The Meanings of Sustainability in the Full-service Canadian Restaurant Context: Perceptions and Co-created Service Experiences of Managers, Employees, and Customers

by

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ABSTRACT

The Meanings of Sustainability in the Full-service Canadian Restaurant Context: Perceptions and Co-created Service Experiences of Managers, Employees, and Customers

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The focus of this research is how the construct of “sustainability” is enacted in the context of Canadian full-service restaurants. An inductive research approach and social constructionist paradigm was adopted for the study. The research has three objectives: to examine the meanings of sustainability at four levels - a broad hospitality industry level, a broad consumer marketplace level, a firm or restaurant level, and a service experience level; to investigate what influences the meanings and perceptions of sustainability among key participants in the service experience - managers, employees, and customers; and to determine how meanings and perceptions of sustainability are created by individuals in the service consumption process. A conceptual framework, service experience clues (Berry, Wall, & Carbone, 2006a; Berry, Wall, & Carbone, 2006b), is applied to uncover the perception of sustainability in the restaurant experience. Data is collected from two online studies and a descriptive single-case study of a “sustainable restaurant” that draws on multiple data sources, including interviews with managers, employees, and customers.

First, the results of the research show diversity in the meanings of sustainability in restaurants from stakeholders at the industry, consumer marketplace, restaurant, and service experience levels. Second, the results illustrate sustainability was communicated through three types of service clues in the experience, yet the consistency of messaging, awareness of sustainability, and perceived importance of the clues varied among managers, employees, and customers. Third, the results suggest that the meanings of sustainability may be co-created in the service experience when a customer engages with the service staff.
The research contributes to literature on sustainability in hospitality and tourism by engaging in the conversation on “sustainable hospitality”, an area of inquiry that is underdeveloped in the broader context of sustainable tourism. Through a comparison of the meanings and perceptions of managers, employees, and customers, the study develops an inclusive understanding of a “sustainable service experience”. This empirically grounded and holistic understanding of the sustainable service experience will be useful for managers seeking to better understand customer and employee perceptions of sustainability in hospitality, and to improve the quality of messages on sustainability in hospitality service experiences.
Dedication

I wholeheartedly believe in the message conveyed through a well-known quote authored by Annie Danielson: “Home is where your story begins”. I wish to thank my family for their continued love, support, and encouragement as I write my own story.
Acknowledgements

One’s destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.

Henry Miller

A Ph.D. is a journey which leads an individual to spaces and places physically, intellectually, and emotionally. My journey has been arduous, but has presented many growth opportunities. As I am finally reaching a “destination” in my journey, there are individuals I wish to acknowledge for their guidance, support, and contributions.

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1 Introduction

_The world changes according to the way people see it, and if you can alter, even by a millimeter, the way people look at reality, then you can change the world._

*James Baldwin*

1.1 Sustainability in Canadian Restaurant Experiences

“Sustainability” has been receiving more attention in the foodservice industry internationally in the past few decades. A Deloitte report (2014) identified sustainability as a “defining issue” for the hospitality industry in 2015, and suggested sustainability needs to progress from being treated as a “standalone issue” to becoming embedded within the industry. Internationally, there are many examples of awareness of sustainability in the sectors within the hospitality industry through associations or groups, hospitality businesses, or professionals who have acknowledged one or more of the well-known pillars of sustainable development as outlined by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2002) - economic, social, and environmental. In places such as the United Kingdom, Australia, India, the United States, and Canada, one can find cases of industry awareness of the severe environmental impacts of producing heaps of waste and consuming great amounts of energy and water. Although awareness of environmental management issues may be decades old, the dialogue about the systemic impacts of sustainability in the foodservice sector and hospitality industry can be described as being in the early stages (Melissen, 2013).

The existing industry discourse on sustainability in one segment of the hospitality industry – foodservice - presents more anecdotal than empirical evidence on the _benefits of sustainability to foodservice operations_ and less on the _benefits to other stakeholders, including consumers, employees, communities, and the environment_. As such, an emphasis on the business case for green and environmental still tends to dominates the discussion. This same discourse, however, also reflects a range of definitions and meanings of sustainability. These definitions “emerged from an environmental perspective” and “have broadened to include social and economic dimensions” (van Rheede & Bloome, 2012, p. 259). “Environmental sustainability” is described as being linked to ideas on limited resources (such as food, water, or energy), pollution, carbon footprints, or climate change whereas “social sustainability” reflects themes of community, equity, justice, well-being, health and poverty (van Rheede & Bloome, 2012).
“Economic sustainability” showcases the third “p” (profit) in the triple bottom line approach (planet, people, and profit) (Elkington, 1997) and represents the integration of people and planet into business decision-making and daily operations. Sustainability, “corporate social responsibility”, or “responsibility hospitality” are terms that may be used to describe the interactions between the three pillars of sustainability in the industry or in one operation. A lack of clear definitions for sustainability, sustainable development, corporate social responsibility and responsibility hospitality is argued to inhibit our understanding of the construct of sustainability in the hospitality industry overall (Melissen, 2013), and in particular operations. In exploring individual operations, one may also see in the discourse differences in the meanings of sustainability within foodservice operations based on characteristics such as the culture and location of the operation, the type of food service operation, the type of ownership (group-owned, independently-owned or franchise), or the size of the operation.

In Canadian society, dining out at restaurants is considered a common leisure activity. Statistics offered by Restaurants Canada, a national hospitality association, indicate there are 91,250 restaurants, caterers and drinking places in the country, and suggest that 18 million restaurants visits are made each day nationally (Restaurants Canada, 2015). Industry data has posited that Canadian restaurant consumers support sustainability initiatives in restaurants (Tristano, 2014). Consumer support for sustainability is said to vary by market segment and demographics as well as influence a customer’s willingness to pay higher prices in restaurants (Tristano, 2014). The support for sustainability shown by restaurant customers through inquiry and patronage is argued to be quintessential for growing industry attention and support for sustainability in Canada (Greer, McAdams, & Von Massow, 2012).

Existing discussions on the incorporation of sustainability and sustainable initiatives in Canadian foodservice operations have raised environmental, economic, social, cultural, health, and well-being concerns. Within the industry, national and provincial hospitality, foodservice, and restaurant associations offer resources on sustainability to owners and operators through channels such as industry publications, workshops, restaurant shows, and online web resources. Certification programs exist to help owners and operators take steps toward becoming more “sustainable” - either partially (e.g. through food sourcing) or holistically (e.g. by embedding sustainability into strategy and operations) – as well as to educate consumers on sustainable practices. Industry awards give recognition to foodservice organizations or operators who strive
to become more sustainable. Trade shows inform operators and managers on sustainable practices, “green” technology, and new “ecological” or “environmentally-friendly” products. Government departments encourage sustainable practices in restaurants, largely through local, organic, and/or sustainable food supply chains. Even not-for-profit organizations from various perspectives (e.g. environmental or health) attempt to educate restaurateurs and consumers on the benefits of sustainable restaurants through conferences and “working groups”.

Current discussion forums and information channels often focus on promoting specific sustainable initiatives or activities that could be undertaken in a foodservice operation: sustainable food purchasing practices; sustainable waste management; recycling and composting; energy conservation; sustainable building materials; and sustainable human resource management. The emphasis in foodservice operations has largely been on sustainability in the back of the house operations. Sustainability in the front of the house of a restaurant has been ignored, especially in relation to the transmission of sustainability in the restaurant service experience. The food, the restaurant environment (the building, building materials, ambiance and décor), and the service all can all have the potential to communicate meanings of sustainability to the customer who visits the restaurant. The phenomenon investigated in this study is sustainability in the broader Canadian foodservice sector industry, sustainability in the broader consumer marketplace, and sustainability in a particular service experience within a “sustainable restaurant”. The macro and micro perspectives allow for the exploration of the context of the construct of sustainability as well as the investigation of the perceptions and meanings of sustainability that may be co-created by actors in the service experience.

1.2 Problem Statement

1.2.1 Scholarly Background

Scholars of management and organizational studies have shown interest in sustainability as a phenomenon for decades (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995; Marcus, Kurucz, & Colbert, 2010). The broad management literature reflects a range of researcher views on the relationship between business, society, and nature (Marcus et al., 2010) which impacts how sustainability is perceived and operationalized in business environments. In practice, managers in business firms act on their own perceptions of sustainability and continue to direct more effort toward
sustainability initiatives. The efforts of managers may range from emphasizing one pillar or dimension of sustainability (often the environmental) to emphasizing all three (environmental, social, and economic) because of dynamic and shifting societal and consumer expectations of businesses (Colbert & Kurucz, 2007). It is necessary then that practicing managers monitor the performance of all types of sustainability initiatives acted out in organizations. Some firms participate in environmental management programs, perform life cycle assessments, or publicly report triple bottom line performance (Elkington, 1997). The interest in sustainability from stakeholders (including government, employees, and consumers) and the enactment of sustainability in firms drive managers and scholars to investigate the phenomenon of sustainability within all types, facets, and levels of organizations. The researcher agrees with the assertion that sustainability is a contested concept that does not mean the same thing to all leaders, managers, and employees (Colbert & Kurucz, 2007). Continued investigation into the practice of sustainability in different contexts is argued to be necessary to fully understand the implications of sustainable value creation in a range of settings (Kurucz, Colbert, & Wheeler, 2008, 2013).

The context of this study on the meanings and perceptions of sustainability is in Canadian full-service restaurants. Restaurants provide service experiences that combine food, atmosphere, and service. While all parts of the service experience are important and contribute towards the customer’s satisfaction (Ryu & Han, 2010), food quality has been identified as a key aspect of the restaurant experience (Namkung & Jang, 2007) or a tourist experience (Quan & Wang, 2004). The importance of food (a tangible product in the service experience), therefore, cannot be ignored. “Food” is a complex construct by itself, and adds more layers to the conversation of sustainability in restaurant experiences. Discourse on food and sustainability overlap each other in hospitality and tourism settings, including restaurants. The restaurant service experience displays layers of meaning about sustainability and food that increase our understandings of each construct individually and combined.

Food and sustainability are important topics across many disciplines because of the broad definitions each of these terms have. The connection between food and sustainability emerges from the discussion of “sustainable development” presented by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987). The definition for sustainable development presented by the WCED focused on long-term balances between ecological, economic, and
social processes. Such long-term balances are argued to be necessary in food production and consumption, according to Aiking and de Boer (2004), because these are “the humanic activity with the single largest environmental impact” (p. 360). There has been much debate and controversy around food and sustainability, including: the developing awareness of climate change; the growth of a “green economy” that is more ecologically and socially aware; the increasing consumer demand for organic, local and sustainable products; the debates over genetically-modified organisms for increased food production; the developing recycling programs in areas and countries; the issues of food security and health; and the investigations into food waste (United Nations Environment Program, 2011).

The concept of “food sustainability” is multifaceted and can be debated along all segments of the food supply chain: production, processing, storage and distribution, retailing and consumption (Baldwin, 2009). Issues such as the well-being of workers; animal welfare; the processing and distribution of the food; the consumption of the food; and the amount of food waste may all fit under the umbrella of “food sustainability”. It can, therefore, be a challenging task for organizations in the food industry and foodservice sector to implement and manage sustainable practices. One strong motivator that continues to drive organizations to work at sustainability is an underlying belief that consumers and society, in general, will increasingly demand sustainable food.

Practitioners and academics alike are interested in how consumers perceive sustainability in relation to products. Consumer perceptions of sustainability have been explored from the perspectives of marketing (McDonald & Oates, 2006; Simpson & Radford, 2012), agricultural sciences (Roitner-Schobesberger, Darnhofer, Somsook, & Vogl, 2008), public health (Kriflik & Yeatman, 2005), nutritional sciences (Wilkins, 2002), environmental studies (Kloppenburg Jr., Lezberg, De Master, Stevenson, & Hendrickson, 2000) and tourism and hospitality (Ball, Rowson, & O’Toole, 2008; Levy & Duverger, 2010; Ogbeide, Brunner, Freshour, Kinzler, & Bryant, 2009; Schubert, Kandampully, Solnet, & Kralj, 2010). Studies from the various disciplinary perspectives showcase the diversity and variability of consumer perceptions of sustainability by context (place or culture) and by the purchase and consumption of a product or service. In relation to food, Beer (2008) describes sustainable food can be inclusive of local food, organic food, biodynamic food, genetically-modified food, hydroponic food or healthy food.
The motivations for consuming “sustainable food” can be as varied as the “types” of food identified as being sustainable. The reasoning behind consumption of sustainable products or services varies by the type of food, by the reputation of the brand or organization, by the values of the consumer, and by the context of consumption. While the literature on consumer perceptions of sustainability emphasizes the motivations and behaviors around sustainable consumers and consumption, it important to also consider the context of consumption. Simpson and Radford (2012) contend we need to ask consumers how they perceive and define sustainability in relation to particular products during consumption. This can broaden the perspective to investigating not only the product itself, but also the context in which the product is presented and sold. Research has demonstrated that retailers may influence sustainable consumption by understanding consumer purchasing patterns in the context of a store and interacting with consumers about sustainability (Lehner, 2015). The context, or physical environment, is an important consideration for services, including restaurants (Han & Ryu, 2009; Ryu & Han, 2011). By attempting to understand consumer meanings and perceptions of sustainability in a particular context, scholars and managers may learn more about consumer decision-making for sustainable consumption.

1.2.2 Research Gap

1.2.2.1 Consumers and Sustainability in Hospitality

Consumers are increasingly becoming more aware of sustainability, and they may encounter it in the consumption of goods and services. More sustainable goods and services are available to consumers in a number of settings. Consumers form meanings and perceptions about products and services that possess sustainable attributes, and they can develop positive or negative feelings about organizations that communicate sustainable values. Not all consumers share the same meanings of sustainability, and meanings of sustainability vary by product, service or context (Aarset et al., 2004; Lehner, 2015). Simpson and Radford (2012) found that consumers often believe that sustainability represents the ecological dimension only; consumers do not typically acknowledge the other two pillars in relation to products. In hospitality settings, customers may also have an inclination for environmental sustainability over social and social sustainability (van Rheede & Bloome, 2012).
The concept of sustainability has been prevalent in the media, in public policy, in business, and in education, but there has been no consensus about what sustainability means. Consumers are therefore exposed to multiple meanings and definitions about sustainability. In connection to food, some consumers accept “sustainable food” includes certain types of food or food produced using specific agricultural methods (e.g. hormone-free or pesticide-free). How people perceive or individually define concepts like sustainability could impact their choices for goods or services (Campbell, Khachatriyan, Behe, Dennis, & Hall, 2015). Understanding consumer perceptions and meanings of sustainability is therefore important to developing a greater appreciation of consumer behavior and sustainable consumption.

1.2.2.2 Co-Production versus Co-Creation of Service in the Hospitality Industry

Foodservice operations deal with food producers or distributors in order to acquire the food to prepare for customers to consume. Consequently, foodservice operations have the ability to not only purchase sustainable food products, but also to educate the customer on the type of food, where the food was produced, the agricultural methods used to produce it, and even the in-house treatment of the food itself.

Currently, hospitality operators give customers minimal choice in developing products or service elements (Chathoth, Altinay, Harrington, Okumus, & Chan, 2013). Hospitality operations such as restaurants select the food products to purchase, predefine the menu items, and script the service interactions. Customers regularly interact in service encounters as passive recipients choosing from what is being offered by the operation. The operation encourages customers to critically evaluate the totality of the service after it has been consumed (Chathoth et al., 2013, p. 12). The idea of “co-production” refers to customer interaction in service experiences through a firm-centric lens that largely ignores any exchange that occurs between the firm and customers beyond payment for the service; ignores any co-creation of meanings, and downplays the mutual dependence of the firm and customer during the service (Chathoth et al., 2013, p. 13). The most important outcome in the co-production process is the articulation of what customers’ value in the service experience. It is believed that only customers can create value in the consumption process; the firm may offer value propositions to the customer, but the customer must choose to activate the value (or not).
At the other end of the continuum that includes co-production is the idea of “co-creation”. Co-creation is the focus of service-dominant logic (SD-L) introduced into the services marketing literature by Vargo and Lusch (2004). In the SD-L, the customer co-creates meaning and value throughout the service process and, in so doing, can generate a service conversation or dialogue between managers, employees, and customers in the service environment. Researchers who apply a SD-L perspective emphasize co-creation and investigate longer-term relationships between customers who help the organization to define the product or service as active participants throughout the generation, production, delivery and consumption of the service (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Co-creation is defined as being different from co-production which confines customers to participate at the later stages of consumption only.

Co-production and co-creation are concepts that have been introduced into the hospitality and tourism research within the last five years or so (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Chathoth et al., 2013; Minkiewicz, Evans, & Bridson, 2014; Shaw, Bailey, & Williams, 2011). Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2009) contend that the study of tourism and co-creation in preliminary, and much more is needed to better understand how to design and develop experience environments and networks that position tourists at the centre. The role of co-creation needs to be explored further within the context of sustainability in the hospitality industry, and this research will advance our understanding of sustainability within this context.

1.3 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how the construct of sustainability is enacted in the context of Canadian full-service restaurants. The first research objective is to examine the meanings of sustainability at four levels: at a broad hospitality industry level, at a broad consumer marketplace level, at a firm or restaurant level, and at a service experience level. The second objective is to investigate what influences the meanings and perceptions of sustainability among key service participants in the service experience: managers, employees, and customers. The third objective is to determine how these meanings and perceptions of sustainability are created by individuals in the service consumption process.

Attention is given to the meanings of sustainability within a broader hospitality context as well as within a full-service restaurant through a process of meaning creation in the actual real-
world restaurant experience. Managers, employees and customers represent key actors in the restaurant service experience, and, by combining actor perceptions and perspectives, the researcher will be able to better understand the meanings of sustainability which are generated and potentially co-created in the experience. The existing knowledge of customers’ perceptions of sustainability in service environments highlights customers’ individual understanding of the environmental dimensions of sustainability only (van Rheede & Bloome, 2012). While individual perceptions are important, a service experience is a dynamic interaction and exchange that occurs in a particular service environment. This study captures customers’, employees’, and managers’ perceptions and meanings of sustainability within the context of the restaurant service experience and compares them to each other. The combining of perspectives and methods in this research will generate a more holistic, systemic, and comprehensive view of sustainability within the service consumption.

In examining the aspects of sustainability in a restaurant experience, the conceptual framework of “service experience clues” (SEC) (Berry et al., 2006a; Berry et al., 2006b; Carbone, 2004) is applied. The concept of service experience clues identifies three categories of clues - functional, mechanic and humanic – which combine to generate a customer’s overall perspective and evaluation of the service experience. The framework describes the customer’s evaluation of the service experience as a combination of the rational evaluation of the quality of the experience through functional clues (the technical aspects of a service) and the emotional evaluation of the quality of the experience through mechanic clues (the clues within the service environment) and humanic clues (clues derived from the appearance and personality of the service personnel). The SEC framework was selected because it investigates the customer service experience holistically from both rational and emotional viewpoints, and is valuable when used in field research such as in a case study. One criticism of the SEC framework is the emphasis that is has on collecting only customer viewpoints to assist management in the design and execution of the service experience. This research extends the framework to collect managers’ and employees’ views in order to analyze and compare the role of the clues in a specific restaurant experience. The researcher also uses the framework in a new way to help further our understanding of the design and management of a “sustainable service” in hospitality environments.
1.4 Research Questions

The central, and “grand tour question” (Creswell, 1994), of this research is “how is the construct of ‘sustainability’ enacted by individuals in the context of Canadian full-service restaurants?” To explore this broad question, three main sub-questions are identified:

1) What are the meanings of sustainability at the broad hospitality industry level, at the broad consumer marketplace level, at the firm or restaurant level, and at the service experience level of a sustainable restaurant experience?
2) Within the restaurant context, what do managers, employees, and customers perceive influences the meanings of sustainability in the restaurant experience?
   a. What is the role of functional service experience clues in sustainable restaurants?
   b. What is the role of mechanic service experience clues in sustainable restaurants?
   c. What is the role of humanic service experience clues in sustainable restaurants?
3) Within the restaurant context, how are the meanings and perceptions of sustainability created in the service consumption process?

1.5 Overview of Methodology

1.5.1 Online Studies

Two online studies are included as a part of this study in order to investigate the broader perspectives and meanings of sustainability in the hospitality industry and in the consumer marketplace. The online analyses were important to gain insight into the real-world conversations about sustainability related to foodservice that occur in the Canadian hospitality industry context. The value of these perspectives is to contextualize the meanings and perceptions of sustainability captured in a single-case study.

1.5.2 Single-Case Study

Case study method is applied in this research. There are many definitions of a “case” offered by scholars, and multiple perspectives on case study research describing it as a method or strategy of inquiry (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1994), I follow the guidelines and protocol outlined by Yin (2014).
The single-case chosen for this research is a full-service restaurant that declares itself a “sustainable restaurant”. The case study selection was based on the criteria of restaurant type (full-service over quick-service); a focus on sustainability (as shown in restaurant marketing); and consumer awareness of sustainability-related initiatives (as mentioned in TripAdvisor consumer reviews for the restaurant).

Both primary and secondary data were collected for this case study. The multiple sources of data utilized in this case research included documentation, archival records, and direct observations in addition to the restaurant website, social media pages (Twitter and Facebook), and TripAdvisor customer reviews. A pilot case study was first conducted to refine the methodology for the formal case.

1.6 Rationale and Significance of Study

1.6.1 Scholarly Contributions

A contribution of the research is to expand the current understanding of perspectives of sustainability in the consumption of services. Research on consumer perspectives of sustainability during the consumption of hospitality services demonstrates the varying degrees of importance of sustainability to consumers; the ranking of important sustainable initiatives of the organization; the satisfaction of consumers with sustainable products; and consumer willingness to pay for sustainable products. These studies are conducted predominately with surveys that outline market segments, identify consumer motivations for consumption, and explain consumer behavior. A limitation is that the studies neither present consumer meanings of sustainability nor explain the process of meaning creation between the consumer, the product or service, the organization and the consumption environment. McDonald & Oates (2006) illustrate the need to identify customer meanings of sustainability related to particular products, but do not explore the co-created meanings that occur during their consumption. This research investigated the perceptions and co-created meanings of sustainability in the consumption of the service in restaurants so as to add to the understanding of consumer perspectives of sustainability.

Another contribution of this research is to further explore the process of co-creation in hospitality environments to better understand the complex interactive experience of customers in
these service environments. Specifically, this research is able to comment on the process of co-creation of meaning in full-service sustainable restaurants, with implications for the broader services experience literature explored in the discussion of the research.

### 1.6.2 Managerial Contributions

A practical implication of this research is to provide restaurant managers with a model illustrating customer awareness of sustainability in the restaurant experience through service experience clues. The holistic service experience encompasses numerous clues that customers may use to formulate cognitive and affective perceptions of the experience and restaurant. The clues that are recognized most by customers suggest ways managers can effectively communicate sustainability to customers in the restaurant experience. Restaurants need to “implement practices that are beneficial for the environment as well as practices that are seen as valuable to guests and cost effective for business” (DiPietro, Gregory, & Jackson, 2013, p. 141). The clues tell a service story that customers receive and which allows them to formulate an evaluation based upon cognitive and affective perceptions of the service. The customers passively receive the clues and add up the math to generate an impression of the service which, if positive, may create loyal customers.

Another contribution of this research is to help explain the process of co-creation in the restaurant experience. Co-creation involves customers as active participants and resources in the production of service as a “co-creator”. Co-production, on the other hand, involves customers, but not to the same extent as co-creation where customers are active participants in the production of the service and considered as co-creator. By involving customers more in the production, delivery and consumption of the experience, the customer can become an important resource and be a competitive advantage. Restaurant managers need to gather feedback for their customers and use this data to maintain a competitive advantage against other restaurants.

Restaurant managers should also be aware of the conversations around sustainability that occur in the service experience. These conversations that occur involve the product, service environment, management and employees which combine to create shared meanings and perceptions of sustainability. Restaurant managers need to realize the importance of each
participant in the dialogue and that the restaurant may influence the nature of the conversations that take place through the co-creation process.

The research also explores the potential that restaurants have with regard to their educational capacity. Restaurants can teach people about sustainability through the product, service environment and service staff. Each encounter the customer has with a person, atmosphere or product can be a learning opportunity. Employees, as an example, offer an opportunity to act as a “food guide” or “sustainability interpreter” for the guest. It may therefore prove important that managers hire staff with an interest or actual expertise in sustainability to help promote the sustainability strategy to customers. As Kusluvan, Kusluvan, Ilhan & Buyruk (2010, p. 194) suggest, hospitality organizations need to more carefully select staff that fit with the “organization’s values, competencies and business strategies”, and that possess particular personality traits and emotional intelligence, amongst other traits. Hiring and continually training food guides would improve the service, educate the customer and create a unique competitive advantage for the restaurant thus impacting sustainability at both the organization and at the broader societal levels.

1.7 Research Assumptions

There are several assumptions made by the researcher. The first is that individuals perceive their experiences differently within each restaurant and each restaurant experience. This research aligns with Pine and Gilmore (1998, p. 98) who assert that experiences are unique to each individual as “an interaction between a staged event (like a theatrical play) and the individual’s state of mind”. The second assumption is that customers in a sustainable restaurant will observe and comprehend sustainability clues that are present in the restaurant experience. The third is an assumption made about historical and cultural specificity (Burr, 1995): all ways of understanding about sustainability are products of a Canadian culture in 2014 and 2015.

The limitations of the study are that the findings are contextually bound in Canadian restaurants, and that participants may respond to questions in a socially desirable way towards the researcher’s interests. To address the second limitation, Kwortnik (2003) suggests using in-depth interviews which make it harder for participants to determine the researchers’ personal interests. Other limitations include the use of articles in English only off of industry websites,
and the self-selection of interview participants. Participants with an interest in sustainability or restaurants chose to be interviewed.

The scope of the study is the Canadian foodservice industry and one sustainability-focused restaurant in southwestern Ontario.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terminology

1.8.1 Meanings of Sustainability

There are many definitions of sustainability. The most frequently cited definition emerges from the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in *Our Common Future*. The WCED definition of sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (p. 43) (Brundtland, 1987). The pillars of sustainable development outlined by the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development produced at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 are economic development, social development, and environmental protection. These three pillars are considered interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Many definitions used today are influenced by the WCED definition, including the one outlined by the Canadian government. Sustainable development is “about improving the standard of living by protecting human health, conserving the environment, using resources efficiently and advancing long-term economic competitiveness. It requires the integration of environmental, economic and social priorities into policies and programs and requires action at all levels--citizens, industry, and governments” (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016).

1.8.2 Meanings of a Sustainable Restaurant

The question, “what is a sustainable restaurant,” is difficult to answer. A number of definitions currently exist in the context of foodservice. A variety of labels, descriptions and indicators for sustainable restaurants are presented by stakeholders, including industry groups, associations, and individual restaurants. Some of these descriptions and indicators focus solely on the environmental (or green) dimension whereas others adopt a dualistic or systems approach by combining two or three of the dimensions of sustainability.
In the academic forum, a sustainable restaurant can be different. In trying to develop and review a set of indicators that measure the level of sustainable performance achieved by individual restaurants, Legrand, Sloan, Simons-Kaufmann, and Fleischer (2010), observe that the literature is concerned more with parts of sustainability (food, local suppliers or sustainable buildings) therefore causing confusion. Operating a sustainable restaurant may “mean anything to anyone” (p. 169). Sloan, Legrand Chen (2013) define a sustainable hospitality operation based on the WCED definition and the three pillars of sustainable development: an “…operation that manages its resources in such a way that economic, social and environmental benefits are maximized in order to meet the needs of the present generation while protecting and enhancing the opportunities for future generations” (Sloan, Legrand and Chen, 2013, p. 22). A green restaurant

In practice, groups and associations that advocate for green or sustainable restaurants do not share a common definition of what a sustainable restaurant might be. For example, the Sustainable Restaurant Association, based in the United Kingdom, defines a “sustainable restaurant” as one that manages “the social and environmental impact of their operations” (http://www.thesra.org/about-us/what-is-sustainability/). This association promotes social sustainability aspects such as community engagement, engaging with the community; treating people fairly and with respect; promoting healthy eating; and marketing responsibly. The environmental aspects identified include conserving water and energy, reducing waste, greening the supply chains, and collecting adequate workplace resources for a sustainable restaurant. The third, and final, area of focus described is the sourcing of sustainable, ethical and fair trade products that have been produced in an environmentally friendly way (includes local and seasonal food). In the United States, the Green Restaurant Association advocates for (and defines) environmental sustainability through the criteria of water efficiency; waste reduction and recycling; sustainable durable goods and building materials; sustainable food; energy; reusables and environmentally preferred disposables; and chemical and pollution reduction. A Canadian association, Leaders In Environmentally Accountable Foodservice, promotes environmental sustainability through energy, water, and waste reduction as well as the creation of community partnerships and the “farm to table” concept. Each of the three associations identified above, articulate a unique construction of a sustainable restaurant. The challenge for a
restaurant operator is to determine if any of these constructions presented by industry associations can “fit” in the culture of his or her restaurant.

Other definitions of sustainable restaurants exist beyond industry associations. An example from a sustainability and business website illustrates what a sustainable restaurant might mean to individuals beyond industry associations that promote eco-labels. The “world’s most sustainable restaurants” internet article presents a list of restaurants with sustainable practices including serving local and/or organic food; being energy efficient; incorporating recycled furniture; growing their own food; and reducing food waste (Mazzoni, 2015). The restaurants on this list expressed different internal ideas of sustainability. Some restaurants even received external validation of their sustainability efforts through industry awards or certifications.

Scholars do not maintain a consistent definition of a sustainable restaurant either. Publications in the hospitality literature use such terms as “green restaurant”(Chen, Cheng, & Hsu, 2013; Chu, 2013; Dewald, Bruin, & Jang, 2013; DiPietro & Gregory, 2013; Hu, Parsa, & Self, 2010b; Jang, Kim, & Bonn, 2011; Jeong & Jang, 2010; Kun-Shan, Huang, & Teng, 2013; Liu & Yu, 2012; Ogbeide et al., 2009; Schubert, 2008; Schubert et al., 2010; Tan & Yeap, 2012a; Wu, Huang, & Teng, 2013), “eco-friendly restaurant” (Campbell et al., 2015; Kim, Njite, & Hancer, 2013), “eco-restaurant” (DeMicco, Seferis, Bao, & Scholz, 2014) or “sustainable restaurant” (Bandyopadhyay & Munjal, 2014) to describe restaurants performing particular tasks. Scholars, like practitioners, tend to focus on parts of sustainability, such as acquiring organic food or designing a sustainable building, which creates confusion as to what a sustainable restaurant might actually be.

The study aims to better understand the meanings of sustainability from an industry perspective, restaurant perspective and manager, employee or customer perspective. In recognizing sustainability as a social construction, I, as the researcher, chose not to establish a pre-determined definition of a sustainable restaurant. I inductively investigate and seek to adequately describe the meanings and perceptions of sustainability presented in the context of the Canadian foodservice industry, and in full-service restaurants.
1.8.3 Definition of a Full-Service Restaurant

The North American Industry Classification labels a “full-service restaurant” as an establishment that is “primarily engaged in providing food services to patrons who order and are served while seated and pay after eating” (Statistics Canada, 2012). Full-service restaurants may “sell alcoholic beverages, provide take-out services, operate a bar or present live entertainment, in addition to serving food and beverages” (Statistics Canada, 2012). Examples of full-service restaurants include bistros; Chinese buffet restaurants, dining rooms, family restaurants, fine dining restaurants, Internet cafés, pizzerias, and restaurants that have bars, lounges and taverns. In this study, full-service restaurants were chosen over other types of restaurants because of the “high-contact” with restaurant staff and the restaurant environment in the service experience (see “good restaurant” on Figure 1.1) (Lovelock, 1996). The full-service restaurant experience is challenging to manage because it requires a lot of physical involvement by the customer with service staff and the physical environment (facilities and equipment).

Figure 1.1. The Characteristics of Service (Lovelock, 1996, p. 38).
1.9 Organization of the Dissertation

The research study investigates how the construct of sustainability is enacted in the full-service restaurant experience. The next chapters provide a literature review and discuss the theoretical framework - service experience clues - applied to the research. Chapter 3 then outlines two online studies and a descriptive single-case study. Comparisons are made between primary and secondary data collected from hospitality industry websites; from TripAdvisor consumer reviews; from a case restaurant website and social media pages; and from in-depth interviews. Chapters 4 and 5 present the results and discuss the significance of the findings, respectively. Final conclusions and recommendations are also made in Chapter 5.
2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature reviewed in this section supports the purpose, objectives, and research questions for the study. The research has three objectives. The first objective is to examine the meanings of sustainability at four levels - a broad hospitality industry level, a broad consumer marketplace level, a firm or restaurant level, and a service experience level. The second objective is to investigate what influences the meanings and perceptions of sustainability among key participants in the service experience - managers, employees, and customers. The third objective is to determine how meanings and perceptions of sustainability are created by individuals in the service consumption process.

