization life. This is supplemented by the view of Aldrich (1979) that organization must take into account of other organizations. According to Carroll and Delacroix (1982), organizations competing for resources and customers is not sufficient, organizations need to compete for political power and institutional legitimacy also for social as well as economic rewards. Institutional isomorphism occurs through three mechanisms, namely coercive pressure, normative pressure and mimetic pressure.

**Coercive pressure:** Coercive isomorphism stems from formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society within which organizations function (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). These pressures can be arise from government regulations or laws (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), customers (Teo *et al.*, 2003) and firms may felt as force as persuasion or as invitations to join in collusion which they are not intend to do so. Some firms are coerced into adopting practices or actions to avoid punishment (Grewal and Dharwadkar, 2002) and sanctions (Scott, 1995). For instance, prior studies have shown that regulatory pressure drives firms to adopt environmental practices (Buysse and Verbeke, 2003; Yalabik and Fairchild, 2011). Firms are affected by various government regulations that have implications on their business, these regulatory pressures from government forced firms to follow in order to achieve compliance (Druker *et al.*, 2005; Goodman *et al.*, 1998; Patton and Worthington, 2003;

Petts *et al.*, 1999; Vickers *et al.*, 2005). According to Zhu and Sarkis (2007), firms may have better environmental performance when facing higher regulatory pressure.

In addition, Darnell (2006) observed that customers can play a very vital role in giving pressure to organizations to adopt environmental friendly practices and strategies. Due to the increasing of global environmental crisis, customers are now put more attentions on environmental issues (Follows and Jobber, 2000). The heavy promotions through media and exposures of information technology had raised the awareness of consumers on their roles in contributing to save the environment, one of the roles is to consume green product or service (Eze *et al.*, 2011). Earlier studies showed that there is a growing demand of green products or services from consumers (Clark, 2009; Environmental Leader, 2009; The Star, 2010) and consumers are also concerned on the level of involvement of businesses in adopting environmental friendly activities (De Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2005). With that one of the challenges for businesses to be sustainable is to deal with the growing demand from consumers in concerning on the environmental protection conducted by them (Follows and Jobber, 2000). According to Manaktola and Jauhari (2007), firm environmental performance can be considered as one of the product's attributes that deliver benefits to customers. This environmental performance includes green practices that pose by firm such as water disposal or use of alternate source of energy, etc. The growing awareness of people on the damages caused in the environment by regular business has leads to more and more customers looking for firms that are adopting green practices to save the environment (Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007). Based on aforementioned in this study, coercive pressure arises from regulatory pressure and customer pressure which lead to the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Coercive pressure has a positive and significant relationship with green practices adoption.

**H1a:** Regulatory pressure has a positive and significant relationship with green practices adoption.

**H1b:** Consumers pressure has a positive and significant relationship with green practices adoption.

**Normative pressure:** Normative pressure refer to the pressure stems from professionalization which can be interpreted as collective struggle of people who hold an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work and also to establish a cognitive base and

legitimation for their occupational autonomy (Cheng and Yu, 2008; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Larson, 1991). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) observed two sources of professionalization: formal education and the growth of professional network of the personnel within organization. When the personnel (i.e., managers and key staffs) are professionalized (i.e., they have similar formal education and attributes), they tend to view problems in a similar fashion, see the same policies, procedures and structure as normatively sanctioned and legitimated and approach in decision in much the same (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). When personnel within an organization are struggling for same expectations, these expectations will become shared norms which in turn influence organization attitudes toward the maintenance of relationship networks and curtail behaviors that promote individual goals (Heide and John, 1992). Conforming to these shared norms puts the firm in a position to assure constituents in the field that it maintains procedural legitimacy (John *et al.*, 2001; Zsidosin *et al.*, 2005). According to Cheng and Yu (2008), organization's adoption of a new practice is related to its managers' personal traits. In this study, normative pressure refers to pressure from employees and managers' personal attributes (education background and research experience) in influencing fast food restaurant to adopt green practices. Therefore, the above discussion leads to the following hypotheses:

