

Applied research on Non-traditional use of Hotels during the Covid-19 period in Selected 4* & 5* Hotels of Gujarat

Salla Vijay Kumar¹

ABSTRACT. Every organization is assessed to recognize the reasons for employee retention in positive working culture. A supportive work environment through management support, subordinate support, and the balance strengthen the connection between an organization and the employee. When management respects the employees' existence as work resources, employees reach a high level of motivation, performance, and resilience towards the organization.

This research intends to address retention amongst employees of 4 and 5-star hotels of Gujarat. COVID-19 pandemic, a global emergency, has affected the worldwide economy and hospitality industry. The pandemic has forced many hotel owners and tour operators to change their course of action, including employee payments extending benefits in the hour of loss of business. The World Travel and Tourism Council predicts the jobs impact of Covid-19 of up to 50 million jobs at risk globally in the travel and tourism sector. The attrition will affect the productivity due to current economic uncertainty and corporate downsizings when losing potential skilled talent increases exponentially (Caplan and Teese, 1997; Ambrose, 1996; Noer, 1993).

The paper intends to assess the pandemic scenario efforts of the management to retain employees. If it is converted for nontraditional use, the employees could contract the illness in close contact operations.

KEYWORDS: Retention, Hotels, Employees, Covid-19, Nontraditional

1 INTRODUCTION

The tourism market in India has had a dynamic domestic and international tourist inflow. India receives 11 million foreign tourists, which is small compared to its size and relative potential. We must capitalize on domestic travel to retain the earnings, which would be difficult given the international travel restrictions at this time of unprecedented global lockdown. The way forward amongst customers and employees is to ensure protocols for safety and hygiene at their best. It is imperative to note that all the allied and ancillary industries, including the airline industry, are working to adapt and change to foster tourism growth.

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W.H.O declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020. This global lockdown has to reinstate tourism for its revenue that has been the immense suffering. The concern of hygiene facilities and practices is taking the customers on the back burner in the sector.

The rapid spread of nCOV-2019 has led to a significant reduction in almost all global tourism (Estrada et al. 2020), and the hospitality industry is the worst hit. Studies and reports suggest that recovery from the current COVID-19 levels could take until 2023—or later even as declared by W.H.O.; there have been multiple instances across the industry that have their recovery timelines for hotels ranging from luxury to business segment. It is notable to mention the safe practices hotel companies employ like contact-less check-ins and check-outs, contactless and secure food & beverage service, and reasonable hygiene assurance.

The tourism sector needs to redefine, redeploy and transform mechanisms to move ahead. The impact of Covid-19 can help devise an effective strategy to sustain. Survive (short-term), revive (medium-term), and thrive (long-term). The tourism sector has been affected the worst and may take more time to reclaim the human resource and recover from the economic loss.

The western state of Gujarat in India is continuing to lay solid foundations for broad-based high growth. In 2020-21, a very subdued year for economic activity due to the dominance of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the State's GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) was officially estimated to be INR 17.4 trillion (USD 239 billion), 5th highest in the country. The lockdown crisis has given rise to the hotels using their facilities in nontraditional ways. The prime concern is to house the patients who have been diagnosed positive. These hotels act as temporary accommodation with adequate quarantine facilities to recover and resume their family. This has posed a challenge for the hotel authorities, especially the employees, to ensure the utmost safe environment amidst covid positive patients and the entire recovery mechanism, assuring that all rooms and restaurants/ cafeteria offered are maintaining the highest standards of cleanliness and safety standardly challenges are to resume businesses and reinstate jobs. The attrition will affect the productivity due to current economic uncertainty and corporate downsizings when losing potential skilled talent increases exponentially (Caplan and Teese, 1997; Ambrose, 1996; Noer, 1993).