The study draws from several main areas of literature. The literature on the meanings of sustainability within organizations and consumer perceptions of sustainability are interdisciplinary. In this section, the included research is derived from the fields of management, marketing, and consumer behavior. The second section describes the growing hospitality literature on environmental management, green restaurants, sustainable hospitality, and sustainable development in hospitality. The third part addresses the literature on service management and the connection between the concept of sustainability and service. As hospitality and tourism is classified as a part of the service industry, there is a discussion of the literature integrating service management concepts and principles in to hospitality and tourism research. The core of the study is on service experiences in restaurants, therefore, the literature on service experiences and restaurant experiences is outlined. Finally, the conceptual framework applied in this study, service experience clues (Berry et al., 2006a; Berry et al., 2006b), is acknowledged as emerging out of the services marketing field.

2.2 The Meanings of Sustainability

The discussion of “sustainable development” presented by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) introduced the concept to the political arena, and spurred interest in sustainability (Norton, 2012). The (Brundtland) report, Our Common Future, defined
sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43). This definition emphasized the social aspects of development, yet identified the linkages between the social, environmental and economic parts of development in all countries (Norton, 2012). Our Common Future also noted that goals for economic and social development “must be defined in terms of sustainability in all countries” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43).

The commonly identified pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development, and environmental development - were outlined by the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development produced at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. These three pillars were articulated to be “interdependent and mutually reinforcing”, and the aim was to “advance and strengthen” them at all levels (local, national, regional, and international) (United Nations, 2002, p. 1).

The concept of sustainable development (and sustainability) has matured over the years since 1987, and interest in this concept has led to growth in environmental, social and economic development concerns. Industries and businesses have encountered ideas and concepts around sustainable development, and this has encouraged more integration of the pillars into business environments. Some organizations even strive to become “sustainable organizations”, or ones that aim to generate value for people, planet, and profits (known as the triple bottom line, (Elkington, 1997)) (Cavagnaro & Curiel, 2012).

### 2.2.1 The Meanings of Sustainability in Business

The idea of sustainable development outlined in Our Common Future inspired policy makers and scholars to investigate the idea of sustainability. Scholars of management and organizational studies have demonstrated a growing interest in “sustainability” (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995; Marcus, Kurucz, & Colbert, 2010), and the literature reflects a range of views that scholars have of the relationships between business, society and nature (Marcus, et al., 2010).
Managers in business firms are increasingly acting out their own perceptions of sustainability as they continue to direct more energy toward initiatives that may emphasize one or a combination of economic, environmental and social dimensions in large part due to shifting consumer and societal expectations of businesses (Colbert & Kurucz, 2007). Practicing managers monitor the performance of sustainability initiatives in organizations and some firms publically report triple bottom line (Elkington, 1997) performance in what has been labelled “corporate social responsibility”.

The interest and “practice” of sustainability in firms continues to drive scholars to investigate sustainability within all types, facets and levels of organizations. Sustainability does not mean the same to all leaders, managers and employees (Colbert & Kurucz, 2007), and investigation into the practice of sustainability in different contexts is necessary to fully understand the implications of sustainable value creation in a range of settings (Kurucz, Colbert, & Wheeler, 2008, 2013). In research and practice, there are a range of definitions for sustainability itself and the many related concepts and terms that appear in the conversations. In the tourism industry, some of the concepts and phrases related to sustainability include “green tourism”, “responsible tourism”, “corporate social responsibility”, and “triple bottom line reporting” (http://www.tourism.australia.com/industry-advice/what-is-sustainability.aspx).

According to Tourism Australia, the description of each of these concepts and phrases can be as follows:

**Corporate Social Responsibility** is defined by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development as the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families and the local community and society at large. More than goodwill, corporate community involvement or strategic corporate philanthropy, corporate responsibility is a genuine attempt by a company to build meaningful relationships between the corporate sector and the rest of society.

**Green or Sustainable Tourism** is a broad reference to tourism experiences that focus on protecting the environment and allow visitors to travel responsibly, with little impact.

**Triple Bottom Line Reporting** means expanding the traditional reporting framework to take into account environmental and social performance in addition to financial performance. Triple Bottom Line reporting is
becoming an accepted approach for organisations to demonstrate they have strategies for sustainable growth. It focuses on decision-making and reporting which explicitly considers an organisation’s economic, environmental and social performance.

**Responsible Tourism** has emerged in recognition of the fact that eco-tourism should apply to all tourism, not just in natural areas or with nature-based experiences (http://www.tourism.australia.com/industry-advice/what-is-sustainability.aspx).

### 2.2.2. The Meanings of Sustainability to Consumers

Consumer perceptions and meanings of sustainability have been explored in a number of disciplines including marketing (McDonald & Oates, 2006; Simpson & Radford, 2012), agricultural sciences (Roitner-Schobesberger, Darnhofer, Somsook, & Vogl, 2008), public health (Kriflik & Yeatman, 2005), nutritional sciences (Wilkins, 2002), environmental studies (Kloppenburg Jr., Lezberg, De Master, Stevenson, & Hendrickson, 2000) and tourism and hospitality (Ball, Rowson, & O’Toole, 2008; Levy & Duverger, 2010; Ogbeide, Brunner, Freshour, Kinzler, & Bryant, 2009; Schubert, Kandampully, Solnet, & Kralj, 2010). Many of these studies highlight consumer confusion about sustainability and sustainable products such as the variability around “sustainable food”. Sustainable food has been identified as including local food, organic food, biodynamic food, genetically-modified food, environmentally-friendly food or healthy food, amongst others (see Figure 2.1. for a diagram of typically identified types of sustainable food).

Research has shown that consumers’ motivations for the consumption of sustainable products such as food varies by the product and by the individual consumers’ values, beliefs and attitudes. The product and consumer are not the only important factor is influencing consumer behavior, however. It is equally as important to consider the context of consumption. Simpson and Radford (2012) promote that we need to ask consumers how they define sustainability and how consumers perceive sustainability it relation to specific products or services (Simpson & Radford, 2012).
Research on consumer perceptions of sustainability in products (McDonald & Oates, 2006), including consumer perceptions of sustainability in food or beverage products (Aarset, Beckmann, Bigne, Beveridge, Bjorndal, Bunting, McDonagh, Mariojouls, Muir, & Prothero, 2004; Codron, Siriex, & Reardon, 2006; Paloviita, 2010; Roitner-Schobesberger, et al., 2008), demonstrates the myriad of consumer perspectives. Studies on consumer perceptions of sustainability in service environments such as retail (Charrière & Morin-Delerm, 2011; Hyllegard, Ogle, & Dunbar, 2006), lodging (Levy & Duverger, 2010) and food service (Ball, et al., 2008; Ogbeide, et al., 2009; Schubert, et al., 2010) illustrate the range of consumer opinions about services that incorporate sustainability initiatives. The existing studies have explored consumer purchasing motivations, personal values and behavior, and product or service evaluations of sustainability. Fewer studies have explored the perceptions or meanings of sustainability within a specific service. For example, the influence of the service context may influence consumer perceptions in environmentally responsible retail stores (Hyllegard, Ogle, & Dunbar, 2006; Ogle, Hyllegard, & Dunbar, 2004). The investigation of consumer perceptions and meanings from all aspects within the service experience has been largely understudied.
2.2.3 The Meanings of Sustainability in Hospitality Research

The media coverage on “sustainable development” in the late 1980s and early 1990s increased industry and public awareness on all three pillars of sustainability. “Sustainable tourism”, or “achieving a particular combination of numbers and types of visitors, the cumulative effect of whose activities at a given destination, together with the actions of the servicing businesses, can continue into the foreseeable future without damaging the quality of the environment on which activities are based” (Middleton & Hawkins, 1998, p. ix) then became a popular concept in the tourism industry, and an burgeoning area of interest for tourism scholars. Sustainable tourism and ecotourism (“a sustainable, non-invasive form of nature-based tourism that focuses primarily on learning about nature first-hand, which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented (control, benefits and scale)”) (Fennell, 2008, p. 24) have both been well researched areas in the tourism field (Myung, McClaren, & Li, 2012).

Environmentally related research in hospitality has been increasing in the last two decades. An environmental management guide for students and managers was published in the early 2000s emerging out of the introduction of environmental management systems in the 1990s (Webster, 2000), and since then textbooks on sustainable operations in the industry (Sloan, Legrand, & Chen, 2009, 2013) and responsibility hospitality (Hawkins & Bohdanowicz, 2012) have been developed. While there has been industry awareness about the negative impacts of hospitality operations for decades, the industry overall has been slower to implement changes to address these concerns. Nonetheless, sustainability and environmental responsibility are believed to be an important “megatrend” that will be influential for the future of the industry (Jones, 2006).

In a meta-analysis of the environmentally related research in hospitality, Myung et al. (2012) found that research on “going green” in lodging, restaurants, and meetings is “understudied”, and that research specifically on restaurants needs more diversity of topics including current environmental practices, restaurant menus, or consumption behavior (pp. 1269-1270). Recently, Chan and Hsu (2016) published an article synthesizing the research trends in hospitality environmental management and noted existing research gaps. The findings of their analysis outlined that studies from 1993 to 2014 investigated green practices, the environmental management system, and green consumerism. Areas that need further examination include
“green marketing; environmental technology; environmental reporting, carbon footprint, employees’ green behavior; environmental management effect on stakeholders; and environmental management in small and medium sized enterprises” (SMEs) (Chan & Hsu, 2016, p. 22).

The environment and the concept of sustainability is argued to be a “teasing paradox” because hospitality operations wish to communicate sustainability through marketing and customer experience yet still want to generate “conspicuous consumption”, a concept quite opposite from sustainability (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2016, p. 36). These authors argue that while there is support for sustainability by the industry and consumers, few stakeholders are ready to commit to working towards a more sustainable future (Jones et al., 2016). Sustainability is still seen under the umbrella of economic growth in the industry, and this paradigm influences the integration of the concept into the industry and the majority of the hospitality research conducted.

2.2.4 The Meanings of Sustainability in Restaurants

In the food and beverage industries, sustainability is recognized in food production and procurement, food preparation, food safety and food waste (Baldwin, 2009, 2012; Baldwin, Wilberforce, & Kapur, 2011; Ionescu-Somers & Steger, 2008; Turenne, 2009). Practitioners focus on the aspects of organizations which are the most tangible and measurable and so work at sustainability initiatives where cost savings and performance can be most easily measured. Food waste, for example, is a growing area of interest in the food industry largely because minimizing waste can reduce purchasing and processing costs. Consumers may perceive sustainable initiatives such as reducing food waste, conserving water or composting as positive and base purchasing decisions on the positive feelings associated with the product or service. Consumers expect businesses to make the effort to be more sustainable. If these expectations are not met, consumers may see the organization more negatively. Businesses are working hard to communicate sustainable initiatives and firm sustainability performance. The industry is currently focusing on behind-the-scenes initiatives or the supply chain rather than seeing sustainability as a key part of the front-of-the-house service as well. Sustainability needs to be considered an integral part of the service to improve the performance, communication and
education of citizens in society. This research aims to demonstrate the dialogue that emerges in the service offerings of sustainable full-service restaurants.

Within the food service environment specifically, sustainability can be an influence not only in the procurement, storage and preparation of food but also in the act of service (Turenne, 2009). The major considerations of food service operators focused on sustainability tend to include food purchasing, menu development, preparation techniques, equipment type, water use and recycling and composting programs (Turenne, 2009). From a practitioner’s standpoint, the considerations listed above may save on money, reduce resources, attract new customers and build loyal employees and customers because the restaurant is ‘doing the right thing for the environment’ (http://www.crfaconserve.ca/educationprogram/). Leadership, employee training, marketing and customer education also appear among considerations of how to become a more sustainable food service operation (Turenne, 2009), and yet, are the areas least explored in the scholarly and practitioner literature. One explanation for the under developed discussion of these areas could be the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness and impact of sustainability on performance.

2.2.4.1 Sustainable Restaurants

The concept of a “sustainable restaurant” is a newer idea. The literature focuses more on the idea of a “green” restaurant. The definition of a green restaurant is “one that offers a selection of green food menu items that use locally grown or organic certified food, as well as one that implements green practices, such as a recycling program, the efficient use of energy and water, and the reduction of solid waste” (Jang et al., 2011, p. 804).

environmentally-friendly restaurants and practices and wanted to be educated more by the
restaurant about these practices.

Scholars do not maintain a consistent definition of a sustainable restaurant either. Publications in the hospitality literature use such terms as “green restaurant” (Chen et al., 2013; Chu, 2013; Dewald et al., 2013; DiPietro & Gregory, 2013; Hu, Parsa, et al., 2010b; Jang et al., 2011; Jeong & Jang, 2010; Kun-Shan et al., 2013; Liu & Yu, 2012; Ogbeide et al., 2009; Schubert, 2008; Schubert et al., 2010; Tan & Yeap, 2012b; Wu et al., 2013), “eco-friendly restaurant” (Campbell et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2013), “eco-restaurant” (DeMicco et al., 2014) or “sustainable restaurant” (Bandyopadhyay & Munjal, 2014) to describe restaurants performing particular tasks. Scholars, like practitioners, tend to focus on parts of sustainability, such as acquiring organic food or designing a sustainable building, which creates confusion as to what a sustainable restaurant might actually be (Legrand, Sloan, Simons-Kaufmann, & Fleischer, 2010). As Legrand et al. (2010) state, a “operating a sustainable restaurant may therefore mean anything to anyone” (p. 169).

2.3 Service Management and Sustainability

This research is situated within the service management literature. A service management perspective is a lens for researchers to focus on the customer and the value created inherent in the act of a “service”. In this investigation, the focus is on the customer service experience and the discussion of sustainability that occurs in the experience from the viewpoint of managers, employees, and customers.

2.3.1 Service Management

The research takes a service management perspective. Service management is a perspective that is argued to have five key facets (Grönroos, 1994, p. 7):

(1) It is an overall management perspective which should guide decisions in all areas of management (not only provide management principles for a separate function such as customer service);
(2) It is customer driven or market driven (not driven by internal efficiency criteria);
(3) It is a holistic perspective which emphasizes the importance of intraorganizational, cross-functional collaboration (not specialization and the division of labour);
(4) Managing quality is an integral part of service management (not a separate issue); and
(5) Internal development of the personnel and reinforcement of its commitment to company goals and strategies are strategic prerequisites for success (not only administrative tasks).

Edvardsson, Gustafsson, and Roos (2005) suggests that service, not just service management, should be the perspective level since it shows value creation, especially from the eyes of the customer. To see a particular service through the customer’s perspective is to understand the characteristics that are important to customers and create value for them (Edvardsson et al., 2005, p. 118). Viewing service as the perspective means that a general definition of service cannot exists because the definition has to be “determined at a specific time, in a specific company, for a specific service, from a specific perspective” (Edvardsson et al., 2005, p. 119).

2.3.2 Sustainability in Service

In a study systematically looking at the service research published in four hospitality journals over a fifteen year period, Kandampully, Keating, Kim, Mattila, and Solnet (2014) noted that the most popular topic was service experience (including service quality, satisfaction, customer loyalty, service expectations, service guarantees, service encounter and value perceptions). The least popular topics included social responsibility that encompassed environmental concerns, society/community considerations, disability services, organic food. The service experience was largely seen from the customer perspective whereas social responsibility was viewed through both customer and organization perspective.

2.3.3 Sustainability as Service

Sustainability has traditionally been viewed as an independent concept or “add-on” in services (Wolfson, Tavor, Mark, Schermann, & Krcmar, 2011). Wolfson, Tavor, Mark,
Schermann & Krcmar (2011) contend sustainability should be considered a partner to service to create “sustainable service” or that which can meet customer expectations without “negatively influencing the customer’s natural and social environments” (Wolfson, et al., 2011, p. 173). A customer’s perceptions and meanings are created in social processes and interactions and so one needs to look at interactions to view the constructions of sustainability. The interactions that occur in sustainable restaurants present one way to investigate how consumers perceive sustainability in services.

2.3.4 Service Dominant Logic (SD-L) and Sustainability

Service-dominant logic (SD-L) was introduced into service marketing literature by Vargo and Lusch (2004). Since 2004, a discourse of SD-L has emerged (Lusch & Vargo, 2008; Lusch & Vargo, 2012; Lusch, Vargo, & O’Brien, 2007; Lusch, Vargo, & Tanniru, 2010; Lusch, Vargo, & Wessels, 2008; Ng, Vargo, & Smith, 2012; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2011; Vargo, 2011; Vargo & Akaka, 2012; Vargo & Lusch, 2008a, 2008b; Vargo, Lusch, & Akaka, 2010; Vargo, Lusch, Akaka, & He, 2010; Vargo, Maglio, & Akaka, 2008). In SD-L, the customer co-creates meaning throughout the service process and, in so doing, generates a service conversation or dialogue between the customers, employees, managers or owners and the service environment (see Table 2.1). Researchers who take a SD-L perspective focus on co-creation and see a longer-term relationship with customers who help to define the product or service as active participants throughout the production, delivery and consumption (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Co-creation is different from co-production which confines customers to participate only in the consumption phases of the service.

2.3.5 Service Management in the Hospitality Industry

SD-L has been framework used in hospitality and tourism to help better understand value and the customer experience. The key aspects of SD-L are value and co-creation.

The nature of hospitality paradigm is that hospitality operators offer present co-production products where the customer is led by the firm. Customers do not help create the service. Hospitality operations such as restaurants predefine the product or service, allow
Table 2.1.
A Comparison of Co-Production and Co-Creation Approaches to Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Co-production</th>
<th>Co-creation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value creation</strong></td>
<td>• Extraction of economic value</td>
<td>• Creation of unique personalized experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Quality products and services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customers’ role</strong></td>
<td>• Passive (rely on physical environment provided)</td>
<td>• Active (provide input to service providers before, during, and after the service)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Perceived as a resource</td>
<td>• Information provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Value creator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customers’ participation</strong></td>
<td>• Mainly at the end of the production chain</td>
<td>• Repeated interactions and transactions across multiple channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Serves as operant resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Suit their needs to what is available</td>
<td>• Co-create products and services with customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Managers and employees</td>
<td>• Customers, managers and employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customers’ expectations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key actors</strong></td>
<td>• Production and company centric</td>
<td>• Customer and experience centric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Engaging customers</td>
<td>• High level of information processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• High level of information processing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>• Led by the firm</td>
<td>• Co-innovate and co-design with customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Learning from customers (opinion leaders and trendsetters) and the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Innovation</strong></td>
<td>• Listening to customers</td>
<td>• Ongoing dialogue with customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Less transparent</td>
<td>• Open and transparent communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chathoth, Altinay, Harrington, Okumus and Chan (2013)
customers to interact in service encounters as passive recipients, and encourage customers to critically evaluate the service after its consumption (Chathoth, et al., 2013, p. 12). The idea of “co-production” explains the interaction in service experiences through a firm-centric lens which largely ignores the “reciprocity” that occurs between the firm and customers, the co-creation of meaning and the mutual dependence of firm and customer during the service (Chathoth, et al., 2013, p. 13). Only customers can create value in the process; the firm may offer value propositions but only customers can choose to activate them. The most important outcome in the co-production process is the articulation of what customers’ value in the experience.

2.3.6 Service Experiences

2.3.6.1 Restaurant Experiences

The restaurant experience is complex with various elements and functional and emotional aspects that may lead to its positive or negative evaluation as well as that of the organization (Berry, Carbone, & Haeckel, 2002; Berry et al., 2006a; Berry et al., 2006b). Scholars have investigated the aspects of the dining experience (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004), the meal experience (Gustafsson, Öström, Johansson, & Mossberg, 2006; Hanefors & Mossberg, 2003; Hansen, 2005; Hansen, Jensen, & Gustafsson, 2005; Johns, Tyas, Ingold, & Hopkinson, 1996; Jönsson & Knutsson, 2009; Meiselman, 2008; Öström, Rapp, & Prim, 2008; Wood, 2000) or important restaurant attributes (Harrington, Ottenbacher, Staggs, & Powell, 2012). Restaurant experiences are unique since they vary with type of restaurant, type of food, type of service, and type of customer. The experiences are hard to manage because of the tangible and intangible aspects of allow for a holistic examination of the entire service experience.

2.3.7 Service Experiences Clues (SEC)

This research study draws upon the service marketing conceptual framework of service experience clues (SEC) (Berry, et al., 2002; Berry, et al., 2006) which explains customer perceptions and evaluations in the holistic customer experience. SEC and the idea of “clue management” were introduced by Berry, Wall and Carbone (2006a) to illuminate how the marketing of services differed from the marketing of goods as well as to suggest that managers
need to design and oversee clues to “create the right kind of customer feelings” and to “tell the right story” during the experience (Berry et al., 2006a, p. 10). The emphasis of the framework is on customer perceptions of the quality of the experience and the customer evaluation (either positive or negative) at the conclusion of the experience. Customers are viewed as “detectives” in the service environment who process “clues”, defined as “anything in the service experience the customer perceived by its presence – or absence (Berry et al., 2006a, p. 1). Clues are processed consciously or unconsciously by a customer and help form rational and emotional perceptions before, during and after an experience (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. Service Experience Clues Framework*

*Adapted from Berry, Wall, and Carbone (2006a, 2006b)

2.3.7.1 SEC in Restaurants

Within a restaurant, management designs clues that influence a customer’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours in addition to telling a story (Berry, et al., 2006). The three types of clues – functional (the technical quality of food and service), mechanic (the tangibles of the service including those that are sensed) and humanic (the behaviour and appearance of service
providers) – send messages to customers. Collecting customer feedback using the framework of service clues provides a way to understand customer restaurant experiences holistically. Chua, Jin, Lee, and Goh (2014) examined the effects of the clues on customer experience and behavior intention in full-service restaurants, and found that the clues are determinants for customer experiential value. Mechanic clues in restaurants influenced functional and humanic clues. Functional clues, along with customer perception of experiential value, impacted customers’ behavioral intentions. The findings of the study were that functional and humanic clues were key to the full-service restaurant dining experience.

2.3.7.1.1 Functional Clues in Restaurants

Functional clues are the core of the service. The service must meet the needs of the customer (e.g. the accuracy of the food order and quality of food delivered in a restaurant). Customers will generate perceptions of quality of the overall service when experiencing these clues. In all restaurants, food quality is a very important clue (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, & Luke, 1997) and continues to be an influential clue in restaurants with an emphasis on sustainability (Ball, Rowson, & O'Toole, 2008; DiPietro, Cao, & Partlow, 2013a). In sustainable restaurants, the functional clues may include sustainable food information or nutritional information on menus; information on the traceability of food or particular food labelling; and even offering water and bread upon request only. These clues communicate to the customer that the restaurant is taking action to source environmentally-friendly and healthy food; is trying to educate customers on types of food and beverages and where the items come from; and the need to conserve water and reduce food waste. Functional clues are acknowledged and interpreted differently by customers. Female customers, for example, prefer being informed about green practices and request specific food information more so than male customers in restaurants (Ball, et al., 2008; DiPietro, et al., 2013a; Schubert, Kandampully, Solnet, & Kralj, 2010).

2.3.7.1.2 Mechanic Clues in Restaurants

Mechanic clues are described as the tangibles of the service: things that can be seen, smelled, heard, tasted or felt. These clues can reveal a restaurant’s commitment to customers’
needs and desires. In services with a longer duration such as hospitality services, mechanic clues are important. In a restaurant emphasizing sustainability, mechanic clues may include energy-efficient lighting; furniture made from eco-friendly materials; eco-friendly paint; recycled or eco-friendly building materials; recycling bins; eco-friendly soap and towels; low-water toilets and sinks; a community engagement board or displays and signs such as those communicating the restaurant’s sustainability policies and initiatives. The visible clues in a hospitality service are necessary to the customer since they demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and ultimately improve the confidence of customers (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). Ambiance of the restaurant is important to customers in restaurants, including restaurants with a sustainability emphasis (Ball, et al., 2008). Mechanic clues are of great importance to customers of green restaurants (Jeong & Jang, 2010; Wang, 2012). These tangible clues create an image of the restaurant that impacts the customer’s overall perception of the restaurant (Jeong & Jang, 2010).

2.3.7.1.3 Humanic Clues in Restaurants

Humanic clues reveal the how of the service experience alongside the mechanic clues. Humanic clues showcase the human interaction of the service experience. Service provider’s behaviours and appearances, word use, tone of voice and body language all suggest to the customer the organization’s commitment to customers. Encounters with service staff lead customers to form emotional perceptions of quality of the experience (Berry & Carbone, 2007; Berry, et al., 2002; Berry, et al., 2006). In a restaurant with a sustainability emphasis, humanic clues may include communication with guests by service staff, managers or owners; service providers’ knowledge and attitudes about sustainability-related issues; and even management communication with service staff regarding sustainability and service. In upscale foodservice operations, DiPietro, Cao, & Partlow (2013, p. 792) recommend that managers offer “front-of-the-house and service employees, who may be in a position to personally promote or answer questions about the restaurants’ green practices”.

Humanic clues have been the least explored in the literature related to sustainability in restaurants even though employees are acknowledged to have a role in customer encounters in service environments (Wall & Berry, 2007). In tourism and hospitality organizations, the human
dimension is believed to influence “service quality, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, competitive advantage and organizational performance” (Kusluvan, Kusluvan, Ilhan, & Buyruk, 2010, p. 171). The appearance, behaviour, attitudes and dispositions of service staff do contribute to customers’ perceptions of the experience and evaluation. Service staff must be knowledgeable, friendly and competent in dealing with customers to meet customer expectations. The commitment of the organization to sustainability practices internally reflects upon the daily operations and may influence customer perceptions of a service and organization.

Employees have a key role to play in the service encounter but also in the successful implementation of corporate social responsibility initiatives as participants and supporters (Shen & Benson, 2013). The consideration of internal stakeholders such as employees is necessary and human resource factors such as top management support, environmental training, employee empowerment, teamwork and reward systems are all important in building a successful environmental management system or sustainability strategy (Daily & Huang, 2001). Sustainable strategies have been shown to be profitable in service operations (Goodman, 2000). An organizational value system focused on sustainability along with employee-training programs, environmental information systems and collaborations with suppliers can be influential in economic sustainability (Goodman, 2000). Education about sustainability helps to create a bond between company and employees and create employee satisfaction (Goodman, 2000). Sustainable strategies and human resource practices contribute to building the context within which the sustainability-oriented service experience is enacted.
3 Research Approach and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this research is to examine how the construct of sustainability is enacted by individuals in the context of Canadian full-service restaurants. First, I examined the meanings of sustainability at the broad industry and consumer marketplace levels, at the firm or restaurant level, and at the service experience level (see Figure 3.1). Second, I investigated what influences the meanings and perceptions of sustainability among key participants in the service experience—managers, employees, and customers. Third, I explored how meanings and perceptions of sustainability are created by individuals in the service consumption process through the application of the conceptual framework “service experience clues” (Berry et al., 2006a; Berry et al., 2006b).

This chapter explains the rationale for the research paradigm, approach and context. It then outlines the data sources and collection techniques. The data analysis process is described, and the criteria for establishing the quality and trustworthiness of the research are identified. Finally, the limitations and scope of this research are discussed.

Figure 3.1. Levels of Analysis for the Meanings and Perceptions of Sustainability in Full-Service Restaurant Experiences.
3.2 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm best suited to explore the meanings of sustainability at various levels and to multiple service participants is “social constructionism”. A social constructionist acknowledges that people interpret and construct realities, and that multiple realities may exist simultaneously. I, as the researcher, seek to determine how these constructions are made in a specific context, and how these constructions influence people’s interactions with others and their own lives (Patton, 2002, p. 121).

The following section details my research paradigm for this thesis, which encompasses my ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

3.2.1 Ontological Assumptions

Ontology can be described as the researcher’s “approach to the nature of the phenomenon examined” (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 14). Consistent with the social constructionist approach, this study has the following ontological assumptions (Patton, 2015, pp. 121-123):

- people interpret and construct a reality that is influenced by but may be different from the physical world;
- things are defined “interpersonally and intersubjectively by people interacting in a network of relationships;”
- “truth” is formed from shared meanings and consensus among a group of people;
- multiple realities are constructed by different groups of people; and
- the phenomena can be understood only in context and cannot be generalized to another context.

A constructionist approach is valuable to tourism research, according to Pernecky (2012, p. 1120), especially because of the “increasing calls for the need to understand the construction of meanings in touristic experiences”. Pernecky (2012) identifies two constructionist directions in tourism research: knowledge and constructions of tourism, and knowledge and constructions within the framings of tourism. Sustainability, itself socially constructed, is categorized as a “tourism social problem” under the “constructions within the framings of tourism” direction. He recommends that researchers seek to uncover the constructions of a range of actors based on
“various experiences, performances, and behavior” (Pernecky, 2012, p. 1130). This research contributes to this call for further understanding of the construction of meanings in touristic and hospitality experiences. It also adds to the current research on “sustainable hospitality”, an area of inquiry that is less developed in the broader context of sustainable tourism (Melissen, 2013). Melissen (2013) contends that investigations on sustainable hospitality are meaningful because of the influence and role of sustainable hospitality within environmental, social, and economic systems (p. 821).

3.2.2 Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemology refers to the researcher’s actions to gain knowledge and beliefs about reality (Van de Ven, 2007). The epistemological assumptions of this research are influenced by the constructionist perspective which guides me to not only capture and present the “understandings and multiple realities about people’s definitions and experiences of the situation” (Patton, 2002, p. 122), but also to acknowledge my own participation in social construction. From this perspective, the findings of the research represent one interpretation of the data collected. In order to enhance the credibility of this analysis, I have actively worked to identify my own beliefs, assumptions, and biases throughout the process of data collection and analysis through “memoing”. Memoing can bring a researcher’s assumptions to the surface, and allow me to challenge my assumptions throughout the data analysis process.

3.2.3 Methodological Assumptions

Methodological assumptions are those made by the researcher about the methods used in the study (Creswell, 1994). As this research is framed by social constructionism, a paradigm that honours multiple realities (Patton, 2015), the methods chosen needed to allow for collecting and representing data with different views on sustainability within real-world restaurant experiences. A descriptive case study method was selected for several reasons, including the ability to better “understand complex phenomenon” by allowing the researcher to “focus on a ‘case’ and retain a holistic and real-world perspective” (Yin, 2014, p. 4) and to accommodate a relativist perspective. Broadly speaking, Yin (2014) describes case study as a powerful method for
research where the main questions are how or why questions; where the researcher has minimal or no control over behaviour during particular events; and where the phenomenon being investigated is contemporary (p. 9). In this research, all three of Yin’s recommended facets were met.

A single-case, embedded design was selected with the rationale of it being a “revelatory” or unique case (Yin, 2014). The opportunity arose where I, as a researcher, actively sought and received permission from management to recruit managers, employees, and customers from the same “sustainable restaurant” to interview. The purpose of doing so was to better understand the phenomenon of sustainability in a real-world restaurant experience. Access to all three service participants for interviews is not always available to researchers since it requires gaining an owner’s trust and working with a designated manager who acts as a “gatekeeper” to the participants and data (Yin, 2014). The case design is “embedded” in order to emphasize the different perspectives of managers, employees, and customers while still investigating the restaurant experience in a single organization.

Yin (2014) explains case study research is an “all-encompassing method – covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis” (p. 17). A feature of case study is the reliance on “multiple sources of evidence” that can originate from many different sources. The case study evidence in this thesis comes from documentation, archival records, interviews, and direct observations.

Primary data were collected from semi-structured interviews. From a social constructionist perspective, interviews are to be considered “dialogical performances, social meaning-making acts, and co-facilitated knowledge exchanges” (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008 as cited in Patton, 2015, p. 433). The semi-structured interviews used in this study were designed to be flexible and conversational. The purpose of conducting the interviews was to elicit data about the meanings of sustainability within a restaurant experience, and so questions were asked about the general restaurant experience as well as about sustainability (see Appendices E through G).

The interviews were conducted in the “post experience” phase of the hospitality experience (Knutson, Beck, Kim, & Cha, 2010) where an individual’s perception, satisfaction and value of the experience can be discovered. Participants could experience the restaurant initially without any researcher intervention, such as when surveys or comment cards are used.
In order to deal with memory recall, the interview was scheduled with participants who had visited or worked at the restaurant within 30 days of the interview, and photographs of the restaurant were used as a way to prompt a participant and remind him or her of the restaurant experience.

As the interviewer, I was open to sharing my own restaurant experiences and knowledge with participants, when asked. I recognize I exchanged knowledge with participants, and we created meanings during the conversation. I let the participant share as much information as he or she wished, and let himself or herself direct me as to whether the interview was a “shorter case” or “prolonged case” (Yin, 2014). A few managers became key informants for the study as they met multiple times with me to discuss their perceptions on sustainability and the restaurant experience.

