

Role of Crisis Management in the Hotel Sectors: An Indian COVID-19 Pandemic Assessment (A Case Study of Lucknow Hotels)

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Abstract

Purpose: The aims of study was to evolve the role of crisis management in hotels and regenerate the role of managers involved in the hotel business during the pandemic with innovative practices to downsize the effect of the pandemic crises COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Design/Methodology/Approach: To study current topic, survey-based research was liberally used. The active respondents were senior hotel managers. The empirical survey was based on opinion and facts revealed by the management of hotels. The scope of study was the hotels of Lucknow.

Findings: This research study found the readiness of hotel industry by implementing crises management concept in its training to their top management in India. It was focused on specific operational parts of the core area of hotel operations and discovers the use of technology to resolve the crises in achieving professional success.

Practical Implications: The current study was focused on specific operational parts of the core area of hotel operations and discovers the use of technology to resolve the crises in achieving professional success.

Originality/Value: As far as the authors are aware, this is the first study in India to concentrate on the role of crisis management in the hotel industry during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in the hotels of Lucknow.

Keywords: COVID-19, Crisis Management Techniques (CMTs), Innovative Practices, Technology

and hospitality businesses faced a severe tragedy. By April 20, 2020, travel restrictions had been implemented in every tourism destination globally, resulting in a billion fewer international traveller trips by the end of 2020 (UNWTO, 2021a, 2021b).

According to Kare et al. (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that crises can inflict more severe damage on the travel and tourism sector than earlier research has suggested. The paper closes a research vacuum by identifying hotel tactics in a COVID-19 crisis and providing senior hotel managers with crisis management measures that will reduce financial consequences. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more research is required because fewer people are travelling worldwide, which lowers hotel revenue because many hotels base their prices on demand (Denizci-Guillet & Chu, 2021). It emphasizes the significance of researching the application of CMTs in HSMs since crises are erratic (Baum and Hai, 2020) and have a range of consequences (Arbelo et al., 2021; Seraphin et al., 2018). Stressing this will ensure that HSMs have prepared contingency plans (Laws et al., 2007) to reduce or eliminate the economic fallout from a crisis, making them more prepared during times of crisis (Bundy et al., 2017; Ritchie, 2004, 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Management of Crises of the Tourism Industry

Numerous instances and a deep grasp of the subject of crisis management have been highlighted by the broad examination of the field (Coombs, 2007; Mitroff et al., 1988; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Williams et al., 2017). According to Selbst (1978) as cited in Faulkner (2001),

INTRODUCTION

With 1.5 billion travellers globally in 2019, the tourism industry accounts for 10% of the world's GDP. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization designated the COVID-19 outbreak a worldwide health crisis, resulting in substantial financial losses. Despite this, the tourism

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“Any activity or inaction that impairs an organization’s goals, survival, or day-to-day operations and has an adverse effect on its stakeholders, customers, or employees is considered a crisis. An organization cannot prosper if emergencies are not handled well.” Past recovery solutions may not be applicable to other crises, such as economic and pandemic crises, as their retrieval times vary (Rodríguez-Anton and Alonso-Almeida, 2020). Nonetheless, given the growing number of crises affecting tourism, organizations need to take the impact of future crises more strategically and proactively (Ritchie, 2009, p. 57). There were fifty-seven participants in Kash and Darling’s (1998) study. “Being proactive in planning allows managers to manage and address a crisis,” they also say. If the possibility of a crisis is ignored, it may eventually materialize on its own. Thus, the chances of success increase for a hotel with the extent of its crisis management efforts, as “the significance of pandemic preparation is evident” (Keogh-Brown et al., 2010, p. 453). It has also been stated that a hotel may suffer greatly from inadequate knowledge of how to manage a crisis (Chien and Law, 2003). A crisis management team that promotes improved communication between internal and external stakeholders can help control or mitigate crises before they arise, according to Bundy et al. (2017). It is important to note that different crises require different approaches to crisis management, as it depends on the type of crisis. In 2009, the UNWTO highlighted three major areas to enhance tourism demand: resilience, stimulation, and investment in the green economy. These sectors provide examples of a CMT of communication. The swine flu epidemic is one example of this.

However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, much of this scenario would not work as intended cross-border travel restrictions would reduce demand for travel. This highlights two key points: first, that existing crisis management techniques (CMTs) cannot be recycled to avert a new catastrophe; and second, that CMTs must be customized to the particular crisis and its location. Many hotels survive by applying crisis management techniques (CMTs) in reaction to crises, despite the fact that there has been a great deal of research on the subject (Chan et al., 2021).