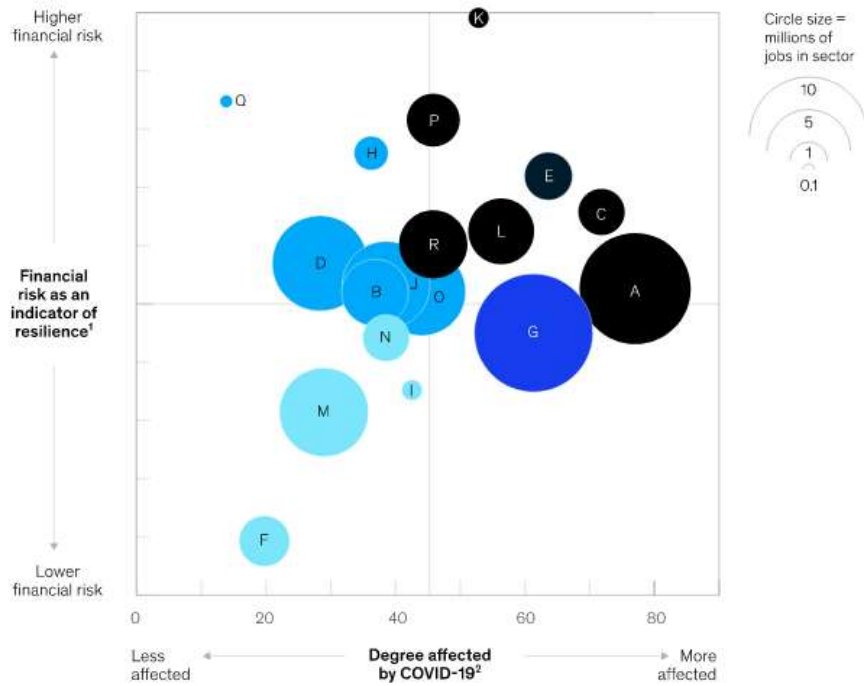
As per a study of the impact of COVID-19 on employment in urban areas by Omir Kumar & Shashank Srivastava (2021), the International Labour Organisation (I.L.O.) projected that almost 2.5 crore jobs could be lost worldwide, and an experiential purview states that more than 40 crore informal workers in India may get pushed into deeper poverty, due to the effect of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The accomplishments of job satisfaction express empowerment of employees' work profiles. Scott (2009) defines job involvement as the physical and mental dedication to performing duties and responsibilities reassuring self-esteem.

COVID-19 is especially threatening for several sectors.

Where small business jobs are vulnerable

Less affected, higher financial risk (light blue circle)
 Less affected, lower financial risk (light cyan circle)
 More affected, higher financial risk (dark blue/black circle)
 More affected, lower financial risk (medium blue circle)



- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| A Accommodations and food services | G Healthcare and social assistance | M Professional services |
| B Administrative and support | H Information services | N Real estate and rental and leasing |
| C Arts, entertainment, and recreation | I Management of companies | O Retail trade |
| D Construction | J Manufacturing | P Transportation and warehousing |
| E Educational services | K Mining, oil and gas | Q Utilities |
| F Finance and insurance | L Other services (except public admin) | R Wholesale trade |

¹Based on profitability, credit risk, and use of retained earnings.
²Based on US Census Bureau pulse survey of small and medium-sized businesses.
 Source: Statistics of US Businesses, 2017; Federal Reserve Banks' Small Business Credit Survey, 2019; Annual Business Survey, 2018; Census Bureau Small Business Pulse Survey Week 4, 2020; Labor CUBE

Source: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/risk/our-insights/covid-19-implications-for-business#>

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The hotel industry in Gujarat shows it at 8th position in terms of tourist arrivals to the state and 16th in terms of international tourists in India. The Gujarat tourism policy has assessed the need for skills development, training, infrastructure & digitalization for additional two million persons in the next 05 years.

Hospitality workforce asset has always been thriving for a concerning work environment and better humanity. This conversion of a traditional hotel use may be new but has had a different perspective in allotting only-women floors, pet-friendly categories, etc. Considering the Hotel alternative nontraditional accommodation in the Covid-19 Period, the 14 days isolation in a makeover environment will be difficult, especially for low-income individuals. Still, the conversion of hotels could address the quarantine.

3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem to be addressed in this study is "Applied research on Nontraditional use of Hotels during the Covid-19 period in Selected 4* & 5* Hotels of Gujarat" is to examine and understand the employment policies and benefits in selected 4* & 5* Hotels of Gujarat; on the conversion to an alternate use about the ongoing Covid pandemic.

4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the present hospitality study is limited to the on-the-job academia and in-plant industry professionals. Moreover, this study also explores the various alternatives and nontraditional uses of selected 4* & 5* Hotels of Gujarat during the pandemic period. The perspective of employees and management in the concerned interest has been explored.

5 SAMPLING METHOD AND SAMPLE SIZE

In this study, the non-probability convenience sampling method was used to select 26 (though less enough) respondents related to hospitality academia/ industry via google forms. Considering the current situation wherein lockdowns and social distancing measures prevent face-to-face interviewing, rapid surveys by telephone or web may only reach selected population sectors. Care has been taken to design the limit on the number of questions on a given topic to impact the identification of title-specific working activities.