The interviews conducted included the use of photographs from the specific case restaurant experience. Photo-elicitation, also called “photo interviewing” (Collier, 1957, 1967), can be defined simply as “inserting a photograph into a research interview” (Harper, 2002, p. 13). Photographs are said to help in the collection of different types of information because the images “evoke deeper elements of human conscious than do words” (Harper, 2002, p. 13). Photo-elicitation has been used by tourism researchers as a way to understand people’s experiences at specific sites or participating in certain activities (Andersson, 2004, 2012; Matteucci, 2013). In his study, Matteucci (2013) argued that images elicited more “objective accounts of participants’ daily activities and routine, but also unveiled personal meanings, feelings and a wide range of embodied experiences” (p. 196). In the study of a hotel experience, Pullman and Robson (2007) contended that images encouraged customers to examine their experiences in ways that are different from surveys or comment cards. In this study, the use of photographs portraying the service experience provided participants with an opportunity to ask the researcher about aspects of the restaurant experience that they may not have remembered or even encountered.

Additionally, the study investigated the broader context of the meanings of sustainability in the hospitality industry and consumer marketplace. Online articles posted on industry websites (from three different national foodservice website) and consumer restaurant reviews

40
(from TripAdvisor) were captured and analyzed to explore the multiple realities of sustainability in the restaurant experience.

### 3.3 Research Approach

A qualitative inductive case study method is used in this research. It is informed by constructivist grounded theory which “adopts the inductive, comparative, emergent, and open-ended approach”; emphasizes the researcher is neither neutral or value-free; and promotes research is a construction set in a context (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 12-13).

### 3.4 Research Context

The chosen setting of this research is a self-declared “sustainable restaurant” in Canada. The context was chosen for several reasons:

- Sustainability has been identified as important issue for the hospitality industry by researchers and practitioners (Deloitte, 2010, 2014; Jones, 2006; Jones et al., 2016);
- “Sustainable hospitality” is an underdeveloped area of investigation in the hospitality and tourism literature (Melissen, 2013);
- Research on green or sustainability in hospitality contexts in Canada is limited (examples of existing publications include: Dodds & Holmes, 2011; Gibson, Dodds, Joppe, & Jamieson, 2003; Prud’homme & Raymond, 2013), and especially so for sustainability in the Canadian restaurant or foodservice industry (Greer et al., 2012; Jeong & Mindy Jeon, 2008); and
- The hospitality sector is a unique context for studying service because “customers and employees often have the opportunity to develop genuine bonding relationships far beyond most other service contexts” (Kandampully et al., 2014, p. 296).

### 3.5 Data Sources

Figure 3.2 illustrates the research context, the unit of analysis, and the respective primary and secondary data sources used in the study.
3.5.1 Canadian Hospitality Industry Data Sources

As shown in Figure 3.2, three foodservice industry websites were selected to explore the industry perspectives on and meanings of sustainability in the Canadian restaurant industry: *Restaurants Canada, Restaurant Central.ca, and Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine*. These websites were chosen because they all represented national perspectives on the foodservice industry; concentrated on an industry audience; and were hosted (and published) by different associations or publishers. A comparison of the three websites could show similarities or differences on the construct of sustainability in the Canadian hospitality industry.

The three websites chosen continuously post articles that illustrate dialogue on restaurant trends or issues at the national, provincial, and sometimes even local levels. Best practices for commercial foodservice operations are a large part of the dialogue represented in the published articles. A description of each of the website (and the affiliated industry association or publisher)
is provided below. While collecting data from the websites, observations were made on the structure of the website, the layout of materials, and the language used in relation to the construct of sustainability.

3.5.1.1 Restaurants Canada (Founded in 1944)

Restaurants Canada (RC) ([www.restaurantscanada.org](http://www.restaurantscanada.org)) is a national, not-for-profit association marketed as the “voice of foodservice”. The association was founded in 1944 under the name of the “Canadian Restaurant Association”. Seventy years later, the association represents a wide ranging restaurant and foodservice industry in Canada. The association is located in Toronto, Ontario, but membership includes approximately 30,000 businesses, from all segments of the industry ([www.restaurantscanada.org](http://www.restaurantscanada.org)). Restaurants (quick-service, full-service, and fast-casual), bars, institutions, caterers and suppliers all are represented by the association. RC promotes continuous education on important industry and social issues through industry specific training, information sharing, business relationships, and articles. As a national association, both official languages (French and English) are used for communications and on the website. The website is actually broken up into an English version and French version. This study collected and analyzed data on the English version of the website only.

The RC website has a section for the “environment” that is found under the “industry issues” heading. The “environment” can therefore be said to be considered an industry issue. The environment section of the website includes subheadings for “Canada” and for individual provinces. Articles posted under the environment focus on waste, water, and energy issues in restaurants. The term “sustainability” is not used regularly on this website. Instead, one finds “green” or “environment” appear more frequently.

3.5.1.2 Restaurant Central.ca (Founded in 2010)

Restaurant Central.ca (RA) ([www.restaurantcentral.ca](http://www.restaurantcentral.ca)) is the official website for the Canadian Restaurant & Foodservice News magazine published by MediaEdge Communications (Toronto, Ontario). Launched in 2010, the website has since been considered the “go-to” for foodservice professionals in Canada. The website includes current industry news, information,
and resources for foodservice operations. A number of industry perspectives are seen on relevant business issues, laws, and regulations. Additionally, best practices are identified and described from a Canadian viewpoint.

The RA website includes a specific section on “sustainability” that is located under the “operations” menu heading. Articles listed under this sustainability section describe food procurement, food waste, green cleaning, local food and overall sustainability practices in foodservice operations. The articles published on the website do mention sustainability frequently.

3.5.1.3 Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine (Founded in 1968)

Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine (FHM) (http://www.foodserviceandhospitality.com) is coined “Canada’s national hospitality magazine”. The magazine has been published by Kostuch Media Ltd. (Toronto, Ontario) since 1968. Currently, eleven issues are published per year online and in print. The focus of the magazine is to disseminate information on relevant operational topics, industry issues, and new products and services for hospitality operators. The website itself hosts digital copies of the issues of the magazines and feature articles.

The FHM website does not have a particular section dedicated to environmental or sustainability issues. In order to obtain articles related to sustainability, the search function (keyword search) is necessary. Specific keyword searches illustrate the use of the term sustainability regularly in the website content.

3.5.2 Canadian Hospitality Marketplace: Consumer Data Sources

A tally of Canadian “sustainable restaurants” was generated from online lists of restaurants that were certified as “green” or sustainable through programs available to restaurateurs in Canada: Green Restaurant Association (GRA), Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice (LEAF), and Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA). The three certification programs were selected because they guide restaurateurs to become more sustainable in daily operations. One industry article listed programs such as the GRA, LEAF or
SRA as “sustainability solutions” available to Canadian foodservice operators. The programs mentioned in the article were the following: OceanWise, Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice, Local Food Plus, and Green Table Network (LaRivière, 2011). OceanWise and Local Food Plus programs were excluded from this study because these programs focus on sustainable food procurement practices without any larger consideration of sustainable operation practices in the restaurant. Although the Vancouver, British Columbia based Green Table Network is a program encouraging restaurants to adopt a “sustainability philosophy” that permeates the entire operation of the organization, it was not chosen because all the members listed online were from the province of British Columbia. The emphasis of this online analysis was on the broader Canadian restaurant industry, not on one specific province.

By viewing the criteria of each program, it can be said that the meanings of sustainability established by these three programs vary. The GRA focuses on environmental sustainability whereas SRA and LEAF include both environmental and social considerations. All three programs require self-reporting of restaurant activities in combination with an external audit process. When the restaurant is successful at reaching a particular level or goal, the name of the restaurant is posted on the program website as a green or sustainable restaurant.

The list of sustainable restaurants from GRA, SRA and LEAF were captured in April of 2015. The lists for the GRA (https://www.dinegreen.com/), SRA (http://www.thesra.org/) and LEAF (http://leafme.ca/) programs were cut and pasted into an Excel document which was then uploaded into NVivo 10. Table 3.1 shows the number of restaurants listed by each program.

Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Sustainable restaurants” in Canada in 2015</th>
<th>Number listed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice (LEAF)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Restaurant Association (GRA)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The types of restaurants listed under each program varied. The LEAF program had a wide variety of members listed including retail food stores, cafes, and food trucks. Only full-service restaurants were chosen for investigation in this study because of the characteristics of this type of service include “high-contact” with restaurant staff and the restaurant environment in the service experience (see “good restaurant” on Figure 1.2.) (Lovelock, 1996). The certified restaurants chosen to investigate further included hotel restaurants, institutional restaurants, chains restaurants, and independent restaurants. Overall, online restaurant review data for 29 Canadian full-service restaurants was used to analyze broad consumer meanings and perceptions of sustainable restaurant experiences.

3.5.3 The Single-Case Study Data Sources

A single-case study was conducted using multiple sources of data including documentation, archival records, interviews, and direct observations. The documents reviewed included news releases and articles on the case restaurant found through an online Google search; archival records given to the researcher by restaurant management; interview transcripts; researcher notes; and informal direct observations, including photographs taken by the researcher during visits to the restaurant.

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Secondary Data: Industry and Marketplace Context

Secondary data were collected through industry websites as well as through consumer restaurant reviews posted on TripAdvisor Canada.

3.6.1.1 Industry Data Sources

The researcher utilized the keyword search option on each website to obtain articles, announcements or new releases related to the operational meanings of sustainability, and to view the discussions on sustainability-related issues in the Canadian foodservice industry. The terms sustainability and sustainable were independently typed in to the search function of each of the
three websites in July of 2015. Results were captured using NCapture, a part of the NVivo 10 software program. Each article was uploaded into NVivo 10 as a separate pdf file using the original file name. Once all initial articles were captured, duplicates were removed from the project file. Then, each article was viewed and linked documents mentioned in articles were captured and uploaded into NVivo. The reason for capturing linked or recommended articles was that the information was considered to be related to sustainability, and these recommended articles could illustrate the breadth of the meanings of sustainability. Once again, duplicates were removed from the project file. A total of 648 original items remained in the project file. Finally, these articles were sorted into folders for each website. The number of pdf files captured from each website are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foodservice Industry Website</th>
<th>No. of Files</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants Canada (RC)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant Central.ca (RA)</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine (FHM)</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were a few initial observations of the data. First, the articles captured from all three websites were published within a six-year period: 2010 to 2015. Second, as shown in Table 3.2, Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine (FHM) published the most articles on sustainability at the time that the data was captured. Third, a variety of “articles” were captured. The pdf files included news releases, business or product announcements, industry statistics, and opinion pieces in addition to written articles on trendy topics, issues, and best practices. Table 3.3 provides examples of the files captured from each website.
Table 3.3.

Examples of the Captured PDF Files Retrieved from Three Canadian Foodservice Industry Websites, 2010-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Name of file</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publication Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants Canada</td>
<td>the_chefs_have_spoken_local_is_the_hottest_menu_trend_in_2011</td>
<td>Canadian Restaurant and Foodservice Association (CRFA)</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant Central.ca</td>
<td>Five key focus areas on your restaurant’s path to sustainability</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine</td>
<td>Ocean Wise Celebrates Five Years - Foodservice and Hospitality magazine</td>
<td>Maya Tchernina*</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Maya Tchernina is listed as a Web Communication Specialist for Kostuch Media, the publishing company for Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine.

The data was treated in the following way. First, word frequency analysis was conducted amongst all of the files in NVivo. The purpose of conducting a frequency analysis was to explore the prevalence of sustainability in dialogues within the Canadian foodservice industry; to ascertain the dimensions used in the meanings of sustainability; and to determine if a common social definition or meaning existed. Similar to Dahlsrud (2008) and Moloney et al. (2014), I use frequency analysis from a social construction perspective to investigate the whether and how understandings and meanings of sustainability differ amongst those in the industry. Frequency analyses were then conducted by website and compared across them.

Second, content analysis was conducted in order to investigate the sustainability pillars or dimensions used in the meanings of sustainability, and the prevalence of particular terms in the dialogue. Initially, themes were generated for the three dimensions of sustainable development – environmental, social, and economic. Additional themes established were local food and beverage; organic food and beverage; sustainable food and beverage; waste reduction; water use; and energy were created to capture additional data points about sustainability-related issues and operations in restaurants. Finally, themes were developed that recognized places (provinces),
restaurant operations, or parts of the dining experience since discussions of sustainability take place within the context of the Canadian restaurant industry broadly, and restaurants specifically.

3.6.1.2 Consumer Data Sources

Consumer restaurants reviews from the TripAdvisor Canada website (www.TripAdvisor.ca) were captured for each sustainable restaurant during the months of July, August, and September of 2015. A query for each restaurant was conducted within the TripAdvisor website, and consumer reviews for a one-year period (September 1, 2014 to September 1, 2015) were cut and pasted into separate Word documents. The Word documents were imported in to NVivo 10 for analysis. TripAdvisor was the chosen site for collecting consumer data since the review website possessed the greatest number of reviews for restaurants located across Canada. Other restaurant reviews sites in Canada such as Yelp (www.yelp.ca), Zomato (www.zomato.com), or OpenTable (www.opentable.com) did not have as many reviews per individual restaurant during the designated time period.

There were several observations made during the initial data collection. First, the use of the words green and sustainability in the certification programs for Canadian restaurants was not uniform. During the creation of the list of applicable sustainable restaurants, it was noted that there was a wide variety of meanings for green, environmental, and sustainable. The word local also appeared regularly and appeared to have a connection to the meaning of a sustainable restaurant. For example, an article that appeared in Restaurant Central.ca advocating for green practices in restaurants showed the word green in the title and then listed four sustainability-oriented programs available to Canadian restaurant operators. The same article also used the words environmental, local (food), and green when describing aspects of sustainability (LaRivière, 2011). Second, it was noticed that not all restaurants had the same number of restaurant reviews. The number of consumer reviews posted may be impacted by when the restaurant created a TripAdvisor account; how much the restaurant encouraged guests to post reviews on the website; or even how active consumers were in posting reviews generally on the TripAdvisor site. Third, it was observed that reviews were not always posted in a “timely fashion”; in some cases, consumers posted reviews days, months or years after visiting a restaurant. Fourth, consumer reviews were guided by a template provided by the TripAdvisor
website as part of the review process. Each consumer had the opportunity to assign a five-star rating for the restaurant in the areas of food, service, atmosphere and overall experience. Space was provided for the consumer to textually describe his or her experience in the review as well as to upload photographs taken during the experience. In this study, the star ratings and photographs uploaded by consumers were not considered; only the text descriptions in the reviews were inductively analyzed.

As a focus of the study is sustainability in restaurant experiences, the pillars of sustainability (economic, environmental and social) were explored. The data captured was also analyzed using the concept of service experience clues which breaks down the overall experience into functional, mechanic and humanic clues (Berry et al., 2006a; Berry et al., 2006b; Carbone, 2004). Any additional themes observed in the data were coded thematically.

3.6.2 Single-Case Study Data Sources

A single-case, embedded design was selected for this research (Yin, 2014). The reason for this choice of method is that it allowed me to investigate, in-depth, how sustainability is enacted in a restaurant experience in a real-world context. A restaurant service experience involves customer interactions with the food, restaurant environment, and service staff. As there currently is no agreed upon definitions of sustainability, a method that can showcase the complexity of individual constructed meanings and perceptions of sustainability in the restaurant experience is necessary. The close investigation in a single-case is preferred for this research which, like Yin (2012, p. 4) argues, seeks to “produce an invaluable and deep understanding—that is, an insightful appreciation of the “case(s)”—hopefully resulting in new learning about real-world behavior and its meaning”.

3.6.2.1 The Selection of the Single-Case

The restaurant selected as the single-case for the research was a full-service “sustainable restaurant”. The selection process for potential restaurants was based on several criteria highlighted below and described in the next sub-sections:
1) restaurant type (full-service);
2) sustainability focus (as demonstrated on the restaurant website or social media pages); and
3) sustainability-related initiatives in the restaurant experience (as identified in online customer reviews from TripAdvisor).

**Criterion 1: Restaurant Type**

The first criterion for selecting a case was the type of restaurant. The study aimed to investigate not only the perceptions of sustainability but also the meanings of sustainability co-created in the service experience. A restaurant with a longer duration of service and high contact with staff and the restaurant environment (Lovelock, 1996) was believed to have the most potential to explore the construct of sustainability. Full-service restaurants were therefore chosen as the focus of this research.

**Criterion 2: Restaurant Sustainability Commitment**

In this study, sustainability commitment is argued to be represented through restaurant web pages and social media pages. The researcher therefore viewed websites of restaurants that were identified as sustainability-focused restaurants either through programs, through industry publications, through TripAdvisor consumer reviews or through a Google search. Only full-service restaurants with sustainability practices or values mentioned in marketing materials were chosen to remain on the list of potential case restaurants.

**Criterion 3: Customer Awareness of Sustainability-Related Initiatives**

The third, and final, criterion used for selection of case restaurants was customer awareness of sustainability-related initiatives. This was assessed through the capturing and analysis of customer restaurant reviews from TripAdvisor Canada, an online consumer review site. If the reviews included customer commentary about sustainability initiatives in the
restaurant experience, the restaurant was considered a potential case restaurant. The mention of sustainability-related initiatives within these customer reviews illustrates the presence of clues available for customers to notice and interpret thereby creating a richer dialogue of sustainability in the restaurant service experience.

These three criteria were developed after a review of the academic literature and industry sources did not show consensus for a “sustainable restaurant”. The academic literature did acknowledge differences in how sustainability was perceived in quick-service and full-service restaurants (DiPietro, Cao, et al., 2013; DiPietro & Gregory, 2012; DiPietro, Gregory, et al., 2013), and so the decision was made to concentrate on a full-service restaurant. Green and sustainability programs available to restaurateurs in Canada presented different criteria and therefore displayed diverse meanings of a “sustainable restaurant”. The websites of restaurants listed as being green or sustainable through programs were then investigated to look for similarities in the meanings of sustainability. The researcher informally observed that many certified restaurants did not effectively communicate initiatives or values related to sustainability on restaurant websites. A similar finding was found in a recent study investigating the ethical and sustainability dimensions of foodservice on the websites of Australian ecotourism businesses (Fennell & Markwell, 2015). The researcher continued to look for full-service restaurants that illustrated a commitment to sustainability on websites and social media pages, but the decision was not to limit the potential case restaurants to certified ones. Finally, in order to reaffirm the restaurant’s commitment to sustainability, TripAdvisor reviews were searched to determine if consumers commented on aspects of sustainability in their restaurant experiences.

Restaurants that met all three criteria were listed as potential case restaurants. The researcher contacted an owner or manager of the restaurant in person or by email to describe the research study, and to ascertain if the owner or manager would be interested in working with the researcher to conduct the study. In return for participation in the study, the researcher would provide the owner or manager with a summary of the findings of the research upon completion of the study.
3.6.2.2 The Pilot Case Study

A pilot case study was conducted in a Canadian full-service restaurant with a self-declared sustainability-focus. The purpose of a pilot case, according to Yin (2014, p. 240), is to test and refine research questions and procedures for the formal case study. Yin (2014) recommends conducting a pilot case study as effective preparation for a case study, and so a pilot case was conducted for this research.

The restaurant selected for the pilot case study fit the case selection criteria developed. It was a full-service restaurant with a demonstrated commitment to sustainability that customers made note of within TripAdvisor Canada reviews. The restaurant is situated in a city located 30 minutes west of Toronto. The mid-sized city hosts one university and has a reputation for being sympathetic to environmental issues. The restaurant is managed by a hospitality group which owns and operates a total of three operations in southwestern Ontario. The overall philosophy of the restaurant group is to manage restaurants with an emphasis on local food, sustainability, and community. The strategic emphasis of the restaurant group is to think three generations ahead. In 2013, the president of the restaurant group received a green leadership award from a Canadian hospitality industry group. The award recognized the group’s environmental initiatives and the promotion of local food, sustainable food, and sustainability.

Two of the restaurants managed by the restaurant group share the same name and concept: a grille and bar style restaurant. The restaurants are located in two cities only 30 minutes apart from each other. The first location opened in 2008 and the second in 2011. The third restaurant managed by the group opened in 1990 as a pub restaurant. The pub focused on craft beer initially, and later introduced local and sustainable food into the restaurant. All three restaurants operated by this group aim to balance the triple bottom line (environmental, social, and economic) (Elkington, 1997).

As mentioned, the pilot restaurant (hereafter known as PILOT to protect the identity) opened in 2008 in the suburb of a mid-sized city. PILOT is a full-service restaurant with 135 seats and a staff of 38. The restaurant has seating in the bar, dining rooms, and on the patio. The décor is aimed at casual dining and shows a strong influence from Canadian art and nature. From the beginning, the restaurant has highlighted local food and beverages, tried to engage with the local community, and worked at becoming a leader in sustainable hospitality. The décor of
the restaurant ties into the sustainable philosophy of the restaurant with reclaimed local wood tables and stonework, pictures of local food producers, and community cultural artifacts.

The case design called for primary data to be collected from semi-structured interviews with managers, employees, and customers. Photographs unique to case restaurant experience were taken by the researcher in indirect observation or collected through the restaurant’s website or social media sources. The photographs would be used to gather information from the participants during the semi-structured interview in a technique called “photo-elicitation” (Harper, 2002). Participants were recruited through posters hung in the restaurant, bill fliers given to the customer at the end of the meal, or through promotion by the owner or managers. The participants voluntarily emailed the researcher to arrange a meeting time for the interview. Nine scheduled interviews were conducted by the researcher over a ten-week period from April to June in 2014. Two managers, one employee, and six customers were interviewed. Over sixty pages of transcripts were generated and then analyzed.

The results of the pilot study are described below.

- The meanings of sustainability varied from person to person. Environmental concerns, local, community, health, and longevity were all mentioned in the described meanings of sustainability.
- Sustainability was of interest and value to participants, even though it was not always seen as a “normal” interest for individuals.
- Functional clues (clues that relate to the basic restaurant service such as food accuracy and quality) were the most dominant types of service experience clues mentioned by participants about the restaurant experience. Food quality was perceived to be the most important part of the dining experience by managers, employees and customers.
- Mechanic clues (clues from that can be seen, touched, tasted, heard or smelled) were more important to managers than to employees or customers. Employees perceived mechanic clues to be valuable to the restaurant experience. As the restaurant experience is designed with a number of mechanic clues in the environment, these clues were frequently discussed by customers. Not all customers noticed the same mechanic clues, however.
• Humanic clues (clues from restaurant staff) are considered to be essential to the restaurant experience by both managers and customers. Managers believed staff were communicating with customers about sustainability, but the reality was that employees were not engaging with customers on sustainability because it took too much time.

• Sustainability was not considered to be a focus of the restaurant experience. Great food, good service and a nice atmosphere was believed to be more important to the restaurant experience. Sustainability was identified as an “added bonus” to the experience.

• In the restaurant experience, aspects of sustainability were communicated passively to the customer in the restaurant environment through mechanic clues. The menu, chalkboards, and tent cards on the table identified some sustainability aspects of the experience. The building materials and décor also showed a connection to sustainability (for example, birch tree branches mounted on the dining room wall). In most cases, the customer was left to notice the clues himself or herself, and to ask questions, if he or she was inclined to do so.

• Customers felt that the restaurant could communicate more about sustainability initiatives in the service experience. Customers suggested servers should educate guests about the restaurant philosophy and sustainability.

Based on the understandings garnered from the pilot case, the interview scripts were refined and the next stage of primary data collection was conducted.

3.6.2.3 The Formal Case

The chosen full-service case restaurant was located in southwestern Ontario in a city one hour west of Toronto that is home to two universities and a growing technology sector. To protect the identity of the restaurant, it will be identified as “ABC Restaurant”. ABC is the second location of a grille and bar restaurant. The first location was used as a pilot case study to test the questions and procedures for the formal case study. ABC has been open since 2011, and has consistently promoted itself as a restaurant that is concerned with local food and beverages, local community, and sustainability. It is the largest of the two restaurant locations with a restaurant that seats 200 customers and is run by a team of 52 employees. Sustainability
initiatives (such as the heritage building the restaurant is built around) are promoted on the restaurant website, in the restaurant environment, and within the restaurant experience.

The case study was conducted based on both secondary and primary data sources. First, the secondary data sources and related data analysis method is presented. Next, the primary data sources and related data analysis method is explained.

3.6.2.3.1 The Restaurant Website

The pages from the website of the case restaurant were captured using NCapture from the NVivo 10 software package in September of 2015. A total of 22 pdf files were captured from the website and then uploaded in to NVivo for analysis. The researcher coded the data for meanings of sustainability and prevalence of service clues.

3.6.2.3.2 The Restaurant Facebook and Twitter Pages

Social media pages from the case restaurant were captured using NCapture for the period of September 1, 2014 to September 1, 2015. Twitter and Facebook were selected to analyze because the restaurant regularly used these to educate consumers about the restaurant, the menu, special events or other relevant information.

3.6.2.3.3 TripAdvisor Consumer Reviews

TripAdvisor Canada consumer reviews were collected for the period from September 1, 2014 to September 1, 2015. The reviews captured represented only those where the review date fell within the designated one-year period. First, the case restaurant was searched for and found on the Canadian version of the TripAdvisor website. Second, the reviews posted during the specified time frame were copied from TripAdvisor and pasted in to a Word document. The Word document was then uploaded in to NVivo 10 for analysis.
Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted using researcher generated and collected images to elicit information about the restaurant experience from the participants’ perspectives. Photo-elicitation is a technique introduced by anthropologist John Collier as “photo interviewing” (Collier, 1957, 1967). It is defined most simply as “inserting a photograph into a research interview”, and it is argued to be valuable when conducting interviews since photographs can “evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words” (Harper, 2002, p. 13). The technique has been utilized by tourism researchers not only as a tool to uncover tourist experiences (Andersson, 2004, 2012) and “objective accounts of participants’ daily activities and routine”, but also to reveal “personal meanings, feelings and a wide range of embodied experiences” (Matteucci, 2013, p. 196). Photo-elicitation has also been used successfully in hospitality studies to explore guests’ experiences with hospitality environments (Pullman & Robson, 2006, 2007). Pullman and Robson (2007) contend that photographs give researchers a new look into customer experiences since the images encourage customers to examine their experiences in other ways than surveys or comments cards.

Three separate interview scripts were developed for each participant type (manager, employee or customer), but the same photographs of the restaurant experience were used for all participants (see Appendices D-F for the interview scripts and Appendices H-J for the photographs used). Managers were asked more questions about daily operations and staff training related to the customer experience. Employees were questioned about their role in the service experience. Customers were queried about their awareness of sustainability initiatives in the restaurant, and their perceptions of sustainability in the restaurant experience. Additionally, all participants were asked to define the term sustainability. These one-on-one in-depth interviews explored the constructions of reality around sustainability in the restaurant experience through naturalistic inquiry.
Interview Protocol

The researcher received permission from the restaurant management to recruit participants from within the restaurant itself. Customers were recruited through posters hung in the restaurant; through flyers distributed with bills; and through verbal encouragement from the owner and managers. Restaurant employees and additional managers were recruited by flyers, emails, and verbal promotion from the owner. The recruitment process began in September of 2014 and lasted for 15 weeks. Participants self-selected to be interviewed; the recruitment method required individuals to email the researcher to arrange a date, time and location for the interview. The researcher chose to interview the participants during the “post experience” phase of the hospitality experience (Knutson, Beck, Kim, & Cha, 2010) where the individual perception, satisfaction and value of the customer’s experience can be represented. The researcher attempted to schedule interviews with all individuals who contacted her, but not all could be arranged. The participant chose the time and location for the interview. Some participants requested to bring along a spouse to the interview, and the researcher interviewed both individuals at the same time.

At the interview, the researcher informed the participant(s) that the interview would entail a series of questions and a photo-elicitation activity. The participant was then asked if the researcher could record the interview. Notes were taken by the researcher based upon the questions that were asked. The photographs of the restaurant experience were used in the interview to remind the participant of the restaurant environment and sustainable activities, and elicit more information from the participant. The researcher manually recorded the photographs selected by the participant.

Nineteen photographs were used by the researcher in the interview to ascertain what aspects of sustainability in the restaurant experience the participant could identify and found meaning from (see Appendices H-J). The photographs were generated by the researcher during several restaurant visits or were downloaded from the restaurant’s webpage or social media accounts (Twitter and Facebook). The photographs showed different aspects from the restaurant experience. The majority of photographs (15) showed mechanic clues, or clues that represent what a customer can taste, touch, feel, hear or see in the environment. Photographs of mechanic
clues included various internal and external signs, chalkboards, décor items, building materials, napkins (see Appendix I). The researcher observed that mechanic clues are the dominant way that the managers communicate sustainability initiatives to customers. Mechanic clues, as part of the restaurant environment, are accessible to customers and to the researcher. Other types of service experience clues, functional clues (clues from the basic service such as menu items) and humanic clues (clues from the encounters with service staff) were represented each with two photographs. Functional aspects of the experience were best represented by photographs of daily features or menu items (see Appendix H). Photographs of humanic clues were not readily available to the researcher because of anonymity concerns; the photograph needed to show an encounter between a customer and a service staff. One of the two photographs representing humanic clues exhibited a server interacting with a guest. This particular photograph was downloaded from the restaurant’s Facebook account, with permission from the restaurant management. The second photograph representing humanic clues was captured by the researcher with permission from the server in the photograph (see Appendix J).

In the middle of the interview, participants were handed a stack of 19 photographs about the restaurant experience. The researcher labelled each photograph with a letter for coding purposes. The participant was asked by the researcher to select one photograph or multiple photographs that he or she felt exemplified the customer experience in the restaurant. If the participant asked for clarification, the researcher would rephrase the question as “what photograph or photographs do you believe best represent this restaurant experience?” (see Interview scripts in Appendices E, F, and G). Participants were also informed that if they felt there was a photograph missing from the stack, to please identify what the photograph should be. Once the participant selected his or her photograph(s), he or she was asked to explain the reasoning behind why the photograph was chosen. The researcher recorded the photographs selected by the participant as well as the reasoning behind the selection.

Overall, the researcher conducted 33 interviews with managers, employees, and customers. The breakdown of the participants by type and gender can be seen in Table 3.4. Participants fell under three types: managers, employees (front of the house or back of the house), and customers. Three out of the four managers were able to be interviewed, and 10 employees out of the team of 52 were interviewed. It is hard to determine the number of customers served in a restaurant over a fixed period as there are many factors influencing this
number. Thirty interviews were conducted with a total of 33 customers interviewed. The number of customers differs from the number of interviews conducted since three interviews were led with two participants each. Three participants who contacted the researcher by email asked if they could bring their partner to the interview as they had also dined at the restaurant.

The participants came from many walks of life. Participants were students, hospitality professionals, business professionals, educators, health professionals, and retired individuals. Employees came from both front of the house and back of the house positions. The majority of customers interviewed were working professionals or retirees. Across the three groups, participants were more often female than male.

Table 3.4.
Qualitative Interviews, listed by Participant Group and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Group</th>
<th>Completed Interviews</th>
<th>% of Staff or Customers Interviewed</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee – Front of house</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee – Back of house</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer</td>
<td>20*</td>
<td>Not available*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Three interviews were conducted with two customers each, upon request from the participants. The number of customer interviews conducted was 20, but the actual number of customers interviewed was 23. All customers were given a number from 1 to 23 for research purposes. Managers and employees were also assigned a number from 1 to 3 and 1 to 10 respectively.

^ The percentage of customers interviewed cannot be determined. The restaurant can seat 200 customers per meal, and is open for lunch and dinner. Interviews were conducted over a four-month period (September to December) in 2014. The researcher was not provided with the number of customers actually served over this period.

The locations of the interviews varied as the researcher left it up to the participant to name a public location to meet. Some interviews were conducted at the restaurant itself, others at local coffee shops, and a few at food courts in shopping malls.

The length of the interviews ranged from 21 minutes to an hour and 58 minutes. The mean length of the interview was 56 minutes. The total amount of recorded time was 30 hours.
and 15 minutes. One participant refused to give permission to record the interview, and so the researcher relied upon her notes for analysis rather than a transcript. Thirty-two transcripts and one detailed notes files were generated from the 33 interviews. The transcripts added up to 112 pages of single-spaced, full page text. Each transcript contained one chart summarizing the photographs chosen by the participant and the comments associated with the photographs. One participant chose not to participant in the photo-elicitation activity.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in accordance with the data analysis spiral recommended by Creswell (2013). The spiral represents a non-linear approach that begins with data of text or images and ends with an account or narrative (Creswell, 2013, p. 182). In this process, the researcher first organizes the data into computer files and units for analysis. Second, the researcher reviews entire transcripts to gain a holistic perspective of the data and writes memos or notes that occur when reading the data. Third, the researcher codes, categorizes and compares the data to interpret the data. Finally, the researcher displays the data in a visual format (Creswell, 2013).

3.7.1 Secondary Data Sources

All of the secondary data collected were organized in to separate file folders in an NVivo 10 project file. Word frequencies were conducted on all of the industry data sources combined, and then run by “group” (publication). A similar procedure was done for the consumer data sources. Content analysis and thematic coding were also performed on the collected data.

The case study secondary sources (restaurant website, Twitter and Facebook pages, and TripAdvisor consumer reviews) were analyzed through word frequencies, and then thematically coded.
3.7.2 Primary Data Sources

The data collected from the interviews was analyzed using the conceptual framework, the service experience clues (Berry et al., 2006a; Berry et al., 2006b; Carbone, 2004) first, and, second, by thematic coding second to capture the unexpected data offered by participants.