Companies need resilience to face challenges head-on, mitigate their effects, and enhance their crisis management capabilities (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007). Meyer (1982) and Smith and Elliott (2006) have observed that a company’s capacity to resist a danger can yield

substantial benefits when it is backed by meticulous planning and preparedness. According to Brown et al. (2017), if managed and executed properly, organizational reactions and the flexibility of company strategies can lead to successful response. Sitkin (1992) presents the thesis of “intelligent failure,” which holds that businesses can learn from mistakes and poor planning and make improvements. The company must, however, be willing to learn new things. This means that while certain companies may be more vulnerable to unpreparedness than others, there is always room for successful tactics to be used. Hi et al. (2021) accentuate the resilience of luxury hotels in China, demonstrating that altering sales, revenue, and operations strategies is essential to success in difficult situations. The results suggested that the location affected the results. More than half of the general managers (GMs) in Giousmpasoglou et al.’s (2021) study felt confident about handling the pandemic’s effects, as evidenced by strong resilience indicators.

The study conducted in 2021 by Giousmpasoglou et al. emphasizes the need of Human-System Models (HSMs) in crisis management, particularly in tackling the obstacles presented by the COVID-19 outbreak. The results showed that 43 GMs out of 50 have crisis management backup strategies in place. But according to their research, just two out of fifty general managers stated that having experienced a crisis similar to SARS before helped them implement crisis management techniques. It is noteworthy that chain hotels were found to have more developed crisis management contingency plans, raising concerns regarding the influence of staffing levels and organization size on various crisis management strategies (Gursoy & Chi, 2020; Rousaki & Alcott, 2007). The McKinsey (2020) study also highlights differences in the rates at which different kinds of hotels recover from economic downturns: luxury hotels recover from downturns the slowest, whilst budget hotels recover more slowly. According to Kare et al. (2021), “epidemic disruption varies significantly between the type of disease outbreak and across world regions,” which implies that the effects on hotels vary depending on the state, nature of the crisis, and location. According to Ugur and Akbıyık (2020, p. 11), this implies that each crisis is different and that organizing and preparing for it could be more difficult than expected. Note that compared to other crises, COVID-19 has a far bigger impact. This emphasizes how crucial it is to customize CMTs for each unique crisis and organization.

Showcase of Previous Crisis Management Techniques

Since the 2003 SARS disruption was brought on by a coronavirus, COVID-19, also known as SARS-CoV-2, can be used to compare the effects observed and the control measures implemented (WHO, 2020). According to Hung and Co. (2018), all hotels with licenses in Hong Kong were provided with hygienic recommendations to encourage improved cleaning and sanitation procedures during the SARS outbreak. Similar guidelines were carrying out in the UK, where the National Health Service provided COVID-19-related hygienic guidance to the hotel industry (NHS, 2020). The findings of Chan et al.'s (2021) study, in which 24 hotel managers from mainland China and Hong Kong stressed the significance of heeding local governments' health advise when making operational decisions, are consistent with this. Additional steps, such as separating hotel visitors in order to minimize the spread of infections, were accomplish during the 2003 SARS outbreak (Hung et al., 2018) and are still being used during the COVID-19 pandemic (Altuntas & Gok, 2020), demonstrating a consistent approach to crisis management and the unavoidable consequences for the economy. In the wake of the SARS pandemic, hotels in China and Hong Kong exhibited cross-border CMTs by offering cost-saving incentives and enhancing health and hygiene protocols to entice customers to return (Chien & Law, 2003). In another case, the hotel deliberately reduced the number of rooms it sold to restrict the number of guests it could accommodate at any given time. This was done with the objective of attracting foreign tourists again by emphasizing security and safety (Henderson & Ng, 2004). In Toronto, similar initiatives included closing portions of hotels and providing discounted rates in an attempt to draw in more visitors (Tew et al., 2008). The necessity of cooperation in Crisis Management Teams has also been highlighted by previous crises. One example of this is the coordinated efforts that followed the 9/11 attacks, which included enhanced communication between airports and local authorities to enable the tourism industry to safely reopen (Stafford et al., 2002). This also included promotional strategies designed to entice the relevant, recently discovered target audiences to stick around (Taylor and Enz, 2002). However, inadequate consumer interest may mean that marketing strategies fall short of expectations (Lai & Wong, 2020). Following the global financial crisis, Alonso Almeida and Bremser (2013) discovered that Spanish hotels offered additional

advantages and flexibility to the customers by proactively reaching out to new markets, such as domestic travel—a strategy akin to what was done following 9/11. According to Randhawa et al. (2016), one important function that is credited with the success of the new initiatives is the cooperation across organizations. A correlation between the nature of crisis and the recovery approach employed can be observed in the recoveries.

