# IN A "GREEN" RESTAURANT, WHAT MAKES THE CUSTOM ERS SATISFIED? THE RESTAURANT ATTRIBUTES OF TRIP ADVISOR REVIEWERS[1]

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**Abstract:** The aim of the study is to examine the restaurant attributes of green restaurants that make customers satisfied and dissatisfied. After the sustainability and green movement in food sector has gained importance, green restaurants have emerged. In this study, the main attributes that created satisfaction in a green restaurant are the food, atmosphere and the location, while food, price and the staff are the dissatisfaction creating attributes. However, none of the themes are related to sustainability. Thus, although sustainability is important in today's business, customers are not seeking it as a restaurant attribute.

**Key words:** Green restaurant, sustainability, restaurant attributes

**JEL Codes:** Z33

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized environment, restaurant customers have many opportunities for places to eat. And, both the growth of the economies and the changing lifestyles has driven the customers eat outside which made the restaurant business an important social fact. But if the restauranteurs desire to attract customers and earn more, then they need to understand the criteria of preference of customers as the restauranteurs need to know that if the needs are not met, then the customers will seek for another.

Weiss et al. (2004) suggested the comparison of customer satisfaction between the theme and casual dining restaurants. Jeong and Jang (2011) have recommended that researching the experiences that cause not only positive but also negative e-WOM communications from restaurant review pages. Similarly, Harrington et al. (2013) concluded that, the impact of attributes should be analyzed that will turn into behavior either positively or negatively. For this reason, the aim of this study is to investigate the attributes commented in Trip Advisor network that made green restaurant customers satisfied and dissatisfied which the restauranteurs should take care of.

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## 2. LITERATURE
### 2.1. Sustainability and Green Movement

Sustainability which has become an important concept, is becoming crucial especially for the tourism sector in which the nature is the source of the sector and they impact each other mutually. The term sustainability has many definitions. According to Gilman (1992) sustainability is the ability to maintain the system such as a community or ecosystem, without interruption, distortion, and consuming with over usage. In Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development which is also known as Brutland Report, has defined the sustainability as "the kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987: 43).

Regarding these definitions, sustainable tourism is defined considering this basis. One of the well-known definition is made by World Tourism Organization which is "meeting the needs of the tourists and host regions while developing and protecting the opportunities for the future is the development of sustainable tourism" (WTO, 2008). Green movement was developed in 1988 is a part of sustainability which raised in 1980's. Being green has become the key for businesses and this is explained with its regulations, marketing and value dimensions (Hu et al., 2010).

Living Planet Report which is prepared by WWF (World Wildlife Foundation) in every two-year time to reveal the situation of the planet has highlighted that human and nature relation has entered to a dangerous period in the last 40 years (WWF, 2016). The increase in ecological problems so intensively, has made the urgent solutions necessary in this field. Thoughts on protecting the environment and the need to live in healthy environments began to be discussed internationally. During this process, major changes happened; especially after geographical discoveries, important improvements such as inventions, Renaissance movements and industrial revolutions has caused crucial problems in the nature's ecological balance. As these ecological problems increased, fighting against these problems has started. Environmentalist associations are established in both national and international level and, these organizations have concentrating on green movement, acting on the same principles.

Many hotel and restaurants have decided to become "green" impressed by green movement. For example, British Airways Holiday, an English airway, is determining the environment-friendly hotels and awarding them. In 2002, "Kasbah du Toubkal Hotel" which is located in Atlas Mountains in Morocco, has been awarded by the British Airways as it used conventional building materials and employed local people in the hotel. Green Globe is running a global certificate program. Touristik Union International (TUI), a major tour operator in Germany and has more than 5 million customers, is one of the leading companies in tourism sector which supports environmental responsibility. In a symposium held in World Travel Market Trade Show theming England Abroad Travelling in 2023, Dermot Blastland, TUI England and Ireland Manager, has stated that they will not work with hotels and destinations which succeed in attaining sustainability standards. Moreover, businesses or destinations that did not obtain a certificate from Travelife Sustainability System in a five years period, will not be a part of TUI operations (www.turizmdunyasi.com.tr).