3.8 Criteria for Quality and Trustworthiness of the Research

To ensure the quality and trustworthiness of this case study research, the tactics advocated by Yin (2014) for case studies were considered first. The suggested tactics and approaches used in the research are identified next.

- **Multiple sources of evidence (confirmability):** Multiple sources of evidence were collected at the macro level perspective. Three industry websites were compared “within-group” as well as TripAdvisor consumer reviews from 29 certified restaurants were compared. At the micro level, manager, employee, and customer perspectives were compared in a single-case restaurant experience. Twitter and Facebook posts were compared for the same period to determine the meanings of sustainability communicated online as well as the level of customer engagement around sustainability.

- **Establish a “chain of evidence” (confirmability):** A chain of evidence was created with case study notes, documents, photographs, and memos.

- **Have key informants review the draft case study report (confirmability):** The key informant (and gatekeeper) reviewed the recruitment materials, interview scripts, and photographs prior to data collection. Several meetings were conducted where I updated the informant on the progress of the research and the initial findings. It was negotiated that the informant will receive a copy of the draft case study report after the dissertation is defended.

- **Use case study protocol (dependability):** A case study protocol was developed at the thesis proposal stage. It contained the recruitment materials (Appendices A and B); the information letter (Appendix C) and consent form (Appendix D); the interview guides for managers (Appendix E), employees (Appendix F), and customers (Appendix G); the
photographs used in the interviews (Appendices H, I, and J); the photograph release form (Appendix N); and the ballots and receipts for gift card incentives (Appendix K, L, M). The thesis proposal was reviewed by my Ph.D. Advisory Committee and orally defended to an examining committee. The project and case protocol were also reviewed by the Ethics Review Board at the University of Guelph.

- Develop a case study database (dependability): A separate case study database was generated that included data, documents, collected materials, field notes, memos, and collected materials.

To ensure the quality of this constructionist qualitative research, several “parallel” criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) were considered for “trustworthiness”: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The strategies recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1989) to address parallel criteria which are utilized in this research are outlined below.

- Prolonged engagement (credibility): Dozens of visits were made to the restaurant to build a relationship with the managers, staff, and regular customers. It was done in an attempt to “overcome the efforts of misinformation, distortion, or presented “fronts” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237). These visits were made to ensure I understood the context and culture of the restaurant by immersing myself as a customer. I dined in various rooms of the restaurant on different days and at different times, and spoke to staff and customers about the restaurant experience. Direct observations were made and recorded during those visits.

- Progressive subjectivity (credibility): Before any visit to the restaurant, I wrote down my expectations of what I would find. Every two weeks, I would reflect upon my own previous and recent constructions. My own constructions would be compared to industry, manager, employees, and customer perceptions of sustainability.

- Member checks (credibility): Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, if permission was given by the participant. In cases where permission was not given, the researcher made detailed notes. Transcripts or notes were emailed back to the participants for verification.
- “Thick description” (transferability): Detailed descriptions of the time, place, context, and culture of the case study were made in order to create a data base that others could use to determine if the study was relevant to another restaurant or situation.

3.9 Limitations of the Research

As with any research, there are several limitations for the study. One limitation of the data collected from various sources was that it was captured at one point in time only. First, the online sources such as industry publication websites, TripAdvisor pages, and restaurant social media pages are all dynamic spaces where conversations can by ever-changing. Because the data were collected at one time and only for a period of one year, there is a temporal limitation to this study. Future research might look at how the meanings of sustainability change over five-year period. A longitudinal investigation of the online data may illustrate the dynamic nature of sustainability at the macro level and allow for the speculation of what is “sustainable hospitality” as the concept continues to develop.

A second limitation is that I captured articles published in English only. The Restaurants Canada website is bilingual, and therefore publishes articles in both French and English. The French version of the website might showcase other areas of dialogue related to sustainability.

A third limitation is that articles captured from the three websites were written by different authors, some of who are identified and others who are not. The voices represented in the analysis are varied (e.g. consultants, owners, managers, researchers or writers) and represent a broad range of perspectives from the industry.

Yet another limitation is that the articles that were captured using NCapture in the NVivo 10 software were not always complete. It was observed in NVivo that some of the articles were not captured fully.

There are limitations for the data collected from the consumer perspective. First, the lists of certified restaurants gathered from the three program websites were captured at one point in time. The lists do change periodically and so the participating restaurants may have changed. Not all restaurants are able to continuously participate in the programs and pay the fees. Restaurants are dynamic organizations as well and will change operations to suit the existing
market. Second, the restaurants listed did not all have reviews listed on TripAdvisor during the data collection period. No data were therefore included for those restaurants that did not have published reviews. Third, the consumer reviews represent those restaurant customers who may be more technologically-oriented or those who like to view or share on the TripAdvisor website.

Finally, there are limitations for the data collected from interviews. The interview data were collected over four months and required individuals to self-select to participate. The limitation is that the people who arranged for interviews may already have strong environmental values, and can only be the voices for those consumers and employees with an awareness and interest in sustainability.
4 Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter first presents the results from the data sources captured through available online secondary data which represents a broad industry perspective and a consumer marketplace perspective on sustainability in Canadian restaurants. Detailed results from the multiple data sources used in a single-case study are provided next.

4.2 Showcasing Industry and Consumer Perspectives of Sustainability

This section presents the results from two online data studies. The perspectives of both the industry and consumers are captured through available online secondary data sources.

4.2.1 Showcasing Industry Perspectives of Sustainability

Results of the online analysis portraying an “industry” perspective are presented under two sections: (i) results of a word frequency analysis and (ii) results of a content analysis. The results come from the data set that was obtained by searching for the words *sustainability* and *sustainable* in the search box on three Canadian foodservice industry websites. The focus of this research is on the meanings of sustainability in the process of a service experience, and this impacts the search words chosen to explore the meanings in the industry context. The noun *sustainability* and the adjective *sustainable* were selected to discover the complexity of the perceptions and meanings presented by the industry. The purpose of this part of the inquiry is to deeply explore the constructions of sustainability identified by those in the industry in their own language, and not simply to confirm or deny whether sustainability is prevalent in industry conversations.

4.2.1.1 The Context of Sustainability

A word frequency analysis of all of the articles captured in pdf format from three Canadian foodservice industry websites yielded the selected results, as exemplified in the word
cloud in Figure 4.1. The word cloud illustrates the 100 most frequently used words (over three characters in length) in the entire data set. Words under three letters were removed from the data because they were not relevant to the topic.

The Restaurants Canada website had the least number of captured articles during the key term search. On this website, the search results could be categorized in two groups. First, sustainability was recognized in the results of an annual chef survey on menu trends. Second, sustainability was discussed in water, waste and energy issues. Articles published on the Restaurants Canada website displayed specific sustainability-related issues for regions of the country. The identified issues represent water, waste or energy concerns in a municipality or province. One example of a specific issue in a location was a discussion over the Ontario Waste Reduction Act on 17 July 2013. Restaurants Canada Restaurant Central.ca showcases sustainability as an issue for restaurants in food procurement, strategy and operations. Articles written by industry practitioners, consultants, and researchers describe the opportunities and challenges for restaurant owners and operators to become more environmentally sustainable. When mentioned, sustainability is portrayed largely as an operational issue on this website.

Foodservice and Hospitality offered a range of articles from industry practitioners, consultants, researchers and writers that profile restaurants, hospitality organizations and
suppliers as well as acknowledge best practices or trends in the industry. This magazine had the greatest number of pdfs found during the online analysis. The over 450 results presented a broad discussion of sustainability in the restaurant industry with perspectives on sustainability from all types of stakeholders in the industry. The articles addressed environmental aspects of sustainability with only a few acknowledgements of social sustainability.

The word frequency analysis conducted on the industry data sources showed three interesting categories: the general sense of sustainability (generic elements); the milieu of businesses (economic and industry elements); and the milieu of restaurant services (food-related elements). These categories, illustrated in Figure 4.2, combine to portray the context of sustainability in restaurants from a broad industry perspective.

![Figure 4.2. Categories from Online Industry Word Frequency Analysis.](image)

**4.2.1.1 The Broad Meaning of Sustainability**

The results demonstrated the complex and diverse meanings of sustainability and sustainability-related words. Since the search terms used on these industry websites were sustainability and sustainable, frequently mentioned words may be considered to have some connection to the meaning of sustainability. Specific results showed the word *local* appeared more often than *sustainable* or *sustainability* on the websites. Second, the words *local* or
sustainable appeared more often than the word organic. Finally, the word green appeared more than environmental. In summary, sustainability is more discussed using a variety of terms that differ from one industry website to another.

The broad meaning of sustainability is portrayed by words such as local, sustainable, sustainability, energy, green, environmental, health, organic, and water. These words may be said to represent aspects of the dimensions of environmental sustainability and social sustainability.

4.2.1.1.2 The Milieu of Businesses (Economic and Industry Elements)

The business context of the foodservice industry came across in the results of the data retrieved from industry websites. Words such as restaurant(s), foodservice, chef, industry, company, products, people, customers, hospitality, trends and service demonstrate aspects of the operational side of the restaurant industry. These words appear more frequently than the words that can be said to relate to sustainability.

4.2.1.1.3 The Milieu of Restaurant Services (Food and Beverage Related Elements)

The restaurant services context is also strongly represented in the results of the word frequency analysis conducted from industry websites using the search terms sustainability and sustainable. Words such as food(s), menu, seafood, fish, wine, ingredients, pizza, quality, fresh, and coffee are all food-and-beverage-related elements that appear on the word frequency list. The word food(s) is the most frequently mentioned word across all three industry websites. This finding highlights the perceived importance of food as a part of the restaurant product.

The results of the word frequency analysis illustrate that sustainability is discussed as a part of the restaurant industry but is not yet a key aspect of it. Second, the discussions of sustainability are multifaceted and vary from website to website. There is diversity in the meanings and perceptions of sustainability which greatly impacts the understanding of sustainability and the application of sustainable practices in restaurants.
4.2.1.2 The Multifaceted Meanings of Sustainability

Based on the understanding from the word frequency analysis conducted from industry websites, content analysis of all articles captured in pdf format was conducted. The following themes were found in the data: “general sense of sustainability”, “pillars of sustainability,” and “sustainability as a restaurant issue”. Figure 4.3. illustrates these three primary themes, and several subthemes.

4.2.1.2.1 The General Sense of Sustainability

The content analysis of the data retrieved from industry websites indicates a “general sense of sustainability” can be articulated through the use of the words local, sustainable, green, or organic. Some examples are shown below.

Going local is so 2009. Upping the ante when it comes to sustainable food sourcing is Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, which has broadened the “go local” mantra by raising its own hens, tracing seafood origin from ocean to plate, and gone out of its way to create homemade tofu. (RA, 2011)
By listing items as organic, operators are satisfying a growing demand for fresh and natural foods. Additionally, the word “organic” is often associated with sustainability efforts; using natural, chemical-free ingredients is viewed as healthier for the environment as well as for diners. (RA, 2014)

From your perspective, what are the best opportunities around your operation to add sustainability? Once you’ve determined what matters most, it likely won’t take long to spot the key aspects or areas of your operations that are ripe for your green makeover. Maybe it’s a new recycling/composting system or long-lasting, energy-saving LED upgrades to your kitchen or dining room lighting or finding some locally-grown ingredients for that new signature dish. So, if you’re considering making changes or upgrades to your equipment, design/décor, menu or brand marketing, you’ll want to include them among your first green steps. (RA, 2011)

4.2.1.2.1 Green and Operations

“Green” was a word used in articles as a synonym of sustainability or to describe an aspect of sustainability. The examples below illustrate the complexity and importance of green to restaurants:

There are many reasons to go green these days: savings in operating costs, reducing waste, improving public image, and of course, reducing your impact on the environment. (RA, 2010)

Sure, green seems to be the consumer bandwagon of the moment, and every business sector is jumping to get on board. However, underlying this phenomenon are motivating factors unlike any others in recent history: the global effects of climate change, mounting environmental impacts and other threats to our collective future. (RA, 2012)

4.2.1.2.2 The Pillars of Sustainability

Content analysis of all of the articles captured in pdf format by using the search terms sustainability or sustainable yields some interesting insights of how industry professionals dialogue about sustainability. Results indicate that sustainability in restaurants is a complex term and issue. Examples of the way industry professionals use the term “sustainability” generically are shown below:
In March 2010, CRFA released its first chef survey, and, along with a clear interest in all things local, nourishing and sustainable, chefs identified new meat cuts and non-traditional fish as up-and-coming menu trends. (RA, no date).

However, as more and more people are discovering, sustainability is about much more than going through the motions of recycling garbage and turning off a few lights. It is a complex issue that demands more from the foodservice industry – among the largest consumers of energy and water in the country – than token gestures. (RA, 2012)

Sustainability - Pressure continues to grow on the foodservice industry to implement sustainable operating practices. It can be challenging for larger chains to implement local food initiatives given the scale of operations but these companies have been creative in developing alternate sustainability strategies. Responding to consumer and advocate group demand for improved sustainability will continue to be a challenge for foodservice operators. (RA, 2014)

Furthermore, the word sustainability is also used to refer to specific pillars of sustainability such as environmental, social or economic aspects of sustainability. Of the three pillars identified under the concept of sustainability, the term “environmental sustainability” was mentioned most frequently. The specific terms “social sustainability” and “economic sustainability” were rarely mentioned in the discussions within and across all the articles posted on the three industry websites.

4.2.1.2.2.1 Environmental Sustainability

A query for “environmental sustainability” in the industry data sources showed the term appeared in 26 articles. The term was mentioned in 17 articles in the Foodservice and Hospitality magazine website and 5 articles posted on Restaurant Central.ca. The specific term environmental sustainability was not mentioned in any of the captured articles for the Restaurants Canada website. This finding highlights the variation in the language used in the construct of sustainability. For example, articles on Restaurants Canada use the term green more than sustainability.

Some examples of how environmental sustainability was used in the online articles posted on two industry websites are seen below.
The way we see it, becoming more sustainable requires an ongoing commitment to balance the social, environmental and economic aspects of how we do business today and in the future. (RA, no date)

Off the showroom floor, seminars and presentations will cover topics such as industry and consumer trends as well as environmental sustainability, and the show will also feature speakers such as chefs Rob Feenie, Chuck Currie and John Bishop. (FHM, 2013)

As part of its commitment to environmental sustainability and promoting green building practices in its more than 4,400 restaurants, this Earth Day, Tim Hortons is announcing a new initiative to replace all existing lighting fixtures in restaurants across Canada and the United States with energy-efficient light-emitting diode (LED) lighting from Royal Philips. The conversion program will see 485 restaurants outfitted with LED lighting in 2014 alone, translating to an estimated 6.4 million kilowatt hours (kWh) in energy savings, (RA, 2014).

4.2.1.2.2.2 Social and Economic Sustainability

The terms “social sustainability” and “economic sustainability” appeared in two articles and one article, respectively. Social sustainability was mentioned in one article posted on two of the websites. Economic sustainability also appeared in the article “Sustainability is more than just green” independently, and in combination with the other pillars of sustainability in “Tyson Foods Receive an ‘A’ for New Corporate Responsibility Report”.

The new sustainability report is the fourth Tyson Foods has produced since 2005, but the first to receive the Global Reporting Initiative’s (GRI) Application Level ‘A.’ This represents a high degree of disclosure and transparency in sustainability reporting. GRI is a world-recognized organization that promotes economic, environmental and social sustainability. (FHM, 2013)

Social sustainability: The social context of sustainability is perhaps where we shine the most. There are few industries who give back as much to our communities as we do. We should feel good about the fundraising and social awareness we create though our participation in local and national charitable endeavours. Take Second Harvest for example, a “food rescue” group in Toronto who provides food to marginalized members of our society. Much of the 5.7 million pounds of food they delivered in 2008 was supplied by restaurants. This great work aside, we should all be aware of the recent Statistics Canada finding that 38 per cent of food and beverage products produced in Canada are never consumed and go to waste. (RA, 2010)
Just some of the benefits of this whole animal butchery include a better product, a variety of menu options, support for the local economy and preserving skills and knowledge that every cook should have,” says Belcham. (RA, no date)

Additionally, the data also showed the term “socially responsible” was used in nine articles to describe community engagement or mindset, or what might also be referred to as “social sustainability”. For example,

Millennials appreciate restaurateurs that are socially responsible, have quality food and support local community activities, according to a report from the Chicago-based research firm Technomic. (FHM, 2012)

4.2.1.2.2.3 Sustainability has Two Pillars

Often, sustainability is described using two pillars such as environmental and economic or environmental and social. Examples can be:

The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association is proud to offer a new program to help restaurants reduce their impact on the environment and improve their bottom line. CRFA Conserve is a new online tool specially designed to help restaurants learn about sustainability best practices for the foodservice industry. (RC, 2013)

Here in Canada, Vancouver’s The Acorn, which opened in 2012, is garnering critical acclaim and packed dinner crowds with its all-vegetarian menu. “It’s great to see people realizing that you can still be happy and full, and have a creative and delicious meal [with no meat],” says Shira Blustein, The Acorn’s owner. While part of this trend is about the desire to make healthy choices, Blustein hopes that it can also be partly attributed to a growing sense of social responsibility. “We’re becoming more aware of the state of the world and how unsustainable it is to raise meat for the masses,” she says. (FHM, 2015)

Prices are going up and will continue to do so across a lot of different categories,” Long explains. “I strive to pay a living wage to my suppliers, my farmers. That’s reflected on the menu. I don’t buy huge amounts of stuff. I don’t have franchises. My ideal is good food, not cheap food, so I constantly have to explain to people why it costs a dollar more here or there. It’s because I actually give that money to places that are going to keep it sustainable. (RA, 2014)
4.2.1.2.3 Sustainability is a Restaurant Issue

Sustainability was articulated to be an important issue for restaurants. Authors of articles described sustainability as a “journey” that was complicated, challenging and necessary. One particular author described, in detail, what sustainability is and presented some motivations for restaurants to try to become more sustainable:

If you asked 100 different people what sustainability means to them, you’re highly likely to receive about as many different answers, each dependent on the respondent’s cultural, economic or educational background. In light of such disparate viewpoints, it’s no wonder that restaurant operators and foodservice providers might find themselves scratching their heads when they read yet another article, blog or news report on how the sustainability issue is pervading the foodservice industry and what it means to their bottom line. (RA, 2012)

Plus, a growing number of consumers are demanding that businesses “get real” on this issue. Those who do will earn their loyalty, while those who persist in “business as usual” risk losing the support of not only consumers, but business and governments as well. (RA, 2012)

4.2.2 Showcasing Consumer Perspectives of Sustainability

Results of the online analysis from the “Consumer Perspective” are presented under two sections: results of the word frequency analysis and results of content analysis.

4.2.2.1 Initial Consumer Perspectives

Word frequency analysis of all the consumer reviews captured in Word document format yielded the selected results, as shown in Figure 4-4. The word cloud illustrated that consumers rarely mentioned or used any sustainability-related words in reviews. Some of the most frequently used words such as reviews, restaurant, report, food, or service are words used in the template for TripAdvisor on the website and were therefore omitted from the word cloud. Restaurant names, employee names and cities were also removed from the word frequency list.
The general word frequency (list of 1000 most frequently mentioned words) demonstrated some interesting results. The word *local* was ranked 38th. *Environment* appeared 537th on the list while *green* was ranked 574th. *Organic* was ranked 579th. The most frequently mentioned words consumers used in reviews were typically not sustainability-related. *Local* is the first ranked word that may be argued to have a connection with sustainability. It may also be a concept that consumers are more familiar with and is easier to understand. Consumers, in this case, tended not to use *organic* often and this may be due to the lack of identification of organic items in the restaurant experience. The lack of identification of sustainability in the restaurant experience suggests that consumers are not aware of sustainability in the experience or do not feel it is important enough to mention in reviews to other consumers.

Since *sustainable* or *sustainability* were terms that did not appear on the word frequency list, specific text queries were done. Neither the word *sustainable* or *sustainability* were mentioned in the consumer review data. One might use this result to say that consumers are not interested in sustainability in restaurants, and that is why the terms are not found in the reviews. However, since related terms such as *environment*, *green*, *organic*, and *local* were mentioned, more analysis will be needed to explain the result. One reason why *sustainability* may not be a frequently mentioned word in consumer reviews is that the TripAdvisor review template does not ask consumers specific questions about sustainability. Consumers may need to be prompted to answer questions about sustainability in restaurants in order for the words to be used in reviews.
Nonetheless, it is not possible to determine from the word frequency analysis whether consumers are actually interested in sustainability or how much of an impact sustainability might have on their evaluations of the restaurant experiences.

4.2.2 Deeper Consumer Perspectives

A content analysis of the consumer reviews captured was conducted and the following themes were found: “sustainable philosophy of the business” (from an environmental perspective only) and “local food and sustainability”. The themes are highlighted in Figure 4.5.

![Figure 4.5. Themes from Online Consumer Content Analysis.](image)

4.2.2.1 Sustainable Philosophy of the Business

An environmental sustainable initiative or philosophy of the restaurant is one element that some consumers did seem to be aware of and comment upon. A couple of reviews noted the ecological initiatives or environmental philosophy of certain restaurants. The following examples demonstrate awareness by the consumer of sustainability in some aspect of the experience.

The food is good but very pricey. Portions are miniscule. An entree salad is not accompanied with bread or crackers and requires an upcharge. Service is average and
our server appeared inexperienced. The restaurant is located in an old brickworks that has been converted to an ecologically focused complex making for interesting surroundings. (Review of L4, July 6, 2015)

It is a very nice environmental friendly restaurant, good design with the mix of old and new stuff. free wifi available. I did order the fish and some paste [sic], the presentation is good, taste is fine too. I think they are using fresh stuffs. But I would say the portion is too small and the price is a bit more than I expect for a lunch. With tip is about C$30 per person, without any dessert, their cheese cake is $14, I guess if I want to be filled, $90 plus in here is a must.

I have to go to eat a muffin after lunch. Something they have to work on to improve it. (Review of L4, March 17, 2015)

The attention to great, wholesome ingredients is fantastic. I felt so good when leaving because the food was delicious and so beautifully prepared, I could compost the remaining crumbs and recycle my drink bottle. I love restaurateurs who pay attention to using quality ingredients, prepare simple foods in fantastic and creative ways, and are friendly to the environment and their customers. Makes me feel like they are not in business only for the money but also to make the world a better place - one burger at a time! (Review of L14, March 3, 2015)

Excellent food, and it’s great to eat at a place that puts so much emphasis on ethical meat and the environment. (Review of L22, May 12, 2015)

This place has the tastiest food. I am a pescetarian [sic] and hubby is a carnivore. He is gracious about eating where I want. We were passing through and I saw the reviews and had to try. I had the Shawarma and he had the quesadilla and both of us said it was some of the best food we ever had. In fact, hubby had meatloaf at a restaurant the night before and said he would take this over the meatloaf. That is serious praise, believe me. We ordered the goat cheesecake and the lemon square. Both were awesome but that goat cheesecake was to die for. We are also both very impressed with the community work and the planet-saving (or non-harming further) efforts this company takes. (Review of L20, September 1, 2015)

4.2.2.2 Local Food and Sustainability

Furthermore, the data specific to sustainability in restaurant experiences seem to describe locally sourced food more than anything else. One example of consumer awareness of sustainable practices in a Toronto restaurant was on 11 January 2013: “local and sustainable food in a spectacular setting”.

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Some consumers mentioned local food and beverages as a positive aspect of the experience in their review: “The food was hot, fresh and unique. The menu is small but varied and locally sourced. The wine and beer selection was mostly local as well” (Review of G3, April 10, 2015) or “Field to Fork is their motto purchasing mostly local if not Ontario products” (Review of G3, March 29, 2015).

Consumers saw local food in a restaurant as a way to support the local economy. One reviewer described his or her visit to a British Columbia restaurant as involving “fantastic food, fabulous service and great ambience. You can enjoy a fabulous meal while knowing that you are also supporting the local economy because they go out of their way to source ingredients as locally as possible” (Review of L13, August 23, 2015).

The word local offered several examples, including the ones below:

A friend ended up at the Sheldon Chumir Health Centre (he’s 93, so these things happen). Minutes turned to hours. But Chumir has these great windows that overlook Central Memorial Park... And I spied what looked to be a restaurant. A great restaurant, as it turns out... With locally sourced ingredients. I had roast chicken on a fresh bun, followed by the best Mac n’ cheese ever (local Gouda, roasted cauliflower and spinach -- to die for!). Served with a house-made sparkling ginger soda; so good, I had two and asked for the recipe!

But hey, you don’t need to have a friend at the health centre as an excuse! The park is great, the service is witty and attentive, and the setting is downtown Calgary at its finest. (Review of L3, May 28, 2015)

Four of us went to this restaurant to experience Big Taste. We were impressed with our meals. All of us had the lamb chops which our waiter recommended. There was also duck confit as a choice. The lamb came from a local farm and was done to perfection - juicy and tender with a rosette of mashed potatoes, spinach and a roasted tomato all beautifully presented on a plate. The two choices of appetizers were both good - a smoked salmon salad and a tomato olive mixture in a martini glass. One of our party had the wine pairing for the salad and said it was good. The lemon meringue tart was a nice finish to a delicious meal. Service was attentive and pleasant though out the meal. Tables were well spaced and the lighting made it easy to read the menu but subdued enough to give a good atmosphere. (Review of L21, March 10, 2015)

I’ve been going to this restaurant since it opened twenty years ago and it’s always a treat. With a premise of local and fresh ingredients, and a creative chef, the menu is always inspirational. Reservations are recommended, and if a nice day you may get a coveted table outdoors. Be sure to find out where to park for easy access to the island. (Review of L18, February 18, 2015)
We previewed the menu online and found it to be accurate with the inclusion of 2 dishes as a result of fresh ingredient availability. The menu is limited which we always find to be a good thing because if there’s 5 pages of good chance nothing is real. I can only say that from the appearance of the different dishes all around our table and the way our mains were presented that the aromas were just a predication of the tastes and appearance of our own meals. My Sable fish/Black cod was probably better than most Chilean Sea bass I’ve had but much more ocean friendly and as far as that goes...local and responsibly sourced is emphasized here. On site green house supplies some ingredients and open veg garden is to be completed this year. (Review of G3, March 8, 2015)

Overall, the online analysis demonstrated that consumers did not regularly mention aspects of sustainability in their reviews of restaurant experiences. The data captured offered minimal information on how consumers perceived sustainability in restaurant experiences. There could be several reasons why consumers did not choose to mention aspects of sustainability in these reviews. First, TripAdvisor does not prompt consumers to mention sustainable aspects. Consumers may unconsciously interpret the information on sustainability, and need prompting to discuss this aspect of the experience. Second, the restaurant may not communicate much information on sustainability initiatives to customers either at the restaurant or through other communication channels like a website or social media pages. Consumers may therefore be unaware of the sustainable philosophy of the restaurant or particular initiatives.

4.3 Case Study of a Sustainable Restaurant

Case study methodology was chosen for this study which investigated the phenomenon of sustainability in the restaurant experience in a real-world restaurant (Yin, 2014). The restaurant selected for this case study had to meet specific selection criteria: 1) be a self-reported and sustainability-focused restaurant; 2) be a full-service restaurant; and 3) have online customer reviews from TripAdvisor that mentioned sustainable initiatives in the restaurant. The reason for selecting a restaurant that self-reported and promoted itself as a sustainable restaurant was that the restaurant would be working on sustainable activities or initiatives at the time of data collection. The second criteria was implemented so that customers would be describing a longer service experience. Full-service restaurants require a more complex service experience since the
dining experience requires customers to be seated at a table and served food and beverages by employees. The duration of the restaurant experience is typically longer and there is more time and opportunity for the restaurant to communicate sustainable initiatives to the customer. Finally, the third criteria was identified because it demonstrates that previous customers became aware of sustainable initiatives implemented in the restaurant from online sources, from recommendations by other people, from restaurant marketing or from employees in the restaurant.

A single-case study was utilized to determine the perceptions and meanings of three types of participants in a restaurant service experience: managers, employees and customers. Secondary and primary data sources were utilized to understand the context in which participants viewed and partook in a restaurant experience within a sustainable restaurant. Secondary data sources included the restaurant website and social media pages (Twitter and Facebook) in addition to consumer TripAdvisor restaurant reviews. Primary data from qualitative semi-structured interviews was collected. The case data collected were compared to illustrate the real life context of restaurant experiences in a sustainable restaurant.

The chosen case, ABC Restaurant (hereafter referred to as “ABC”) is not an externally certified sustainable restaurant through any third party certification program; it is a sustainability-focused and self-declared “sustainable restaurant”. The hospitality group management team values environmental and social sustainability, and all of the restaurants managed by the group follow guidelines created by the management team. The founder of the restaurant group has won a Canadian hospitality industry award in “green leadership” for his dedication to managing restaurants with sustainable values. The opportunity to investigate the sustainable restaurant experience from various perspectives in this unique hospitality operation was recognized by the researchers. A single-case was useful in this study because the restaurant represented a “revelatory” case which Yin (2014) argues provides the researcher the opportunity to investigate a phenomenon that is largely inaccessible. The benefits of a single-case study are balanced by the limitations, the main one being that the case may differ from what the researcher believed it to represent. The researcher acknowledges this risk, but did not find the case to be different than what was expected.
The following sections offer results from both secondary and primary data sources collected for the case study.

4.3 Perspectives of a Sustainable Restaurant

Results from the data analysis of secondary data of the case: restaurant website, restaurant social media pages, TripAdvisor consumer reviews of restaurant experience are presented next.

4.3.1.1 The Restaurant Website

A word frequency was performed on the pdf pages captured from the case restaurant website.

The word frequency demonstrates the words Ontario, local and organic are the most popular of the sustainability-related words used on the restaurant website. Local connects to two restaurant slogans: “obsessively local” and “local tastes way better”. The restaurant motto is “taste of Ontario”, and so Ontario is used often. Organic is a word typically used to describe food and beverages. The word “sustainability” does not make the top 100 most frequently used words, but appears four times within the restaurant pages. First, sustainability is mentioned on the “our community” webpage where it is described how the restaurant is involved in the local community:

In addition to our core values of Local, Building Heritage and Sustainability, at ABC we believe strongly in giving back to our local community. ABC Restaurants are proud supporters of organizations dedicated to restoring rivers. We work closely with Creemore Springs Brewery to raise funds for [location omitted] River Project and [location omitted] Conservation Authority. In addition, ABC is very proud to support our local farming community as well as over 20 local charities through financial support and charitable program participation. (ABC Website)

Sustainability is also used on the “our values” page of the restaurant website where the founder describes the history of the core values for restaurant operations and what these values mean to the customer:
In 1990 the Core Values of our parent company, The [Redacted] Group, evolved into 3 key areas; 1. Local: Promote and serve locally sourced Ontario quality foods and beverages. That’s “The Taste of Ontario”! 2. Building Heritage: Respect and restore our local natural heritage in the building plans, construction and interior craftsmanship and design of all of our restaurants. 3. Sustainability: To work in an environmentally sustainable manner in all aspects of our operations with a focus and dedication to continually reducing our “carbon footprint”. Our goal is simple: to be the food service industry leader in sustainability. (ABC Website)

What does that exactly mean to you, our guest? Simply, [Redacted] Grillhouse & Pub is a restaurant that serves the very best of locally crafted foods and beverages at everyday prices. We bring “The Taste of Ontario”, the highest quality of fresh products from Ontario farmers, breweries and wineries to our guests each and every day. Combined with a deep respect for local heritage and craftsmanship and an unwavering dedication for sustainability, [Redacted] represents the embodiment of our philosophy as it took form in the late sixties”, Founder of The [Redacted] Group of Companies Ltd. (ABC Website)

The word environmental appears only once on the entire website under the “our food and beverages” heading. The description under this heading connects the philosophy of the restaurant to sustainability principles such as environmental and social:

Our “buy-local” approach is based upon the following logic: 1. Locally sourced food is fresher and tastes better and it contains more nutrients. 2. Local food is safer due to more stringent government controls of the food chain. 3. Buying local diversifies the local community’s economy and provides more employment in our immediate region. 4. There is a closer connection to the local farmer giving you the opportunity to actually know the people who grow and process your foods. 5. The environmental impact is minimized because our food is not transported from foreign countries on diesel-fuelled, pollution-spewing trucks, trains or boats. As respected environmentalist Dr. David Suzuki noted: “Eating locally isn’t just a fad – it may be one of the most important ways we save ourselves and the planet!” (ABC Website)

Thus, this study found that restaurant webpages portrayed Ontario and local as connected to sustainability. Ontario had 18 uses and local had 17 uses on the restaurant webpages, and were ranked 46th and 48th on the most frequently used word list.

The restaurant also utilized the word organic 14 times on the various pages of the restaurant website. Descriptions of menu items or alcoholic beverages mentioned whether the product was organic. For examples, a dish on the lunch menu is described as “Organic Field
Greens”; an item on the dinner menu is “Organic Quinoa + Arugula Salad” or a wine on the wine list is noted as “Organic Red ... Southbrook “Connect”.