Hotel Crisis Management

Because they accommodate a large number of passengers, hotels play a crucial role in the tourism industry and can have a substantial impact on how crises develop (Hung et al., 2018). It is crucial to recognize that travel and tourism have an impact on the economy and can transmit diseases (Gössling et al., 2020, p. 5). This highlights how tourism and crises are closely related, underscoring the need of studying and implementing CMTs in hotels. A thorough perspective to crisis management can lessen the effects of crises on the society, the environment, and the economy on a local and global level (Ritchie, 2009). According to research, the Ebola outbreak in Africa had a devastating effect since CMT was not used (Novelli et al., 2018). There have been many warnings concerning the damage that pandemics pose to society and tourism, according to Gössling et al. (2020). The theory of chaos, as demonstrated by Faulkner (2001), suggests that crises are inevitable, underscoring the significance of being ready for a crisis' potential impact on the hospitality industry, as contended by Baum and Hai (2020). Scholars Kash and Darling (1998), Keogh-Brown et al. (2010), and Ritchie (2009) reinforce Faulkner's (2001) emphasis on the possibility that inadequate management practices or a lack of adaptability to change might trigger crises, underscoring the significance of proactive planning to minimize impacts and risks. However, each crisis is distinct (Rodríguez-Anton & Alonso-Almeida, 2020); as a result, strategies that worked in previous crises may not work in the same way or be easy to replicate and learn from. Nevertheless, calamities have the ability to interrupt supply and distribution systems for even the most prepared companies (Lee & Harrald, 1999, p. 184). This calls into question theories of successful pre-crisis strategy execution in hotels, emphasizing that although strong management can somewhat avert crises, it's equally critical to have preparations in place for handling unanticipated occurrences outside the control of the

organization (Faulkner, 2001, p. 137). Kindly make sure not to use your phone throughout the meeting. Therefore, those working in the tourism sector must conduct in-depth risk assessments and develop potent crisis management plans in order to survive (Ugur & Akbiyik, 2020, p. 11). Keeping the word count intact, rewrite the following text in the same input language: As stressed by Page et al. (2011) and Rodríguez-Anton and Alonso Almeida (2020), plans must be flexible and appropriately adjusted to be successful among all stakeholders (PwC, 2020b; Sigala, 2020). Still, planning and preparing for an unforeseen catastrophe can be difficult, costly, time-consuming, and even insignificant (Ugur & Akbiyik, 2020). Since no possible threats were found before to 2020, the PwC (2020a) UK Hotel 2020 Forecast research highlighted the difficulties in anticipating crises and then implementing crisis management strategies, indicating a lack of awareness regarding crises. The COVID-19 problem has affected the travel and tourism sector, inducing changes in customer behavior by compelling airlines to require the use of face masks during flights and to demand documentation of negative COVID-19 test results prior to and upon arrival at different places. The success of a location depends on making visitors feel safe and secure, as Volo (2007), Ahmad et al. (2021), and Amir et al. (2015) have all noted. It's critical to keep customers' trust when they make reservations and visit. Nevertheless, as noted by "increased uncertainty hinders a quick economic revival" (Altig et al., 2020, p. 10), hotels and other tourism locations must have in place CMTs that handle complaints from visitors.

