

## Changed cleaning protocol of housekeeping department in hotels in New Normal

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**Abstract.** The study was conducted in the area of housekeeping operations and management. The study focused on the changed cleaning protocol of housekeeping department in hotels in New Normal. The study focused on classified hotels in Mumbai city

**Keywords:** Hospitality; Pandemic; artificial intelligence; Opt-out and opt-in procedure; Traditional cleaning

### 1 Introduction:

Hospitality industry is very dynamic industry and one of the fastest growing industries. Housekeeping is the one of the core areas of a hotel and it does thank fewer jobs. The executive housekeeper and team take care of maintenance of guest rooms and public areas. One of the most important parts for the housekeeper is to meet guest expectations and maintain high level of hygiene and sanitization. The challenge for the housekeeper is to achieve highest level of cleanliness in the pandemic situation. The organization need to change in cleaning protocol to achieve this goal. Housekeeping staff are in direct contact with guests as they clean rooms and conduct other housekeeping duties; they must follow basic protective measures and precautions against COVID-19. Globally, everybody is affected due to Covid-19. The Hospitality and Travel industry is affected the most. (CDC, 2021) But when slowly things get back to normal as we learn to survive, we need to focus on cleaning procedure, Hygiene, disinfecting areas. More awareness is required towards dealing with Virus and treatments as the safety of the guests and Employees are very important. It will also help in looking at customer safety and safe environment to work for the employees. Instead of following traditional methods organization are setting up new SOP, safety measures for staff and guests, best

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cleaner in the laundry procedure, add on parameters in budget planning, monitoring cleaning schedule and for how many hours room was vacant, dropped out from cleaning schedule. (Debashis Chatterjee, 2020)

As per the WHO guidelines-- "Environmental cleaning techniques and cleaning principles should be followed as closely as possible". As per this guideline the hotels are tend to follow the cleaning protocol which will not damage the environment and health of human being.

The hotel industry's current need is multitasking workforce, professional development of the employees, increased sense of hygiene, need of better crisis preparedness to face the challenge during new normal. (Vikrant Kaushala, 2021)

## **2 Objective:**

To study various cleaning protocols that classified hotels follow.

1. To study change in cleaning protocols because of pandemic situation.
2. To study implementation of changed cleaning protocols in classified hotels during New Normal.
3. To analyze necessity of changed cleaning protocols in classified hotels in Mumbai city.

## **3 Literature review:**

### **3.1 Necessity of changed cleaning protocols in classified hotels in Mumbai:**

The hotel industry has lowered down with revenue because of Covid 19 travelers are not traveling. The hotel industry has taken a boost after few months of pandemic attack. Number of Guests is increasing and occupancy percentage is increasing slowly. The housekeeping department has to be transparent in exhibiting the cleaning procedures so that the guests will trust and they will book a room without fear. Housekeeping department has to prove that they have cleaned and sanitized guest rooms and public areas. It is the most important factor for housekeeping department to make sure a guest is safe in hotel.

Hoteliers are extremely good at taking care of guests. Because of the current scenario the hotel is following system of skeleton crew or leaning the team. Now days the hotels are operating with minimal number of guests and staff.

A formal inspection process is the key of making sure the rooms are safe and clean. Fulfilling that the check list has become a necessary parameter as a reminder and act as a guide for new normal.

