Hotels Housekeeping Innovative Trends and Modern Practices- An overview

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ABSTRACT
Hotel housekeeping need to meet leading challenges, trends and best practices as eco-friendly practices, outsourcing, IT savvy housekeeping, training, retention of employees, payroll performance and Ergonomics techniques. If the hotels implement these trends in an organised manner, it can lead to hotel growth opportunities and long term profitability(Singh,2014). Today, housekeeping is no more a back-of-the-house department; most of the reputed hotel chains have chosen to raise their housekeepers as front runners and encourage them to interact with the guests. With advancements in technology and modernization, face of housekeeping has changed as per the latest trends in the hotel industry This paper has reviewed the academics and popular hotel housekeeping trends. Hotel housekeeping need to meet leading challenges, trends and best practices as eco-friendly practices, outsourcing, IT savvy housekeeping, training, retention of employees, payroll performance and Ergonomics techniques. If the hotels implement these

trends in an organised manner, it can lead to hotel growth opportunities and long term profitability. This paper
aughts new urgency to develop new trends in hotel housekeeping domain specific for manifold benefits.

Keywords- Housekeeping, Trends, Hospitality industry, Hotels

INTRODUCTION

Housekeeping in present era is not only about to clean, maintain and aesthetic upkeep of an area but much more beyond that. After the campaign of Swachh Bharat promoted through our PMO has given multiplier impact on our countrymen or citizen of India.

Swachh Bharat Campaign

“I take this pledge that I will remain committed towards cleanliness and devote time for this. I will devote 100 hours per year — that is two hours per week — to voluntary work for cleanliness. I will neither
litter nor let others litter.

I will initiate the quest for cleanliness with myself, my family, my locality, my village and my work place. I believe that the countries of the world that appear clean are so because their citizens don’t indulge in littering nor do they allow it to happen. With this firm belief, I will propagate the message of Swachh Bharat Mission in villages and towns. I will encourage 100 other persons to take this pledge which I am taking today. I will endeavour to make them devote their 100 hours for cleanliness. I am confident that every step I take towards cleanliness will help in making my country clean.

The hospitality industry is service oriented, the hotels are face tough competition to operate their business profitably. Various changes and improvements made by the hotel management to increase occupancy and customer satisfaction, the most important is the housekeeping function. In India, travel and tourism accounts for 5.9 per cent of the GDP and 9.2 per cent of the total employment. The total number of jobs (direct and indirect), in the tourism sector in 2010 was 53 million and 49.8 million in 2009, followed by 13.1 million in automotive and 10.2 million only in the IT sector, in 2009. Our sector estimates around 77.5 million jobs by 2016. Housekeeping has undergone a sea change, especially since the mid-90s. The use of technology has changed the style and functioning of the department in a large way. This has changed the prevalent mind set and has increased professionalism. In modern world professional housekeepers are striving to get housekeeping its due recognition in the hospitality industry. This department is responsible for bringing in the largest share of profit to an accommodation operation, but this fact is hardly acknowledged and veterans of the industry too often must consider it a thankless job. Housekeeping operations are increasingly becoming scientific and mechanized. Efficiently managed Housekeeping departments ensure the cleanliness, safeguarding and aesthetic entreat of the hotel. The tasks performed by Housekeeping department are pivotal to the horizontal daily operation of any hotel. In the present stringent competitive scenario maintaining hotel is very tough and satisfying guest is even tougher. With advancements in technology and modernization, face of housekeeping has changed as per the latest trends in the hotel industry. Several companies like SealedAir, Ecolab, 3M have been exploring the opportunities of creating and custom designing the equipment softwares much to the relief of housekeepers to make cleaning operations convenient. This not only improves the overall efficiency of the department but also boosts the morale of cleaning associates. Foreign tourist arrivals in the country have increased substantially during the past decade motivated by both, business and leisure needs and are further expected to grow at a CAGR of around 8% during 2010-2014, as per our new research.
report “Indian Tourism Industry Analysis”. India currently has over 200,000 hotel rooms swell across hotel categories and guest houses and still facing a short fall of over 100,000 rooms (FHRAI). For every room constructed, 3-4 jobs are created, the world Travel and Tourism council has estimated 8 percent annual escalation in jobs in India. According to a report –The Indian Hotel Industry Report 2011 Edition by CYGNUS business Consulting and Research Firm, In next two years, a total investment of INR 545.2 billion is expected that will add over 20 New international brands in the hospitality sector as the hospitality industry grows it will face lots of challenges which leads to increase in latest trends in diverse sections of hospitality. Hotels are generating optimum revenue by major operating departments like Housekeeping which deals with the schedule operations of Hotels.