Not only tour operators or airways but also restaurants are also affected by the sustainability in the tourism sector (Gilg et al., 2005). Today, environmentally friendly food is gaining importance and that eco-friendly food has changed the restaurant

industry as well (Jang et al., 2011). As the National Restaurant Association has set its conference theme as green restaurants in 2008, the restauranteurs became more conscious of and aimed green applications (http://www.restaurant.org; Hu et al., 2010). Green restaurants are efficient, new and renovated systems in terms of eco-friendly energy. They have five focus points when compared to conventional restaurants. These are 3R and 2E. 3R is to reduce, reuse and recycle; 2E is energy and efficiency. To reduce; products that cause less waste should be chosen. To reuse; reutilizing the products are aimed; to recycle the waste is aimed to transform to a new product. Reducing, reusing and recycling principles can be considered as a reverse pyramid. As the waste is reduced, the reusing lessens and as long as the waste is reused more, they require less recycling. In energy and efficiency, the main principle is the energy-saving sustainability without harming the environment using renewable energy sources. English Green Chef Arthur Potts Dawson has stated the importance of gaining a conscious consumption and recycling the waste in food and beverage sector in which waste is over-produced (Gastronomi, 2015). Taking part in green applications can affect the cost management, market differentiation, and environment protection for restaurants (Schubert et al., 2010). Besides, restaurants exhibit a corporate image, as they apply green restaurant principles (Tan and Yeap, 2012). In terms of cost management, the first advantage is saving. Due to the cut on consuming products such as electric, fuel, equipment many savings can be achieved and the costs may decrease. An example for this is that, a green generation restaurant has saved energy after closing the winter garden and stop using the palm tree gas stoves (Yeşil Nesil Restoran, 2017).

According to Green Restaurant Association, the application has seven suggestions which are;

• Energy efficiency and protection,
• Water saving and efficiency,
• Recycling and integration,
• Purchasing sustainable, local and organic food,
• Using non-poisonous and non-chemical materials,
• Preventing pollution,
• Using sustainable furniture and building materials for new buildings.

Related to this awareness, green restaurant certificate is awarded by WWF Turkey in collaboration with Boğaziçi University in order to make the processes in the food and beverage sector more sustainable and lead the transformation.


## 2.2. Restaurant Attributes

In a dining out experience, customers evaluate the attributes of the restaurant subconsciously (Koo et al., 1999) and their experiences cognitively and as they experience a high quality of food they have a positive behavioral intention or vice versa (Ha and Jang, 2013). An attribute that is considered as important is defined as a subjective importance of an attribute for evaluating a product and/or service of a restaurant (Ponnam and Balaji, 2014). Besides, the experience and thus the attributes are a consequence of their subjective judgement of their experiences (Jeong and Jang, 2011).

Customers evaluate the attributes of a restaurant, they consider it in a rank of importance (Perutkova, 2010). For a restaurant, quality perception is considered as the

most important factor among others, that includes food quality, service quality and atmospheric quality (Liu and Jang, 2009). Although food quality is the most cited attribute (Kivela, 1997) and the core product of a restaurant, customers do not only evaluate the quality of food. They also consider the service quality, atmosphere, price fairness and authenticity which are determinant factors for restaurants (Liu and Jang, 2009). Studies have revealed that there are plenty of attributes that makes customers satisfied (Ponnam and Balaji, 2014).

Harrington et al. (2013) have studied the restaurant attributes for quick service restaurants and according to them, these attributes consisted seven factors and 25 attributes. The first three important attributes were in quality indicator factor and these were safe food, restaurant cleanliness and food quality. Others are speed of service, perceived value of the food and drinks, quality of service, staff friendliness, price, variety of menu and close distance. Likewise in a study of Bhuian (2000) related to fast food restaurant, there are 11 attributes creating satisfaction. Cleanliness, taste, friendliness, speed, variety, location, novelties, nutrition, seating capacity, price and delivery service are the ones that are important. Perutkova (2010) While food quality is the important factor for upscale restaurants, speed of have studied the quick service and upscale restaurants whether they have difference among their important attributes which are food quality, service and ambiance. Service is the one for quick service restaurants.

