

## A Study on Transforming Hotel Food and Beverage Service Experience in the Post Covid Context

Akshita Tiwari<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** The hospitality scenario has been devastated by the pandemic as the services offered by the industry involve a high degree of contact between the guest and the hotel employees. The food and beverage service department has been a victim of this whirlwind process and has to layout a new plan of action to stimulate recovery and ensure business revitalization. The current study's focal point is the transformation of the food and beverage service experience, post the pandemic in hotels. The various challenges faced by the food and beverage department while struggling with the crisis and how the department is adapting to the changing expectations and demands of the guests. The managers of food and beverage departments of 5-star hotels of Delhi NCR were contacted for a questionnaire survey. The restaurant service experience after the outbreak of pandemic will be highlighted in the current research. Development of key strategies to bounce back quickly and also win back trust of the guests will be a real challenge for the department. As it is rightly said that necessity is the mother of invention, hence food and beverage service department will also re-think, re-define and re-imagine its whole service experience to cater to the shift in guest requirements and expectations from it. The current study will have useful insights for food and beverage professionals and the hospitality industry as it will document the dramatic changes and new strategies along with current practices of the hotel food and beverage service department.

**Keywords:** food and beverage service; hotels; COVID-19; India; service experience; changing food and beverage service

### 1 Introduction

Food and beverage services department is an essential component of the hospitality industry as it is the responsible for communicating with the guests through service of food and drinks, greeting guests, order taking and various other issues and complaint handling tasks till the guests leave the hotel. Food and beverage service professionals in the hotel have to create effortless service experiences for the guests and also do the right thing at the right time! The scenario has completely changed for the department since the onset of the pandemic, the hustling bustling back areas, the fully occupied

---

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Amity School of Hospitality, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, Noida  
akshitatiwari29@gmail.com

tables, the continuous order announcements to the chefs by stewards and also the regular printing of bills from the billing machine are nowhere to be seen!

The shift in the operations of the hotel and especially food and beverage service department has impacted the business as well as the whole food and beverage experience has been hampered. Every problem has its solution and the food and beverage service department is also following the same and looking out for solutions to ensure maximum guest satisfaction and to cater to guests' needs keeping in mind the pandemic appropriate standards of hygiene and cleanliness. The current study will focus on the practices and strategies applied by the F&B department to transform the food and beverage service experience in the pandemic context. The changes in standard operating procedures and daily operations will be closely studied. The study will highlight the significant changes and differences in the hotel food and beverage sector during the current times.

The guests will be experiencing a completely new way of food and beverage service till the pandemic goes away as social distancing is something which will not let the stewards and restaurant managers to roam around and keep asking the guests what they want, minimum contact services will be conducted in the restaurants, bars and room service as well. The banquets have also seen a change in its operating procedures. The department which has been continuously following strict rules of service, etiquette, grooming and from the correct side to serve food and beverages has to now change its way of working and keep the maximum focus on practicing COVID appropriate behavior. The guest behavior has also been influenced by the pandemic and they may fear to get back to hotels and restaurants. The Sunday brunches in coffee shops of luxury hotels may be seen more than half empty till the situation settles down. Till then the transformation may be noted in the hotel operations and food and beverage service experience.

## 2 Literature Review

The food and beverage service department since the coming up of the pandemic has witnessed that service quality is not alone the only factor to be focused upon but now the hygiene and safety of guests in respect of COVID-19 appropriate measures need to be considered. These preventive practices may directly impact the standards of service, guest expectations, service quality and guests' perception as well. For maintaining the guest satisfaction and quality of service, it becomes necessary for the food and beverage service department to formulate and improve the services according to the need of the hour and also keep a major focus on guests safety (Kunchornsirimongkol, K. 2020).

A study by (Jaswal, et al. 2020) focuses on In-room dining during the pandemic and concludes in their study that In Room dining will be the highest revenue generating sub-department of food and beverage service as the room service has been serving isolated covid patients staying in hotels and other guests as well as very few prefer to eat inside coffee shop and restaurant of the hotels. The study also noted that current times demand shift in style of service and pre-plated service is highly preferred as it requires minimum interaction among guest and the food and beverage professional.

Guests are preferring to go for hotels and restaurants that are communicating with them through online platforms about their hygienic strategies and facilities. They are keen towards hotel using sterilized hotel rooms, electronic food menus and touchless payments. Guests will prefer hotels providing discounts for longer stay periods. A healthy lifestyle is being established due to the pandemic and it has resulted in change of guest behavior ( Indrianto, et al, 2020).