4.3.1.2 The Restaurant Facebook and Twitter Pages

Local and Ontario were words found to have a connection with sustainability on the restaurant Twitter account. Facebook was not shown to be as active a platform for communicating sustainability for the restaurant. The types of sources in which the word local was used are shown below:

- Twitter posts – 32 uses, and
- Facebook posts – 3 uses.

Some examples of how local was used on the restaurant Twitter account include: “We #loveontfood so check out the ways to celebrate our local farmers for #localfoodweek June 1-7 (June 2, 2015) or a retweet by the restaurant posted on July 21st:”Thanks, [CASEGrille] esp. Sara! - for a fabulous meal and outstanding service. We love local!”

The word local did appear on Facebook, predominately from customer posts. Customers mentioned local in posts, including in the following examples: “Trying out the local food stuff” (January 18) or “Amazing food, amazing staff will deff [sic] be back gotta love eating Local heart emoticon” (November 2). Customer reviews on Facebook also showed that local was a positive aspect of the restaurant experience. The following is from a customer that gave the restaurant a 5 star review: “Tried CASE for the first time and it was amazing. I highly recommend trying this restaurant if you haven’t already. I love that they use local foods. I want to go back tonight!” (January 18).

Ontario was mentioned in Tweets, such as the one tweeted on August 1st: “Lets [sic] not forget about the delicious seasonal Ontario fruit we use for our cocktails! White white… https://instagram.com/p/53XANZmAjH/ ”.

Tweets also showed a connection with sustainability. This tweet connects a local brewery and a river fundraiser on September 15th: “I’m sold.. What about you? Drink a pint! Save the
planet! #planet @MuskokaBrewery”. A tweet on July 27th identified a local wine on tap as environmentally friendly: “Just started pouring wine on tap in... Guaranteed fresh and much friendlier environmentally. A perfect fit!”

The word sustainability was specifically utilized in Tweets from the restaurant’s Twitter account. The two following tweets were posted on the same day from a sustainability event that the restaurant management attended in April of 2015: Family @CASE Grill at #SWRevening for the celebration; 3 generations driving sustainability into restaurant biz!” and “Starting the learning about sustainability early @SustainableWat #SWRevening #thereisnoplanetB“. Sustainability was mentioned in a hashtag on April 3, 2015 by the restaurant when a tweet was posted about Friday evening events where OceanWise fish was served: “It’s @ocean_wise Friday! Come and enjoy our Chefs #sustainable offerings. We’re open all weekend! http://ow.ly/i/ac5LH “

The word organic appeared in Twitter posts as well. Tweets from May 29, 2015 and April 3, 2015 highlight organic being used to describe fish offerings: “Poached Organic Salmon is a delicious new entree on our summer dinner menu! #organic‘ or “Happy Fish Friday!! Come and join us for our Chefs feature tonight. An Organic Oceans pan seared… https://instagram.com/p/1BwgwtmArD/”.

Green was referenced to by the restaurant when describing salad greens or the political Green party. The restaurant showed their support for environmental stewardship by tweeting information about the Green party on several occasions, including May 20, 2015: “He has fought for Ontarians for over 30 years – now he is seeking #GPC nomination in [location omitted]


4.3.1.3 TripAdvisor Consumer Reviews

The terms local and Ontario were found in TripAdvisor reviews 92 times. These were found in comments made by consumers as a part of their restaurant experience review. Below are some examples of how the term local was used by consumers in review.
Simply loved it. Food was great. Especially since it was local. Even the beer was local. The fact that the restaurant is now in an old school was also quite impressive. Great way to connect to the past. Finally [sic] staff was very nice and professional. Great place in [location omitted]. (Robert C., Review of ABC, June 26, 2015)

1st visit and was impressed. Interesting menu with local ingredients such as great lake fish and elk along with some different takes on more standard dishes. Had the grilled pickerel, was cooked perfectly and delivered great flavor Good selection of local brews. Nice change from the chain restaurants. I’ll go back and try the other entries. (Dean A., Review of ABC, June 24, 2015)

I love ABC’s commitment to “fresh and local”. The menu is outstanding - eaten here many times and I’ve never been disappointed with the service or the food. I’ve only been there for dinner...looking forward to trying lunch there soon! (Leslie V., Review of ABC, June 24, 2015)

We are here for our anniversary. We received complimentary glasses of champagne upon arrival. Dinner was delicious. All locally grown and raised. Even the wine was from Ontario. It’s not overly priced which is nice. It was a wonderful experience from start to finish. The service is impeccable. Highly recommend this restaurant for something different. (chrislee007, Review of ABC, June 3, 2015)

We have been here a handful of times with family and as a couple. We have had a great experience every time we go and our family has enjoyed it too. We love the old schoolhouse that has been repurposed and how all the food is from local Ontario farms. Ask to sit in the old schoolhouse section for the best experience. This is a great restaurant in [location omitted]! (Courtney F., Review of ABC, August 31, 2015)

I’ve been hearing about this restaurant on the radio and have driven by it many times. My husband and I finally had a Friday date night so we thought we’d give it a try. It looks good from the outside and there is plenty of parking b/c it’s in a shopping complex.

The decor is OK but...you can see where they went cheap. As we waited for the 3 staff members at the hostess stand to notice us we had time to watch the bar patrons. A bit scruffier (construction clothes) than we expected. We had made a reservation and were seated right away at a table. The booths looked more comfortable (despite the cheap fabric) but were all taken. The table was very tight to its neighbours. We are tall people and we both bumped our legs on the table sitting down and had to take special care sitting down to not bump
into the people behind us. We almost immediately left but felt badly to not give 
the “obsessively local” food a chance. Now I wish we had left.

The server was polite and nice enough but we could tell she wasn’t very 
experienced and despite the Manager delivering each course himself with 
“Enjoy!” the food was very lack lustre. We never got water and had to ask for 
extra napkins and plates. We started with their cheddar and harvest ale dip with 
Barry’s asparagus chips - the chips were the best part!. Hubby had a beef dip 
sandwich and I tried the Elk tacos. Presentation of each were good (tacos served 
on a plank) but the food VERY bland. No mention upon ordering of side options 
for the beef dip sandwich so hubby was disappointed with fries that he hates. We 
probably won’t return. (jnamurray, Review of ABC, January 26, 2015)

We dropped into CASE for a late Friday dinner. I had the strip loin and my wife 
ordered the flatbread and salad combo. Our server was on the ball throughout the 
evening, even after what had likely been a busy dinner service. 
We always enjoy CASE as it is a cut above your standard chain fare and the price 
point is reasonable. The focus on locally sourced food is also great. Stop in and 
enjoy the food! (DY, Review of ABC, June 28, 2015)

The term organic was used by consumers in the TripAdvisor reviews for ABC 
Restaurant. Some consumers did indicate that they knew the food was organic in reviews of 
their restaurant experience.

Finding this place was a blessing; I was staying at the Hampton Inn because it 
was near [location omitted] Airport, and wanted a decent meal within walking 
distance. CASE is right across the street. The organic greens salad with 5 oz strip 
loin was delicious, as was the glass of sparkling chardonnay. Total cost before tip 
was 32.10 CAD. Servers were attentive but not intrusive. (Mechaieh, Review of 
ABC, July 26, 2015)

We’ve been frequenting ABC in [location omitted] since they opened 4 years 
ago. We were enchanted with their “obsessively local” food and drink menu, as 
well as their commitment to restaurant energy reduction and even kitchen scrap 
recycling. 

Since then we’ve been proud to watch them rack up awards for their earth 
friendly endeavours while introducing as many friends and family as we could to 
this family-owned and lovely establishment.

The one big issue they faced early on was the renovation of a 100 year old school 
room into an open room eating area. The acoustics just killed any idea of an 
imtate dinner upstairs. Since the beginning, they’ve been working to correct it. 
This didn’t stop us; however, my monthly visits seemed to be reserved to the 
main level area, which I didn’t love as much as the idea of the upstairs school 
room.
I’m so pleased to say that last week my husband and I went to [restaurant name] for our Anniversary dinner and we were seated upstairs into a BOOTH. They had just the day before completely finished all of the renovations to the upstairs school room, transforming it into an intimate dining area, low lit, with just right music playing in the backyard, perfect acoustics. THE FOOD. If you’re still with me, since I go so often I know all the weekly specials. Mondays and Tuesdays, 2 for 1 Wings—the biggest and best juicy organic wings I’ve ever had, plus $5 glasses of wine. Wednesday night is date night, two can eat two courses for $49. Thursday is cocktail day. Sundays are Prime Rib night. The Prime Rib is a true melt in your mouth experience, especially if you’ve never experienced organic grass fed beef as it should be.

THE FOOD THAT NIGHT: My husband ordered the Ginger Chili half chicken grilled and plated over a pilaf/ragu [sic] of roasted chickpeas, spinach, and wild rice. Succulent and he ate up every bit of his ragu [sic] (surprise surprise).

I splurged (carb wise) on the wild boar and grass fed beef meatloaf over cheddar mashed potatoes with veg. Comfort food at its highest. If you have room, the creme brulee [sic] with blueberry compote is my favourite sweet ending.

I love that you can spend a little, or splurge and spend (lots) more. The menu is so extensive, there’s something for everyone. We were there last Tuesday evening and the restaurant was full. The evening service was very relaxed and just right, compared to the brisker lunch service. And lunch is always full, as well.

I can’t recommend this establishment enough. Kudos to doing everything just right!” [Review of ABC, February 22, 2015]

The analysis of the secondary data from the case study offered insights into how sustainability was communicated to customers on the restaurant website, and through Twitter and Facebook accounts. The restaurant website tended to stress Ontario, local, and organic. Ontario and local are a part of the restaurant motto and slogans, respectively. Sustainability was mentioned in an explanation of the restaurant’s values and engagement with the community. On these webpages, sustainability was described with environmental, economic and social dimensions. Furthermore, the environmental dimension was identified as a part of the restaurant’s food and beverage purchasing policies. A noted Canadian environmentalist, David Suzuki, was even quoted on the restaurant’s webpage to reinforce the idea that eating local food is a way to save the planet and people. Local therefore had ties to sustainability in this restaurant. The ties between local, Ontario and sustainability were also seen on the Twitter and Facebook accounts for the restaurant. Local was identified as environmentally-friendly whereas Ontario was linked to food purchasing and local. The Twitter account demonstrated more
communication of local or sustainability-related aspects than the Facebook account. In tweets, consumers showed awareness of the restaurant’s commitment to local (food and community) and often shared positive statements about local ingredients or the historical building. Consumer reviews on Facebook also demonstrated positive feelings and reviews about local food.

4.3.2 Comparing Perspectives of Sustainability in Restaurant Experiences

Results of in-depth interviews are presented under two main themes: (i) meanings of sustainability in restaurant experiences and (ii) role of service experience clues in restaurant experiences. The themes and sub-themes are displayed in Figure 4.6.

![Figure 4.6. Themes from In-depth Interviews on Sustainability in Restaurant Experiences.](image)

4.3.2.1 The Meanings of Sustainability in Restaurant Experiences

Meanings of sustainability in restaurants experiences are presented under two themes, personal meanings and importance of sustainability in restaurants.
4.3.2.1.1 Personal Meanings of Sustainability

Personal meanings of sustainability were very diverse. Overall, participants found it challenging to describe sustainability.

One female customer laughed multiple times as she struggled to explain her ideas about sustainability succinctly. She felt she should have “been prepared for this” (Customer 1). After a few moments, she was able to articulate that sustainability was connected to health and future generations:

Simply it is maintaining the life on this planet. But so that that life in order to maintain it. That it implies that it is healthy somehow. We can ...Yeah. Very simply, that life on this planet can continue. So that human beings can survive more or less in the same state that we are in now without becoming cyborgs or something... It is as simple as that. Healthy food. Clean water. Clean air. (Customer 1)

The term *sustainability* was described by customers as being “multifaceted” (Customer 20) and complex. Environmental, economic and social aspects were identified by participants along with other attributes. One customer perceived sustainability as being “equal to the environment” (Customer 11). Another customer defined sustainability as “local, green, environmental, and healthy” (Customer 22). Sustainability was, to one customer a triad of “local, healthy, sustainability – all fitting together” (Customer 13). A customer strongly identified sustainability with environmental concerns such as the “availability of clean water, arable land, good soil management, restriction of environmental damage, no damage to animals, and limiting the carbon footprint” (Customer 20).

Sustainability was perceived to be beneficial to individuals, the environment and the community. A female customer described it as being “helpful to you, the environment, and the community” (Customer 15). Being sustainable made one female customer “feel better” and she believed “psychologically, it feels like sustainability tastes better” (Customers 3-4). Employees also saw the benefits of sustainability to various stakeholders, as expressed by a female employee in her definition: “Plus environment conscious, long standing, local and community” (Employee 2). One manager described sustainability holistically, as part of a system, with positive influences throughout the community:
The concept of sustainability, uh, purchasing local, and trying to keep all of our monies in the community. My vision is that it is wonderful. It is a good way to make sure all of our neighbours are looked after. And it is a full circle of money going through the system and coming back to the system. (Manager 1)

A strong connection was made between local and sustainability by various customers. A female stated “local and sustainable fit hand in hand” (Customer 11). Another customer said she didn’t think about sustainability, but did about local. She “didn’t think about sustainability until about the last 4 years and it was largely due to greater ethical concern for animals” (Customer 20). Local was described as being complex with “lots of facets: local first, organic, least amount of messing with food; environmental friendly disposing; packaging” (Customer 8). A female customer felt that “if you stay local, you are helping your own community” (Customer 22). The participants ultimately viewed sustainability and local as complicated concepts that were connected by environmental and community concerns.

The other concept that was deemed important to mention alongside sustainability was organic. Several customers and employees perceived organic to be a part of sustainability. An employee articulated that “organic is important in combination with sustainability” (Employee 2). A customer ate only organic, and she believed the restaurant to be an option for her because the emphasis of the restaurant was “as much as you can choose local and has sustainable practices, but is not organic!” (Customer 10). Customers suggested that the restaurant chose more organic foods because “local is good, but organic is better” (Customer 15).

4.3.2.1.2 The Importance of Sustainability in Restaurants

Customers perceived sustainability to be an important issue for restaurants. Customers strongly expressed that “sustainability should be an issue” (Customers 5-6), and that he or she “totally supports restaurants who [sic] try to be sustainable” (Customer 14). But, customers also realized that lots of people don’t really think about sustainability” (Customer 16) and so the customer demand may not always be there to push restaurants operators to be more sustainable.

Customer expectations about sustainability in restaurants were that “sustainability should be there” (Customer 22) and that restaurants “should make an effort or have guidelines” (Customers 3-4). The perception was that “sustainability should be an issue in any restaurant -
whether it is the focus of the restaurant or not” (Customer 15). Customer expectations were that restaurants would cut down on food waste and water waste (Customer 15). One male customer who was an avid recycler, indicated his expectations were very low for green practices in restaurants because only a “small group of restaurants are green” (Customer 16). A customer indicated that she felt that ABC was going green “for the right reasons”, but they need to put “their money where their mouth was and not just put a label to indicate they are sustainable” (Customer 12). A customer did understand that sustainability in restaurants was a challenge overall and questioned how economically viable it was to incorporate into restaurant operations: “sustainability is a plus, but does it really add to profitability” (Customer 16)?

The discussion of the importance of sustainability in restaurants illustrated the personal values of participants. In some cases, customers felt strong that sustainability “is important for everybody” (Customer 1). Another customer felt that seeing sustainable practices in restaurants was a “validation of sustainability catching on in society” (Customer 34). One customer articulated that “we are seeking it (local food and sustainable options) out, so why can’t restaurants?” (Customers 5-6). A long-time customer of ABC, felt that the restaurant’s emphasis on sustainability drew him initially to the restaurant and that “coming to the restaurant made me more aware of sustainability issues” (Customer 13). Yet, another customer believed that she had to “find” sustainability in the restaurant experience: “I feel like it is currently left entirely up to me. I had to make a point to remind myself (of sustainability in the restaurant)” (Customer 1).

Managers had a more balanced viewpoint of sustainability in restaurants, with both positive aspects and challenges to operations mentioned. One manager described sustainability as a value of the restaurant (Manager 1); this value, according to a male manager, “drew both people and employees to the restaurant” (Manager 2). Sustainability was, however, considered a challenge for the restaurant because it was “vague and overwhelming” (Manager 2). One manager described sustainability as hard to enforce in service, and considered “people complying with the system in the speed of service” as a barrier (Manager 1).

Integrating sustainability into restaurant operations was classified as a learning opportunity by managers. One manager felt that his personal views on sustainability developed more because of being at the restaurant (Manager 1). A manager also described working at the restaurant made her “more aware of things I am doing at home” around sustainability. Finally,
another manager described he always had strong sustainability viewpoints, but the restaurant has made him “much more realistic” about being sustainable (Manager 2).

Employees perceived sustainability to be important in the restaurant. Sustainability was coined as a “big issue” in the restaurant with waste and carbon footprint being key areas to control (Employee 3). One employee stated, “sustainability is important, but is not efficient” (Employee 1). A female employee emphatically stated that “sustainability is huge to me and to restaurant operations” (Employee 4).

Employees offered suggestions for what sustainable initiatives could be attempted in the restaurant, but acknowledged the operational challenges of adhering to policies around sustainability (e.g. recycling or composting). One employee noted, “a lot of service staff don’t recycle (at the restaurant”. It is considered an add-on to service or education piece by employees. An employee described sustainability as “more of a conversation piece” (Employee 1). Not all employees believed sustainability to be challenging to service. One female employee stated definitely that “yes, yes you can educate and still perform the service” (Employee 4).

In order to educate and inform customers, employees believed, like managers, that sustainability requires a lot of learning. An employee described himself as “still learning” about sustainability (Employee 3). A front of the house employee described how ABC’s “idea of sustainability evolved, thereby demonstrating organizational learning through experimentation and innovation (Employee 4).

4.3.2.2 The Role of SEC to the Meanings of Sustainability in Restaurant Experiences

Results relating to mechanic clues, functional clues and humanic clue are presented next.

4.3.2.2.1 Mechanic Clues in Sustainable Restaurant Experiences

Mechanic clues are described as “the physical “things” that are intimately woven into the experience: the sights, sounds, smells, textures, and physical elements that contribute to the overall experience” (Carbone, 2004, p. 82). In terms of the restaurant experience, these clues relate to the restaurant ambiance and other elements in the environment (Wall & Berry, 2007). The photographs used in the interviews which represented mechanic clues were from the front of
the house of the restaurant only; the kitchen and the washrooms would also have mechanic clues but were not available to be photographed. The photographs of mechanic clues included external and internal signs; chalkboards; ambiance in specific rooms or sections of the restaurant; décor items in particular areas; bar taps; napkins and tables. Mechanic clues are the most accessible type of clues in the restaurant experience as they appear in the restaurant environment.

Mechanic clues were the most prominent types of experience clues identified through a photo-elicitation exercise in the interview or through analysis of the interview text. The photographs selected by participants really demonstrated that there was no consensus on the mechanic clues that were most influential. Ten different photographs with mechanic clues were identified by a minimum of ten customers. Seven different photographs with mechanic clues were selected by five or more employees. Finally, one manager selected all of the photographs with mechanic clues as important while another manager selected only three photographs – an external sign with a restaurant motto, the old schoolhouse building incorporated into the restaurant, and the bar and bar taps.

Specific examples of photographs with mechanic clues are chalkboards with information about the values of the restaurant or local beverages (see Figure 4.7.) or the décor from one particular room in the restaurant with a Canadian artist theme (see Figure 4.8., top right).

![Figure 4.7. Mechanic Clues: Photographs of Chalkboards in the Case Restaurant.](image)
Employees also mentioned photographs of suppliers displayed on one wall of the restaurant (2nd row, left; of a large external restaurant sign with a slogan (see Figure 4.8, bottom right); and of a chalkboard in the bar with a listing of the local beers on tap (see Figure 4.7, middle). Employees and managers felt that photographs of the wine cellar (and group room) in the basement of the restaurant and a photograph of the kitchen represented parts of the restaurant experience and should be included in the collection.

Figure 4.8. Additional Photographs of Mechanic Clues in the Restaurant Experience.

Employees found mechanic clues valuable in the restaurant experience since they communicated aspects about the restaurant and sustainability that they may not be described to the customer. One server did mention, however, that the restaurant could have too many
mechanic clues; the restaurant could be “too busy – with too much on walls and on paper” (Employee 4); in her viewpoint, the restaurant needed to be strategic in mechanic clues so as to “respect the customer’s space”.

Managers described the mechanic clues as important for educating customers and telling the story of the restaurant:

The opportunity for customers to learn and get educated is there. We have a lot of information out there for them to learn about us. It’s on the menu. A lot of things on the menu tell the story. Saying what farm it is from, what cheese dairy it is from, what butcher it is from, what location in Ontario it is from. Showing sustainability that way. And Being Ocean Wise certified, and then having our Green Leadership Award along with Leapfrog energy that we use here. (Manager 1)

Now, it is education on the menu. I have a new idea now. The menu is something everything touches. The menu is two sided. And the one side doesn’t say much of anything . . . put an infographic ... to create something on the back of the menu. All-encompassing piece. Then, tell the guests. Have you been here before? Tell them a bit about the concept and then let them know they can find more information on the back of the menu. That way we are not wasting a lot of paper. (Manager 2)

That is a tool that we use which is necessary so that guests can make their choice. It also shows the guest that we actually do we stand behind our green ideas. We don’t have this great big huge menu that is going to get wasted. (Manager 3)

The results showed that mechanic clues are influential to the restaurant experience, and that the service clues that customers can see, touch, hear and smell can be a vehicle to communicate aspects of sustainability in the restaurant environment. Mechanic clues may be a passive way to communicate sustainability-related aspects such as a focus on local or organic food, restaurant values, recycling initiatives or community engagement, but these clues can be an effective communication strategy in a full-service restaurant experience where staff did not have the time or knowledge to communicate these aspects to the customer. Employees did appreciate mechanic clues to help them meet management expectations on all aspects of the service that are deemed necessary for all customers, even during busy times at the restaurant. Customers did
acknowledge noticing some mechanic clues in the restaurant experience, but they were not always noticed or understood. Chalkboards were clues that were noticed more frequently than other clues.

4.3.2.2 Functional Clues in Sustainable Restaurant Experiences

Carbone (2004, p. 81) states “functional” clues are those that are aspects of the product or service that are functional. They are believed to be the “easiest to identify and understand” and their “meaning and value are interpreted by the logical circuitry of the customer’s brain as it assesses the functionality of the specific good or service being provided” (Carbone, 2004, p. 81). In a restaurant experience, functional clues are the “technical quality of the food and service” (Wall & Berry, 2007, p. 59). The photographs used in the interviews which represented functional clues were a photograph of a daily feature and a photograph of the menu with descriptions of each dish (see Figure 4.9). In this particular case, the results indicated that functional clues in the restaurant experience were perceived differently by customers, employees and managers.

Food was a deemed a quintessential part of the restaurant experience to employees. Employees mentioned a photograph of a daily feature often during the interview (8/10 employees). To employees, food was believed to be the key aspect of the restaurant experience - above both service and atmosphere (e.g. Employee 6). The menu, however, was not as necessary for a memorable restaurant experience, according to employees. Fewer than half of the employees (4/10) believed the menu to play a big role in the restaurant experience.

Figure 4.9. Functional Clues: Photograph of a Daily Feature (left) and a Photograph of the Menu (right).
Customers did acknowledge food to have a role in the restaurant experience, as demonstrated by the choice of photographs in the interview process. Seven out of the twenty-three customers selected the photograph of the daily feature as a key aspect of the restaurant experience. More customers, nonetheless, chose the photograph of the menu to discuss as important (15/23). The results suggested that not all customers read and understood the entire menu as they were not always aware of the logos or details on the menu itself (e.g. OceanWise certified logo).

Managers also indicated that food was generally important to the experience. Manager 3 stated that food is “the wow factor. You can talk about how great the food is, but when it comes out looking like that and then tastes as great as it looks.”

Service clues were mentioned by participants pertaining to the restaurant experience, but few clues were mentioned that related to the dimensions of sustainability. Where sustainability was mentioned within functional clues was on the menu where logos identified OceanWise products, where specific local farms or producers were mentioned, and where news of the restaurant’s achievement as a Canadian Green Leadership Award winner was communicated. The food or dish itself would require a server to point out the sustainability aspects to the customer.

4.3.2.2.3 Humanic Clues in Sustainable Restaurant Experiences

Humanic clues are described as clues which “involve stimuli produced by people: the ways the customer perceives things such as choice of words, tone of voice, cadence of voice, voice level, enthusiasm, gestures, actions, body language and so forth” (Carbone, 2004, p. 82). In the restaurant experience specifically, humanic clues are those revealed in the “performance, behaviour and appearance of employees” as well as in the interactions with managers and other customers (Wall & Berry, 2007, pp. 59-60). The photographs used in the interviews which represented humanic clues were a photograph of a server offering freshly ground pepper to a guest in the restaurant and a server in uniform showcasing the restaurant slogan (see Figure 4-9).
Humanic clues were identified by several participants as being influential to the restaurant experience. Managers readily identified humanic clues in photographs of the restaurant. For example, one photograph in Figure 6 (left) shows a server smiling and providing fresh ground pepper to a guest in the restaurant. Managers tended to emphasize humanic clues over mechanic clues. They referred most to one photograph of a server in uniform (see Figure 6 on the right). Both humanic photographs shown in Figure 4.10 were identified by two out of three managers as representing an important part of the restaurant experience.

![Photographs of a Server’s Appearance (right) or Interaction with a Guest in the Restaurant (left).](image)

*Figure 4.10. Humanic clues: Photographs of a Server’s Appearance (right) or Interaction with a Guest in the Restaurant (left).*

Manager 3 described the photograph of the server offering pepper as representing “just random service. Going above and beyond to be happy”. When reflecting on these photographs, Manager 2 felt that education of customers was important to the restaurant experience and described this education process as coming from employees in the restaurant:

> We call it “the story”. And every dish that I have has a story. And we have the ability through servers to explain that. And also through my visits to the dining room. And education through the people by asking about [suppliers]. So where is it [the supplier]? (Manager 2)

The story was the key in communicating the philosophy of the restaurant to customers, according to the managers. Servers would communicate the details of the dish to the guest (e.g. local suppliers), and, in that way, express aspects of sustainability. Manager 1 strongly stated
that we “need to talk local” and to “talk about other local community services and places” to educate customers. Describing the dish was a foray into to a conversation about local, and dimensions of sustainability such as environmental or social.

Managers were passionate about engaging with guests to “tell the story” about the restaurant and food to customers. A manager described being available to customers to educate them and answer questions on what is being done at the restaurant:

I also have the availability to go out during the dining periods and visit our customers and talk about the things we do and how we promote who we are. So, I hope they believe us. If not, they can question us and come visit. I am easily obtainable to talk about it and easily prove that we are doing the best we can for the situation we are in. (Manager 1)

Additionally, employees felt that humanic clues were influential to the restaurant experience. Employees identified most with the photograph of a server offering pepper to a guest; six out of the ten employees selected the photograph as a key part of the restaurant experience. This photograph highlighted interaction with customers that servers believed to be a positive aspect of the experience. Servers could communicate with guests, educate them on the menu and dishes, and convey the philosophy of the restaurant. Fewer employees (three out of 10) selected the photograph of the server in uniform.

Employees believed there was a need for servers to educate customers about food and sustainability. One back-of-the-house employee stated that “pamphlets and signs don’t always prove it (sustainability)” (Employee 3), and so employees needed to point out and educate customers about local and sustainable. A long-time front of the house staff member felt that “face to face is the best way to communicate, because you can’t pick up on the passion through print” (Employee 6). A long-term server of the restaurant was proud to report that “I can tell people where food comes from” (Employee 5), and believed that it is necessary to educate customers about sustainability and tell them about initiatives like the restaurant having Ocean Wise Certification” (Employee 5).

The desire of many employees to educate customers about sustainability was contrasted with the employee’s actions to follow sustainability principles in service. A male server
explained his practice of changing cutlery between courses, even though “I know it is not as environmental. I still feel service comes before sustainability” (Employee 5).

Employees also felt that staff needed to be hired based on their values. One female server believed the restaurant “needed more like-mind people with a value system” to improve the restaurant experience (Employee 4). Employees needed to be adequately trained so that they become “ambassadors” for the restaurant (Employee 4).

Customers did perceive humanic clues to be influential to their restaurant experience. Nine customers chose the photograph of the server in uniform as important. Twelve customers identified with the photograph of the server engaging with the guest. The appearance of the server with the t-shirt stating a restaurant slogan was almost as influential as the server engagement with the customer.

Humanic clues are a way to communicate about sustainability in the restaurant experience. In this case, managers want employees to tell customers about sustainability and the values of the restaurant but some employees feel pressure to do so and still fulfill the expectations of service. Long-time employees felt more comfortable telling stories about the food, the building and the restaurant philosophy whereas newer employees believed it to be a challenge to fit it in. Service was more important than sustainability. More training is needed, according to employees, to ensure humanic clues are used well to communicate sustainability in the experience. Customers do believe humanic clues are an effective way of communicating sustainability, and encourage restaurants to train servers to communicate more with customers since engagement was seen as valuable to the experience.

4.3.2.4.4 SEC in the Restaurant Experience

The combination of all service clues create the customer’s total experience (Berry et al., 2002). The variety of service clues to be read and remembered can be seen in Table 4.1. Managers, employees and customers mentioned different service clues as something they felt were key to the restaurant experience.

The results from the case of a sustainability-oriented restaurant demonstrated that some managers understand the importance of all clues to the restaurant experience (Manager 3), while
others choose particular mechanic clues to emphasize based on their own experiences and preferences. One manager concluded that the restaurant experience is “a combination of everything. Us working together as a team to breathe sustainability at ABC” (Manager 1). Educating customers was to be done through the entire restaurant experience, according to another manager. He felt that the goal of the restaurant is to offer “good food, good service, unique ambiance, and then add education through the ambiance in the restaurant. We don’t want to intimidate guests” (Manager 2). Sustainability then, was deemed to be a clue, in this restaurant, to educate customers and reinforce the values of the restaurant management team.

Employees identified several clues that they perceived were important to the restaurant experience. It was predominately functional and mechanic clues that were acknowledged as influential to the experience. It was food and environment that seemed to communicate sustainable aspects the best, according to employees. Service was articulated by some to be separate from sustainability.

Customers strongly identified with functional clues, but mentioned mechanic and humanic clues as being influential to their restaurant experience. Each customer had their own ideas about the restaurant experience and how sustainability was communicated, but several customers wanted to hear more about sustainability overall. The restaurant environment was really the only way that many people knew about sustainability.

4.4 Summary

In summary, the semi-structured interviews highlighted the diversity of meanings of sustainability amongst individuals; the personal values of sustainability that individuals possessed; and the role of sustainability in restaurants and restaurant experiences. Participants in the study attempted to define sustainability and found the term complex and difficult to articulate. The words and concepts used to describe sustainability were local, organic, healthy, and environment. The personal meanings of sustainability were layered, and participants did believe sustainability had economic, social and environmental dimensions. Local was certainly linked to sustainability not only for the restaurant managers, but also for employees and customers. Sustainability was perceived to be important to individuals and to the restaurant industry. Customers expected restaurants to try to become more sustainable since they
themselves strived to be in the personal lives. Managers and employees felt they learned more about sustainability working at the restaurant, and employees felt that more training was required to properly educate customers on sustainability within the restaurant experience. The most prominent way to communicate sustainability in the restaurant experience was through mechanic clues such as chalkboards and signs, although employees and customers felt servers (humanic clues) should be better utilized to educate customers on sustainability. Customers, ultimately, did want to hear more about sustainability in restaurants as it reaffirmed their own personal values about sustainability.
5 Discussion and Contributions

The following will explore the results of the study in respect to three main research questions, explain the conceptual contributions, and identify managerial implications of the research.

5.1 Discussion of Research Questions

The first research question focused on investigating the meanings of sustainability at four levels: at a broad hospitality industry level, at a broad consumer marketplace level, at the firm or restaurant level, and at the service experience level. The themes generated from the data collected through online analyses and semi-structured interviews were personal meanings of sustainability, organizational meanings of sustainability, and industry meanings of sustainability.

The second research question investigated what influences the meanings and perceptions of sustainability among key service participants in the service experience: managers, employees, and customers. The concept of SEC (Berry et al., 2002; Berry et al., 2006a; Berry et al., 2006b) was used to determine the roles of the technical aspects of the service (functional clues), the ambiance and restaurant environment (mechanic clues) and the people (humanic clues) in communicating sustainability in the restaurant experience.

The third research question sought to determine how these meanings and perceptions of sustainability are created by individuals in the service consumption process.

5.1.1 Meanings of Sustainability within the Context of a Restaurant

Sustainability took on different meanings in the context of the restaurant industry, in the context of a specific restaurant and in the context of a restaurant service experience. A variety of meanings and attributes identified in online industry sources, in online consumer reviews, on a restaurant website and social media pages, and in restaurant interviews showed the lack of clarity or consensus about sustainability. Differences in meanings by industry publications and by
consumers, employees and managers highlighted the ambiguity of sustainability at the macro and micro levels of the foodservice industry.