Bojanic and Shea (1997) examined whether there is a difference in attributes between the restaurants located in suburban and downtown. They resulted that, downtown customers are satisfied with timely service with a good quality of food and a reasonable price. Suburban customers, on the other hand, satisfied with service quality and the friendly attitudes of the staff. Liu and Jang (2009) have used 24 restaurant attributes as important for customers. The top 10 attributes that are important for customers are the taste, safety and freshness of food, environmental cleanliness, appropriate food temperature, the serving of food as ordered, accurate check, consistent and prompt service and fair price.

For Koo et al. (1999) there are nine factors that are important for customers. The ranking of these factors is; taste of food, service, uniqueness, price, location, decoration, type of food, variety in menu and car parking. Gregory and Kim (2004) had revealed that 10 attributes of a restaurant which include food quality, food type, value for money, atmosphere, location, speed of service, new experience, brand name, opening hours and facilities for children. Gupta et al. (2007) states that there are five factors and 15 attributes that creates satisfaction, and these factors are restaurant operation, greeting, service, value and food, respectively. Also, Jeong and Jang (2011) have categorized the attributes as restaurant experience and listed them as food quality, service quality, atmosphere and price fairness. These four experiences included 10 attributes which are taste, presentation and temperature of food; attentive and friendly staff and consistent service; dinescape items and fair price. Besides Alonso et al. (2013) had 20 attributes that are important to customer's restaurant choice. The first 10 attributes are; prior positive experience, cleanliness, staff, timeliness of service, reputation, right service in the first-time, trust in the brand, safety, healthy food and atmosphere. Food and food related attributes, value and value for money and the service and its components are the common attributes in these three studies.

Kivela (1997) have investigated the attributes that are important for different purpose of visiting a restaurant. But before this, he revealed that 14 attributes are important, quality, type and cost of food, new experience, location, variety in menu, speed of

service, ambiance, comfort and cleanliness. After that, he examined that, for fine-dining, prestige, friendliness of staff, food quality and ambiance; for theme restaurants ambiance, prestige and food quality; for family purposes location, cleanliness and cost of food; for fast-food location, speed of service and cleanliness are important. Also, Ponnam and Balaji (2014) asked whether the attributes vary according to the visiting purpose or not and revealed that, nine factors are relevant for any purpose of a casual dining restaurant. These are responsiveness, the taste, hospitality, food presentation, ambiance, upscale image, variety in menu, menu price and design and décor of the restaurant. However, these attributes differ as the purpose of visit is important. Thus, for dining-out purpose, taste, variety in menu, menu price, upscale image, design and ambiance; for celebration purpose, only hospitality and food presentation; for hanging-out responsiveness, ambiance, design, upscale image and hospitality; for take-away taste, variety in menu and price; for dating responsiveness, presentation, ambiance and upscale image are important, respectively.

Heung (2002) have found out 16 restaurant attributes under five factors. The most important ten attributes that are important for customers are the quality of food, staff attitudes, value for money, atmosphere, word-of mouth, presentation of food, image, decoration, variety in menu and advertising. Weiss et al. (2004) had 26 attributes under five factors that are food service, atmosphere, convenience and novelty for theme restaurants. Restaurants' cleanliness, friendliness of the staff, restaurants' appearance, food freshness, willing to serve, efficient service, food temperature, restaurants comfort, attentive staff and the feeling that makes the customers eat there.