**H2:** Normative pressure has a positive and significant relationship with green practices adoption.

**H2a:** Pressure from employees has a positive and significant relationship with green practices adoption.

**H2b:** Managers' attributes has a positive and significant relationship with green practices adoption.

**Mimetic pressure:** According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), mimetic processes happened when organizations model themselves on other organizations under the circumstances that organization is in uncertainty environment (i.e., organizations goals are ambiguity, poor understanding of organizational technologies). Organizations tend to models themselves after other organization which they believed are well managed and able to survive in the competitive environment. The organizations do not intentionally serve as models however, they are viewed by other organizations as a convenience source of information to reduce uncertainty. According to Jennings and Zandbergen (1995), sometimes firms implemented programs (environmentally friendly, green products and environmental marketing programs)

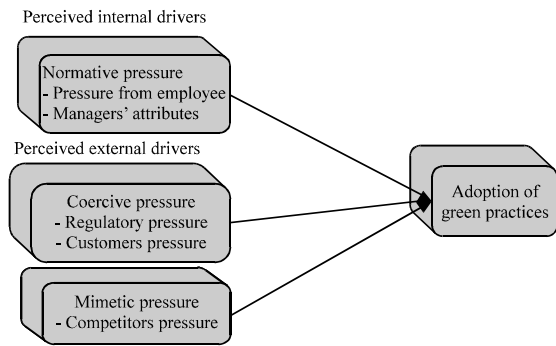


Fig. 1: Proposed conceptual framework

without studying the impacts but rather due to the competitive pressure. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H3:** Mimetic pressure has a positive and significant relationship with green practices adoption.

**H2a:** Competitors pressure has a positive and significant relationship with green practices adoption.

Based on the review of the relevant literature and discussion on Institutional Theory, it is widely supported that this theory had been adopted to study how environmental pressures (institutional pressures) affect managerial actions in shaping organization structures and actions (Goodstein, 1994; Greening and Gray, 1994).

Hence, researchers believe that Institutional Theory best fit the purpose of the study. In addition, using Institutional Theory to study environmental issues (environmental practices, green practices) is consistent with previous research (Babiak and Trendafilova, 2011; Brammer *et al.*, 2012; Clemens and Douglas, 2006). With that the propose conceptual framework for this study is shown as in Fig. 1.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The unit of analysis for this study will be fast food restaurants in Malaysia. The respondents of the survey will be the manager of fast food restaurants. Hence, the population frame should be drawn from existing, formal directory of fast food industry such as Euromonitor International. Euromonitor International, the world leader in strategic research for consumer markets. There were several previous research had also utilized Euromonitor reports in their study (Ryan *et al.*, 2011; Ungku *et al.*, 2011; Bruwer *et al.*, 2011). Researchers will employ cluster sampling in this study to select burger and chicken fast

food outlets as they are the major shares among all fast food. To measure the goodness of data, reliability and validity tests are compulsory (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Cronbach's Alpha can be used in measuring the reliability of inter-item consistency among variables (Nunnally, 1978). Factor analysis needs to be conducted to measure the validity of each construct (Field, 2009). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) can also be used to measure the causal relationship between independent variables (i.e., pressure from employees, managers' attributes, regulatory pressure, customers pressure, competitors pressure) and dependent variable (adoption of green practices).

**CONCLUSION**

This study served as a contribution with regards to the limited study in foodservice industry (Line and Runyan, 2011; Tseng, 2010; Wang, 2012) particular within Malaysian context. This study had highlighted several benefits of being green restaurant (e.g., costs savings, better firm reputation, sustainability and saving the environment, etc.) which might enhance managers' understanding of the importance and impacts of adopting green practices. In addition with the increasing number of fast food restaurant and also the growing demand of fast food, this will definitely needed greater amount of energy to cater the demand. The impact will be huge if no measure taken to reduce the energy consumption among foodservice industry. Moreover, the testing of this framework will serve as a guide for foodservice industry especially in understanding its perceived internal and external pressures put forward to them. Lastly, researchers hope that when this study is concluded, we would be able to assess the hypothesized relationships and outlined in this paper and consequently be able to provide detailed key research and practical implications including suggestions for future research agenda.

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