Several themes were observed in the data about the meanings of sustainability in the restaurant experience: personal meanings of sustainability, organizational meaning of sustainability, and industry meanings of sustainability.

5.1.1.1 Personal Meanings of Sustainability within the Context of a Restaurant

The personal meanings of sustainability in the restaurant experience were broken down into perspective of consumers and perspectives of employees and managers.

5.1.1.1.1 Meanings of Sustainability from Consumers’ Perspectives

Consumers voiced their meanings of sustainability in online TripAdvisor reviews of sustainable restaurants and in face-to-face interviews about a specific restaurant experience. TripAdvisor reviews demonstrated that consumers rarely mentioned the word sustainability in their reviews of sustainable restaurants overall. Similarly, a Hartman Group (2015, p. 2) report of American consumers found most diners tend not to use the word sustainability and do not find the word meaningful when used by restaurants and food service operators unless it relates to the quality of food ingredients or the meal itself. In this American study, consumers were aware of the links between diet, health and the environment, but needed more knowledge to use the term sustainability (The Hartman Group, 2015). The omission of the word sustainability in the data may also be explained by the data source. The TripAdvisor review template directs reviewers to answer questions about service, food, value, cost, meal selection, accessibility along with being suitable for gluten-free diners or family diners. Consumers are not asked any specific questions about sustainability.

Consumers mentioned sustainability aspects in the open text boxes in the review template. The most frequently mentioned word in the open text was local. This finding can be explained by the growing local food discourse in the last decade. Consumers are being given more choices to purchase foods grown from a community or area. It is a concept that consumers may understand and relate to more. The term local is also a popular menu trend over the last five
years in Canada, according to annual chef surveys. Since the term is more prevalent in the restaurant environment, it is a word that consumers may use more, if they are aware of it in restaurant experiences.

An interesting finding about the meaning of sustainability that emerged from the consumer reviews was that green appeared more frequently than environment. While there is ambiguity about the concept of green, consumers can relate to the term which is used in many consumer products. Sustainability, which encompasses environmental, social and economic aspects, is a harder concept to understand.

When consumers did acknowledge sustainability, they tended to mention the sustainable philosophy of the restaurant. Their awareness of the philosophy requires communication by the restaurant through advertising or social media, through certifications and logos, through the restaurant environment or by restaurant management or employees. Communicating the philosophy of the restaurant may be difficult, and requires strategic thinking to convey this information in a way that consumers understand and appreciate. An analysis of reviews from the case restaurant showed that some consumers were aware of the restaurant’s commitment to local food and the community; consumers were positive about local food or the historic section of the building in their reviews.

Consumer descriptions about the sustainable philosophy of a restaurant or the presentation of local food were mostly positive. They perceived these aspects of the restaurant experience to be positive and distinctive enough to share in reviews. A study by Aiking and de Boer (2004) concluded that consumers use sustainability to mean everything related to “green and good” (i.e. any consumption systems that have attributes that are community-based, healthy, just and local (p. 361). Attributes such as green, good, local and the like then seem to connect to something positive, according to consumers. The appearance of references to a sustainable philosophy or local food in reviews highlighted that these aspects are a part of the restaurant experience, and are open to criticism by consumers. Some reviews showed that consumers were critical of the food, if the quality was not acceptable to them, and may actually condemn the restaurant for ruining high quality local, organic or sustainable food. This insight reminds managers and operators that sustainability and local should not be “added on” to a restaurant experience without considerable thought. Sustainability or local can be parts of the experience
where consumers develop positive or negative impressions of the experience. Sustainability and local, therefore, can impact consumer perceptions of the restaurant, restaurant brand image, and customer loyalty.

In face-to-face interviews, consumers described the meaning of sustainability as complex and multifaceted. Consumers had to be prompted to try and describe the term, and, for some, it was a difficult exercise. Individuals often referred to particular attributes that they felt related to sustainability. To consumers, sustainability seemed to be connected to local food, organic food, health, well-being, the environment, green, the community, fertile soil, clean water, a small carbon footprint. The variety of attributes identified with sustainability shows the complexity of and subjectivity of the term. These findings were consistent with the results of a previous study that demonstrated that the meaning of sustainability and its related terms are neither consistent across consumers nor across consumption of products or services (Aarset et al., 2004) McDonald and Oates’s (2006) study on consumer meanings of sustainability stressed the need to look at the meaning of sustainability within the context of the consumption of a product. There is a need then to investigate the meaning of sustainability in the consumption of a restaurant service, including all of the people involved in its production and consumption. The meanings of sustainability then are varied and require businesses to clarify their own organizational meanings and to investigate consumer meanings to avoid consumer misunderstandings or disappointment from unmet expectations.

The attributes consumers mentioned in the interviews can be categorized in to environmental, social and economic sustainability dimensions. In this study, consumers identified sustainability largely under the environmental dimension umbrella. These findings supported the results of a previous study on consumer meanings of sustainability which saw that consumers tended to believe that sustainability represents the environment or ecological dimension only, especially when connected to a product (Simpson & Radford, 2012). In the hospitality industry specifically, a study found that customers have a preference for environmental sustainability over economic and social sustainability (van Rheede & Bloome, 2012). While the findings of this study confirm the dominance of environmental sustainability in relation to products and services, the popularity and consumer awareness of the term local in relation to restaurant food products and the community has introduced more than environmental sustainability in to the conversation. This is an important finding for hospitality businesses
since it illustrates that consumer expectations are broadening beyond the environment and into social and economic dimensions of sustainability.

The diversity of consumer perceptions and meanings of sustainability can be partially explained by what Barber (2014) calls “shades of green” consumers. His study of hotel guests demonstrated that there are degrees of green consumers. Consumers who represent a particular shade of green are said to possess specific particular characteristics and behaviours. Shades of green participants may be represented in this study. Participants were recruited from a sustainable restaurant and self-selected to participate in the interviews. No questions were asked about a participant’s green behaviour although some participants volunteered this information in the interview.

5.1.1.1.2 Meanings of Sustainability from Employees’ and Managers’ Perspectives

In this study, employees and managers of a restaurant were also asked to share their own personal meanings of sustainability. Similar to the restaurant consumers, both restaurant employees and managers found the meaning of sustainability hard to articulate. An easier way to describe the term for both types of participants was to identify particular attributes that relate. The attributes identified by employees were local food, organic food, community, long-standing and environmentally-friendly. Managers were more specific and concise stating local food and community as the key attributes of sustainability. The commonality between employees and managers was local food and community which can be categorized as representing environmental and social dimensions of sustainability.

Employees and managers had a more holistic and systems viewpoint of sustainability than did consumers. Employees and managers tended to view sustainability as a combination of all dimensions put together: environmental, economic and social. Sustainability, therefore, was considered a complex system that was much harder to grasp. Employees described sustainability generally as an important consideration for all individuals, businesses and society, but noted that it was easier as an individual to consider sustainability than it was for a business.

Both employees and managers felt that the economic dimension of sustainability was the perspective that was only realized from working in the restaurant. The hard reality of trying to
balance environmental, social and economic aspects of the business was experienced in the restaurant. Employees described the challenges of sustainability in the front of the house (in service) or in the back of the house (kitchen). Some employees felt sustainability was costly and cumbersome in service operations like restaurants. Other employees believed working at the restaurant altered their meaning and perception of sustainability in a positive way. These individuals described how they consider sustainability more in their own personal life after working at the restaurant.

Managers had an even broader perspective of the challenges of choosing equipment, food, cleaning supplies, office supplies and hiring staff. Managers seemed to have the most comprehensive and specific definitions of sustainability out of all the participants interviewed. The reasoning for this clarity of the concept might be because managers, if committed to a sustainable philosophy, must struggle with the operationalization of sustainability on a daily basis. One manager described sustainability as a journey where learning takes place regularly. He indicated how much his meaning of sustainability changed from the opening of the restaurant to the current year. A lack of policies, guidelines or infrastructure related to sustainability in restaurants forces managers to take on projects to determine the feasibility of the product, equipment or initiative for the restaurant. Ultimately, restaurant managers have to see sustainability differently than consumers because they are required to balance the positives and challenges of sustainability in a competitive industry. Ball et al. (2008) found in their own study of the perceptions of organic, ethical and local foods, that restaurant managers and consumers disagree about the meanings of sustainability and sustainability-related aspects of the restaurant experience. This study saw variation in the understanding and communication of sustainability across managers, employees and customers.

Managers’ personal views of sustainability have an impact on the employees and service experience. Employees identified the passion of the managers towards sustainability as influential in the organization’s current and continued commitment towards becoming sustainable. One manager saw sustainability as a journey or process and not necessarily an outcome. The core values of the restaurant encourage management to look to become more sustainable, but the interest in sustainability drives managers and employees to look for ways to improve on sustainability. The passion and vision of the owner is important in the pursuit of
sustainability, as shown in a case study of an entrepreneur of a sustainable café in Australia (Moskwa, Higgins-Desbiolles, & Gifford, 2015).

5.1.1.2 Organizational Meanings of Sustainability within the Context of a Restaurant

An analysis of the case restaurant’s website and social media pages indicated that the conversations on sustainability differed. First, the restaurant’s website discussed the values of the restaurant as local, sustainable, and organic. These values were communicated on separate pages of the website that described the philosophy of the restaurant. All three dimensions of sustainability – environmental, economic and social – were mentioned in the discussion of the restaurant itself. The restaurant was said to have a local food policy for the benefit of the environment, health and community development. In addition, the restaurant was to be actively involved in community events.

Second, the restaurant’s Twitter account conveyed more about local than about sustainability, but provided examples of both. Both the restaurant and consumers favourably identified local in terms of food or connections to the community. Sustainability was mentioned only a few times, mainly in relation to food items (e.g. sustainable seafood) or to participation at local events.

Third, the restaurant’s Facebook account demonstrated it was not an active platform for communicating about sustainability. The word local was mentioned only three times in Facebook posts, often by consumer posts with comments. The variation in the discussions about local and sustainability from restaurant website to social media pages suggests a lack of consistency in messaging. An online strategy should be developed to ensure that the messaging is consistent across several communication platforms.

The review of the various online sources also showed some attempts at engagement between “the restaurant” and customers. The restaurant’s organizational voice was represented on both Twitter and Facebook alongside other community groups, servers and consumers. Comments and “likes” from other people on Facebook can be seen in response to restaurant posts describing restaurant specials, community events, employee achievements, et cetera. The restaurant, however, did not engage consumers in an active way about sustainability. On Twitter,
there was minimal interaction between the restaurant and consumers besides “re-tweeting” consumer comments or “hashtagging” other organizations or individuals. The assumption may be that people already know about local food and sustainability and so there is no need (or demand) to engage in this type of conversation. Restaurant operators should consider using Facebook and Twitter to extend the conversation about local food and sustainability by posting resources on sustainability and continually educating consumers on what sustainability means to the restaurant. Additionally, restaurant operators should be asking consumers what they think about local food and sustainability. This type of information can help operators strategically design the restaurant experience to address the needs and expectations of consumers.

5.1.1.3 Industry Meanings of Sustainability within the Context of a Restaurant and the Hospitality Industry

The meanings of sustainability from a macro or industry level were investigated in this study through an analysis of industry online publications. The overall finding of this analysis was that sustainability is a concept addressed in the restaurant industry, yet only in a minimal way. The dominant discourses in industry publications were on the business environment or on restaurant services. The results demonstrate that the hospitality industry is slowly beginning to acknowledge sustainability and the triple bottom line, yet the economic paradigm is still pervasive. The push for recognizing sustainability in the industry appears to come from consumers and sustainability pioneers or advocates since there is no current policy or legislation in Canada which directs restaurant operators to integrate sustainable initiatives in to the organization. Revell & Blackburn (2007) found that small and medium enterprises did not see a convincing business case for environmental initiatives in the U.K. restaurant scene. There were no incentives to voluntarily improve environmental performance because of the lack of legislation or regulation in the industry and the perception by the operators of higher costs to the business. Managers wished for regulation not only for external guidance and support in becoming more sustainable but also to “level the playing field” in terms of the expenses related to integrating sustainable initiatives. The perception is that businesses that try to be more sustainable have higher costs which translates into higher consumer prices and impacts the restaurant in an already overly competitive industry.
A major impact on the discourse of sustainability in restaurants is that it is voluntary. Only those chef and operator advocates who are “sustainability pioneers” and that can demonstrate the business case for sustainable practices may influence the frequency and depth of the conversation of sustainability in the restaurant/foodservice industry. This particular study found only a minority of examples of how small and medium enterprises were dealing with sustainability in the business. This finding confirms a statement made in an article by Jones, Hillier, and Comfort (2016, p. 7) that “the vast majority of the reporting and research on sustainability within the hospitality industry has been initially focused on the major players in the sector and it is important to recognize that much less is known about if, and how, the smaller companies, operators and individuals who make a significant contribution to consumer provision within the industry are addressing sustainability”. The examples of sustainability pioneers often emerge in the conversations initiated by sustainability schemes and programs that exist for hospitality operators.

In addition to these sustainability pioneers are restaurant or foodservice sustainability certification schemes or education programs that offer knowledge or guidance to restaurant operators. The benefit of participation in these schemes or programs is that they offer best practices and measures that can help the operators change purchasing procedures, modify current restaurant practices, and market the restaurant as a green or sustainable to consumers. There are several criticisms for these schemes and programs, however.

First, the meanings of sustainability are not consistent. The difference between a green restaurant and a sustainable restaurant is not clear to the operator, let alone to consumers. Some schemes or programs focus on particular activities, such as food purchasing, whereas others strive to be more comprehensive and address several aspects of the restaurant’s operations. Those programs that focus on one aspect are easier to understand and implement for operators, and seem to be more popular than those which require more change and commitment. As there currently exists minimal data on the benefit and value of these schemes or programs to the restaurant bottom line or customers, operators or managers cannot find good reason for participating.

Second, the drawback of these programs to operators is that they require an annual fee, require additional measures and audits, and may suggest practices that are not always appropriate
for a particular region where the restaurant is located. Furthermore, it is hard for operators to see value in participating in these schemes or programs unless customer demand is there. A manager in this study specifically mentioned that there was no reason for the restaurant to participate in a sustainable certification scheme program since the restaurant actively sought out sustainable initiatives and continuously tried to improve environmental performance. In his viewpoint, the scheme was a waste of money since the management was already finding ways to be more sustainable.

In the existing sustainability discourse, the word *local* tended to be the most frequently mentioned word. The discussion of *local* was neither uniform nor one-dimensional. The term meant everything from purchasing from local suppliers, showcasing local dishes and culture, being environmentally-friendly because of a low carbon footprint, or even lower costs and better food quality. Such a broad definition and understanding of the term *local* is not uncommon in restaurants (Herzog & Murray, 2013). The discussion of *local* evident in this study showed how various aspects of the dimensions of sustainability are addressed. While Melissen (2013, p. 817) concluded that “sustainability concerns currently only include the ecological and parts of the economic elements of sustainable development”, *local* ventured into the social dimensions of sustainability as well.

The prevalence of the word *local* in the discourse is not surprising if one looks to published annual chef surveys put forward by a national restaurant association. Over the past five years, *local food* has been highlighted as a major menu trend by chefs across Canada. Similar results have also been found in the United States. The reasoning behind the popularity of the concept of local in restaurants can be said to be fueled by factors such as government support for local food systems, by the development of infrastructure in food distribution systems to allow restaurants better access to local food, and a growing consumer awareness and demand for local food. For restaurant operators, purchasing from local suppliers seems to be a more concrete and straight-forward practice than “sustainability” and can offer a competitive advantage to the restaurant.

*Sustainability* was a term that had different meanings in different publications. It was noted that the frequency and depth of the discourse on sustainability varied by industry publication. One of the three chosen online industry publication did not have any instances of
the word *sustainability* being used. Instead, the word *green* appeared over *sustainability*. *Green* tended to be used to represent parts of the meaning of sustainability or even as a synonym for sustainability itself.

Additionally, each publication did not treat *sustainability* in the same way. One publication included section for sustainability under the “operations” part of the website. Another publication utilized a heading of “environment” under the “industry issues” section of the website. Finally, the third publication had no heading related to sustainability at all; instead, one had to use the search tool to find articles. The diversity of language used, meaning and perceived level of importance for sustainability reinforces the ambiguity of the term and the perceived level of importance of sustainability in the industry.

The publications illustrated that the word *sustainability* took on many attributes or word variations including local, energy, green, environment, health, organic and water. While this finding reinforces the lack of clarity of the term, it also supports the statement made by Melissen (2013, p. 816) that “recent trends within the hospitality industry have focused on environmental concerns, use of technology and efficient energy use”. Over the last few years, food waste has become an important trend and is speculated to be another popular attribute of sustainability in future discourse.

### 5.1.1.4 Summary

The findings showed that the meaning of sustainability is hard to pinpoint at an industry level; that restaurant operators have challenges understanding the role and value of sustainability in the current business model; and that individuals involved in a sustainable restaurant experience each have their own perspectives on the meaning of sustainability. The term *local* seemed to be a word that was wrapped up in the ideas of sustainability in the broad industry perspective all the way down to the managers employee, and customer perspective in a sustainable restaurant experience. Other words that were identified as related to *sustainability* included *organic, green, environmental, health and water*.

The meaning of sustainability where shown to vary across industry publications as well as across managers, employees and customers. The results indicated that that meanings are
unique to individuals, to the role of the individual in the restaurant experience, and to stakeholders in the restaurant industry. The findings of the study lead to several recommendations for the industry as well as for specific restaurant operators.

It is recommended that restaurants operators and managers be strategic, clear and consistent in the use and application of the terms *sustainability* and *local*. Particular meanings of the terms should be strategically created by management, integrated in to service operations and training, communicated to customers through various channels (e.g. website, social media pages, restaurant ambiance, and servers) and continuously monitored to ensure consistent messaging and execution. Inconsistent messaging around sustainability will impact customer evaluations of the restaurant experience and influence overall brand image. Second, it is recommended that the industry should push for legislation to integrate sustainable practices into the hospitality industry. Sustainability pioneers in the industry continue to demonstrate a new business model for integrating sustainability into restaurants, but restaurant operators do not yet have adequate incentive to start or continue on the journey. Anecdotal evidence suggests operational cost savings and a growing consumer demand yet these incentives are not always available in every location due to local resources and infrastructure. Industry groups should continue to offer educational workshops and programs on sustainability topics in the industry and keep the conversation about sustainability going to promote change. A new perspective is needed on the successful hospitality business model; the new model should include sustainability as an integral facet of the business.

A limitation of the data collected from various sources was that it was captured at one point in time only. First, the online sources such as industry publication websites, TripAdvisor pages and restaurant social media pages are all dynamic spaces where conversations can be ever-changing. Since the data was collected at one time and only for a period of one year, there is a temporal limitation to this study. Future studies might look at how the meanings of sustainability change over a longer time period (e.g. five-year period). A longitudinal investigation of the online data may illuminate the dynamic nature of sustainability at the macro level even more and allow for a better understanding of what is “sustainable hospitality”. Second, the interview data was collected over four months and required individuals to self-select to participate. The limitation was that the people who arranged for interviews may already have had strong
environmental values. The voices represented in this study therefore may only be those for those consumers and employees with an awareness and interest in sustainability.

5.1.2 Role of Service Experience Clues in Sustainable Restaurant Experiences

Service experience clues break down the service experience into three categories of clues (functional - the technical quality of food and service; mechanic – the tangibles of the service including those that are sensed; and humanic - the behaviour and appearance of service providers) all of which impact the customer’s rational and emotional evaluations of the experience. The customer’s overall evaluation of the experience and impression of the restaurant is said to influence customer loyalty. In a restaurant, operators and managers can “engineer” the total experience; that is they can specifically design clues for customers to see, taste, hear, smell or touch which influence the customers thoughts, feelings and behaviours and communicate a story (Berry et al., 2006b). This concept can be useful in sustainable restaurants to help managers identify what customers notice about sustainability in the experience (sustainability clues) and how well the story of sustainability in a restaurant is being communicated. In restaurants with an emphasis on sustainability, clues about sustainability may be engineered by management and then read by customers who tally up the positives and negatives to generate an overall evaluation of the entire experience. Research has shown that customers in hospitality organizations do notice environmental initiatives in the service (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007). The results illuminate what consumers like to hear about sustainability in a restaurant experience (what type of clue is effective and desired) and how well (and consistently) the sustainability story is communicated by the restaurant. The conceptualization of “service clues” therefore offers a way to gain an understanding of customer perceptions of sustainability in restaurants.

The role of the service clues in sustainable restaurant experiences is separated into (i) functional service clues, (ii) mechanic service clues, and (iii) human service clues.

5.1.2.1 Functional SEC in Sustainable Restaurant Experiences

Functional clues are those that reflect the accuracy and quality of both the food and the service. A functional clue in a service environment represents the basics of the service itself; in
the case of the restaurant, the technical aspect of the service is the ease, speed and accuracy of the food and beverage order along with the taste of the food and beverages. In restaurants with a sustainability emphasis, the functional clues may include sustainable food information on menus, information on the traceability of food, food labelling, and the limited offering of water and bread. These clues communicate to the customer that the restaurant is taking steps to source environmentally-friendly food, trying to educate customers on where the food comes from, and attempting to conserve water and limit waste.

The results from the study, demonstrated that managers, employees and customers each had their own perspectives and insights on the functional clues in the restaurant experience. The most frequently identified functional clue by all participants was the food. It was seen as very important to employees and ranked above and beyond the service quality and atmosphere. The menu was not deemed as important to the experience by employees. Customers saw food as having a role in the experience, however, the menu was considered more important. Customers thought the menu was influential, yet many acknowledged not reviewing the entire menu. Logos and information about sustainability programs and initiatives were included on the bottom of the menu, but few customers remembered seeing them there. Managers believed that food was key to the experience, especially its taste. Like previous studies, this research found that food quality was important to the experience even in a sustainability oriented restaurant (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, & Luke, 1997; Ball, Rowson, & O’Toole, 2008; DiPietro, Cao, & Partlow, 2013a).

Functional clues were essential to the restaurant experience, yet they were not perceived to communicate much about sustainability. Only managers recognized the menu as being a key communication tool, and it was in the process of being modified to include more information about sustainability on the backside of the one page. Both managers and employees believed the menu reiterated the philosophy of the restaurant because it was a small and seasonally-focused menu. Overall, managers and employees saw the menu as a stronger communication clue than customers believed it to be. Managers should be careful to find out what their customers want to see on the menu so as to avoid spending time and money on menus with information that customers do not read. If managers were to put more information on the menu, then consideration should be given during the service to leave the menu on the table for customers to look at over dinner.
Several studies have concluded that customers identify and interpret clues differently in green restaurants (Ball, et al., 2008; DiPietro, et al., 2013a; Schubert, Kandampully, Solnet, & Kralj, 2010). For example, a study by Ball et al. (2008) indicated that female customers asked for more food information than male customers in restaurants with a sustainability emphasis. Gender was not a focus of this particular study, and so further research would have to support any differences in perception of clues by demographic characteristics.

5.1.2.2 Mechanic SEC in Sustainable Restaurant Experiences

Mechanic clues are described as the tangibles of the service: things that can be seen, smelled, heard, tasted or felt. These clues can reveal a restaurant’s commitment to customers’ needs and desires. In services with a longer duration such as hospitality services, mechanic clues are important. In a restaurant emphasizing sustainability, mechanic clues may include energy-efficient lighting; furniture made from eco-friendly materials; eco-friendly paint; recycled or eco-friendly building materials; recycling bins; eco-friendly soap and towels; low-water toilets and sinks; a community engagement board or displays and signs such as those communicating the restaurant’s sustainability policies and initiatives.

The findings have shown that mechanic clues were the most prominent type of clues used by the management to convey aspects of sustainability. Cetin and Walls (2015) similarly found that managers were focused more on physical environment cues than on human interactions. In this study, managers were hesitant to be too aggressive in their messaging and disrupt the customer experience and so most of the communication of sustainability was done through chalkboards, photographs, signs, and décor. These clues were believed to tell the story of the restaurant and the food. Studies have shown that visible clues and ambiance are necessary and important since they demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and influence the confidence of customers that it is a restaurant with a sustainability emphasis (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007; Wall & Berry, 2007). Mechanic clues are of great importance to customers of green restaurants (Jeong & Jang, 2010; Wang, 2012). The tangible clues create an image of the restaurant that impacts the customer’s overall perception of the restaurant (Jeong & Jang, 2010).

Employees, like managers, believed mechanic clues were valuable and effective for communicating to customers in the restaurant experience. The value that employees saw in
mechanic clues was in relation to their own service performance. Employees appreciated the mechanic clues as a way to communicate to customers what they did not have time to communicate in the service experience. Mechanic clues are an “assist”. This perception that employees had was connected to some of their views that sustainability was difficult in a busy service and not as important as other functional aspects of the service. Employees did not consider the clues that were communicated to the customer through their actions; instead, it was more about the general performance of the service. For front of the house staff, the customer evaluation of the general performance of the service leads to tips; sustainability is not something that is believed to have an impact on tip amount.

Employees also raised a valuable point about the number of mechanic clues that exist in the restaurant environment. Several employees cautioned against using too many clues, and believed management needed to be strategic about what mechanic clues were placed in the environment. Customers also believed that there could be too many clues. An interesting finding was that this same caution against using too many clues was not expressed by managers who consistently focused on branding the experience rather than determining what exactly customers wanted to know during the restaurant experience and in what way. Managers therefore need to be more aware of customers’ expectations to be more strategic about the mechanic clues in the restaurant experience. Wall and Berry (2007, p. 67) found that “customers’ expectations of service were significantly higher when mechanic clues were positive than when they were negative”. Assessing the quality and effectiveness of each mechanic clue therefore is vital to ensure that customers see these clues as positive. Mechanic clues, however, have to continue to be seen as part of the total experience since customers’ expectations of service increase when mechanic clues are done well. Without considering mechanic clues in the broader experience, managers may create the conditions for customer disappointment.

In this study, customers did acknowledge seeing a number of mechanic clues in the experience. The number of clues identified however was not consistent since the restaurant itself has several dining areas each with its own unique décor and clues. The messaging across the restaurant spaces is not consistent and the awareness of sustainability by customers varied by where the customer sat. Customers regularly mentioned seeing chalkboards that conveyed information about the restaurant values or displayed local food and drink options. Customers tended to comment on how creatively the information was presented on these chalkboards.
Another frequently mentioned mechanic clue was an external sign with a restaurant motto posted outside the restaurant facing a major road. This sign was described as intriguing and actually drew people to the restaurant itself.

Overall, the mechanic clues in the case restaurant made up the majority of the service experience clues that were connected to sustainability. Managers and employees did not agree upon the purpose or the number of these clues in the restaurant experience. Managers tended to assume that customers would notice many of these clues in the restaurant environment when, in reality, customers only unconsciously noticed them. Customers had to be prompted by photographs to remember things they saw in the restaurant environment. As described by Berry et al. (Berry et al., 2006a), mechanic clues are often unconsciously absorbed and contribute to an emotional evaluation of the restaurant.

5.1.2.3 Humanic SEC in Sustainable Restaurant Experiences

Humanic clues reveal the how of the service experience and influence the emotional side of the overall experience evaluation alongside mechanic clues. Humanic clues showcase the human interaction and engagement within the service experience. Service provider’s behaviours and appearances, word use, tone of voice and body language all suggest to the customer the organization’s commitment to customers (customer-centricity). Encounters with service staff lead customers to form emotional perceptions of the quality of the experience. In a restaurant with a sustainability emphasis, humanic clues may include communication with guests by service staff about sustainability initiatives; service providers’ knowledge and attitudes about sustainability-related issues; and even management communication with service staff regarding sustainability and service.

Managers perceived humanic clues to be more important than mechanic clues since they emphasized story telling as the key facet of the restaurant. Both a manager and chef indicated it is up to the servers to tell the story of the dish, the building and the restaurant. Yet, it was interesting that managers also chose to present a great deal of information in the restaurant environment (mechanic clues). Managers verbally stated the significance of humanic clues, yet perceived these clues could be “intimidating” to the customer. One manager specifically
suggested that the goal was to “educate through ambiance” only after the food and service was executed well.

Employees expressed that engagement with customers was important to the restaurant experience. Several employees felt there was a need for servers to educate customers about food and sustainability initiatives. Shorter-term employees suggested that there was often not enough time during the service to talk to guests about sustainability, local food or local suppliers. While managers encouraged service staff to ask guests if they had been to the restaurant before (and therefore new the philosophy of the restaurant), employees admitted to not continuously doing so. This scripted question opens the door for a conversation about sustainability, yet it assumes customers who have been before heard the information and it necessitates the server having the time to explain to the customer. Studies have demonstrated that employees not only have an important role in the service encounter but also contribute to corporate social responsibility initiatives as participants and supporters (Shen & Benson, 2013). It is suggested that management consider employees as “internal stakeholders” and that support, training, empowerment, team building and rewards are needed to establish an environmental management system or sustainability strategy (Daily & Huang, 2001). Management needs to look at the capabilities of servers, help them create strategies to deal with busy service times, and provide the necessary “space” for employees to share stories and promote the philosophy of the restaurant to customers.

Customers perceived humanic clues to be essential to the restaurant experience, a finding similar to that Cetin and Walls (2015) noted in hotel experiences. Restaurant customers, however, they had different opinions about the employee’s appearance and level of engagement with the customer. For example, more customers selected the photograph illustrating an employee interacting with a customer as representing a key part of the experience. Yet, a photograph showing an employee in uniform was mentioned by customers almost as often.

These findings suggest that employee appearance, personality and engagement are all influential in the restaurant experience. This particular finding has been present in the literature. Humanic clues are fundamental to services and studies have addressed the impact of employee attitudes and behaviours on customer’s service experiences (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006; Bitner, 1990a; Czepiel, 1985; Dean, 2010; Gazzoli, Hancer, & Kim, 2013; Guiry, 1992; Lin & Mattila,
2010; Magnini, Baker, & Karande, 2013; Specht, Fichtel, & Meyer, 2007; Wall & Berry, 2007). In tourism and hospitality organizations, the human dimension is believed to influence “service quality, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, competitive advantage and organizational performance” (Kusluvan et al., 2010, p. 171). The appearance, behaviour, attitudes and dispositions of service staff do contribute to customers’ perceptions of the experience and evaluation. Service staff must be knowledgeable, friendly and competent in dealing with customers to meet customer expectations.

5.1.2.4 Summary

The second research question asked in this study was in three parts. The overarching question was “what do customers perceive influences the meanings of sustainability in the restaurant experience”? To answer this question, the concept of service clues was used and the question was broken down into three sub questions:

- What is the role of the functional service experience clues in sustainable restaurants;
- What is the role of mechanic service experience clues in sustainable restaurants; and
- What is the role of humanic service experience clues in sustainable restaurants?

The findings suggested mechanic clues are used often in the sustainable restaurant experience. Managers and employees feel that these clues are more effective as they are perceived not to impact the service experience as much as do humanic clues. Research studies suggest that the research environment influences the perceptions and behaviours of employees and customers in service environments (Bitner, 1990b; Bitner, 1992). Customers, however, acknowledge mechanic clues but tended to encourage the use of humanic clues to help educate them on sustainability in the restaurant experience. There is a gap in the preference for the use of particular clues to communicate aspects of sustainability in the experience. This can be partially explained by the perceptions by managers and employees that sustainability is not a key part of the service; sustainability is a “bonus” in the service that should only be communicated when time permits. Management needs to ask customers what their expectations in the service experience to fully understand if the restaurant is meeting customer needs.
Functional clues were stated to be important to the restaurant experience which aligns with previous research on restaurant dining experiences, including in green restaurants (Ball et al., 2008; DiPietro, Cao, et al., 2013; Pettijohn, Pettijohn, & Luke, 1997). Food quality is a key part of the restaurant experience, and this remains equally so in sustainable restaurants. Not all individuals agreed upon whether it was food quality or the menu that had a greater impact on the restaurant experience. Customers described the menu as being essential to the experience, yet many admitted that they did not read it in its entirety. For customers, it was a foray into the food and philosophy of the restaurant. Managers and employees perceived the menu to be important and food presentation and taste were a major influence on the customer experience and evaluation.

Humanic clues were emphasized by managers, employees and customers yet the reality was that customers were left seeking more engagement about sustainability with restaurant staff. Managers believed that story telling was important to the concept and encouraged staff to do so about the food and the building to customers. Hiring practices involved asking potential candidates about their values on local food and sustainability to determine their commitment to the concept. Research suggests that operators should hire staff that fit with the organization’s values, competencies and strategies and that possess particular personality traits and emotional intelligence (Kusluvan et al., 2010). A strong organizational culture dedicated to sustainability is needed to align hiring and training practices, environmental reporting systems, and relationships with suppliers to influence the overall economic sustainability of a service organization (Goodman, 2000). Goodman (2000) also found that sustainability education by the organization helped to create bonds between a company and employees and improve employee satisfaction (Goodman, 2000).

