

# The Relationship between Restaurants and Sustainability

## Marketing the Tempe FOG program

Michael Nicastro



Student, School of Sustainability, and Research-Internship Fellow, Decision Center for a Desert City; Arizona State University



### Problem

Recently, corporations have begun to follow “Sustainability principles” like environmental preservation, economic benefit, and social responsibility. However, little is known about the restaurant industry and their view on “Sustainability”. In society restaurants can influence vast amounts of people from different cultures and backgrounds. Therefore, it is important to determine if the restaurants of the present-day, value “Sustainability principles”. This study increases our understanding of the restaurant industry and their views on sustainability.

### FOG Programs

My research looked at FOG (fats, oils, grease) programs conducted by two municipalities Lebanon Tennessee and Weslaco Texas and the launch of the Tempe Grease Cooperative (TGC). These municipalities established a green partnership with their local restaurants to better manage fats, oils and grease. I used these programs as a basis to reach the restaurant community and analyze their interest in sustainability principles. This information helps the City of Tempe implement their FOG program.

### Methods

Extensive hands on field research was used to conduct this project.

#### Weslaco, Texas & Lebanon, Tennessee

FOG program survey – created and successfully administered over the phone to total of six restaurants owners. The results of the survey are shown in two categories:

1. Convenience Quality & Economic Benefits
2. Environmental & Community Benefits

#### Tempe, Arizona

FOG questionnaire – created and administered successfully to a total of eleven restaurants. The results of the questionnaire are shown in five categories:

1. Service Quality / Aesthetics
2. Financial
3. Community and Environmental Sustainability
4. Administrative
5. Compliance Assurance



Grease Trap

### References

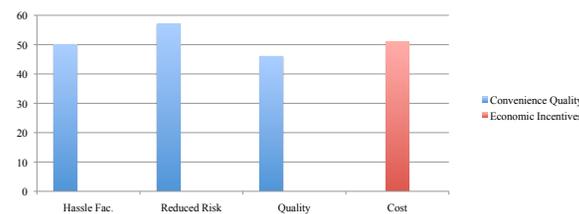
1. Weslaco, Texas Restaurants. (2012, January). Interview by M Nicastro (Personal Interviews)
2. Lebanon, Tennessee Restaurants. (2012, January). Interview by M Nicastro (Personal Interviews)
3. Tempe, Arizona Restaurants. (2012, January). Interpreted questionnaire results.
4. City of Tempe. (2012, March). *Grease Recycling and Conversion to Energy Feasibility Study*.

### Findings

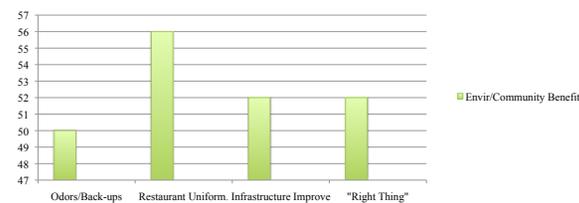
#### Lebanon, Tennessee, Weslaco, Texas

I asked the restaurant owners to quantify on a scale of 1 to 10 the value that the franchised grease program had on them and the results indicate:

#### Convenience Quality & Economic Benefits = 204



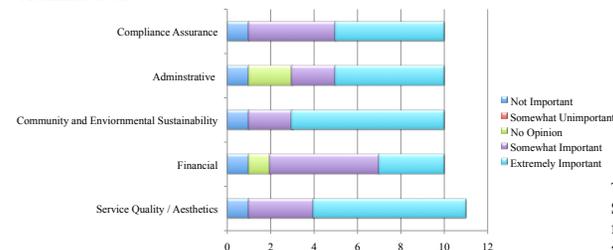
#### Environmental & Community Benefits = 210



#### Tempe Arizona

Of the eleven restaurants surveyed, ten stated interest, while one restaurant was unsure and wanted some more information. After administering the FOG program questionnaire to the Tempe restaurant community the results indicate:

1. Service Quality/Aesthetics = 85%
2. Community and Environmental Sustainability = 76%
3. Compliance Assurance = 74%
4. Financial = 72%
5. Administrative = 70%



### Analysis

All the communities surveyed valued community and environmental benefits to a high degree. Initially I thought convenience and financial benefits would be the most significant. My assumption is that restaurants will care about the environmental benefits and community enhancement only if their economic benefits and convenience quality are either improved or not drastically altered in a negative manner. The Weslaco TX, and Lebanon Tenn. restaurants, noted that the “less hassle factor” or not having to worry about the process provided great comfort. Also, the Tempe restaurants noted that the service quality and aesthetics was the most important. Each municipality has different demographics and city planning. Tempe may have valued service quality and aesthetics the most because it has a more centralized down town compared to the other municipalities.

### Recommendations

By surveying the restaurants and conducting market research on other municipalities that conducted similar programs, the City of Tempe received great insights into what the restaurant community values. This was essential in implementing our FOG program.

Based on the data from a segment of Tempe restaurants, the grease service should be well maintained by professional grease haulers. Also, the restaurant infrastructure should be kept clean and properly serviced in order to prevent odors and overflows.

Going forward other suggestions in how to enlist membership of these restaurants in the FOG program would be to offer them some type of “Environmental/Community” certification, this can highlight their participation in this program, to the entire community. This would be in the form of a certificate that could be displayed in the restaurant probably near the entrance. As a result, profit can be increased because some customers may value sustainability, and when customers hear about the restaurant participating in this program, the restaurant and the town look good and publicity can spread. As a result, environmental/community benefits can increase the economic benefits. That is the driving force of sustainability; economic, social and environmental drivers acting together to create positive results.



The material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant SES-0951366 Decision Center for a Desert City II: Urban Climate Adaptation. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.