Revolutionary Approach in Hotel Tactics

Despite COVID-19's wide-ranging consequences, hotels may benefit from it in terms of improving and resetting tourism (Nepal, 2020). "Crises are commonly viewed as pivotal moments that offer both chances and risks." Ritchie (2009, p. 209). In the end, hotels that are flexible in their methods will have a stronger chance of recovering. In his degrowth theory for tourism, Andriotis (2018) suggests that by reducing travel to a level that is commensurate with existing resources, tourism organizations may preserve economic success while avoiding adverse consequences. Hotels hoping to boost occupancy—which is seen as unjust, unfeasible financially, and unstable environmentally—can benefit from this paradigm (Kallis

et al., 2014). Travel restrictions and a decline in tourists during recessions have a substantial negative economic impact on these establishments. By concentrating on particular market segments and concurrently reducing the number of guests, a hotel can maintain its revenue by implementing degrowth theory. Because of the additional time, there may also be increased customer satisfaction as employees and patrons interact more, raising the hotel's standing and attracting new guests. Chinese hotel patrons showed greater forgiveness, increased willingness to spend, and improved evaluations after the epidemic, according to research by Sun et al. (2022). There's a new study out on how crises—COVID19 in particular—affect the hospitality industry. Several research indicate a trend toward hotel strategy. According to Chan et al. (2021), technological improvements have had an impact on operations and customer service. Denizci-Guillet and Chu (2021) and demonstrates how priorities in revenue management have changed. Lopes et al. (2021) observe that there have been noticeable changes in hotel staff. On the other hand, not much research has been done on revenue-generating techniques, tactics, and skills.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify the role of crisis management in Indian star hotels.
- To find whether the hotels have trained their management to tackle the situation during post COVID-19 crises.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

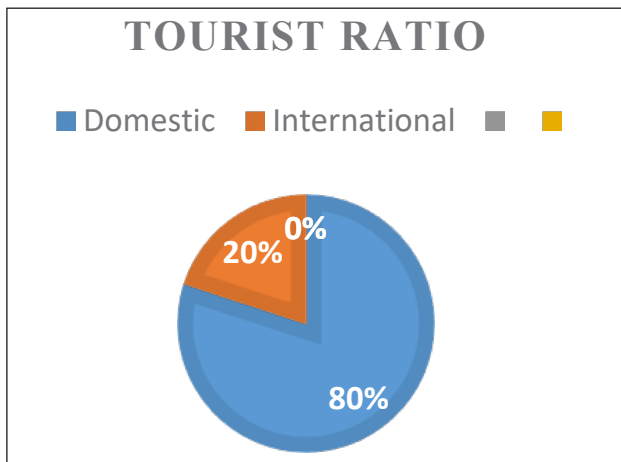
To study current topic, survey-based research was liberally used. The active respondents were senior hotel managers. The empirical survey was based on opinion and facts revealed by the management of hotels. The scope of study was the hotels of Lucknow. Adequate steps were taken to minimize bias opinion to improve reliable information. The tool to collect data was questionnaire, formulated on MCQ nature to streamline the outcome uniformly. Total 265 hotels of Lucknow were contacted in which 234 questionnaires were returned. After scrutiny 196 questionnaires were found complete in all respect. The data was converted into percentage form for analysis purpose.

The analysis of collected data from primary source was the key factor to obtain the result of set objectives. The data was corroborated to certify the findings. Quantitative as well as qualitative analytical method was used. For hypothesis testing student t-test was liberally used to approve the findings.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Types of Tourist

During COVID-19, international flights were cancelled, therefore hotels in Lucknow were catering by 80% of domestic tourist and rest 20% were foreigners who were stuck in India.

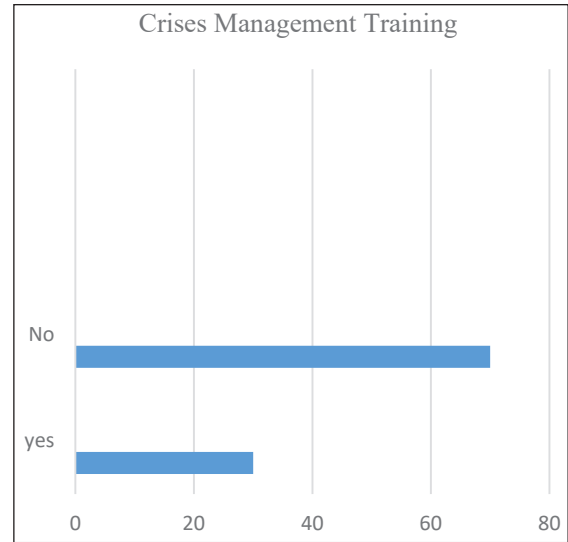


Sources: Self elaborated.

Fig. 1: Type of Tourist

Training of Crisis Management Given to Staff

The COVID-19 type pandemic had not been encountered by current working population. So, sudden outburst could not be imagined. Therefore, more than 90% hoteliers had not prepared themselves. On the other hand, about 10% has managed to tackle the situation. These properties sensed the grievances of situation and changed the utility of property s level one hospital, food supply for COVID-19 patients in hospitals and needy that were quarantined at home.