Harrington et al. (2011) have examined the fine-dining restaurants where the average check is more than $40 or more per person. They have listed 17 attributes and six factors as promotion, price/value, quality expectation, setting, dietary and variety/innovation interests. Value of experience, value of food and drinks, speed of service, atmosphere of the restaurant, price, variety of the menu, interior design, reputation, recommendation from friends and innovative menu items are the ten most important attributes the customers valued most.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The study is a qualitative study and content analysis is used to analyze the important points for customers in green restaurants. Content analysis explores the text to find out the meaning of the text that has a meaning to someone. And verbal conversation, written documents and visual presentation are the texts that are applicable to content analysis (Krippendorf, 2004). Content analysis enables the researchers to reduce the large volume data with a systematic and replicable technique to a content based categories (Stemler, 2001). In the beginning, it was used as a quantitative research method, as it is a quantitative analysis of qualitative data. In other words, the data in the text are coded and categorized using statistics (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

Content analysis has four stages. These are determining the sample and categories, analyzing and determining the counting system. In determining the sample, the source, documents and the sampling size should be decided (Öğülmüş, 1991). Regarding this, Boğaziçi University and WWF Turkey has a collaboration in food and beverage sector that resulted in developing Green Generation Restaurant Project. Within this project, a green certificate is given to the restaurants which are qualified for the rating system. In

Turkey, only six restaurants are entitled to the certificate and all of them are located in İstanbul (www.yesilnesilrestoran.org).

Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) is defined by Litvin et al. (2008) as "all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services". The E-WOM is increasing as the use of internet is increasing to seek information about a product or service (Jeong and Jang, 2011). An online review which can be made by either a consumer or a professional editor can affect the sales of a product (Chen and Xie, 2008). Trip Advisor, is a travel website that provides information to travelers about the travelling choices and prices with its planning feature. It has 6.8 million accommodation and restaurant businesses and destinations (TripAdvisor, 2017). The web site provides the opportunity to comment on the customers' experiences. In this study, the customer comments on the restaurants that have green generation certificate are found and evaluated in Trip Advisor. The web site has many language options but only comments in Turkish and English are chosen for the study. Totally, 1085 customer comments are evaluated. The second stage of the content analysis is determining the categories. In this study, conventional content analysis is preferred as the categories are developed from the text data. In other words, the codes are defined during the data is being analyzed (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The study had two main categories, satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Under these, the themes and the attributes are developed, which is explained in Results section. The third stage is the analyzing of the text data. The data is analyzed according to their themes and these themes and the word counting which the fourth stage is discussed in the Results section.

## 4. RESULTS

In this study, the customer comments collected in Trip Advisor web site are evaluated. Totally 1085 comments are evaluated about the green restaurants. 77% of the comments were on satisfaction and 23% were on dissatisfaction. So, according to the comments it can be said that costumers are satisfied with the restaurants (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Results

| Customer Comments | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction | 740 | 76,92 |
| Dissatisfaction | 222 | 23,08 |
| **TOTAL** | **962** | **100** |

The comments are grouped as satisfaction and dissatisfaction according to their contents. Later, themes are obtained from the satisfaction/dissatisfaction statements. These themes for satisfaction are food, atmosphere, place, staff, service quality and price. Dissatisfaction themes are the same with the satisfaction however, only service quality was not observed. In Table 2, different themes are effective for satisfaction/dissatisfaction. While food, atmosphere and place are the most important

themes for satisfaction, food, price and staff are for dissatisfaction. Among the attributes, food is the most important theme.

**Table 2:** Themes of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction in Green Restaurants

| | SATISFACTION | | | DISSATISFACTION | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Themes | N | % | Themes | N | % |
| Food | 242 | 32,7 | Food | 89 | 40,1 |
| Atmosphere | 211 | 28,5 | Price | 64 | 28,8 |
| Place | 100 | 13,5 | Staff | 61 | 27,5 |
| Staff | 93 | 12,6 | Atmosphere | 6 | 2,7 |
| Service Quality | 84 | 11,4 | Place | 2 | 0,9 |
| Price | 10 | 1,35 | - | - | - |
| **TOTAL** | **740** | **100** | **TOTAL** | **222** | **100** |