### 3.2 The changed procedure of cleaning in hotels:

#### In laundry procedure:

- The temperature of water and cleaning agents used previously has no capacity to avoid growth of virus. SOP s are created to incorporate new cleaning agents while linen cleaning. Linens should be machine washed in hot water (60-90°C) with laundry detergent(ALM-Association of Linen Management) (ALMnet.org, 2021)
- The employee of the hotel provides the plastic bag to collect the soiled linen. Guests keep plastic bag outside the door and housekeeping attendants collects that. The replacement bag is provided for future use.
- Clean lined should not be exposed to linen carts. Housekeeping department will designate special replenishment carts to collect soiled linen. (source, 2022)
- Hotels have stopped use of linen chutes to prevent cross contamination or spread of potential pathogen.
- The laundry design should include separate areas for sorting, storing, washing, finishing, folding so that the line is not contaminated. In case of laundry on premises may not have the separate area for mentioned tasks but they have “functional separation”. In this category the soiled linen and clean linen is separated physically keeping distance.
- While scheduling staff management may consider staggering, splitting shifts to allow less people in the laundry at a given time.
- The laundry may follow the CDC recognized guidelines of chemical disinfection and thermal disinfection as option of disinfection of textiles.
- Regular inspection of laundry machines and writing details in log book.
- Cleaning of surfaces: disinfectant solution or a solution containing 0.1% sodium hypochlorite. Surfaces should be rinsed with clean water after a minimum of 1 minute’s contact time for chlorine solution if used at 0.1% concentration. 70% alcohol or other disinfectant product suitable for corona viruses could be used CDC (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention).
- Microfiber cleaning products are the best option for cleaning of hard surfaces. Multi colored cloths are used as per the area or surface. These cloths are washed separately and not mix with Non-microfiber cloths.

### 3.3 Training to hotel employees:

- Employees are trained to separate the tasks like dirty tasks and clean tasks.
- Application of disinfectants and cleaner are applied early enough in the cleaning procedure so that the contact with surface is for enough time. (<https://www.aliceplatform.com>, 2021)
- Educating guests about work procedure that hotel is following by sending them automated mails of the new normal and how they are safe.
- Physical printouts in room explaining measures that are taken for cleanliness.

### 3.4 Guest room cleaning:

- Hotels are following Opt-out procedure is followed instead Opt-in. In opt –out procedure the guests are provided with required number of line during their stay. The housekeeping service is not provided during stay. In case the linen is required by the guest, the linen is left outside the room. (hotel, 2021)
- The number of nights and number if towels and other amenities are calculated.
- Updating housekeeping software system for stock. (<https://insights.ehotelier.com/>, 2021)
- Some hotels still perform traditional cleaning but a little change is the guest schedules a cleaning window of time on board and the housekeeping staff will follow that cleaning window. (<https://www.hotelmanagement.net/>, 2021)
- Few full serviced and luxury brand hotel request guests prior to their arrival to give their preference of cleaning and tailor their stay as per their preference. They mention what time the staff should enter the room and handle their stay in hotel. (AHLA, 2021)
- Managing Budget of housekeeping department: budget estimation is done by the department, hotels try temporally reducing cost The budget of HK department has increased also because of purchasing the PPE kit, masks, sanitizer and other cleaning tools to protect employees and guests. If the housekeeper is inside and cleaning the room the guest is not allowed to enter. The cart is kept to block the entrance. The employee will not enter if the guest is inside the room. (<https://www.amadeus-hospitality.com>, 2021)
- Vacant rooms are monitored for how many hours it is been vacant

### 3.5 Use numbers not words:

- Authors of this research article have investigated that hotels goodwill their brand as a particular personality traits (sincere vs. exciting) could benefit from different communication styles (inclusion of numerical vs. verbal quantifiers) when presenting their COVID-19 cleaning procedures. For example: “We disinfect rooms with a product that eliminates 99% of pathogens”; “We clean common areas 5 times a day”) and the use of verbal quantifiers (e.g., “We disinfect rooms, eliminating any pathogens, after each guest’s visit”; “We clean common areas several times a day.”). (Jano Jiménez-Barreto, 2021)

### 3.6 Guests are ready to pay premium for enhanced disinfection:

- The article is focusing on how guests are interested in paying extra for enhanced disinfection than normal cleaning. Young traveler and female travelers are may be willing to pay a price premium for enhanced disinfection. This exploratory research administered via internet participants were not asked about the brand. This article helps in offering enhanced cleanliness as a revenue generating amenities. (Jay Neal, 2015).

### **3.7 Aesthetically clean to clinically clean:**

- Clinically clean is new normal than aesthetically clean to keep guests and employee safe. New procedures and techniques have adopted by hotel industry to assure essential sanitization is performed in interior and exterior part of the hotel. (Sharma & Kaushik, 2021)

## **4 Research Methodology:**

A structured questionnaire was circulated amongst industry experts and academicians. We received 25 responses. We also referred various research journals and websites to review literature.