Food and beverage outlets should take steps in the direction of trust building among guests, re planning of menus, development of alternatives, application of hygienic service standards, updating the food supply chain, findings ways to promote the hotel's restaurants and bars. The hotel should take preventive measures for maintaining expenses and also support the staff during crisis. (Yilmaz, et al, 2021) The emphasis of hygiene, health, well-being and also sustainability is becoming relevant in the pandemic times and from the food and beverage business point of view all these elements need to be kept in mind by the hotels( Köster, S. ,2021).

### **3 Objectives of the Study**

1. To ascertain the various changes in food and beverage service operations.
2. To find out the challenges faced by Food and beverage managers during the pandemic.
3. To suggest ways to transform food and beverage service operations in the pandemic context.

### **4 Research Methodology**

The current study utilized both primary and primary sources of data. A structured questionnaire was circulated among the 46 Food and beverage service managers of 5-star hotels in Delhi NCR. The questionnaire involved statements with 5-point Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted with the help of frequency analysis and descriptive statistics.

## 5 Findings and Discussions

### 5.1 THERE IS A TRANSITION FROM DINE OUT TO DINE IN DURING THE PANDEMIC

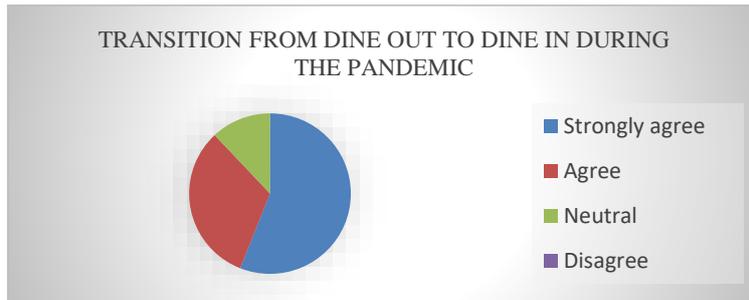


Fig. 1. TRANSITION OF DINING OUT TO DINING IN

- The food and beverage managers were questioned regarding their viewpoint of transition among guests' regarding dining out to now dining in i.e., at their homes during the pandemic, most of the respondents 56% strongly agreed to the statement and 32% agreed and 12% were neutral towards it. It can be noted from the responses that there has been a transition from dining in the restaurants to eating at home during the pandemic.

### 5.2 WE ARE DELIVERY ORDERS TO GUESTS AT THEIR DOORSTEP



Fig. 2. DELIVERY AT GUESTS' DOORSTEPS

- The majority of respondents strongly disagree (36%) and 22% strongly agree to the statement that they are delivering orders to guests at their doorstep, 15% disagree which implies that irrespective of the pandemic challenges, at least 51% (36% strongly disagreed and 15% disagree ) of the respondents haven't thought of home deliveries for guests'.

### 5.3 WE HAVE INTRODUCED ELECTRONIC MENUS IN OUR F&B OUTLETS

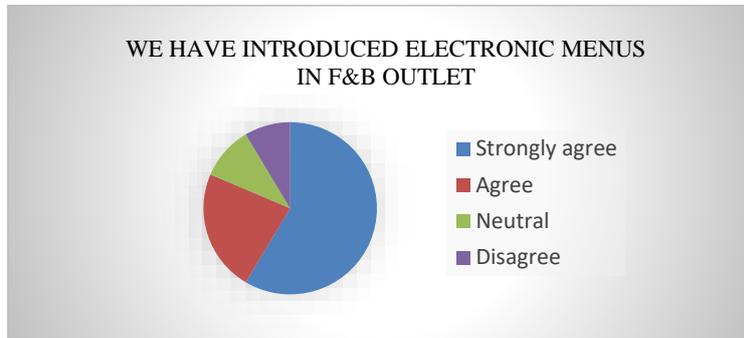


Fig. 3. ELECTRONIC MENUS

- The responses for the statement ' We have introduced electronic menus in our F&B outlets' were majorly positive, as 58% strongly agreed to the statement, 23% agreed and a meagre 9% disagreed to the statement. Hence, the pandemic has led hotels to introduce electronic menus or menus on devices like phones, tablets etc.