6 FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

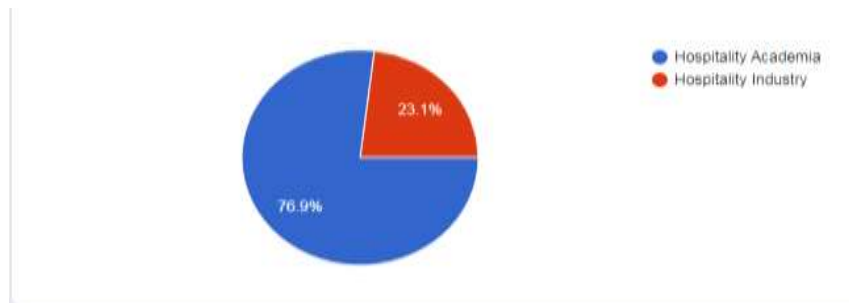


Fig. 1. (a): The figure depicts the three-fourths majority of academia over industry respondents

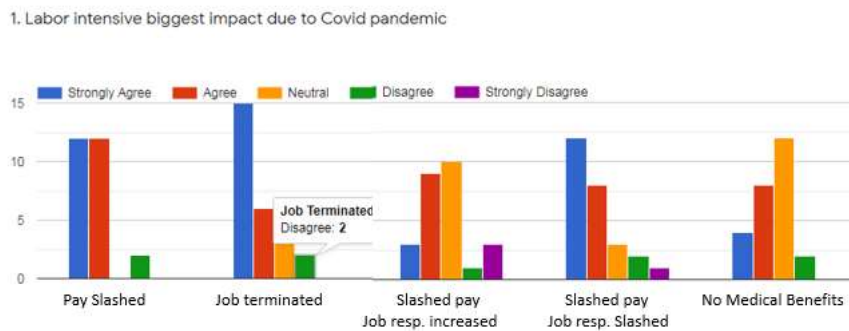


Fig. 1. The figure depicts the intensity of labor due to Covid in the order Job Termination > Pay Slashed > Job responsibilities increased amongst the respondents

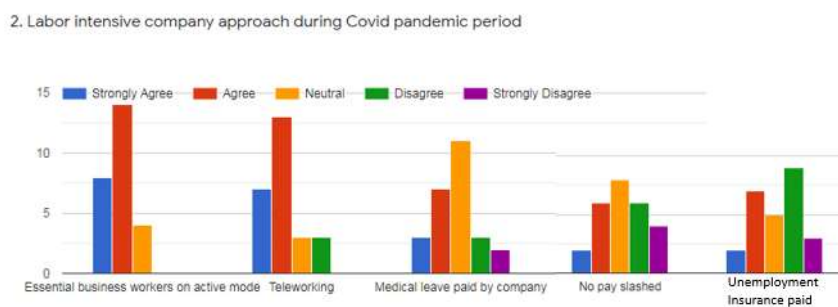


Fig. 2. The figure depicts the company's approach during the Covid in the order – Essential business on active mode > Teleworking > Medical Leave paid followed by Unemployment insurance paid to no pay slashed amongst the respondents

3. Alternate use of Hotels during Covid pandemic period

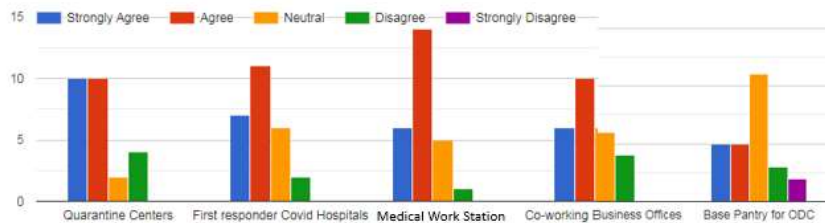


Fig. 3. The figure depicts the alternate use of hotels during the Covid in the order – Medical Work Station > First Responder Covid Hospitals > Quarantine Centers followed by co-worker work stations to the base pantry for O.D.C. amongst the respondents

4. Non Traditional use of Hotel facilities during Covid pandemic period

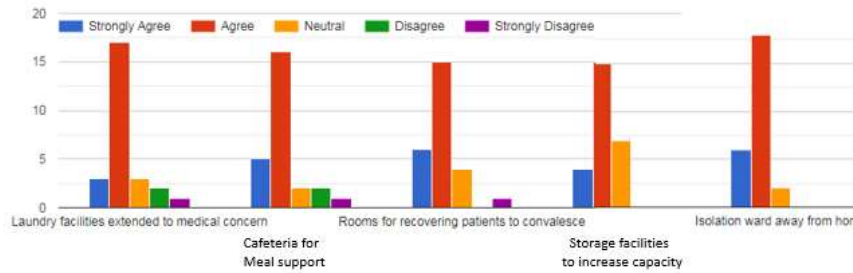


Fig. 4. The figure depicts the nontraditional use of hotels during the Covid in the order – Isolation ward > Laundry facilities extended > Cafeteria for meal support followed by rooms for recovering patients and storage facilities amongst the respondents