Some initial training for employees was conducted by management upon hiring to provide the necessary information on sustainability in the form of a training manual, tours and shadow shifts. Emails with updates were sent fairly regularly to employees to provide new information about products and suppliers to enhance the story-telling. In spite of all this, some employees did not always feel confident about expressing this information, did not feel it was important, or argued that they did not have enough time to communicate it to customers. Long-term employees (over one year) believed this story telling was important and actively tried to engage customers by discussing local food and sustainability. DiPietro, Cao and Partlow (2013,
p. 792) contend that managers need to train employees of green restaurants who may interact with guests and convey information about the “green practices”.

An inconsistency in messaging was therefore found through analysis of customers’ feedback. Not all customers received the same messages about local food and sustainability in the restaurant experience. Those customers who did receive the messages of sustainability, often through servers, felt very positive about their restaurant experience. It is crucial then for managers to ensure that staff actively and consistently communicate about local food, local suppliers and sustainability to customers. Furthermore, Wall and Berry (2007, p. 67) advocate that all clues should deliver a consistent message to customers, but if that does not happen, humanic clues need to be effective. Managers should not rely on mechanic clues to tell the story of sustainability in a restaurant experience. Instead, managers should train, reinforce and monitor humanic clues as the “fallback” for any miscommunication that occurs from functional or mechanic clues.

Additionally, it is recommended that managers obtain continuous feedback on customer experiences. This research has shown, however, that customers tend not to mention aspects of sustainability in an adequate way unless prompted to do so. When seeking feedback, managers should directly ask customers about what their perceptions of sustainability are in the restaurant experience. This information can be used strategically to ensure that customers’ perception and evaluation of the overall experience is positive and satisfying. Hiring and continually training “food guides” would improve the service, educate the customer and create a unique competitive advantage for the restaurant thus impacting sustainability at both the level of the organization and also at the broader societal level.

The results also illuminate that individuals recognize different clues; not everyone notices and interprets the same clues during each restaurant experience. The photo-elicitation exercise saw a wide range of clues recognized as important to customers, employees and managers. Participants did not agree which clues best represented the restaurant experience. This shows that many clues are read consciously or unconsciously by individuals, and that some are more meaningful to some individuals. A study by Ball et al. (2008) also noted that gender had an influence on what clues were “read” in the service environment. Managers, therefore, need to
ensure that they obtain information from a broad range of customers about clues in the environment so as to best meet the needs and expectations of the majority of customers.

A limitation of the approach taken in this research is that the researcher was required to produce the photographs for the photo-elicitation exercise conducted within the interviews because of ethical considerations for anonymity of participants. It would be even more insightful to have customers take photographs of the aspects of the sustainable restaurant experience that are meaningful to them, and to use these photographs to delve deeper into their own perceptions and meanings of sustainability in a hospitality environment. Studies in hotels have demonstrated the value of using visual methods and guest photographs to explore customer perceptions of design and experience (Pullman & Robson, 2006, 2007).

Another limitation is that the data were collected at one point in time only with participants who self-selected to be involved in the study. Asking a broader range of customers who have dined during different meals and different days of the week would offer a more comprehensive perspective on the restaurant experience. As restaurants are dynamic organizations with staff that varies on a daily basis, busy periods and seasonal changes, data representing a one-time period may not provide the full picture of how customers perceive the restaurant experience or how their perceptions and meanings might change over multiple visits to the restaurant.

5.2 Service “Blueprint” for Sustainability in Restaurant Service Experiences

After the investigation of the three main research questions, the researcher has proposed that a “blueprint” would be valuable to visualize the complexity of sustainable restaurant experiences. The concept of the “service blueprint” was first described by Shostack (1984) as a way for an organization “to explore all the issues inherent in creating or managing a service” (Shostack, 1984, p. 134). Service blueprints illustrate the service delivery process so as to help managers build effective customer experiences from a management perspective. A blueprint identifies customer actions, visible and invisible contact employee actions, support processes and physical evidence (Bitner, Ostrom, & Morgan, 2008). Shostack (1984) argues that designing a blueprint requires four considerations: identifying processes, isolating failpoints, establishing a time frame, and analyzing profitability. Additionally, managers need to provide customer
evidence for each part of the blueprint (Bitner et al., 2008). The blueprint is a visible diagram that can be used for operational purposes, service design creation or change, and service innovation. Service blueprints can help show “critical incidents” or interactions between service employees and customers that lead to customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Bitner et al, 1990, p. 73). Blueprinting, according to Zehrer (2009, p. 337), allows the service provider to “shape the customer’s emotional experience, and thus attain a competitive advantage”.

Service blueprints may be considered more of a “practical” exercise, they offer valuable insight into the engineering of effective sustainable experiences in hospitality organizations such as restaurants. The information presented in the blueprint is generated from a real-world case may help to foster more innovative service design that integrates sustainability into the restaurant experience in a systemic and holistic way.

The current literature on “sustainable hospitality” can be described as a “fuzzy picture” as it is considered a challenge to balance the concepts of sustainable development and hospitality (Melissen, 2013). The task of addressing the three dimensions of sustainability independently, holistically, and simultaneously has been a struggle for scholars in the field, according to Melissen (2013, p. 818). This study attempted to investigate the meanings of sustainability holistically and simultaneously, and the creation of a service blueprint can provide a customer-focused bigger picture of the complexity of sustainability in a service.

By investigating the three central research questions, the researcher will contribute to expanding the current knowledge on customers’ perspectives of sustainability in the consumption of hospitality products. Research on these perspectives during the consumption of hospitality services demonstrates the varying degrees of importance of sustainability to consumers; the perceived importance of sustainable initiatives of the hospitality organization; the satisfaction of consumers with sustainable products. Studies to date are conducted predominately with surveys that outline market segments, identify consumer motivations for consumption, and explain consumer behavior. A limitation is that the published studies have not presented consumer meanings of sustainability nor explained the process of meaning creation between the consumer, the product or service, the organization and the consumption environment.
The proposed conceptual framework builds upon the work of customer/consumer experience in hospitality environments (Cetin & Walls, 2015; Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011a; Walls, 2013; Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011b). Cetin and Walls (2015) investigated hospitality experiences from both the manager and customer perspective and developed a model for guest experiences in hospitality from a combined viewpoint (see Figure 5.1).

![Model for guest experiences in hospitality](image)

*Figure 5.1. Model for guest experiences in hospitality (Cetin & Walls, 2015, p. 405)*

The model developed by Cetin and Walls (2015) shows important dimensions of the guest experience in luxury hotels. An important part of the restaurant experience is the food. SEC addresses the functional aspects of the service (e.g. food) as well as touches on the physical environment (mechanic clues) and the interactions in the experience between staff and guest (humanic clues). The service experience clues framework is more applicable to a restaurant experience, but it too focuses on the manager versus customer perspective. The limitations of both the model and framework mentioned above, however, is that neither one integrates the perspective of the employees nor does it consider how meanings and perceptions are created (or co-created) in an experience. Using either guideline or model does not provide a holistic view of the restaurant experience nor does it illuminate the co-creation of meanings and perceptions that happen in the experience.
The service blueprint for sustainability in restaurant experiences is illustrated in Figure 5.2. The blueprint not only represents the actual experience, but acknowledges the three phrases of the pre-and-post contact points in the experience. The focus of the blueprint is to show where sustainability can be present in the experience.

Figure 5.2. Service Blueprint for Sustainability in Restaurant Experiences.

Figure 5.2 is a visual representation of the complex process of a restaurant experience with the integration of sustainability. In this diagram, sustainability is integrated into the front of
the house service, with the assumption that sustainability is also practiced in the back of the house in activities such as the acquisition and production of food and beverages.

The multifaceted experience is separated into the three phases of the hospitality experience: pre-experience, actual experience, and post experience (Knutson, Beck, Kim, & Cha, 2010). The pre-experience and post-experience phases demonstrate the contact points that consumers have with people or online sources before and after the visit to the restaurant. Any of these contact points are “moments of truth” (Albrecht & Zemke, 1985) when the meanings and perceptions of sustainability may be formed. Consumer meanings and perceptions could have an impact on the expectations before the experience and the overall evaluation of the service afterward.

The blueprint also indicates areas where sustainability can be integrated into the experience. For example, the customer row (2\textsuperscript{nd} from top) focuses on how customers become aware of sustainability in the experience. The process of being seated, ordering food and beverages, and paying the bill are all moments when sustainability can be communicated through the physical environment or through employees. The findings from this study indicate that some consumers do wish to hear more about sustainability in the experience. The SEC framework can help to breakdown the experience into parts that managers can understand, address, and measure in order to communicate more effectively with customers about sustainability. SEC may also facilitate the collection of evidence on aspects of the service experience that is necessary to endorse the processes outlined in the blueprint (Bitner et al., 2008).

The entire process outlined in Figure 5.2 addresses the third research question asked in this study: how are the meanings and perceptions of sustainability created in the service consumption process. The “how” is an important piece of information for managers in order to design effective services that embed sustainability into the service rather than seeing it as “an add on”.

5.3 Contributions of the Research

The research concentrated on exploring how the construct of sustainability is enacted in the context of Canadian full-service restaurants. The objectives of the study were to examine the meanings of sustainability at a broad hospitality industry level, at a consumer marketplace level,
at the firm or restaurant level, and at the service experience level. The second objective was to investigate what influences the meanings and perceptions of sustainability among key service participants in the service experience: managers, employees, and customers. The third objective was to determine how these meanings and perceptions of sustainability are created by individuals in the service consumption process.

The literature review revealed meanings of sustainability from research in management, service management, marketing, and consumer behavior (WCED 1987, Colbert & Kurucz, 2007; Wolfson, Tavor, Mark, Schermann, & Krcmar, 2011; Simpson & Radford, 2012; Van Rheede & Bloome, 2012), but also meanings of sustainability in hospitality environments such as hotels and restaurants (Baldwin, 2012, 2009; Baldwin, Wilberforce, & Kapur, 2011; Ball et al., 2008; Bandyopadhyay & Munjal, 2014; Turenne, 2009). The literature specifically on foodservice identifies operational meanings of sustainability (e.g. food production) (Baldwin, 2009, 2012) as well as sustainable food attributes (e.g. organic food) (Beer, 2008). Meanings of sustainability emerge from studies that investigate the firm perspective (for example, green practices: Choi & Parsa, 2006; Chou, Chen, & Wang, 2012; Jeong & Jang, 2010; Kasim & Ismail, 2011; Mathur & Gagre, 2015; Namkung & Jang, 2013; Wong, Wong, & Boon-itt, 2013) or the customer perspective (for example, service quality: Chen et al., 2013).

The literature review highlighted similarities and differences in assigning meaning to sustainability based on where these studies were conducted. This research, however, explores the meanings of sustainability in a holistic way that encompasses perspectives of hospitality industry, marketplace (consumers), and a specific restaurant experience context. This study develops a holistic understanding of the “sustainable service experience”, something which has not previously been inductively derived in the existing literature on sustainable full-service restaurants.

The contributions of this empirical study are exhibited in Figure 5.3. Key findings were that the meanings of sustainability most often enacted in the full-service restaurant context were organic food, local food, and community. The findings emerged at the industry level, the marketplace level, and the restaurant level, as shown by the overlapping circles. The key findings also were connected to the dimensions of sustainability as well as to the aspects of foodservice operations identified at the restaurant level. Moreover, the use of service experience
clues – functional clues, mechanic clues, and humanic clues – is a novel approach to understanding the meanings of sustainability at the restaurant level. The SEC framework allows us to understand the richness of the sustainable service experience along the dimensions of functional, mechanic, and humanic clues. The conceptual framework developed in this research answers the call for more conceptual research in environmentally related research in hospitality (Myung et al., 2012)

Figure 5.3. Conceptual Framework on the Meanings of Sustainability in Full-service Restaurant Service Experiences.
This research revealed that sustainability is a multifaceted phenomenon within the boundaries of the Canadian hospitality industry broadly, and within individual full-service restaurants. The industry showcases a variety of meanings of sustainability which has an impact on how restaurant operators chose to integrate sustainability. Some consumers in the marketplace do identify sustainability in the restaurant experience and communicate their own meanings and perceptions of sustainability to other consumers online. Managers, employees, and customers in a restaurant perceive sustainability differently in the experience, and construct meanings in the experience through interactions with the physical and social environment. The insights gained from this research are relevant beyond the full-service restaurant environment because they highlight the need to understand the meanings of sustainability holistically in a particular service environment, and in the broader industry context. The context of sustainability greatly influences an operation’s willingness to integrate sustainability in all aspects of the operation, including in the service experience.

Overall, the research contributes to the literature by answering the call for a deeper understanding of the construction of meanings in tourist (hospitality) experiences. An empirically informed understanding of the key meanings of sustainability in Canadian full-service restaurants is constructed. It also adds to current research on “sustainable hospitality”, an area of inquiry that is underdeveloped in the broader context of sustainable tourism. It does this through an empirical analysis of meanings of sustainability in the Canadian foodservice industry and a descriptive case study of meanings of sustainability in the context of a specific hospitality environment.

5.4 Conceptual Implications

The restaurant experience is complex with various elements and functional and emotional aspects that may lead to its positive or negative evaluation as well as that of the organization (Berry et al., 2002; Berry et al., 2006a; Berry et al., 2006b). Scholars have investigated the aspects of the dining experience (Andersson & Mossberg, 2004), the meal experience (Gustafsson et al., 2006; Hanefors & Mossberg, 2003; Hansen, 2005; Hansen et al., 2005; Johns et al., 1996; Jönsson & Knutsson, 2009; Meiselman, 2008; Öström et al., 2008; Wood, 2000) or
important restaurant attributes (Harrington et al., 2012). Restaurant experiences are unique since they vary with type of restaurant, type of food, type of service, and type of customer. The experiences are hard to manage because of the tangible and intangible aspects of allow for a holistic examination of the entire service experience. The three types of service clues combine to formulate the customer’s overall perspective and evaluation of the service experience (Berry et al., 2002; Berry et al., 2006b).

Green restaurants and sustainable practices in restaurants have received growing scholarly attention (Chen et al., 2013; DiPietro, Cao, et al., 2013; DiPietro & Gregory, 2012; DiPietro, Gregory, et al., 2013; Dutta et al., 2008; Hu, Parsa, et al., 2010b; Hu, Horng, et al., 2010; Jang et al., 2011; Jeong & Jang, 2010; Jeong & Jang, 2013; Kim et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2013; Kun-Shan et al., 2013; Liu & Yu, 2012; Ogbeide et al., 2009; Remar & DiPietro, 2013; Schubert, 2008; Schubert et al., 2010; Tan & Yeap, 2012a), but there is little information on sustainability within a restaurant service. DiPietro, Cao, et al. (2013) found that customers of an upscale, green certified restaurant favoured environmentally-friendly restaurants and practices and wanted to be educated more by the restaurant about these practices.

This literature showcases more investigation is needed on how customers would like to be educated about sustainability in the restaurant experience, and how this experience influences customers’ perceptions and meanings of sustainability in the context of a foodservice operation. This research helps to close the gap by indicating how customers would like to be educated about sustainability in the experience.

The findings of the study highlight the dynamic nature of restaurant experiences. Some customers described positive restaurant experiences in sustainable restaurants whereas others noted incidents that influenced their evaluation of the restaurant experience. Some of these negative incidents did in fact relate to aspects of sustainability. A customer’s restaurant experience depends on many things, including the meanings and perceptions of sustainability. Meanings and perceptions of sustainability can influence consumer expectations and evaluations of the experience and restaurant.

The complexity of bringing sustainability into the restaurant was another finding in the data. Customers felt that sustainability was important, yet acknowledged how difficult it was for restaurants to be not only economically but also environmentally and socially sustainable. From
the employee perspective, sustainability was perceived to be important, but not “efficient”. Sustainability was seen by an employee to be an add-on that would only be something that would be mentioned if there was time. Consequently, employees saw sustainable initiatives happen mostly in the back of the house. Previous studies have acknowledged the need for restaurants to take care of frontstage as well as backstage signs of sustainability (Cavagnaro & Gehrels, 2009; DiPietro, Cao, et al., 2013). The findings of this study also point to the need for more attention on sustainability in the front of the house. Equally as much is the need for staff to be more involved and committed to sustainable changes (Cavagnaro & Gehrels, 2009). The findings here demonstrate that employees were not involved or educated on the importance of sustainability or communicating it to guests.

Finally, the findings highlighted customer expectations and needs for sustainable restaurant experiences. Customers expected food to be local and sustainable in the restaurant without asking. The knowledge of local food and sustainable practices influenced their decision to visit the restaurant. This finding matched previous studies which found that knowledge of green practices impacted customers intentions to patronize a green restaurant (Hu, Parsa, & Self, 2010a). Customers also desired to know more about green practices in the restaurant, and felt the server was a good vehicle for communicating this type of information. These results paralleled other studies that noted customers wished to learn more about green practices in a particular restaurant (DiPietro, Cao, et al., 2013; Schubert et al., 2010). As Kusluvan, Kusluvan, Ilhan & Buyruk (2010, p. 194) suggest, hospitality organizations need to more carefully select staff that fit with the organization’s values, competencies and strategies and that possess particular personality traits and emotional intelligence, amongst other traits. Hiring and continually training food guides would improve the service, educate the customer and create a unique competitive advantage for the restaurant.

5.5 Managerial Implications

The study can offer several insights to restaurant owners and operators not only about sustainability in restaurant operations, but also about consumer perceptions of sustainability in restaurant experiences. First, the results indicate that the industry overall largely still views sustainability as an “add on” to daily restaurant operations. Industry websites illustrated that the
discourse is focused on the business of a restaurant or on restaurant service execution with a smaller conversation on what role sustainability plays in the operation. The current paradigm of the economic aspects of the business of restaurants has led the conversation on sustainability to be centred on lower operating costs and competition. Both aspects are important to a competitive restaurant culture, but the role of sustainability in the daily operations and execution of services from a range of perspectives has not been explored. Sustainability can be more than a source of lower costs and differentiation to restaurants. Sustainability can be a way to create value for customers, to meet customer’s growing sustainable expectations and to encourage well-being for individuals and communities. Managers, employees and customers from the case restaurant all described sustainable aspects of the restaurant experience positively. What was recognized in the case was that sustainability does not necessarily fit well in the traditional operational design of service. Sustainability necessitates changes to the restaurant environment, staff training and daily procedures to meet the needs and expectations of managers, employees and customers.

Second, there is a growing discussion on sustainability in the hospitality industry, but this discussion has concentrated on local food and food waste, with energy, water and education contributing to the discussion on a much smaller scale. While there are particular hospitality professionals who advocate to move beyond local food and food waste, the discourse is strongly centred in local. Local can refer to food procurement or community relations and is generally used to describe environmental or social dimensions of sustainability. For example, procurement of local food and beverages is associated with a lower carbon footprint and a connection to farmers or suppliers in the community thereby positively impacting the local economy. Local, however, is also perceived to be independent from sustainable. The connection between local and sustainability could be better identified and expressed to customers to meet the existing needs of customer demand. Since local food is articulated to be a major trend over the last five years, according to Restaurant Canada’s annual chef surveys, restaurants offering local fare could benefit from marketing the local and sustainable connection more effectively.

Third, a practical implication of this research will be to provide restaurant owners and operators with information on what sustainability clues or messages in the service experience customers notice, and find value in. The service experience clues concept offers a holistic systems view of the restaurant experience. The identification and calculation of the service clues
indicate what customers may use to formulate cognitive and affective perceptions of the experience and the restaurant overall. When sustainable initiatives or ideas are communicated by the restaurants, the clues point to effective ways managers can communicate sustainability initiatives within the context of the restaurant experience. It can be seen as a holistic system view of how meanings of sustainability can be created in the experience. The clues tell the story of what actually happens in the service experience and the role that sustainability has in the narrative. This story can be told in various ways through the management of service clues and thereby meet the needs of the consumer.

Fourth, restaurant owners and operators should be aware of the conversations around sustainability that occur in the service experience and ensure that the narrative is done effectively and genuinely. Consumers who notice mixed messages from the clues in the service experience can develop a critical view of the restaurant experience and restaurant image. Every clue in the experience will lead to a logical and emotional evaluation of the experience by all the participants in the experience. Every participant in the experience (manager, employee and customer) will impact each other and can create shared meanings of sustainability within the restaurant experience. For example, each individual has an understanding of the concept of local before going to the restaurant. Their idea about local may be transformed through the restaurant experience. A server telling a customer about where the food comes from or a photograph of a farmer (producer) on the wall can educate a customer about what local means in that restaurant context. If the conversations are different in the same restaurant environment, customers may perceive the meanings of local to differ and become more skeptical of the experience. Restaurant managers need to realize the importance of each participant in the restaurant dialogue and the clues must align with each other. The restaurant can influence the nature of the conversations that take place in the restaurant experience.

Fifth, the research also denotes the potential that restaurants have with regard to their educational capacity as they can teach people about sustainability through the product, service environment and service staff. Each encounter the customer has with an individual, atmosphere or product can be a learning opportunity. Employees, as an example, offer an opportunity to act as a “food guide” or “sustainability interpreter” for the customer. It may therefore prove important that managers hire staff with an interest in or actual expertise in sustainability to help promote the sustainability strategy to customers. As Kusluvan et al. (2010) suggest, hospitality
organizations need to more carefully select staff that fit with the organization’s values, competencies and strategies and that possess particular personality traits and emotional intelligence, amongst other traits. Hiring and continually training “food guides” would improve the service, educate the customer and create a unique competitive advantage for the restaurant thus impacting sustainability at both the level of the organization and also at the broader societal level.

5.6 Recommendations from the Research

The first recommendation is that restaurant operators actively seek out consumer and employee perceptions and meanings of sustainability. The results showed that managers, employees and customers had different viewpoints on sustainability in the restaurant experience, including on how it should be presented and communicated.

The second recommendation is for operators to continue to seek feedback from customers about their restaurant experience. This feedback should not ignore sustainability! If restaurants identify themselves as being sustainable or green in any way, then customers should be asked about their expectations around sustainability. The research suggested that customers do not normally mention sustainability in their reviews, unless prompted.

The third recommendation is for managers to become “clue managers”. Managers need to ensure that they obtain information from a broad range of customers about “clues” in the environment so as to best meet the needs and expectations of the majority of customers.

The fourth recommendation is managers should not rely on “mechanic clues” to tell the story of sustainability in a restaurant experience. Instead, managers should train, reinforce and monitor humanic clues as the “fallback” for any miscommunication that occurs from functional or mechanic clues.

The fifth recommendation is for managers to build a strong organizational culture dedicated to sustainability. Sustainability needs to be integrated into strategies and policies for hiring and training, environmental reporting systems, and relationships with suppliers to influence the overall economic sustainability of a service organization (Goodman, 2000).
The final recommendation is for managers to train employees of sustainable restaurants who may interact with guests (DiPietro, Cao, et al., 2013). Hiring and continually training “food guides” would improve the service, educate the customer and create a unique competitive advantage for the restaurant thus impacting sustainability at both the level of the firm and, possibly, at the broader societal level.

5.7 Recommendations for Future Research

First, this study investigated the various clues emitted in the holistic service experience: functional, mechanic, and humanic. There could have been clues emitted from others guests that was not captured in the data because the SEC framework does not recognize customer to customer interaction. Therefore, future research could explore the role of other customers in a customer’s sustainable restaurant experience. In the retail environment, “other customers”, or those who are in the service environment who are not known to the customer interacting with service staff, have been shown to influence customers’ perceptions of the service experience (Brocato, Voorhees, & Baker, 2012, p. 385); this influence should be considered in future work since it goes beyond the traditional focus on the customer’s perception of the firm’s performance (such as in service quality).

Second, more research is need to understand the “transformational” aspects of a sustainable restaurant experience. Managers, employees, and customers indicated that the restaurant experience influenced them. Managers and employees stated that they changed their own behaviours at home because of what was learned at the restaurant. Research on how restaurant experiences could encourage transformation may help restauranteurs to view the restaurant as spaces of learning and engagement equally as much as they are commercial operations.

Third, more research is needed on co-creation in hospitality environments. Few studies exist that explore what co-creation or co-production looks like in hospitality operations such as restaurants.

Fourth, the interview participants were not directly asked demographic questions, but some participants did divulge some of this information voluntarily. Studies have shown that
different generations possess different expectations for green or sustainable restaurants (Jang et al., 2011).
References


Appendix A: Employee Recruitment Poster for Interviews

share your experiences as an employee of

and take part in a research study on the perceptions of sustainability in restaurant experiences

1 in-person interview is required

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a $5 Starbucks gift card

After the interview, your name will be entered to win a $20 Sobeys gift card

To participate, email:
greenrestaurantexperiences@gmail.com

This Ph.D. project has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Guelph.
Appendix B: Customer Recruitment Poster for Interviews

share your recent dining experience and take part in a research study on the perceptions of sustainability in restaurant experiences

1 in-person interview is required

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a $5 Starbucks gift card

After the interview, your name will be entered to win a $20 Sobeys gift card

To participate, email: greenrestaurantexperiences@gmail.com

This Ph.D. project has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Guelph.
Appendix C: Participant Information Letter for Interviews

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

Title of Project - Viewing sustainability through a service management lens: customer perceptions and co-created meanings in sustainable restaurants

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Carrie Herzog (School of Hospitality, Food and Tourism Management), Marion Joppe (School of Hospitality and Tourism Management), and May Aung (Department of Marketing and Consumer Studies). The results of this project will contribute toward the degree of a Ph.D. in Management for Carrie Herzog.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Carrie Herzog at greenrestaurantexperiences@gmail.com. Please address any questions about ethical concerns and your rights as a research participant to the Director of Research Ethics at reb@uoguelph.ca or 519-824-4120, ext. 56606.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of the study is to investigate how restaurant customers view and understand sustainability in restaurants that work towards becoming more sustainable through waste, water, recycling, energy, and social initiatives. The reason for conducting this research is to help restaurateurs develop strategies to clearly communicate sustainability practices to customers in a full service restaurant experience.

PROCEDURES
To participate in this study, you should be a customer, employee or manager at Borealis Kitchener.

If you would like to volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Approximate Time Requirement</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To contact the researcher by email to request to participate in the research study. An interview date, time, and location will be determined.</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>By email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To participate in a face-to-face interview explaining your views on your recent restaurant experience(s) at Borealis Kitchener</td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
<td>A convenient location for you (Suggestion: a local coffee shop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To review your transcribed interview file for any errors or misinterpretations, as a follow-up to the interview.</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>By email</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A summary of the overall research study findings may be made available to you, upon request. You may make a request to the researcher in person during the interview process or anytime by email to Carrie Herzog at greenrestaurantexperiences@gmail.com.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
The potential risks and discomforts to you, as a participant of the study, are possible feelings of pressure by peers to participate in the study; fear of being overly critical about the service in a sustainable (and more socially desirable) restaurant; or fear of exposure as a participant or a non-participant in the study and face criticism from peers.

The researchers will try to minimize the above risks by keeping individual participation and interview data protected. The researchers will not share your individual data with restaurant management, employees or other customers. The researcher is not able to keep your data completely anonymous since it is important to keep your views in context – that is your views on the restaurant experience as a customer, employee or manager. Manager or employee data may be identifiable because of the number of employees working at the restaurant.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY
The potential benefits to you, as a participant of the study, are the opportunity to voice your opinions about your positive or negative restaurant experiences; the opportunity to increase your awareness of sustainability in restaurants or foodservice operations; the opportunity to reflect upon your individual values related to sustainability, food, and consumption; and, finally, the opportunity for you to collect a Starbucks Coffee Company gift card and have a chance to win a Sobeys gift card by participating in the study.

The potential benefits to the discipline and society are to increase the understanding of the meanings of sustainability in a service; to discuss the role of sustainability in a specific context that is familiar to the majority of people (a restaurant); to reflect upon the role restaurants play in educating customers about sustainable practices (for example: food, water, energy, waste or social initiatives); and to provide specific data to restaurateurs on how consumers perceive and understand sustainability initiatives in a restaurant experience.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION
As a participant in the study, you will be given a $5 Starbucks Coffee Company gift card at the interview. Additionally, at the end of the interview, you will be asked to fill out a ballot to win a $20 Sobeys gift card. You have a 1 out of 30 or 3.33% chance of winning the Sobeys gift card.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The researchers are not able to guarantee the confidentiality of your data because of the small number of interviews being conducted. Every effort will be made by the researchers to protect your identifying information collected in this study. The researchers will generate codes for each restaurant and individual participant and avoid using names in transcripts or notes. Only the researchers will see your individual data. Your individual data will not be reported in a case report. You, as a participant, will have the opportunity to review your own transcript data or notes, tell the researchers about any errors or misinterpretations in the text, and point out any concerns or issues you may have about your participation.
The researcher will ask your permission to record the interview using a digital recording device. If you give permission, the digital audio file will be transferred from the digital recording device to a password protected desktop computer within 24 hours of the interview time. The digital audio file will then be permanently deleted from the digital recording device.

All of your paper copy information (such as your signed consent to participate form) will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked room. All of your electronic data (such as your interview recording) will be encrypted and stored on password protected desktop computer housed in a secure room. All electronic files will be backed up on an encrypted portable hard drive that is to be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked room. All data will be secured by the researchers for two years and then destroyed (deleted or shred).

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
You can choose whether to participate in this study (or not). If you volunteer to participate, you may withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact:

Sandy Auld
Director, Research Ethics
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Telephone: [Number]
Email: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Fax: [Number]
Appendix D: Participant Consent Form

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided for the study “Viewing sustainability through a service management lens: customer perceptions and co-created meanings in sustainable restaurants” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_______________________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)

_______________________________________________
Signature of Participant

__________________________________________   ____________
Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

_______________________________________________
Name of Witness (please print)

__________________________________________   ____________
Signature of Witness
Date
Appendix E: Manager Interview Guide

Introduction

- What is your current position at the restaurant?
- How long have you owned or worked at the restaurant?
- What is the concept of the restaurant?
  Probes: Does the restaurant have a theme? Does the restaurant follow a specific philosophy?
- What differentiates the restaurant from other restaurants?
  Probes: What would entice a customer to go there? What makes the customer’s experience different at the restaurant?

Sustainability in the Restaurant

- Does the restaurant have a commitment to sustainability?
  Probes: Is the restaurant green? Does it possess any certifications?
- When did the restaurant begin to implement sustainability initiatives?
  Probes: How long has the restaurant been building its sustainability initiatives?
- What sustainability initiatives does the restaurant practice?
  Probes: Are the initiatives focused on the back of the house or front of the house? Do the initiatives relate to water conservation, waste reduction, energy reduction or sustainable building materials?
- How important is sustainability to the daily operation of the restaurant?
  Probes: What areas of daily operations does it impact? Does it impact the service?

Service Experience Clues in the Restaurant Experience

  Researcher Notes: “Service Experience Clues” - These are clues that influence a customer’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours in a restaurant experience. The designed clues communicate a story about the restaurant to the customer.

- Show the participant photographs from the restaurant with food, ambiance, and service clues. Ask the participant to select one photograph or multiple photographs that he or she feels is a strong example of the customer experience in the restaurant.
  Probe: What photograph or photographs do you believe best represent the restaurant experience?
  Probe: Are there any photographs you would add to the stack?
- Record the participant’s selected photograph(s).
• Ask the participant to explain the reason(s) why he or she chose the photograph(s).
• What is a typical customer experience at the restaurant?
• Who typically interacts with the customer?
• Who or what is most influential in the customer’s experience at the restaurant?
• In your opinion, is sustainability important in or to the customer experience?
  Probes: Why? How?

  Functional Clues in the Restaurant Experience
  
  Researcher Notes: “Functional clues” come from the core service. The clues include accuracy of a food order, efficiency of service, and food or beverage quality.
  • How important is the food quality, order efficiency and accuracy to a customer’s experience in the restaurant?
  • Does the restaurant aim to educate customers about sustainability initiatives through the ordering, execution and delivery of the food? How?

  Mechanic Clues in the Restaurant Experience
  
  Researcher Notes: “Mechanic clues” are the tangibles of the service experience. These clues come from things that can be seen, smelled, heard, tasted or felt in the restaurant experience.
  • How important is the overall ambiance (including building, layout, décor, noise level and smell) to a customer’s experience in the restaurant?
  • Does the restaurant aim to educate customers about sustainability initiatives in the overall ambiance of the restaurant? How?

  Humanic Clues in the Restaurant Experience
  
  Researcher Notes: “Humanic clues” come from restaurant staff and managers during interaction with customers or through customer observation. The behavior and appearance of individuals communicates a part of the overall story of the restaurant to the customer.
  • How important are staff members or managers to a customer’s experience in the restaurant?
  • Does the restaurant aim to educate customers about sustainability-related initiatives through staff and managers? In what way(s)?

  Conclusion
  • What continues to drive sustainability initiatives in the restaurant?
  Probes: Reduction in costs? Customer demand?