The modern day hotel executive housekeeper is faced with challenges which entail a high degree of professionalism. Hotel housekeeping is shifting hastily, earlier, the responsibility of the housekeeping department was to prepare clean guestrooms on a timely basis but now enormous changes have been made in Hotel Housekeeping. This highly fuelled and fast growing industry needs new trends and technology to strengthen hotel operations. After all, housekeeping department is responsible for bringing in the largest share of profit to the hotel. So this study examines the trends of housekeeping in hotel industry. This article has its focal point on the latest trends that hotels can use to expand revenue from accommodation operations.

With the progression in time the Hotel Industry must follow the trends of the times, develop unique commodity value or service mode in order to keep the dominance in the intense competition. The main product of hotel is room sale which expected clean, comfortable and home environment for the guest. In order to compete with challenges hotel housekeeping department must adopt these latest trends in the industry.

Eco practices in housekeeping

(HRANI,2013) With the focus progressively on responsible tourism and green practices, there is much more to being ecologically friendly than reusing sheets and towels. Environmentally-friendly properties whose managers are eager to institute programmes that save water, save energy and reduce solid waste—while saving money.” Eco practices are one of the most spectacular emerging trends in hotel housekeeping. “Going green” is a trend of the day and environment sound policies increases the monetary health of a property. There is an increasing awareness to use eco-friendly amenities, commodities and practices. Housekeepers are developing and adopting new ways to conserve water and energy. According to American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA)
hospitality industry spends $3.7 billion in a year on energy. AHLA estimates that reducing energy use by 10% industry would save $ 285 million. All chemicals used are eco-friendly; we reuse recyclable items and make use of waste vegetables and garden wastes to produce organic manure. Even guests are requested to participate in the reuse linen campaign which saves water, electricity and chemicals. Guests are also encouraged to contribute by participating in towel reuse programs. Parents are cajoled into being green by their children as schools drive home this message. More and more guests choose to stay in Eco friendly hotels, companies are careful, Green Companies would put up their Employees only in Green Hotels. So it looks as if Going Green is the only way!

The energy management system in the hotel helps to analyse data from major energy-consuming appliances. Compact fluorescent lamps are the spinal column in high efficiency lighting. These lamps save energy waste. Ceiling motion sensors are used in meeting rooms, conference rooms and public areas to reduce energy waste. Housekeepers are looking for products and equipments that help in conserving energy.

**IT savvy housekeeping**

Improvement in communication tools has helped housekeeping in saving a good amount of time. Numerous functions such as room cleaning, lost and found, housekeeping supplies and inventory, accessing the mini-bar using telephones and clearing the rooms by the phone available in the guest room, has reduced the number of calls supervisors used to make to the housekeeping desk. Many hotels have invested heavily in information technology (IT) infrastructure and networking that deploy the latest technical advances in their operations. Hospitality Industry strongly invested in information technology (IT) to generate new technologies in housekeeping department. New technologies like Wi-Fi (wire less fidelity), radio frequency identification, GPS (global positioning system), VOIP (voice over internet protocol), hand held communication devices and WLAN (Wireless local area networks) are developing rapidly. Many types of software having comprehensive housekeeping applications are being used today in the hotels. With the help of technology customers involvement in service delivery has been increased. The TRITON HK application is revolutionising housekeeping operations. This easy-to-use software automates and simplifies a number of time-consuming housekeeping tasks such as setting the room-cleaning sequence, providing attendants with guest preference information, updating the room status in the Property Management System (PMS) and so on.