### 5.4 POST COVID, SELF-SERVICE IS APPRECIATED IN OUR F&B OUTLETS

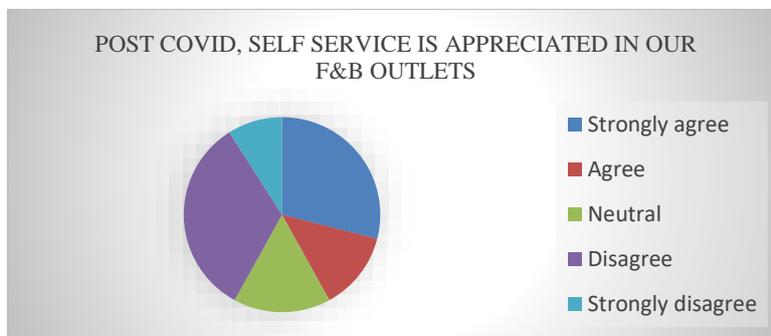
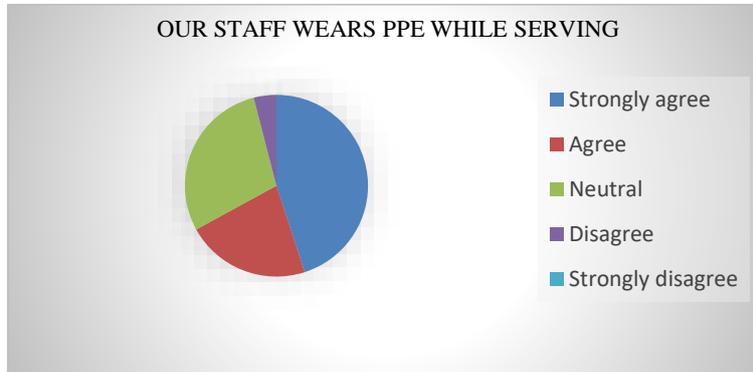


Fig. 4. SELF SERVICE DURING PANDEMIC

- The above data shows that 33% disagree to the statement that 'Post COVID, self-service is appreciated in the hotel F&B outlets , 13% Strongly agree to the statement and the third highest response was neutral (16%) towards the statement.

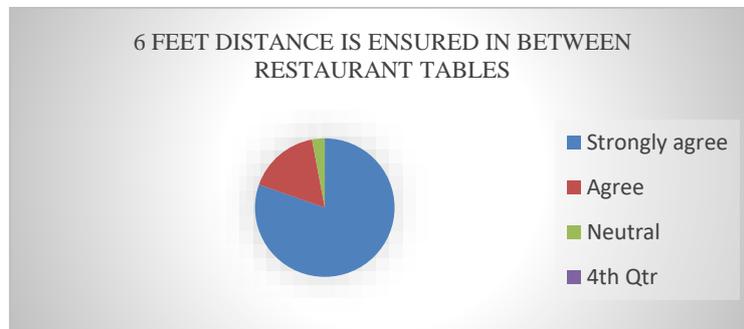
**5.5 OUR STAFF WEAR PPE WHILE SERVING THE GUESTS**



**Fig. 5. PPE WORN BY STAFF**

- The respondents were asked that whether their F&B staff wears PPE while serving the guests and almost half of the respondents (45%) strongly agreed to the statement, only 4% disagreed to the statement and 29% were neutral about the statement. PPE is basically the protective wear to ensure hygiene.

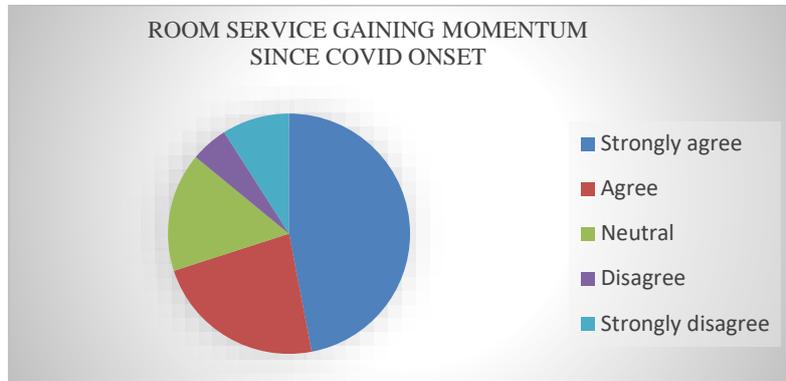
**5.6 6 FEET DISTANCE IS ENSURED IN BETWEEN RESTAURANT TABLES OF OUR HOTEL**



**Fig. 6. 6 FEET DISTANCE BETWEEN RESTAURANT TABLES**

- The statement '6 feet distance is ensured in between restaurants tables' secured 80% responses as strongly agree and 17% agreed to it and no respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed to the notion.

