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Competencies Required for Environmental Practicing Fast Food Industry

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ABSTRACT

The fast food industry consumes lots of water, energy and generates tons of waste which ultimately leads to environmental degradation. The food industry tended to be slower to adopt green practices than other segments of the hospitality industry, but they are currently following suit and are adopting environmental practices that are beneficial for the environment and reduce the negative impacts. The utmost important responsibility of the fast food restaurant must be to implement environmental friendly practices in daily routines of their business. This research aims to explore the environmental practices adopted and competencies required to sustain such practices in the fast food restaurants of Kashmir. A semi-structured interviews and check-lists have been formulated based on which In-depth interview has been conducted from 40 respondents. The study concluded with the fact that, implementation of sustainability practices in any fast food restaurants can be successful only if the employees are competent.

Key words : *Environmental practices, Competencies, Fast food restaurants*

Introduction

Due to various demands, the hospitality industry will no longer be able to disregard its environmental duties. As a consequence of rising environmental consciousness among customers, governmental, social organizations, and workers, environmental management for instance has become one of the essential management concerns facing businesses in a variety of industries, as well as those in the hospitality sector (DiPietro *et al.*, 2013). Environmental Sustainability is widely regarded as the key to a successful business in the 21st century. It is fastly becoming a prime concern for public and private sectors alike and the food service industry is no exception. Environmental Sustainability means that natural ecosystems can continue to support life and provide resources to meet the needs of the present and

future generations (NTG Alliance, 2019). The tourism business depends on the natural environment unspoiled landscapes, sandy beaches, turquoise oceans, glaciers, waterfalls, coral reefs, and pure air which are all wonderful tourist attractions. On the other hand the fast food business clearly has higher expectations of the environment and natural resources. As a result, there's a chance we'll end up endangering hospitality's entire base. The industry has swiftly adjusted to these developments and is increasingly becoming more eco-friendly. To a large extent, they are cultivating a green mindset and improving operational efficiency overlap. When the employees try to use as little energy, water, detergents, and other resources as possible while maintaining service quality, the result is the same: they reduce pollution and protect the environment. By providing training to the employees of fast food res-

restaurants inevitably leads to better work organisation and operations. Competencies do not necessitate specialized ecological or chemical knowledge of substances and liquids used, but rather participation in the process of preparation and reduction of negative effects that occur during the daily operations of an outlet. This research aims to explore the environmental practices adopted and competencies required to sustain such practices in the fast food restaurants of Kashmir.

Literature Review

Schubert *et al* (2010) and DiPietro and Gregory (2012) defined environmental practices as “Those practices that used by organizations to minimize their carbon foot-print and reduce harm to the environment, including the over use of resources as well as any use of non-recyclable products, ineffective recycling processes, and harmful chemical products”. Jang *et al.* (2011) defined green restaurant as “The restaurant that implements green practices, including recycling and composting, water and energy efficiency, and waste management, as well as the option of locally grown or organic foods”. According to Pacific, Gas and Electric’s Food Service Technology Center, restaurants consume a large amount of total energy consumption in all over the world; this is compared to the consumption of other commercial buildings (Jeong *et al.*, 2014). In addition to that, the restaurants and food service facilities use 2.5 times more energy per square foot than other commercial buildings (Dewald *et al.* 2014). Restaurants especially QSRs generate a greater amount of garbage daily than most other retail businesses (Horovitz, 2008). Restaurants are responsible for about 33% of the total energy consumed in the US and the average consumption of the water in restaurants about 200.000 gallons annually (DiPietro *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, the negative impact on the surround environment which is produced by the operation process in restaurant industry will be serious if the green practices are not implemented (Chou *et al.*, 2012). As part of the environmental programme enhancement practices, human resource managers have to encourage employees to participate and initiate green and eco-friendly ideas through empowering employees (Ahmad, 2015).