**Outsourcing of services**
Present era focusing on outsourcing in hotel housekeeping and it helps in reducing manpower related issues like filling the gap due to attrition of manpower, unavailability of suitable personnel, trained manpower to fill the need and unionization. Housekeeping is a labour intensive department. Most of the hotel chains perceive outsourcing as an effective business strategy. It proves to be the best solution for many specialized tasks as it is highly cost-effective. It is a better business strategy to meet the demands of hotel standards.

**Training**

Trainings in HACCP, hygiene and quality check for ISO 18001, SFSMS, OHSAS, etc., are done to track our adherence to the standards laid down. For every staff member, we have a training programme called Quality Inspection Programme, in which we can measure his/her performance and can work on the weaknesses. Staff are the nucleus of your business and will have a major hand in determining its success. Make sure they feel valued right from the get-go with the right recruitment and training practices. Need for improved productivity has become universally accepted and that it depends on efficient and effective training is not less ostensible. It has further become essential in view of advancement in modern world to invest in training (Singh, 2014)

Lodging operations always depends significantly on the ability of managers to find and retain talented employees. Jyoti.et.al(2013) examines that In Europe, hotel management education and training involves Food and Beverages operations, but in USA priority is given to finance, marketing, computer technology and management. Jayawardena (1993) found that the best background for general manager is a mix of these two concepts education and training. Training and motivating employees is a fundamental tool in the present scenario. Increased mechanization of housekeeping operations has placed housekeeping managers in a position to train staff, an optimum usage of equipment, supplies and labour to increase efficiency in operations. Housekeeping jobs are going to mechanized gradually and training is fundamental to maintain high level of performance and productivity standards. Need of collaborate efforts required between Hotel housekeepers and hotel management institutes for theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. Old linens can be used as aprons or towels. Cleaning supplies, if purchased in bulk, save money. For example, concentrated cleaning solutions can be diluted on the site and dispensed in reusable pump-spray bottles. Vendors can be requested to provide supplies that are not over packaged and excess supplies can be sent back to the supplier for reuse.

**Safety & Security**
Hospitality operations, large and small, are extremely susceptible to security hazards. The very nature of the operation which involves the presence of a wide range of people, most of whom are unknown, poses a considerable threat to the security of a property. Risks of fire are also serious; the incidence of hotel fires causing loss of life and serious damage to property has increased in recent years. Some key security features seen today are safety chain and double lock facility on the main room door and entrance doors lined with an environmental seal to minimise noise and protect the room from external smoke in case of a fire; smoke, heat detectors and water sprinklers in each room for enhanced fire safety; double locking facility for entrance door and bathroom doors; closed circuit television (CCTV); DTFM Scanning System; X-ray machines; electronic locks; in-room safes; hand metal detectors; fire safety system for kitchen hoods and surveillance system for car screening. Safety refers to the physical injuries in a work environment and security refers to anticipation of theft, fire and other emergencies. The Occupational, Safety & Health Act (OSHA) was enacted in 1970 to protect workers at workplace. OSHA standards covers work areas, sanitation, signs and tags, first aid and blood bone pathogens, listing hazardous chemicals, labelling all chemical containers and developing written hazard communication programme.

OSHA assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women by setting and enforcing standards and by providing training, outreach, education and assistance. Security in hotels is a broad task of protecting both people and assets. (Mc Millan. & Rossiter, 2006) observed their study that environment, technology, human resource, operations and security are the complex set of challenges which cannot be ignored by manager for being successful.

**Ergonomics**

Ergonomics deals with the study of body movement in relation to housekeeping profession during tasks performed which has significant impact on work fatigues. Housekeeping is a physically demanding profession and work environment has an impact on efficiency and comfort of the employees. Ergonomics is a scientific discipline which deals with interaction between employees and the elements of their work system.