5. Workforce protection during Covid pandemic period

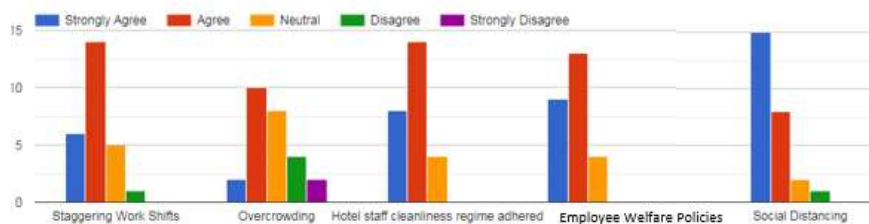


Fig. 5. The figure depicts the protocol of workforce protection during the Covid in the order – Social distancing > cleanliness regime > Employee welfare policies > followed by Staggering work shifts to overcrowding amongst the respondents

6. Internal Reassurance Mechanism during Covid pandemic period



Fig. 6. The figure depicts the internal reassurance mechanism during the Covid in the order – Flexible work schedule > Resilient employees connect > Goodwill ambassador followed by Employee training to Internal mobility amongst the respondents

7. Learning our way forward with the current Covid pandemic period

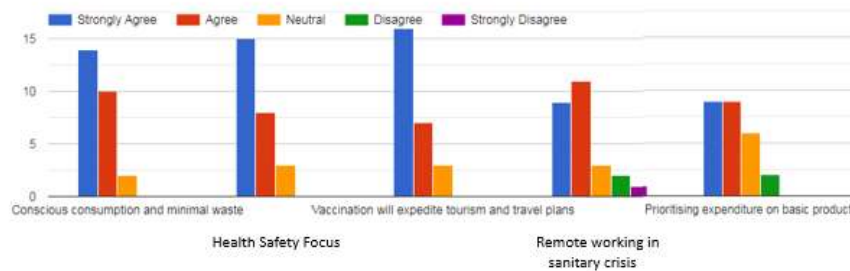


Fig. 7. The figure depicts the way forward through the Covid in the order – Vaccination > Conscious consumption and waste management > Flexible work schedule > Resilient employees connect > Goodwill ambassador followed by Employee training to Internal mobility amongst the respondents

7 CONCLUSION OF STUDY

Fig (a): The survey derives that there are three-fourths of academia as to industry respondents.

Fig 1: The survey derives that the intensity of labor due to Covid are in the order Job Termination > Pay Slashed > Job responsibilities increased amongst the respondents.

Fig 2: The survey derives that the company's approach during the Covid is in the order – Essential business on active mode > Teleworking > Medical Leave paid followed by Unemployment insurance paid to no pay slashed amongst the respondents.

Fig 3: The survey derives that the alternate use of hotels during the Covid is in the order – Medical Work Station > First Responder Covid Hospitals > Quarantine Centers followed by co-worker work stations to the base pantry for O.D.C. amongst the respondents.

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Fig 6: The survey derives that the internal reassurance mechanism during the Covid is in the order. Flexible work schedule > Resilient employees connect > Goodwill ambassador followed by Employee training to Internal mobility amongst the respondents.

Fig 7: The survey derives that the way forward through the Covid are in the order – Vaccination > Conscious consumption and waste management > Flexible work schedule > Resilient employees connect > Goodwill ambassador followed by Employee training to Internal mobility amongst the respondents.

8 WAYS FORWARD IN COMBATING THE EFFECT OF COVID PANDEMIC

8.1 Empower Retention

The action plan by the management has to be to cultivate the intention to stay in the masked illness environment and reinforce the employees by identifying the core capabilities of the employees that would matter the most in handling the current pandemic situation working to reach normalcy. We are positive even if this situation is one of its kind, affecting the whole world but has a hope to revive. This is a challenge to build a culture of adaptability to anticipate the next disaster or black-swan event. The other advantageous turning point in gaining the confidence of working for the organization is doing away with conventional hierarchies and collaborating with designated empowered teams of employees, responsibilities adjudged and required training provided.