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• Does the restaurant educate and train employees about sustainability and sustainable initiatives?
  Probes: Why? How? How often?
• Does the restaurant seek to get customers involved in sustainable initiatives?
  Probes: Why or why not?
• Has your own view of sustainability changed since working at the restaurant?
  Probes: Why? How?
• Do you have any questions or additional comments you would like to make?
Appendix F: Employee Interview Guide

Introduction

- What is your current position/role at the restaurant?
- How long have you worked at the restaurant?
  Probes: Have you changed positions?
- How would you explain the concept or theme of the restaurant?
  Probes: Does the restaurant have a theme? Does the restaurant follow a specific philosophy?
- Would you recommend the restaurant to your family and friends? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, what differentiates this restaurant from others?
  Probes: What would entice a customer to go there? What makes the customer’s experience different at the restaurant?

Sustainability in the Restaurant

- In your opinion, does the restaurant have a commitment to sustainability?
  Probes: Is the restaurant green? Does it possess any certifications?
- When did the restaurant begin to implement sustainability initiatives?
  Probes: How long has the restaurant been building its sustainability initiatives?
- What sustainability initiatives does the restaurant practice?
  Probes: Are the initiatives focused on the back of the house or front of the house? Do the initiatives relate to water conservation, waste reduction, energy reduction or sustainable building materials?
- How important is sustainability to the daily operation of the restaurant?
  Probes: What areas of daily operations does it impact? Does it impact the service?
- Are you involved with any sustainability initiatives in the restaurant? In what way(s)?
- Does the restaurant educate and train employees about sustainability and sustainable initiatives? How?

Service Experience Clues in the Restaurant Experience

Researcher Notes: “Service Experience Clues” - These are clues that influence a customer’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours in a restaurant experience. The designed clues communicate a story about the restaurant to the customer.
• Show the participant photographs from the restaurant with food, ambiance, and service clues. Ask the participant to select a photographs or photographs that he or she feels is a strong example of the customer experience in the restaurant.

  Probe: What photographs or photographs do you believe best represent the restaurant experience?

  Probe: Are there any photographs you would add to the stack?

• Record the participant’s selected photograph(s).

• Ask the participant to explain the reason(s) why he or she chose the photograph(s).

• What is a typical customer experience at the restaurant?

• Who typically interacts with the customer?

• Who or what is most influential in the customer’s experience at the restaurant?

• In your opinion, is sustainability important in or to the customer experience?

  Probes: Why? How?

Functional Clues in the Restaurant Experience

  Researcher Notes: “Functional clues” come from the core service. The clues include accuracy of a food order, efficiency of service, and food or beverage quality.

• How important is the food quality, order efficiency and accuracy to a customer’s experience in the restaurant?

• Does the restaurant aim to educate customers about sustainability initiatives through the ordering, execution and delivery of the food? How?

Mechanic Clues in the Restaurant Experience

  Researcher Notes: “Mechanic clues” are the tangibles of the service experience. These clues come from things that can be seen, smelled, heard, tasted or felt in the restaurant experience.

• How important is the overall ambiance (including building, layout, décor, noise level and smell) to a customer’s experience in the restaurant?

• Does the restaurant aim to educate customers about sustainability initiatives in the overall ambiance of the restaurant? How?
**Humanic Clues in the Restaurant Experience**

*Researcher Notes: “Humanic clues” come from restaurant staff and managers during interaction with customers or through customer observation. The behavior and appearance of individuals communicates a part of the overall story of the restaurant to the customer.*

- How important are staff members or managers to a customer’s experience in the restaurant?
- Does the restaurant aim to educate customers about sustainability-related initiatives through staff and managers? In what way(s)?
- Does the restaurant seek to get customers involved in sustainable initiatives?
  - Probes: Why or why not?

**Conclusion**

- What continues to drive sustainability initiatives in the restaurant?
  - Probes: Reduction in costs? Customer demand? Management interest?
- Has your own view of sustainability changed since working at the restaurant?
  - Probes: Why? How? What does sustainability mean to you?
- Do you have any questions or additional comments you would like to make?
- Do you know of anyone else I should interview for this project?
Appendix G: Customer Interview Guide

Introduction

- When did you last dine at ABC Restaurant?
  Probes: Day? Week?

- What meal did you have?
  Probes: Brunch, Lunch, Dinner ….

- Did you dine alone?
  Probes: Who did you eat with?

- Why did you decide to dine at ABC Restaurant that day?
  Probes: Location, Convenience, Style of food, Cost …. 

- How would you evaluate your overall restaurant experience at ABC Restaurant on that day?
  Probes: Were you satisfied? Dissatisfied? Why? Did that experience compare to other experiences at ABC Restaurant?

- Would you recommend the restaurant to family and friends? Why or why not?

- In your opinion, what is the concept of the ABC Restaurant?
  Probes: Does the restaurant have a theme? Does the restaurant follow a specific philosophy?

- What do you believe differentiates ABC Restaurant from other restaurants?
  Probes: What would entice a person to dine there? What makes the customer’s experience different at the restaurant?

Service Experience Clues in the Restaurant Experience

Researcher Notes: “Service Experience Clues” - These are clues that influence a customer’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours in a restaurant experience. The designed clues communicate a story about the restaurant to the customer.

- Show the participant photographs from the restaurant with food, ambiance, and service clues.
  Ask the participant to select a photographs or photographs that he or she feels is a strong example of the customer experience in the restaurant.
  Probe: What photographs or photographs do you believe best represent the restaurant experience?
  Probe: Are there any photographs you would add to the stack?

- Record the participant’s selected photograph(s).

- Ask the participant to explain the reason(s) why he or she chose the photograph(s).
In your view, what is a typical customer experience at ABC Restaurant?

Who did you interact with at ABC Restaurant?

Who or what was most influential in your experience at ABC Restaurant?
Probes: Who or what was most memorable?

In your opinion, was sustainability important in or to your ABC Restaurant experience?
Probes: Why? How?

**Functional Clues in the Restaurant Experience**

*Researcher Notes: “Functional clues” come from the core service. The clues include accuracy of a food order, efficiency of service, and food or beverage quality.*

- Explain the “functional clues” in the experience. These clues come from the core service. The clues include accuracy of a food order, efficiency of service, and food or beverage quality.
- What was the food quality like in your experience?
- How was the order efficiency?
- Was your order accurate?
- Were you provided with any information about sustainability when ordering or receiving your food and beverages? What was it?

**Mechanic Clues in the Restaurant Experience**

*Researcher Notes: “Mechanic clues” are the tangibles of the service experience. These clues come from things that can be seen, smelled, heard, tasted or felt in the restaurant experience.*

- How important was the overall ambiance (including building, layout, décor, noise level and smell) in your experience at ABC Restaurant?
- Do you remember anything about sustainability in the overall ambiance?
  Probes: What did you recall?

**Humanic Clues in the Restaurant Experience**

*Researcher Notes: “Humanic clues” come from restaurant staff and managers during interaction with customers or through customer observation. The behavior and appearance of individuals communicates a part of the overall story of the restaurant to the customer.*

- How important were staff members or managers in your experience at ABC Restaurant?
• Were you educated by the staff about sustainability initiatives in the restaurant? In what way(s)?

Conclusion
• Are you aware that the restaurant has an expressed commitment to sustainability? Probes: How did you become aware? On website? Brochure? In the restaurant?
• Is sustainability an important issue for a restaurant? Why or why not?
• Would you like to hear more about sustainability in restaurants? Why?
• Would you like to participate in sustainability initiatives in the restaurant?
• Has your own view of sustainability changed since visiting the restaurant?
• Do you have any questions or additional comments you would like to make?
Appendix H: Photographs of Functional Service Experience Clues Used for Photo-Elicitation Exercise during Interviews

Figure H.1. Photograph of a Dinner Daily Feature from ABC Restaurant
Appendix I: Photographs of Mechanic Service Experience Clues Used for Photo-Elicitation Exercise during Interviews

*Figure I.1.* Photograph of a Chalkboard with a Beer List located in the Bar at ABC Restaurant

*Figure I.2.* Photograph of Birch Tree Branches and Table in the Dining Room at ABC Restaurant
Figure I.3. Photograph of Tables in the Upper Level Dining Room at ABC Restaurant

Figure I.4. Photograph of the Host Stand, Display Case with Products for Sale, and Entrance to the Bar at ABC Restaurant
Figure I.5. Photograph of Chalkboard in Bar listing Food Purchasing Criteria at ABC Restaurant

Figure I.6. Photograph of a Chalkboard with a Word Search (Highlighting Aspects of the Restaurant Philosophy) located in the Bar at ABC Restaurant
Figure I.7. Photograph of the Staircase leading to the Upper Dining Room at ABC Restaurant


Figure I.8. Photograph of a Display Case with Food Products for Sale in the Main Entrance of ABC Restaurant*

* Identifying information was blacked out to maintain anonymity.

Herzog, C. (2014, July 17). Photograph of a Display Case with Food Products in Main Entrance of Case Restaurant. [digital image].

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Figure I.9. Photograph of the Exterior of the Restaurant and Sign at ABC Restaurant

Figure I.10. Photograph of the Patio and Exterior Sign near the Main Entrance at ABC Restaurant*

* Identifying information was blacked out to maintain anonymity.

Figure 1.11. Photograph of the Main Entrance at ABC Restaurant*
* Identifying information was blacked out to maintain anonymity.

Figure 1.12. Photograph of the Canadian Art Themed Dining Room at ABC Restaurant
Figure 1.13. Photograph of the Bar Taps on Display in the Bar at ABC Restaurant Herzog, C. (2014, July 17). Photograph of the Bar Taps at the Case Restaurant. [digital image].

Figure 1.14. Photograph of the “Wall of Farmers” located in the Bar at ABC Restaurant

* Identifying information was blacked out to maintain anonymity.

Figure I.15. Photograph of the Napkins used at ABC Restaurant*

* Identifying information was blacked out to maintain anonymity.

Appendix J: Photographs of Humanic Service Experience Clues Used for Photo-Elicitation Exercise during Interviews

Figure J.1. Photograph of the Back of Server’s Uniform Shirt at ABC Restaurant Herzog, C. (2014, April 7). Case Restaurant Server in Uniform (back of shirt). [photograph].

Figure J.2. Photograph of an Server Interacting with a Guest in the Dining Room at ABC Restaurant*

* Identifying information was blacked out to maintain anonymity.

Appendix K: Participant Receipt for Starbucks Gift Card Provided to all Participants

**Confirmation of Receipt of $5 Starbucks Coffee Company Gift Card**
I have received a $5 Starbucks Coffee Company gift card for my participation in the Sustainability in Restaurant Experiences research project.

*Participant to complete. Please print clearly.*

Name: _____________________________________________________________

Signature: _________________________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________

*Researcher to complete.*

Researcher signature: _______________________________________________

Participant number: ________________________________________________
Appendix L: Ballot Provided to all Participants for a Chance to Win a Gift Card

Enter to win a $20 Sobeys Gift Card!

In appreciation of your participation in the *Sustainability in Restaurant Experiences* research project, please fill out this ballot for a chance to win a $20 Sobeys gift card.

*Please print clearly. This information will only be used to contact you if you should win a gift card.*

Name:
_____________________________________________________

Address:
_____________________________________________________

Telephone #:
_____________________________________________________

Email:
_____________________________________________________

Good luck!
Appendix M: Participant Receipt for Gift Card Won in Random Draw

Confirmation of Receipt of $20 Sobeys Gift Card

I have won and received a $20 Sobeys gift card for my participation in the Sustainability in Restaurant Experiences research project.

Participant to complete. Please print clearly.

Name: ____________________________________________________

Signature: _________________________________________________

Date: _____________________________________________________

Researcher to complete.

Researcher signature: _______________________________________

Participant number: _________________________________________
Appendix N: Photograph Release Form for Researcher-Generated Photographs at ABC Restaurant

PHOTOGRAPHY RELEASE FORM

I hereby consent to the researchers’ use of photographs taken for the “Viewing sustainability through a service management lens: customer perceptions and co-created meanings in sustainable restaurants” project:

by Carrie Herzog (name of photographer)

at _____________________________ (location), and

on __________________ (date).

I am (please check the most appropriate):

☐ the subject of the photograph;

☐ the parent of the child subject (under age of 18 years);

☐ the supervisor of a restricted location.

I agree that these photographs may be submitted to the researchers as part of the research project, “Viewing sustainability through a service management lens: customer perceptions and co-created meanings in sustainable restaurants”. All intellectual property rights including copyright for the photographs will be owned by the researchers at University of Guelph for use in the research project in perpetuity.

I understand that signing this release does not guarantee publication of the photographs. I understand and agree that there will be no compensation or remuneration paid to me (or my child, if applicable) for the use of the photographs.

Name: ________________________________________
    Please print clearly.

Signature: ______________________________________

Dated: ________________________________________
    Please print clearly.
Researcher Notes:

Restaurant: ____________________________________________

Photograph description: ____________________________________

_________________________________________________________________
Appendix O: Samples of Coding Scheme and Related Quotes

Theme: The General Sense of Sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotes</th>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Tim Hortons, meanwhile, also devotes an interactive page on its website to its annual Sustainability &amp; Responsibility Report, which details the chain’s environment- and health-related initiatives, goals and accomplishments”. (FHM)</td>
<td>- Environmental Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“From organic, locally sourced and ethically produced food and beverages, to environmentally sound recycling practices, the idea of sustainability has gained mainstream traction in foodservice in the last 10 years. Part of it is the desire to access the very best ingredients to create beautiful dishes. “I want to preserve the sustainability of my profession, because the more restaurants that get pre-cooked, pre-cut, pre-portioned food, the more we lose our craft. There is no joy in opening a bag and having a Rational range ‘cook’ it for you,” he says. (FHM)</td>
<td>- Organic food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Local food</td>
<td>- Ethical food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Environmental-friendly</td>
<td>- Recycling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Idea of Sustainability</td>
<td>- Best Ingredients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Clark, who helmed the kitchen at Vancouver’s sustainable-seafood maverick C Restaurant for 15 years, and is now opening the Ocean Wise-certified sustainable seafood concept, The Fish Counter, believes sustainability is more than a marketing tool. (FHM)</td>
<td>- Sustainability restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ocean Wise</td>
<td>- Sustainability beyond Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFP Conference Highlights Sustainability and Social Media</td>
<td>- Broad Use of Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TORONTO — “Changing Perspectives” was the theme of the Canadian Association of Foodservice Professionals’ (CAFP) 39th annual conference, held May 29 to June 2, at the Delta Vancouver Airport Hotel, where more than 100 delegates networked and attended educational seminars as well as award presentations during the four- day event. Guests attended nine education sessions, including one led by Daniel Edward Craig, former GM of the Opus Hotel and founder of Vancouver-based Reknown, a social-media marketing and strategy agency. He presented on the evolution of social media, and described how to build an online presence while monitoring and analyzing reviews and commentary. Next, Dr. Susan Biali, a Vancouver-based life coach, gave a keynote presentation on how to increase health, happiness and passion. Other sessions included a talk on bottled water consumption by John B. Challinor, director of Corporate Affairs, Nestlé Waters Canada and a presentation about Ocean Wise, by Mike McDermid, program manager of the Vancouver Aquarium’s Ocean Wise program. The CAFP is a national association that promotes professional and personal growth in the foodservice and</td>
<td>- Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ocean Wise</td>
<td>- Water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Coding Tables from Online Industry Sources
A tracking system was created for the three hospitality websites: Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine (FHM), Restaurants Canada (RC), RestaurantCentral.ca (RA).
Beacons of Change - Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine
Suzanne and Dominic Fielden of Rocky Mountain Flatbread, earn the 2012 F&H Green Leadership Award for integrating sustainable practices into their pizza business
Married with a growing family, Suzanne and Dominic Fielden dreamed of opening a green business. Now, nearly 10 years later, Rocky Mountain Flatbread Co. is a sustainable operation with three restaurants in British Columbia and Alberta and a retail line of pizzas and breads. (FHM)

What does going green mean for your company and for you personally?
Suzanne Fielden: It was the mission of our business to demonstrate how you make money, while making an environmental and a social difference. It wasn’t something we started once we embedded the rest of our business. It was at the heart of it when we opened. It guided our decisions. So when we’re building our restaurants we use reclaimed wood; when we’re sourcing our suppliers [it’s] local, if possible. We compost everything, and we designed our menu with a zero-waste [mandate] so that we have minimal waste. It’s really integrated into every orifice of our business. We also have posters and we get involved in the community; on our tabletops we have little info cards about how you can reduce your carbon footprint or how you can buy Ocean Wise seafood or connect with your local farmer’s market. For us it’s a community thing, and it affects the youth, our diners, our community, like-minded individuals, and organizations. We’re trying to get everyone involved in the movement. (FHM)

What are your key green initiatives?
DF: All the initiatives that educate our society are key to our business, because that’s our community outreach. A lot of companies, especially in the food business, will spend a lot of money [distributing] coupons and deals and telemarketing and mail-outs. We’ll spend our promotional marketing money on community initiatives and working in schools. A major part of our success, and our green initiative, is empowering others to do great things for themselves and their community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hospitality industry. (FHM)</th>
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<td>Beacons of Change - Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine</td>
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| What does going green mean for your company and for you personally? |
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| - Green Leadership |
| - Sustainable practices |
| - Green business |
| - Sustainable operation |
| - Social responsibility |
| - Environmental Responsibility |
| - Financial Responsibility |
| - Green |
| - Environmental difference |
| - Social difference |
| - Integration of environmental and social |
| - Reclaimed wood |
| - Local food |
| - Compost |
| - Zero waste |
| - Community involvement |
| - Info cards on tables |
| - Reduce carbon footprint |
| - Ocean Wise |
| - Connect to local farmer’s market |
| - Community thing |
| - The Movement |
| - Green initiatives |
| - Education |
| - Community outreach |
| - Empowerment of others |
**F&H: What are your core green initiatives?**

**BD:** Serving locally crafted food and beverages is our key modus operandi. Further initiatives include using green electricity [at one location], solar panels for hot water and organic cotton staff uniforms made in Toronto. We also ensure our spent fryer oil goes toward making biodiesel. I’ve even gone so far to mandate that any company-owned vehicles must be manufactured at Ontario assembly plants. Probably the most important green initiative, and the one I’m most proud of, is our fundraising activities relating to rivers in our communities. For 20 years we have been raising money for Guelph’s Speed River Project. This exciting venture involves naturalizing the river itself and planting native trees along its shores. Recently, we partnered with [the Cambridge, Ont.-based] Grand River Conservation Authority to raise money for restoring the Grand River. We also host a river dinner to raise funds for river restoration. Last year, [NGC] raised $12,000. (FHM)

| - Green |
| - Local food and beverages |
| - Green Electricity |
| - Solar Panels |
| - Organic unifrms |
| - Repurpose fryer oil |
| - Local cars |
| - Fundraising for communities |

| It’s been seven years since the owners of Vancouver’s Rocky Mountain Flatbread decided to make their two casual family dining locations carbon neutral. Actually, it was second nature to co-founders Suzanne and Dominic Fielden who were sustainability specialists in the corporate world. Suzanne Fielden says a whole-hearted commitment to green is not just about the grand gestures. “We see green as going beyond energy efficiency. Yes, we buy green energy, Energy Star appliances, turn off lights, use compact fluorescent lighting and use low-flow taps and toilets, but we also look beyond that to zero-waste menus, composting, local sourcing of product and biodegradable takeout containers”. (FHM) |

| - Green as topic |
| - Sustainability specialists |
| - Energy Efficiency |
| - Zero waste menus |
| - Composting |
| - Local sourcing |
| - Biodegradable takeout contained |

| But, while green is a big topic of discussion for operators these days, few have given the all-out effort of the Rocky Mountain Flatbread and South St. Burgers of the world, says André LaRivière, executive director for the Vancouver-based Green Table Network. “There’s certainly an uptake in people looking for help making greener and more sustainable choices,” he says. “There’s also an increase in the number of products and services coming to market, from packaging to chemicals to sustainable food”. (FHM) |

| - Environmental concern by consumers |
| - Visit environmental restaurants |
| - Eco-friendly restaurants |
| - Transparency |
| - Communication with consumers |
| - Jaded consumers |
| - Engaging customers |

| Research confirms restaurateurs who showcase their commitment will attract consumers. The NPD Group’s November 2010 Mega Trends Report indicates more than half of Canadians are ‘extremely’ or ‘very concerned’ about the environment; and 42 per cent are more likely to visit restaurants that address their concerns. Interestingly, only 26 per cent of diners can identify an eco-friendly restaurant. |

| That’s why operators need to be more forthcoming about their mandate, says Linda Strachan, industry analyst, Foodservice, for The NPD Group, Inc., in Toronto. “Operators need to make sure they’re transparent and communicate to consumers. Consumers are a bit jaded. If you are doing it, be genuine and talk about it. It’s about engaging with your customers about something that’s important to them”. (FHM) |

| - Green |
| - Sustainability specialists |
| - Energy Efficiency |
| - Zero waste menus |
| - Composting |
| - Local sourcing |
| - Biodegradable takeout contained |
Ask an industry insider to define sustainability and the answers will be as varied as a restaurant menu. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as “Conserving an ecological balance by avoiding depletion of natural resources”. It’s only natural that the term has evolved to encompass every area of a restaurant operation - from energy-savings to cooking with pesticide-free, local and natural ingredients. Sustainability is a decision-making tool that helps us make business choices that are mindful of the environment and our community, sums up Sal Howell, proprietor of River Cafe and Boxwood in Calgary. Find out more as Howell, two of her peers and two industry experts share insights from their sustainability journey. (FHM)

When one thinks about sustainability, we usually think about ‘going green.’ This is natural, as the media has equated one with the other and used the words interchangeably in recent years. Think and look deeper into the notion of sustainability, and you will find that the concept is based on more than just environmental issues. (RA)
### Theme: Sustainability is a Restaurant Issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotes</th>
<th>Initial Coding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offering local and sustainable food is not only responsible, it is en vogue. (CA)</td>
<td>- Responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| For all three chefs, the key is value, not cost. Clark advises food operators wanting to make responsible choices to start with one menu item and gauge customer demand. If that doesn’t work, try another. “The goal is to make sustainable choices, not to put people out of business. If we can put a man on the moon — we’re capable of anything. Don’t say you can’t, because you can. The question is do you want to?” challenges Clark. (FHM) | - Responsibility  
- Sustainable food as trend  
- Responsibility  
- Sustainable choices  
- Value                                                                                                                                  |
| While “sustainable” is a buzzword in the food industry, experts participating in Eat Vancouver’s “Taking Stock of Seafood” panel in the spring debated the definition and viability of sustainable fisheries. “Consumers have a lot of passion for sustainable seafood,” said Mike McDermid, co-owner of Vancouver’s Fish Counter, while also noting that the notion of what constitutes a sustainable fishery today may change tomorrow. “There’s been a shift in consumption, but that has a downward pressure through the system”. He explained: “Wild capture fisheries is the last ‘wild hunt’ on the planet, and we tend to hunt things to extinction before we stop”. Dr. Daniel Pauly, Ocean Sciences professor at the University of British Columbia, agreed, pointing out that management of fisheries in Canada, unlike the U.S., doesn’t include rebuilding. “Sustainable growth is self-contradictory,” said the professor. Traceability is a major issue, too, he said, stating that world fishery statistics are incomplete, as 40 per cent of fish sold is illegally caught, and 60 per cent of the fish we consume is from developing countries. “This is an ethical problem — grabbing fish in West Africa to feed fish on farms for our tables,” Pauly said. (FHM) | - Sustainability as trend  
- Consumer demand  
- Ethical problem  
- Traceability as major issue                                                                                                              |

#### NRA Show Highlights Sustainability

Key issues and trends were discussed and previewed at the Alternative Bitestyle pavilion, which featured products dedicated to special dietary needs; the Conserve Solutions Center, which showcased sustainable products and services; and The Organic & Natural pavilion, which helped buyers find organic and natural products. (FHM)

| Five Industry Insiders Discuss Sustainability in Foodservice. (FHM)                                                                 | - Sustainability as trend  
- Special Dietary needs  
- Sustainable products and services  
- Organic products  
- Natural Products                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local food, check. One hundred per cent recycled napkins, check. Composting program, check. Sustainability in foodservice is on the rise. With money to be saved in operational costs and growing consumer demand as awareness increases, many foodservice operators are looking to make changes that will help the environment and | - Sustainability as trend  
- Local food  
- Cost savings                                                                                                                   |

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2 Quotations from Online Industry Sources

A tracking system was created for the three hospitality websites: Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine (FHM), Restaurants Canada (RC), RestaurantCentral.ca (RA).
their bottom line. (RA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRFA launches program to help restaurants reduce environmental impact; free subscriptions in March</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TORONTO - The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association is proud to offer a new program to help restaurants reduce their impact on the environment and improve their bottom line. CRFA Conserve is a new online tool specially designed to help restaurants learn about sustainability best practices for the foodservice industry. (CA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top 10 Canadian menu trends consumers will see in restaurants this year are: 1. Locally produced and locally inspired dishes 2. Gluten-free/food allergy conscious 3. Sustainability 4. Farm-/estate-branded ingredients 5. Food trucks/street food 6. Ethnic/street food inspired appetizers (e.g. tempura, taquitos) 7. Greek yogurt 8. Simplicity/back-to-basics 9. Non-wheat noodles or pasta (e.g. quinoa, rice, buckwheat) 10. Ancient grains (e.g. kamut, spelt, amaranth) Locally produced food was the top item for the fourth year in a row. (RC)

The influence of environmental consciousness and responsibility is clearly on the minds of chefs, as the top three trends all benefit the environment in some way (RA)

There are many reasons to go green these days: savings in operating costs, reducing waste, improving public image, and of course, reducing your impact on the environment. (CA)
**Theme: Pillars of Sustainability**

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability is first and foremost about the idea of intergenerational equity, respecting and considering future generations as much as our own. Within an organizational context we must look at sustainability as having three pillars, economic, social and environmental. Business models evolve, and now more than ever foodservice operators must look at past practices and be prepared to adapt them to ensure success in the future. (RA)</td>
<td>- Sustainability equal to green&lt;br&gt;- Sustainability more than environmental equity&lt;br&gt;- Sustainability as intergenerational equity&lt;br&gt;- Pillars of sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzanne Fielden: It was the mission of our business to demonstrate how you make money, while making an environmental and a social difference. It wasn’t something we started once we embedded the rest of our business. It was at the heart of it when we opened. It guided our decisions. So when we’re building our restaurants we use reclaimed wood; when we’re sourcing our suppliers [it’s] local, if possible. We compost everything, and we designed our menu with a zero-waste [mandate] so that we have minimal waste. It’s really integrated into every orifice of our business. We also have posters and we get involved in the community; on our tabletops we have little info cards about how you can reduce your carbon footprint or how you can buy Ocean Wise seafood or connect with your local farmer’s market. For us it’s a community thing, and it affects the youth, our diners, our community, like-minded individuals, and organizations. We’re trying to get everyone involved in the movement. (RA)</td>
<td>- Environmental sustainability&lt;br&gt;- Social sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMCR Canada is fully aware of its social and environmental responsibility and is continuing to improve its role as a corporate citizen and providing support to communities. Moreover, GMCR Canada allocates a portion of its annual before-tax revenues to support social and environmental initiatives. In 2012, this represented close to $30 million. (RA)</td>
<td>- Environmental responsibility&lt;br&gt;- Social responsibility&lt;br&gt;- Community support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The question is how can a chef translate a powerful environmental statement into an essential (yet affordable) menu philosophy? For starters, building a streamlined and ethical menu structured around a firm grasp of the problem. Chef Allemeier understands that seafood is already an expensive item to have in inventory; his suggestion is to partner with Oceanwise or Seafood Watch as they have the resources to help your business. They offer training sessions for everyone from back-of-the-house to front-line staff. (RA)</td>
<td>- Environmental statement&lt;br&gt;- Ethical menu&lt;br&gt;- Ocean Wise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3 Quotations from Online Industry Sources

A tracking system was created for the three hospitality websites: Foodservice and Hospitality Magazine (FHM), Restaurants Canada (RC), RestaurantCentral.ca (RA).
Theme: Sustainable Philosophy of Business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I love restaurateurs who pay attention to using quality ingredients, prepare simple foods in fantastic and creative ways, and are friendly to the environment and their customers. Makes me feel like they are not in business only for the money but also to make the world a better place - one burger at a time! (L14) | - Use quality ingredients
- Friendly to environment
- Friendly to customers
- Economic sustainability
- Social sustainability |
| We are also both very impressed with the community work and the planet-saving (or non-harming further) efforts this company takes. (L20) | - Community work
- Planet saving efforts |
| Excellent food, and it’s great to eat at a place that puts so much emphasis on ethical meat and the environment. (L22) | - Ethical food
- Emphasis on environment |

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4 Quotations from Online Industry Sources

A tracking system was developed for the consumer data collected from the marketplace. Three green or sustainable schemes/programs were used to create a list of “sustainable restaurants”. The tracking system uses letters and numbers to distinguish sources. The letters identify the scheme/program where the number indicates the restaurant. The three schemes or programs used are Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice (L), Green Restaurant Association (G), and Sustainable Restaurant Association (S). Any names of establishments or identifying details were blacked out for anonymity.
Theme: “Local Food and Sustainability”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotes</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The first-ever post-secondary presence focused on the field-to-fork concept, which is based on the harvesting, storage, processing, packaging, sale and consumption of food – in particular the production of local food for local consumers. (G3) | - Local food  
- Local consumers |
| local and responsibly sourced is emphasized here (G3) | - Local food  
- Responsibly sourced food |
| I love the way they use fresh and local produce, local meats and make everything in house. (G3) | - Local food |
| has a mission: they showcase the wealth of outstanding produce which is sourced from local producers. From seafood to vegetables to poultry and pigs ... the list goes on. (L13) | - Local food  
- Local producers |
| serves only fresh food from local suppliers - kind of like the 100 Mile Diet. All the food was fresh and fantastic. They were more than accommodating for gluten free and it was delicious. The server helped us choose a wonderful wine pairing and helped with all our special requests. Food is prepared fresh to order. You have never tasted veggies this good. They gave about 300 varieties of herbal teas and locally made sodas! Amazing (L4) | - Local suppliers  
- Local food |
| i [sic] was treated to a unique lunch experience at a once abandoned brickyard site, now saved for people to see where the foundation of many Toronto buildings began as clay .The cafe uses only fresh organic local products that are prepared daily; not a large lunch menu but varied enough to satisfy everyone. (L4) | - Organic food  
- Local food  
- Restored building  
- Community history |
| A great restaurant, as it turns out... With locally sourced ingredients. I had roast chicken on a fresh bun, followed by the best Mac n’ cheese ever (local Gouda, roasted cauliflower and spinach -- to die for!). Served with a house-made sparkling ginger soda; so good, I had two and asked for the recipe! (L3) | - Local food |

5 Quotations from Online Consumer Sources
A tracking system was developed for the consumer data collected from the marketplace. Three green or sustainable schemes/programs were used to create a list of “sustainable restaurants”. The tracking system uses letters and numbers to distinguish sources. The letters identify the scheme/program where the number indicates the restaurant. The three schemes or programs used are Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice (L), Green Restaurant Association (G), and Sustainable Restaurant Association (S). Any names of establishments or identifying details were blacked out for anonymity.
| Been here a few times and this last time annoyed me enough to write a review. Ordered the rotisserie chicken sandwich. Hardly any chicken, a scrape of strawberry mayo, some greens, and no chicken skin which is the whole point of this sandwich...for $14 so not cool. Come on people, you can do better than this. Just because you are located in downtown Calgary doesn't mean these prices are set regardless of food served. A local organic chicken deserves better respect - giver her some pizazz to showcase what she gave her life for. Service was average - empty glasses languished for a while. (L3) | - Local food  - Organic food  - Negative impression of experience |
| I've been going to this restaurant since it opened twenty years ago and it's always a treat. With a premise of local and fresh ingredients, and a creative chef, the menu is always inspirational. Reservations are recommended, and if a nice day you may get a coveted table outdoors. Be sure to find out where to park for easy access to the island. (L18) | - Local food  - Local food philosophy |
| Four of us went to this restaurant to experience Big Taste. We were impressed with our meals. All of us had the lamb chops which our waiter recommended. There was also duck confit as a choice. The lamb came from a local farm and was done to perfection - juicy and tender with a rosette of mashed potatoes, spinach and a roasted tomato all beautifully presented on a plate. The two choices of appetizers were both good - a smoked salmon salad and a tomato olive mixture in a martini glass. One of our party had the wine pairing for the salad and said it was good. The lemon meringue tart was a nice finish to a delicious meal. Service was attentive and pleasant though out the meal. Tables were well spaced and the lighting made it easy to read the menu but subdued enough to give a good atmosphere. (L21) | - Local farm  - Local food |
| I would give this place a 3 1/2 if it was possible. I read such great reviews before I went here so I think had extremely high expectations. The food was just a bit above average for the most part. My girlfriend and I split the calamari and the platter of local game meats which were both just okay...I wouldn't recommend either of the dishes. We had the apricot glazed wild boar and the beef tenderloin with black truffle gravy as mains. I thought the beef tenderloin was the much better dish and she thought the wild boar was better. I will consider going back here and trying some other dishes. The service was fantastic which is the reason why I chose a rating of 4 instead of 3. (L15) | - Local food |