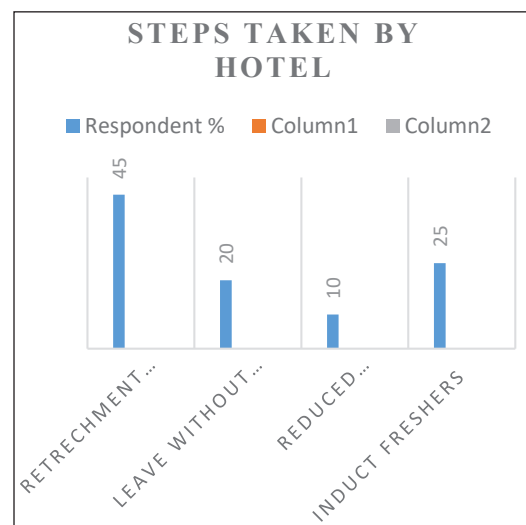
Sources: Self elaborated.

Fig. 2: Training of Crisis Management Given to Staff

Steps Taken during COVID-19

To reduce the operating and fixed cost, hotels took the following steps:

- 45% hoteliers retrenched their staff. In this process, senior level officials who were paid heavy salaries were the main target.
- 10% employees were partially employed by reduced working hours.
- 25% Fresher at low wages were employed.
- 20% work force was put on hold without pay.



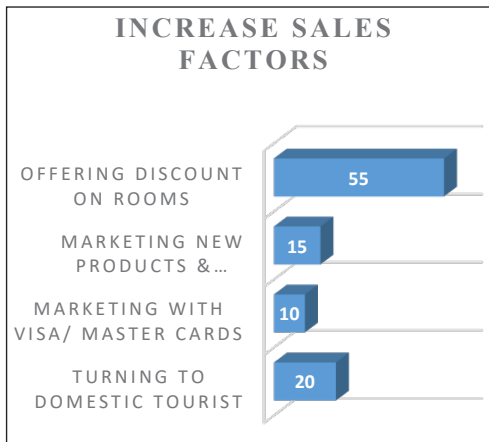
Sources: Self elaborated

Fig. 3: Steps Taken by Hotel

Steps Taken to Increase Sales

To increase sales during COVID pandemic, hoteliers took the following steps:

- 55% hotels put room tariff on huge discount.
- 15% hotels also marked new products and services.
- 10% hotels also offered extended credit payments on Visa/Master Card.
- 20% hotels pinpoint domestic tourist.



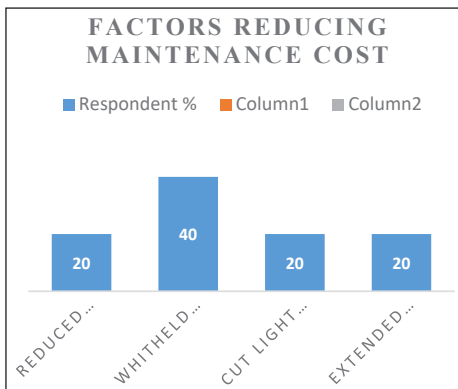
Sources: Self elaborated.

Fig. 4: Steps Taken to Increase Sales

Factors of Reducing Maintenance Cost

To reduce maintenance cost, the following actions were taken:

- 20% Reduced hotel services.
- 40% withheld maintenance services.
- 20% Cut power tariff.
- 20% Extended Credit payment.



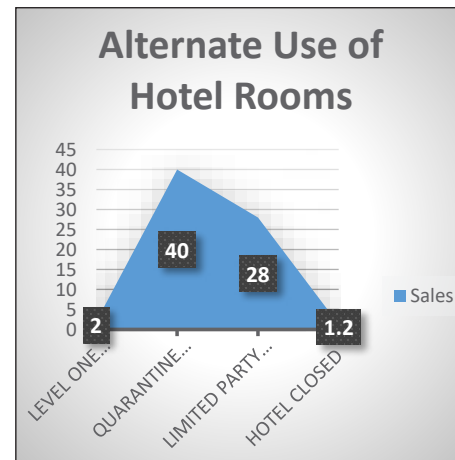
Sources: Self elaborated.