The restaurant attributes differ for satisfaction and dissatisfaction as listed in Table 3. The food theme under the satisfaction have four attributes. These are the taste of the food (68%), quality of the drinks (20%), menu variety (11%) and the size of the portion (1%) namely. Atmosphere has six attributes which are ambiance (45%), decoration (23%), music (20%), entertainment (5%), bar (5%) and the popularity of the restaurant (2%). Place theme has two attributes; the location and the scenery. The location (69%) is more important than the scenery. Staff is the forth important theme in these restaurants. The helpfulness of the staff (46%), caring (46%) and the well-informed (8%) staff are the attributes in this theme. Service quality is another theme in satisfaction and it is the only theme that is not listed in dissatisfaction. In this theme, quick service (99%) and the cleanliness (1%) are the two attributes found. The price theme has only one attribute and that is the appropriateness of the prices.

Similar to satisfaction, food is the most important theme in dissatisfaction. The same attributes are listed in food, but the ranking is different as the taste of the food (73), size of the portion (10%), menu variety (9%) and the quality of the drinks (8%) are observed. Thus, as the food is not tasty, the size of the portion is small, the menu has no

variety and the quality of the drinks are not high they cause dissatisfaction. The second important dissatisfaction theme is the price and it has only one attribute; the high prices of the products. The third theme is the staff and it has three attributes. These are careless (43%), insolence (31%) and the impoliteness of the staff (26%), respectively. The forth theme is the atmosphere which has two attributes. These are decoration and the ambiance of the restaurant and they effect the theme at equal level. Place is the least important dissatisfaction theme. And location is the only attribute in this theme.

**Table 3:** Attributes of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction in Green Restaurants

|  | Satisfaction | N | % | Dissatisfaction | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Place** | Good location | 69 | 69 | Bad location | 100 |
|  | Scenery | 31 | 31 | - |  |
|  | **TOTAL** | **100** | **100** | **TOTAL** | **100** |
| **Service Quality** | Quick Service | 83 | 99 | - |  |
|  | Cleanliness | 1 | 1 | - |  |
|  | **TOTAL** | **84** | **100** | - |  |
| **Staff** | Helpful | 43 | 46,23 | Careless | 42,6 |
|  | Caring | 43 | 46,23 | Insolence | 31,2 |
|  | Well-informed | 7 | 7, 52 | Impolite | 26,2 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **93** | **100** | **TOTAL** | **100** |
| **Price** | Appropriate price | 10 | 100 | High price | 100 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **10** | **100** | **TOTAL** | **100** |
| **Atmosphere** | Ambiance | 95 | 45 | Decoration | 50 |
|  | Decoration | 48 | 22,7 | Ambiance | 50 |
|  | Music | 43 | 20,4 | - |  |
|  | Entertaining | 10 | 4,7 | - |  |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Bar | 10 | 4,7 | - | |
| | Popularity | 5 | 2,4 | - | |
| | **TOTAL** | **211** | **100** | **TOTAL** | **100** |
| **Food** | Tasty | 153 | 67,7 | Not tasty | 73,1 |
| | High quality of drinks | 46 | 20,4 | Low quality of drinks | 7,7 |
| | Varied menu | 24 | 10,6 | Not a varied menu | 9 |
| | Big size of portion | 3 | 1,3 | Small size of portion | 10,2 |
| | **TOTAL** | **226** | **100** | **TOTAL** | **100** |

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to reveal the attributes that creates satisfaction for green restaurant customers. Although in the literature food quality is the most important factor, for Kivela (1997) restaurants are not competing on food quality but also other attributes. Supporting Kivela (1997) the attributes that are found in this study are food, atmosphere, place, staff, service quality and price.