**Microfiber**

Traditional cleaning rags are being replaced by this wonder fabric “microfiber”. This fabric consists of really tiny charged fibres, as dust is negatively charged, it is attracted to the fabric like a magnet, oils are also easily absorbed. Microfiber can absorb eight times its own weight in water. This miracle fabric is also exceptionally soft.
and highly durable. A combination of all these characteristics makes it a very good cleaning material, currently highly priced but being more effective in the long run due to its durability and efficiency.

**Employee Turnover and Retention**

Employee retention or turnover of employees in hotel industry is a major challenge and it is even harder in housekeeping department. It has got long work schedule, less compensation, physically demanding tasks, high pressure environment and uncomfortable work culture which leads to high turnovers in housekeeping. Generally people says housekeeping job is thankless job which results into low morale of the employees. Housekeeping needs to focus on formulation and implementation of dynamic retention strategies to reduce the employee turnover.

**Payroll Analysis**

Payroll analysis of: number of rooms cleaned daily, VIP arrivals/ stay overs, check-outs, deep cleaning schedules, and other items that can affect labor costs are measured. Payroll analysis determines the total monthly labor costs and find out ways to cut various labor costs. This is an important practice to ensure that unnecessary labor is not being used when business does not demand it in housekeeping.

**Creative Turndowns**

Turndown Service in Hotels (at least in India) is getting more competitive and therefore standards are rising. Just when you think “it can’t get any better” somebody turns up with something new! ViP and long stays are wooed with turndown trays, free internet, meal vouchers and other value addons, that can have anything from a teddy bear to a simple good night quote, Chocolates (now old hat), scented candles by the tub, beautiful satin gowns. Herbal teas by the bed stand. Whatever happened to that old simple “Good night sir”?  

**Housekeeping Mantra**

I believe that turning your hotel into a destination, rather than merely a place to stay, through exceptional housekeeping and hospitality can provide a competitive advantage in the hotel industry. A situation which is challenging and yet humorous at Fairmont is the back-to-back situation, when the guests are standing in front of you while you are getting a room cleaned and sometimes they even enter a dirty room.

**Emerging housekeeping trends**

- Black out curtains in rooms
- Remote curtains
- 8-10 inch mattresses for ultimate sleep experience
- High thread count linen
- Shower cubicle and bath tub combinations
- Branded amenities
- Contemporary designs
Popular colours – fuschia or shades of red, yellow and green
More greenery in rooms
Choice of fruits
Plush pillows
Comforters/ Duvets
Bath salts
Aromatherapy products
Aromatisers

Sources: (http://www.hospitalitybizindia.com/events/ihc/ihc_current.htm)

Housekeeping inferences the above given trends in terms of design of room, trends in fabrics, comfort in supplies and amenities provided in rooms, Aromatherapy product aiding in health and soul improvements, choices and comfort of pillows, choices of fruits provided in the VIP suites etc.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Housekeeping is not only about performing cleaning services, the challenge is to consistently maintain the upkeep and cleanliness standards throughout the hotel by adopting innovative trends and practices in housekeeping. The important solution is to prepare hotel housekeepers to face challenges one of the precarious success factors of hotel housekeeping and is the revolutionary trends or best housekeeping practices. To become more energetic & innovative, new trends must be implemented and incorporated in hotel housekeeping, standard operating procedure and work manual strengthened through new trends and demand of hospitality sector. Various tools are used to generate optimum output in hotels but there is a strong need of optimum utilization of resources available, manpower, supplies and new scientific trends like Ergonomics, Eco-friendly practices (energy conservation, waste management, eco-friendly products, stationary, ozone treatment, reduce, recycle, reuse), Payroll Analysis, Housekeeping Mantra, Microfiber, creative turndown etc. All these trends and practices undoubtedly can lead to hotel growth and long term success resulting into purely guest satisfaction and meeting industry standards.

REFERENCES