Concept of Competencies

Boyatzis (1982) defines competency as “an underlying

characteristic of a person in that it may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one’s self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she uses”. Competencies are a combination of observable and applied knowledge, skills and behaviours that create a competitive advantage for an organisation. They focus on how an employee creates value and what is actually accomplished (Nath and Raheja in Jauhary and Misra, 2004). Tas (1988) defines competence as the performance of duties based on one’s ability to accomplish specific job related tasks and assume the role connected to the position. A prominent study was carried out by Sandwith which developed a comprehensive model on competencies. Kay and Russette (2000) found that a number of essential competencies fall under all five of Sandwith’s (1993) Competency Domains: leadership, interpersonal, conceptual – creative, administrative and technical. Leadership and interpersonal skills are essential competencies to more than one functional area and management level. It is important to note that Sandwith’s competency domain is one of the most widely accepted models in the hospitality industry. Sahu (2009) competencies are the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to perform a role effectively. It refers to a feature of a person’s ability to perform a job in appropriate way such as ability to take decisions related with the context of particular professional performance (Zydzianaite, 2005). Further Pacevicius and Keyte (2008) defined it combination of professional knowledge, abilities, and skills as well as an ability to apply them and following the requirements of work environment. Moreover Yukl *et al.* (1990) competencies include planning, organizing, problem solving, informing, clarifying, motivating, monitoring, consulting, recognizing, supporting, managing conflict and teambuilding, networking, delegating, mentoring, and rewarding. Thus competencies address one’s skills, knowledge, and attitude through observable and measurable behavior parameters and outcomes. Setting the competencies of every employee working in an organisation to the highest level the main goal of the human resource department should to provide training.

Fast Food Industry

The coming of quick urbanization went with occupied way of life and headway in innovation has remarkably changed the lifestyle of numerous individuals which thusly have drastically modified the

convention of cooking and eating at home. As obvious, individuals are currently increasingly subject to prepared-to-eat dinners accessible in the market for their day by day food and mainstream among them are quick nourishments. Inexpensive food is a well-known term given to food that can be arranged and served rapidly. It commonly alludes to food sold in eatery or outlet with preheated or precooked fixings, and served to the client in a bundled structure implied for take-out or remove. Nonetheless, the expression "Inexpensive Food" has been conflictingly grouped across research examines. Fast food is a category of mass-produced, commercially resold food that places a high value on expediency of service. It is a term used in commerce to describe meals provided in packaging for takeout or takeaway and sold in a restaurant or store containing frozen, warmed, or precooked components. Fast food was developed as a business strategy to serve a huge number of harried wage employees, travellers, and commuters. Globally, the fast food sector was predicted to be worth \$570 billion in 2018. Pre-cooked meals are the quickest type of "fast food," as they cut waiting times to just a few seconds. Other fast food restaurants, particularly those that specialise on hamburgers like McDonald's, use mass-produced, already prepared materials (bagged buns and condiments, frozen beef patties, vegetables which are prewashed, pre-sliced, or both; etc.) Fast food has been defined in a number of ways, however a common definition or interpretation has not been universally accepted (Ball, 1992).

Methodology

After considering the specific objectives of the study, the exploratory nature of the research was applied based on the qualitative approach. In this study, a check list has been formulated based on which In-depth interview has been conducted. The questions based on literature scanning were used for the data collection and the data has been collected from 40 respondents. The response has been collected from different managers of top 10 Fast Food restaurants of Kashmir after employing the purposive sampling technique. The responses received have been analyzed by using thematic analysis, coding has been done. The processed codes have been arranged in themes by using manual coding, axial coding and selective coding. recorded and transcribed later on into English and used for analytical purposes. The

secondary sources of information were from published research articles, theses, books, websites, magazines, newspapers, national and international journals and government reports etc. The checklist included only four questions which were recorded and transcribed later on into English and used for analytical purposes.

Results and Discussion

The fast food restaurants of Kashmir are also adopting environmental practices with the participation of guests in environmental saving procedures which would not be possible without the continuous efforts of the knowledgeable and skillful employees. The data received from the respondents had been transferred into the codes and transcribed as follows: Energy Efficiency, Food Packaging Management, Food Waste Management and Green Purchasing

Energy Efficiency

NRA (2010) mentioned that restaurants consume 5 times more energy per square foot compared to other organizations, kitchen consume five times more energy than other departments. In addition, energy costs represent 30% of annual budgets of buildings. A 10% decrease in energy costs has an equivalent impact on operating income as a 1.26% increase in sales. Taking all of this into consideration, energy conservation is a wonderful place to start when greening your fast food restaurants operations (Energy Star, 2011). Food Service Technology Center (2011) and Sustainable Food Service Consulting (2013) stated some practices to save energy such as: Utilize Energy Star equipment which that Energy efficient equipment can cost more upfront but will save money in the long run. It helps restaurants to calculate energy cost for equipment's, establish a comprehensive energy management program, implementation of the periodic maintenance plan for equipment's and devices according to the schedules, upgrade lighting systems by use LED's on exit signs and LED's or CFL's for all other lighting, install occupancy sensors, Set operating schedules for all devices and equipment's for optimum usage when these devices are not in use. In order adopt this practice the employees must possess these competencies regarding energy management, energy assessment, Information technology, behavioral change and motivation. One of the respondents

replied

.....*Employees plays an important role in minimizing the use and maximizing the efficiency of energy. The employees working in such restaurants must have proactive behavior towards environmental sustainability. The policy of our restaurant is to periodic maintenance of devices and equipment's used in operation, usage of LED, energy-saving bulbs compared to fluorescent bulbs, separate air conditions in places where there is no guest. Further the competencies required are like Project planning, decision planning, understanding energy use, energy monitoring and investigating*