Fig. 5: Factors of Reducing Maintenance Cost

Alternate Use of Rooms

Hotels started alternate use of hotel properties and took the following steps:

- 2% converted to level hospital as demand explode and all hospitals were over flowed of critical COVID-19 patient.
- 40% hotels converted to quarantine centres
- 28% hotels opened restricted parties
- 30% hotels closed properties



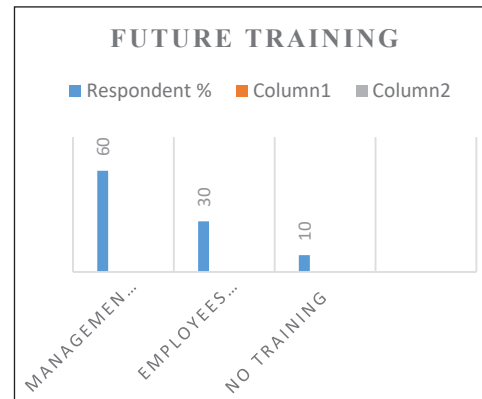
Sources: Self elaborated.

Fig. 6: Alternate Use of Hotel Rooms

Action Taken for Future safety

For future unforeseen threats, the hotels responded the following:

- 60% Training to hotel management.
- 30% Training to hotel employees.
- 10% had no action plan.



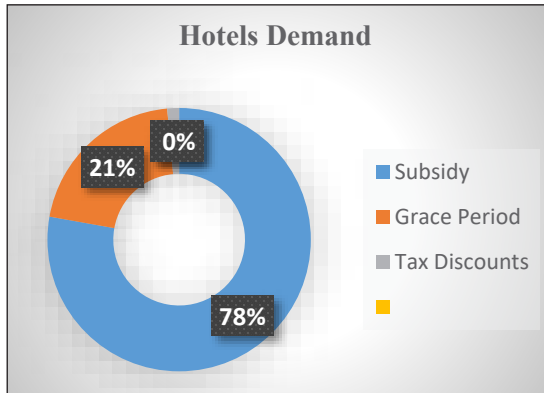
Sources: Self elaborated.

Fig. 7: Action Taken for Future Safety

Hotels Demand

Hotels demanded government the following assistance during pandemic:

- 78% demanded subsidy during zero business.
- 21% demanded grace for over dues.
- 1% demanded tax discount.



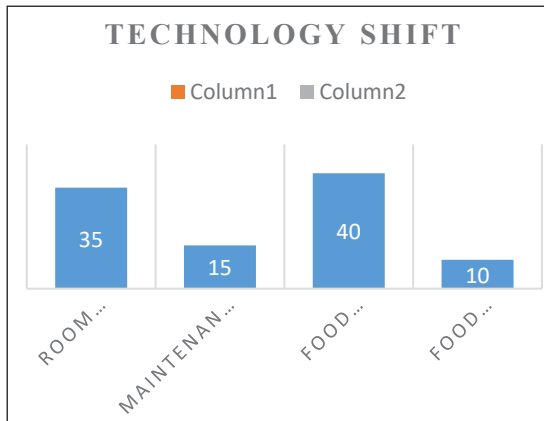
Sources: Self elaborated)

Fig. 8: Hotel Demand

Technology Used Post COVID-19

To check Corona infection, contactless services were introduced in hotel operations. The introduction of technology in operations were under:

- 35% by Room Division
- 15% by Hotel maintenance
- 10% by Food Production

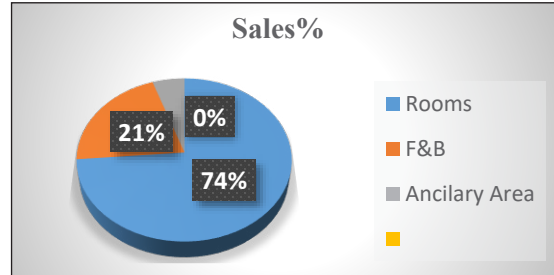


Sources: Self elaborated.

Fig. 9: Technology Used Post COVID-19

Revenue Earning Department

Hotel revenue departments as per respondents' views are 74% from Rooms, 21% from Food and Beverage, and 5% from Ancillary departments.