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction themes that raised in this study are similar to each other. However only **service quality** is the theme for satisfaction, but not for dissatisfaction. This is an interesting result yet it is an important attribute which creates satisfaction (Peturkova and Parsa, 2010; Koo et al, 1999; Gregory and Kim, 2004; Gupta et al., 2007; Jeong and Jang, 2011; Alonso et al., 2013; Kivela, 1997). Similar to that, the same result is observed in this study. However, unlike satisfaction, it is not a dissatisfaction attribute. This may be interpreted as an attribute not so necessary. **Food** is another important factor in customer satisfaction. This result is also supported by other studies (Kivela, 1997; Heung, 2002; Weiss et al., 2004; Gregory and Kim, 2004; Perutkova, 2010; Jeung and Jang, 2011; Harrington et al, 2011; Harrington et al, 2013). In this theme, the taste of the food is the most important attribute which is also considered as important in other studies (Bhuian, 2000; Koo et al, 1999; Liu and Jang, 2009). The **atmosphere** is the second most important factor in restaurant attributes. The ambiance, decoration, music and other attributes are grouped under this theme. The factor is also an important criterion for customers in studies of Heung (2002), Weiss et al. (2004) and, Harrington et al. (2011). So, the study is supported by other studies as well. The place of the restaurant is another factor that is observed in this study. The **location** of the restaurant is the most important attribute and the scenery it has is the second and last attribute. These attributes are also considered as important in Bhuian (2000), Koo et al. (1999), Gregory and Kim (2004) and, Kivela (1997). **Staff**, which is an important factor in tourism establishments are also important in this study as well. The staff is considered as the agent of the restaurant so, the attitude of the staff towards

the customers are very important. The theme is also important for Alonso et al. (2013), Heung (2002) and, Weiss et al (2004). **Price** is the last but not least important factor for customers. The appropriateness of the price is the only attribute for customers. Although Liu and Jang (2009) considered it as the accurateness of the check, the price itself is an important attribute and this result is supported by Bhuian (2000), Koo et al. (1999), Jeung and Jang (2011), Harrington et al. (2011).

The study is mainly based on the attributes which create satisfaction and dissatisfaction for customers in a green restaurant. However, there was no information found on being green among any customer comments. For this reason, it is thought that the green restaurants are not promoting themselves on this subject. Yet, the restaurants are not sharing any information about their green applications on their web sites. Within the scope of green movement, it is recommended that the restaurants should have differentiating strategies by creating green awareness. As an example, it would not be enough if the restaurants publish their green applications on internet as the customers use forums or travelling networks more than restaurants web pages while travelling. In this sense web sites like Trip Advisor would have special icons for green certificates as they have for quality certificates.

As Alpert (1971) have stated, the list of attributes is not so determining as several restaurants may have the similar attributes that are important for customers. Thus, it is crucial to find out the attribute that differs itself from the other restaurants (Kivela, 1997). The satisfaction and the dissatisfaction had the same theme, food. It is found to be the first attribute for both satisfaction and dissatisfaction which may suggest that people are choosing a restaurant for its food quality. The atmosphere is the second important satisfaction theme as the restaurants can be considered as fine-dining restaurants which atmosphere is an important factor to stay long. For dissatisfaction, the taste of the food is as important as satisfaction. The price is the second important theme as these restaurants can be considered as fine-dining restaurants the prices may be higher than any other restaurants. But the acceptable level of high prices should not be ignored.

The study is not without its limitations. Firstly, the attributes of the restaurant are only limited to the green restaurants as the findings may not be generalized to other restaurants. Second, the data examined are obtained from a traveler's network as there may be other data sources. Third, the customers may not choose the restaurant for it is a green restaurant. Thus, not all the customers are expected to visit the restaurant with awareness. Also, the generations of the customers are not known. It is expected that generations are influencing the expectations of the customers from a restaurant. Besides, the customers' visitation to the restaurants are also unknown. As repeat visitors and first-time visitor have different expectations, the number of visitation is important.

In this study the attributes that are important for customers are not the environmental sustainability principles or being green. The attributes are the food, atmosphere, place, staff, service quality and price. None of the customer comments are on green applications. So, it can be said that, the green restaurants are not informing their customers about the green applications or, these applications are not important for the customers. For further studies, the attitudes of the customers on green applications and their choice to dine in a green restaurant should be investigated. Besides, not only customers' but also employees' green attitudes would be important as the green operations in a restaurant are handled by the employees.

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