8.2 nCov-19 Pandemic

World Health Organization has stated Covid-19 to be a global well-being emergency. It has affected industries, organizations, and individuals and cut 50 million jobs worldwide in the travel and tourism industry, and Asia is expected to be the worst affected. As per WHO, the covid virus extent may last for two more years and up to ten months

for the industry to recover (World Economic Forum, 2020). According to WTTC, the threat of coronavirus could shrink the travel sector by up to 25% in 2020 (B.B.C., 2020b)

8.3 Prototype for Nov-19 Pandemic progression

The most crucial measure is sensitizing the community about early detection and quarantine. There have to be ways and means trained to limit the spread. According to reports, after the devastating impact of COVID-19 in the Hubei province, China had planned to build hospitals in the shortest time frame of ten days to accommodate almost 60 million people to combat the spread. The proactive arrangements on the government and authorities have shown a drop in the number of cases.

8.4 The Hygiene Regime - Nontraditional accommodation

Apart from closing down hotel units, the transition to outpatient medical care is most needed. At the same time, there are adaptive high schools conversions to temporary medical care with higher levels of the virus spread. The hotels employ innovative and attractive self-quarantine packages to curtail the covid virus revenue slowdown and simultaneously arrange travel plans.

- Meals in isolation rooms are offered in closed, sanitized, specially designed trolleys with no contact or contamination.
- A special housekeeping services team manages and monitors the guests under quarantine, and at the slightest instance of condition deterioration reported, they are referred to the nearest hospital. These packages are competitively priced with 20% discounted rates (Skift, 2020)

The public-health tools provided by the government and authorities deployed vary considerably from each place and situation based on the epidemic phase and local context. The evaluation of the degree of cleaning processes used by hotel staff and cleaning contractors has designated a new position in the hierarchy - Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) who uses an instant-read device—no laboratory testing required.

8.5 Converted accommodation design

The conversion of the existing infrastructure of the hotels to hospital facilities has seen the nontraditional accommodation segment:

- A full-service convention hotel would convert for 10 to 14 days, with adequate resources, tools, protective equipment, and sensitized team
- The medical, paramedical, transport team, including National Guard troops or government workers, need to be accommodated.
- The conversion of the guest rooms is categorized under three heads one for the low level, mild, and moderately symptomatic COVID-19 patients.

- The patient's category defines the conversion and usage. The low acuity patients would have a private bathroom with T.V. and Wi-Fi facilities. The wall-to-wall carpet in the guest rooms would be removed before normal hotel operations resume.
- The banqueting facilities could house the patient wards offering direct observation and immediate care. The area is vast and spacious could work out better aeration.
- Facilitate essential services like food and drinks for patients, health care workers, and staff.
- Very important to launder the hospital linens at frequent intervals.
- Proper facilities to collect, disinfect, and dispose of infectious waste
- To communicate a sense of confidence to the well-being of patients

Advanced Health care through infrastructural change

- Design I.C.U. for critical patients
- Demarcate rooms depending on the intensity of illness
- Devise unfavorable pressure rooms & conventional halls
- Secure dining and medical team staff rooms
- Conversion of dormitories and hostels for medical care

When many employees are losing their jobs, the employees stationed with the intended hotel conversion and nontraditional operations have been valuable in serving the welfare concern.

9 Conclusion

The employees have entrusted themselves with a crisis-oriented approach and expanded role to protect the guests and organize the incident response, thus proving the resilience quotient of the talent recruited. Many of the employees have also adapted to the technical know-how in various areas of hotel operations in this hour of illness-derived crisis. Hotel alternative nontraditional accommodation of medical services has proven to mobilize available resources in a problem for a global cause.

The hotel companies have proactively and instantaneously taken measures to combat the virus spread through hotel converted hospital facilities and celebrate employee retention. Major hotels have stood with their workforce, reciprocating them, many have been paying salaries with/without any cut, all have designed a new all-time hygiene protocol in the interest of the employees and the guests, and very unlikely in the hospitality operations have adjusted the hours of work. For the newly selected hospitality graduates, many have been waitlisted, not turned down, all in a drive to treat the employees like valued investments who deliver their personal professional best. The organization offers them to experience what it means to retain a guest and thus contribute to building a solid mutual trust as a human enterprise.

10 Discussion and Implications

Even WHO has declared the covid virus will stay for two more years. Thus, we have to continue to plan our operations and measures accordingly. Depending on government policies and guidelines, many establishments are resuming operations from time to time. They have gathered enough time and know-how to continue for the so-called "next to normal." This will assure a positive perspective of the hotel employees' retention in the covid lockdown period. The illustrations of Gujarat hotels' employee perceptions and judgments form the base of our paper. This study aims to check the hotel readiness to empower the hotel employee with a new crisis portfolio. Hotel giants invest in innovative routine designs and systems to attract travelers in competition and branding. These nontraditional properties offer a sustainable work area comparatively less formal than the array of traditional hotel concepts.

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