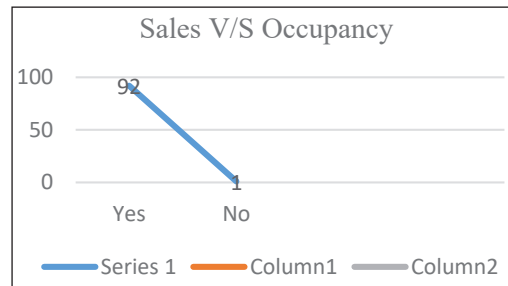


Sources: Self elaborated.

Fig. 10: Revenue Earning Department

Relation between Sales and Tourist Traffic

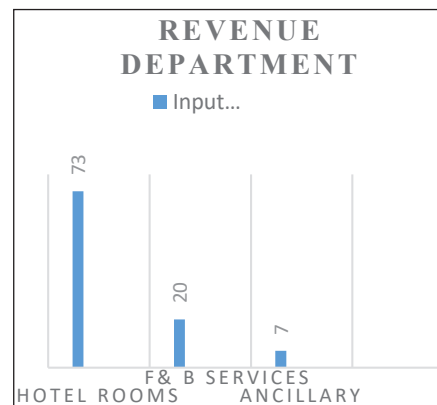
92% respondents supported that sales are directly proportionate with tourist traffic.



Sources: Self elaborated

Fig. 11: Relation between Sales and Tourist Traffic

The Most Affected Area of Sales



Sources: Self elaborated

Fig. 12: Revenue Department

The most affected area was hotel rooms with 73%, followed by 20% Food & Beverage and only 5% ancillary facilities

Hypothesis Testing: Taking null hypothesis

H_0 = There is a proportionate relation between room sale and tourist inflow.

The average population mean is equal to hypothesized mean i.e. 55.

So, $H_0: \mu = \mu_{H_0} = 55$ and hence alternate hypothesis is defined as $H_a: \mu \neq \mu_{H_0}$

Student's T-Test: The sample size is only nine, population variance is not known and the population is considered normal.

Table 1: Factors Affecting Hotel Revenue Loss

| Sr. No. | Factors | X (input) | ∂X | ∂X^2 | Calculation |
|---------|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|----------------|---|
| 1 | Extended Credit Payment | 10 | -43 | 1849 | Value of standard deviation $e = 29$ $t = -0.023$ df = 8 at L.F. =5% R: $ t \geq 2.306$ |
| 2 | Loss of Domestic Tourist | 20 | -33 | 1089 | |
| 3 | Closing of hotels | 30 | -23 | 529 | |
| 4 | Non Profiting activities | 40 | -13 | 169 | |
| 5 | Discount on Room Tariff | 55 | 2 | 4 | |
| 6 | Low Occupancy | 73 | 20 | 400 | |
| 7 | Heavy discount on Rooms | 74 | 21 | 441 | |
| 8 | Loss of International Tourist | 80 | 27 | 729 | |
| 9 | Direct impact of Tourist | 92 | 39 | 1521 | |
| | | $\sum X = 29$ | $\sum \partial X^2$ | 6731 | |

Sources: Self prepared.

The value of $t = -0.023$ is accepted and hence it is concluded that there was a proportionate relation between room sale and tourist inflow.

CONCLUSION

The hotels in Lucknow faced similar type threats as the world were suffering and hotels were closed down during lockdown and few of them were in use as quarantine centers. Since, international flight was away from runway, so the foreigners' stuck in India were occupied by hotels. At the last phases of pandemic internal movements were allowed then the hotels concentrated on domestic tourist.

Hotels and tourism sectors are more venerable than any other business segments, therefore, crises management as strategic planning are common to tackle odd situations but COVID-19 type of global pandemic could not be sensed. Almost all hotel staff was untrained earlier for the pandemic.

Therefore, hotels did not have action plan of such types of crisis and action taken delayed in alternate arrangements.

Hoteliers were focused on reducing operating cost in almost meager occupancy rate. The major action taken by the majority hoteliers were retrenchments of top level managers from its organization tree, reducing working hours, send extra manpower on leave without pay, and inducting fresher with low salary.

To increase sales, management took novel steps such as extended credit payments through visa/Master Cards, huge discount on room tariff, and concentrated on domestic tourist. Few hotels showed humanity by offering its hotels to quarantine center and food to COVID patients' free of cost. The banquets were offered to organize marriage parties with restricted number of guests.

The hotels also demanded subsidies similar to other industries, declare grace period, and tax holidays from government of India. Hotels also adopted new technologies to assure guest zero human touch.

Hypothesis testing justified that there was proportionate relation between room sale and tourist inflows.

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