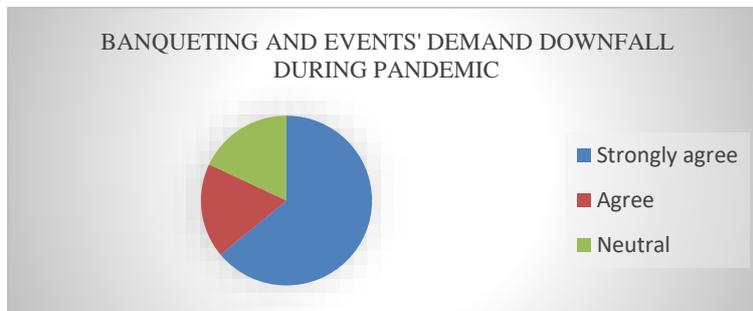
**5.7 ROOM SERVICE IS GAINING MOMENTUM SINCE THE COMING OF COVID**



**Fig. 7. DEMAND OF ROOM SERVICE**

- 'Room service is gaining momentum since the coming of COVID' secured a majority of positive responses from the respondents as 47% strongly agreed to it , 23 % agreed to it and 5% agree and 9% strongly disagreed to it. This leads us to the implication that Room service is in demand during the pandemic times.

**5.8 BANQUETING AND EVENTS HAVE SEEN A DOWNFALL IN DEMAND DURING THE PANDEMIC**



**Fig. 8. BANQUETING AND ITS DOWNFALL**

- The respondents were asked about banqueting and events' demand during pandemic and with a high majority (64%) strongly agreed to the statement that there is a downfall in demand of banqueting and events in the pandemic context.

### 5.9 A SAFE AND SANITIZED ENVIRONMENT IS CRUCIAL TO KEEP UP WITH TODAY'S DEMAND

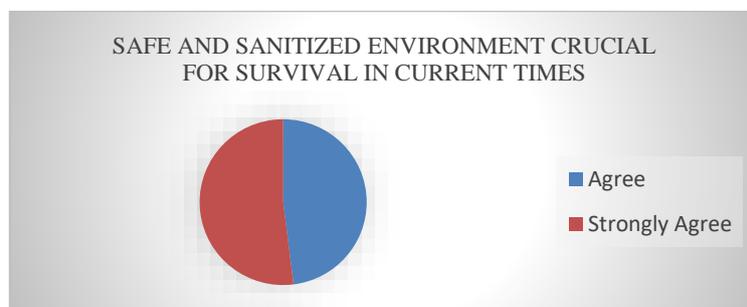


Fig. 9. SAFE AND SANTIZED ENVIRONMENT

- The respondents strongly agreed (52%) to the statement that ‘ A safe and sanitized environment is crucial to keep up with today’s demand’ and 48% agreed to it, no respondent disagreed to the statement.

## 6 Conclusion and Recommendations

The current study conducted a primary data collection among the F&B managers of Delhi NCR 5- star hotels and the findings may be concluded as follows:

- The food and beverage sector is seeing a shift towards dining at home during the pandemic times, the footfall in restaurants has decreased since then, guests’ prefer eating restaurant food but in the comfort of their homes.
- The hotel food and beverage outlets are starting to deliver food at guests’ doorstep.
- The F&B is witnessing a technological transformation during the pandemic as electronic menus are being introduced in the restaurants, so guests shall open the menus in their phones and order without any contact with the staff.
- Self-service is also being accepted now in the food and beverage scenario but still it isn’t been allocated as the only way of serving to the guests.
- PPE and other necessary COVID safety equipment are being worn and used by the F&B professionals to ensure safety and proper hygiene in the hotel and restaurant premises. 6 feet distance is ensured and strictly followed between the restaurant tables.
- Room service is seeing an increase in its demand as guests now have a sense of fear in going to eat in crowded places and places with multiple capacities. Banqueting and other MICE activities are seeing a downfall due to the pandemic and may take a while to recover.
- Lastly, the F&B managers very clearly understand and perceive Safety and Sanitization as the two new luxuries and important elements to survive in the current times and also to attract guests.

The current study recommends the following points:

- Further studies may be conducted on the comparison between Pre pandemic F&B service operations and post pandemic operations to highlight the changes in the same.
- The current study focused on the study area of Delhi NCR, whereas in future, studies may be based on other geographical areas to widen the scope.

## References

1. Indrianto, A. T. L., Kristama, B., & Sugito, S. (2020, October). THE CHANGING BEHAVIOR OF HOTEL GUEST DURING PANDEMIC COVID 19: CASE OF SURABAYA HOTELS. In *1st International Conference of Business and Social Sciences*.
2. Jaswal, R., Dash, M., & Sharma, C. V. A Study of Impact of COVID-19 on in Room Dining of Delhi/NCR Hotels. *Hospitality and Tourism Industry amid COVID-19 Pandemic*, 163
3. Köster, S. (2021). Sustainable innovations in the Food and Beverage industry during a Covid-19 crisis.
4. Kunchornsirimongkol, K. (2020). FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FOR HOTEL IN THAILAND AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 17(7), 8371-8376.
5. Yilmaz, G., & Şahin, A. (2021). How does the COVID-19 outbreak affect the food and beverage industry in Turkey? Proposal of a holistic model. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 1-37