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Covid-19 crisis: The new normal HRM practices in hotel industry

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Abstract

The covid-19 crisis has resulted in loss of livelihood across the world. It has caused drastic changes throughout the globe which is also affected the Indian economy. Out of all working sectors, due to travel & mobility restriction and lockdown, hospitality and tourism industry is one of the foremost affected industry. Many of the hotels and restaurants due to this pandemic has been shut down completely or are working with minimum number of staff. As a result, people are losing their jobs. As per the data shared by world travel & tourism council (WTTC) approx. 174 million travel and tourism jobs could be lost if the pandemic continues. Nowadays, hospitality industry is slowly recovering with the losses but still crisis continue to profound the impacts on how the hotels will operate hence this paper aims to study about the new normal human resource management practices in hospitality industry which can contribute to some extent in managing the covid-19 crisis. Some of the new normal HRM practices includes training for employees to deal with the pandemic, keeping with the high standards of hygiene and sanitations in and around the hotel, strategies to boost the morale of employees to deal with the negative situation and to turn it into a positive opportunity.

Keywords: Covid-19, Indian economy, tourism & hospitality and human resource management practices

Introduction

COVID-19 is the abbreviation used for coronavirus disease 2019. SARS-CoV-2 virus is a new identified virus who is responsible for causing corona virus. The first case of covid-19 was spotted in Wuhan province of China. Since from then this disease is unstoppable and has reached to the whole world. Due to this, World health Organization (WHO) has declared Covid-19 as a pandemic. Pandemic is a disease which widespread over the entire country or the whole world. This virus can cause illness ranging from mild cold symptoms to more severe respiratory problem or in fact in some cases it can cause painful death also. As per the data of WHO, on 11th December 2020, there have been 69,143,017 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 1,576,516 deaths and the numbers are still increasing throughout the world. (<https://covid19.who.int/>)

India is also affected severely by this virus. In India, till date there are 98,27,026 confirmed cases out of which 1,42,662 deaths have been recorded. (<https://www.covid19india.org/>). In response to deal with this pandemic, government has imposed lockdown and travel restrictions in and across the country due to which the travel and tourism industry has become one of the most foremost affected industry. Tourism and hospitality industry are one of the central pillars in the Indian economy and also a great source of employment. But due to this mobility and travel ban hotels are dealing with tremendous loss. Many of the hoteliers are forced to quit their jobs and most of the hotels are completely shutting down and many are struggling. Therefore, it is a need for hour to take some initiatives to overcome with the loss due to covid-19 crisis.

Review of Literature

As many of the hotels are facing huge loss due to covid-19 crisis, hotels are shutting down and also changing policies. However, Human resource management can play a major role for increasing performance by the employee which will ultimately result in better growth of hotel. Taking this into consideration several valuable studies have been conducted on the various aspects of human resource management and covid-19. The existing available literature on the topics are reviewed carefully and some of them are listed below:

1. Davahli M R., Karwowski W., Sonmez S. and Apostolopoulos Y (2020) ^[4].

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Explored the hospitality industry in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic; current topics and research methods and tells about the various research areas.

2. Gigaure I. (2020) ^[5] has conducted a study on influence of Covid-19 crisis on human resource management and companies' response: the expert study and founded that hotels were inexperienced in handling crisis management.
3. Schuler and Jackson (1987) ^[3] defined HRM practices as a system that attracts, develops, motivates, and retains employees to ensure the effective implementation and the survival of the organization and its members.
4. S. Pratibha and Prof. J. Katayani (2016) ^[1] has conducted a study on impact of hrn practices on the performance of small-scale industries and recommended that small scale industries need to implement HRM practices if they want to improve their performance.
5. D. S. Duke Thavamin and Dr. R. Kannan (2016) ^[2] conducted a study on - effectiveness of human resource management practices on hotel industry and concluded that successful implementation of HRM practices can enhance the performance of the hotels.

Objectives

- To find out the various HRM practices followed by industry to manage covid-19 crisis
- To suggest some HRM practices to deal with Covid-19 crisis

Research Methodology

For the present study, secondary data is collected, arranged and analyzed from journals, magazines, books, hotel websites, theses etc.

Finding and Recommendations

"We value our employees tremendously but the severity of the situation means the need to cut costs is a reality. Our strategy is to protect our employees that find themselves in a difficult situation due to the COVID-19 crisis," says Ashwin Shirali, Vice President – Talent and Culture, India & South Asia, Accor.

Some Hotels are adopting technology to manage the pandemic like Mumbai IHCL says "The best way to restructure would be by adopting technology for every aspect of the business, right from client acquisition to guest experience, delivery of service and procurement of materials, and finally to the staff,".

Covid-19 pandemic is badly affected the hospitality industry. Many hotels are struggling for their survival and they are taking various HRM measures to tide over covid crisis. HR practices like Compensation, communication, caring culture, coordination and creativity can be used to manage the pandemic in a better way. Following are some practices which HR can follow in hotel:

- **Training for changing times:** Radisson Hotel Group has initiated a number of training programs that include a 20-step protocol for hotels and a 10-step one for meeting and event spaces across all their properties
- **Training Modules for personal hygiene & safety:** Conrad Bengaluru has introduced new training programs for staff members to further heighten their

hygiene standards. "Slight alterations in the daily life of team members have been made, such as hand wash frequency, high touch-point surface sanitization every 30 minutes, luggage sanitization protocols, and ultra-low-volume misting (ULV) of Oxivir solution for deep-cleaning

- **The New Normal interaction with the guest:** Accor hotels are providing sessions on how to interact with guests and manage the operations once the hotels re-open. Starting from entering the hotel premises to check-in, room service, housekeeping, dining and check-out, the staff is being trained to maintain social distance and follow stringent measures to ensure that the guests feel safe
- Strategies to boost morale of the employees
- **Navigating in the troubled water of covid:** Implementing employee strategies, like the hotel has rolled out a number of crucial initiatives such as Cluster General Manager Program (optimization of human resources, managing their career aspirations and providing them enriched job content), General Manager Lead Referral Program (a result-oriented incentive program and) Manning Blueprint (aims at preparing a future-ready organization to deliver greater efficiencies led by a quality- driven mindset).
- **Feedback of the employees:** Hotels have developed internal processes to enable employee feedback to flow freely to the management.

Following practices can be implement to manage this pandemic

- Communication- Hotels need to communicate at least once a week to be in touch with the employees.
- Clear expectations- Provide the guidelines also inform about the expectations from them.
- Provide Support- Hotel should provide support to the employees as it is a tough time.
- Provide Training- Proper training should be provided to make sure that hotels staff will be safe from the covid virus.
- Protection wears- provide proper protective wears like mask, PPE kits etc.
- All the task should be restructured with the covid protocols.
- Hotel have stopped recruiting new employees for the time being.
- Existing employees can be work for different departments if needed.
- Special Leave polices are implemented for the staff.
- Remote working area or work from home should be implement, if possible.
- Provide workshop and training to follow hygiene practices.
- Motivation meetings need to be conducted.
- Alternative work schedule needs to be implemented.
- Proper hygiene and sanitation equipment's should be fixed in the hotel premises.
- At regular intervals proper scanning of the employee's temperature should be implement.

Conclusion

Covid pandemic is a tough time for hotel industry but by following few steps we can surely overcome with this pandemic. However, during this time hotels needs to take

special care of the employees by following proper HRM practices. Hotels need to be in consistent touch with the employees for the proper communication. Only in extreme condition the salary will lay off or dismissal of employees should take place.

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