Food Packaging Management

Food packaging is a packaging system specifically design for food and represents one of the most important aspects among the processes involved in the food industry, as it provides protection from chemical, biological and physical alterations (Marsh *et al.*, 2007). The main goal of food packaging is to provide a practical means of protecting and delivering food goods at a reasonable cost while meeting the needs and expectations of both consumers and industries. Food packaging covers several functions: safety, protection, hygiene and others. The main one is to protect the food and prevent/minimize food waste. Next to that food prevention, shelf life, hygiene and health are considered very crucial as well.

.....*Food packaging lies at the very heart of the modern food industry Good packaging prevents food waste and ensures that the food retains its desired quality up to consumption or throughout its shelf life. However it can at times be a cause of concern for food safety. Some packaging materials such as certain types of plastic, stainless steel, polythenes, and styrofoam can release toxins when they are heated and can be dangerous to consumers. Our restaurant uses some Eco-friendly packaging that doesn't have a negative impact on the environment and helps you attract people who want to be more sustainable. We choose: Glass containers, Gelatin films, paper or cardboard and bio plastics. Our packaging team is competent and has in-depth knowledge of sustainable food packaging, safety standards, communication, and customer services.*

Food Waste Management

On a daily basis, kitchen dishwashers use a significant quantity of water and electricity to clean silverware and crockery. Restaurants generate a tremendous amount of wastes including paper, cardboard, plastics, wood, food wastes, glass, metals, special

wastes, liquid and hazardous wastes. According to Van Der Wagen and Goonetilleke (2004) waste management is an asset management program demonstrating the organization's commitment to environmental and social issues impacting the restaurant and its environment. The competencies required are as able to grasp complex and dynamic legislation, effective communication skills, analytical, problem-solving and decision-making skills, an interest in, and understanding of, environment and sustainability issues and good IT and general office skills.

.....*The employees working in fast food restaurants must understand the importance of waste management; the staff of our restaurant is well abled to manage the waste. We have implemented the use of glass water bottles which can be reused after sterilizing measures. We practice stock rotation, recycle vegetable oil and donate surplus food to local trusts. We have invested in high-quality kitchen equipment that can impact on kitchen waste reduction. The competencies required are dynamic legislation, effective communication skills, patience and resilience, good organizational and administrative skills and understanding of, environment and sustainability issues.*

Green Purchasing

Sustainable Purchasing refers to the procurement of products and services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose (University of Louisville). "According to Giménez and Tachizawa, (2012); Prier *et al.*, (2016), sustainable purchasing practices are purchasing from small and local suppliers; products probable for recycling or reuse; comply with labor rights; carbon reductions in the movement of products to facilities; operational excellence; product innovation; and willingness of suppliers to commit to waste reduction goals". The procurement of raw materials, production, manufacturing, packing, distribution, reuse, operation, maintenance, and disposal of the product or service may be included in this comparison. One of the respondents demonstrated that

..... *Our staff facilitates and encourages the use of environmentally friendly products. We prefer to purchase seasonal products from local market and prepare local dishes. Our purchasing teams are encouraging suppliers to packaging with limited environmental impact and order those that meet the requirements. We priority to containers and packaging made of 100% recyclable glass and*

packaging made of biodegradable paper or cardboard. The competencies required for sustainability purchasing are as: product knowledge and its impact on environment encourage staff for using eco-friendly product, strategic management, negotiation skills and financial acumen

Conclusion

Environmental practices allow fast food restaurants to grow from inside to outside. It allows restaurants to increase overall quality in operations. The employees working in such restaurant must be competent to understand, adopt and developed competencies required for environmental practices. This research aims to identify environmental practices and competencies required for adopting such practices by the fast food restaurants of Kashmir. The findings revealed that there are set of sustainability practices adopted in hotels these includes Energy Efficiency, Food Packaging Management, Food Waste Management and Green Purchasing. The study suggested that technical skills regarding Project planning, decision planning, understanding energy use, energy monitoring and investigating, in-depth knowledge of sustainable food packaging, safety standards, communication, customer services, dynamic legislation, effective communication skills, patience, resilience, good organizational and administrative skills, understanding of environment and sustainability issue, using eco-friendly product, strategic management, negotiation skills and financial acumen.

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