## **5 Data Analysis:**

Through research it is found that the budget of housekeeping department or institution has increased. As Covid -19 is continuous chain of cycle, 54.2 percent felt the expenses for the department have gone up.

Inventory is necessary for each and every asset and machines, equipment. It will tell you the opening balance, the number of amenities and supplies and equipment used up and discarded. 87.5% of the members felt that there is need for the inventory to be taken more often especially during pandemic n 12.5% members felt that often inventory is not required to be taken. Everyone feels that every organization/Institute needs to change the cleaning methods as new normal. The focus is on not mere cleaning but on hygienically maintaining areas. 91.7% of the feedbacks we received felt the requirement of additional budget due to need of an extra cleaning agent, sanitizers and fumigation sprays.

Cent percent uses a specific brand cleaning agent and Hygiene related products. Most of them recommended and approved products so the results are good n the customers are also happy.

Most of the survey reading said that few new methods, many of the organization have adopted. Such as Anti-viral cleaning, every hourly cleaning for high touch points, using U.V lights to check bacteria on bed line and other areas. The entire visual indicator are cleaned and sanitized and some hotels make the cleaning protocols available on hotels website to make the guest aware of how Hotels are cleaning the areas.

Use of Artificial intelligence (robots) for cleaning is a new method which is adopted. Extensive Sanitizing and fumigation of many areas are done on daily basis.

The experts from the field said that they need to clean the areas using disinfectants, sanitizing areas especially high touch points. The importance requires to be given to Hygiene, self-care of employees and having sufficient stock of PPE kit and disinfectants, cleaning material to fulfill the need of cleaning. The SOPs to be followed regularly. The guestrooms to be cleaned post two days to let virus be ineffective. 95.8% percent felt that hotel Industry has affected the most. As a result, the revenue generation is affected drastically. There is no Revenue coming in but to maintain all the areas, the

salary of the staff and overheads is very challenging. 95% respondents felt that the guestroom is required to be in isolation for 24 hours where as 25 percent felt that there is no need for the gap of 24 hrs as they are using high technique equipment. Post pandemic the 68% housekeepers and academician believe that a different skill set is required. Most of the feedback giver believes that housekeeping staffs load have increased post pandemic.

Everyone is putting efforts for training and educating employees for how to control contamination and, spreading of virus. The importance of Sanitization and DO's and Don't of cleaning are taught. Most of the hoteliers believe that they do not depend on Artificial Intelligence much rather they rely on their housekeeping staff to give the service on time and the presence of 'human element' is necessary.

## **6 Conclusion:**

The research has found that the pandemic situation has changed the cleaning protocol of housekeeping department in hotels. Most of the hotels are not following the traditional method but in combination of traditional and modern methods are applied. The department also is taking care of employees and guest's safety. There are various ways are followed to exhibit the safety measures that hotel is following. There is special attention is given in cleaning of linen. As per the guidelines of ALM and ALHA there has to be a proper design of laundry to control the cross contamination. The employees are educated to use the disinfectant and cleaning agents. The cleaning cloths are also color coded so that they can distinguish as per the area. The budget has increased as department is investing in purchasing the PPE kit, masks, sanitizer. The research also found that the frequent inventory is not necessary, twice in a year or quarter time is adequate. The hotel revenue is affected during pandemic situation. Even though the revenue is affected the hotel is investing in training and educating the staff as well as guests, purchasing PPE Kit, masks, sanitizer and cleaning agents. Expecting that the situation will be normal soon and the industry will be on track. Artificial intelligence didn't play a vital role during this situation. The housekeepers were relying on the human resource (Human Element) and keeping a track of tasks they complete. Through this research we also found that instead traditional cleaning, housekeepers were following the traditional and modern methods. The employees required a different skills set to handle this situation so the training were outsourced through the cleaning agents supplier, to make sure that the employees are aware of the mixing proportion and contact time with the surface.

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