

Study of Challenges faced during Housekeeping linen inventory practices with respect to Housekeeping Linen Inventory Management with reference to Star Category Hotels in Pimpri Chinchwad-Pune.

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Abstract:

This work assessed the hotel housekeeping linen inventory management practices followed within some of the star category hotels in Pimpri- Chinchwad area, Pune region. The researcher collected primary data for this research paper was collected using an interview method. To analyze the data, simple statistical tools were used for this study. The research showed that stock control practice is one of the major activities of the housekeeping department. The study included the data on the various types of linen used in hotel operations. However the study focused on the challenges faced by the hotel during the inventory/ stock taking process of the housekeeping department. The study also identified different measures taken by the hotels to overcome the challenges faced during the inventory procedure. The questionnaire was designed to achieve the objectives of the study. Based on the findings conclusions were drawn and the recommendations were made. Based on the findings, conclusions were drawn and the recommendations were made.

Keywords: Inventory management, Hotel Housekeeping Department

Key terms and definitions:

Housekeeping: Housekeeping is defined as the provision of a clean, comfortable, safe and aesthetically appealing environment.

Inventory Management: As per Business Dictionary it is the value of materials and goods held by an organization to support production, for support activities, or for sale or customer service.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Hospitality industry is growing with ever increasing demands of the guests. To satisfy guest's demands, the industry is constantly providing exceptional services to them. The guestroom has a major role in creating the impression of the hotel. A crisp and clean linen adds to the aesthetic upkeep of the room. Linen is the housekeeping department's one of the largest expense. One of the responsibilities of this department includes providing linen to the guestrooms, restaurants and other F&B outlets, health clubs and beauty parlors. Linen in hotels is classified as Bed linen, Bath Linen and Food & Beverage service linen. It also involves purchasing, maintaining and controlling different types of linen and uniform which contributes to a huge investment under housekeeping budget. One of the primary responsibilities of the housekeeper is managing inventories to ensure proper timely flow of the linen to guest rooms.

Housekeeping inventories refer to the stocks of purchased operating supplies, equipments and other items held for future use in housekeeping operations. Linen inventory is one of the challenging functions of housekeeping due to high occupancy levels, shortage of hotel staff, time and budget restrictions, etc. The housekeeping department has to follow inventory management practices to avoid guest complaints. There are several challenges faced by the hotel during physical inventory of hotel linen.

1.2 Scope of Research

The scope of the research is applicable to the following:

1. The scope is applicable to the Hotel Housekeeping department of star category hotels in Pimpri Chinchwad, Pune.
2. The scope of the research is only applicable to the linen inventory management practices.

1.3 Limitations of the Research

1. The research is applicable to challenges of linen inventory in housekeeping department inventory of hotel linen.

2. Literature Review:

1. Aleta A Nitschke, and William D. Frye stated that Linen is the most important recycled inventory item under the executive housekeeper's responsibility. Next to personnel, linen costs are the highest expense in the Housekeeping department. Proper policies and procedures are needed to control the hotel's inventory of linen supplies. The first task in effectively managing linens is to establishing the right par level inventory for all types of linen used in the hotel.
2. G Raghubalan and Smritee Raghubalan stated that Linen control is carried out in four phases.
 - Routine checking of Linen for appearance and hygiene standards.
 - Quantity control of the daily flow of linen stock/Linen exchange procedure.
 - Stocktaking or physical inventory of Linen.
 - Proper documentation of Linen through the master linen inventory control sheets.
3. Malini Singh mentioned In Hotel Industry, Par Stock is a widely used term which is the standard way to determine the minimum level of items which includes linen, uniforms, supplies and amenities, to meet the daily demands of daily hotel operations. Proper application of par stock can ensure smooth functional activity.
4. Eisenberg et al.(2010) mentioned to maintain use of Hotel Linen. A tracking system for tracking hotel linen includes a tracking control, various check points setting at different key locations in a hotel respectively to communicatively link with the tracking control, and a variety of identification tags arranged for

permanently affixing at various hotel linen products respectively. Each of the identification tags contains a unique code preset by the tracking control to wirelessly communicate with each of the check points. Therefore, when each of the hotel linen products is moved to one of the check points, the corresponding identification tag is registered thereat. A tracking record is generated in the tracking control for the hotel linen products in responsive to each of the check points to monitor and manage the hotel linen products so as to greatly improve linen utilization in the hotel.

5. TRSA mentioned in Clean India Journal October 2016, They conducted Executive roundtables discussion with representatives of textile service operations to identify opportunities to better meet customers' needs for clean textile products and related services. It was concluded that the end users must be educated about how the industry measure and maximizes textile life and launderers must enhance information-sharing on best practices to maximize linen life.
6. Bhavana Alvares, Executive Housekeeper, Vivanta by Taj, Bangalore, "Smart Housekeepers discuss occupancy patterns with revenue managers before placing orders for guest supplies, room linen and other housekeeping items. Based on occupancy and number of guests expected, the order is placed. This also includes putting rooms out of order during off season. This is known by knowledge of the market scenario and what share your hotel has. Secondly, there are suppliers who have agreed to stock the items for the hotels, thus not burdening the hotels with inventories. The housekeepers can share the consumption patterns with the suppliers and stock up for three months. Hence, the hotel can order for the same once a week thus reducing costs, space and storage areas in the hotel.
7. Jeremy Rock, 2009 stated that most of the hotels that currently have uniform and linen inventory management systems installed use the traditional bar code systems. While these systems are very effective, they are somewhat labor intensive and rely on employees scanning each article of clothing individually with a bar code scanner in order to track the garments effectively. They also require an initial upfront investment in equipment such as heat seal machines in order to attach the bar codes to the garments.
8. Sarika Joshi and Dr. Deepa Venkatraman (2019), in their research studied about the different types of linen used in the hotels. They also mentioned about the different PAR levels required to maintain for the linen. The study also discussed about the physical stock taking procedure followed in hotel for linen inventory.

3. Objectives of the study:

- To understand the application of different types of inventory management in housekeeping.
- To identify the challenges faced by the hotel housekeeping during the linen inventory process.
- To recognize the methods followed by hotel housekeeping to control the challenges faced during housekeeping inventory.

4. Research Methodology

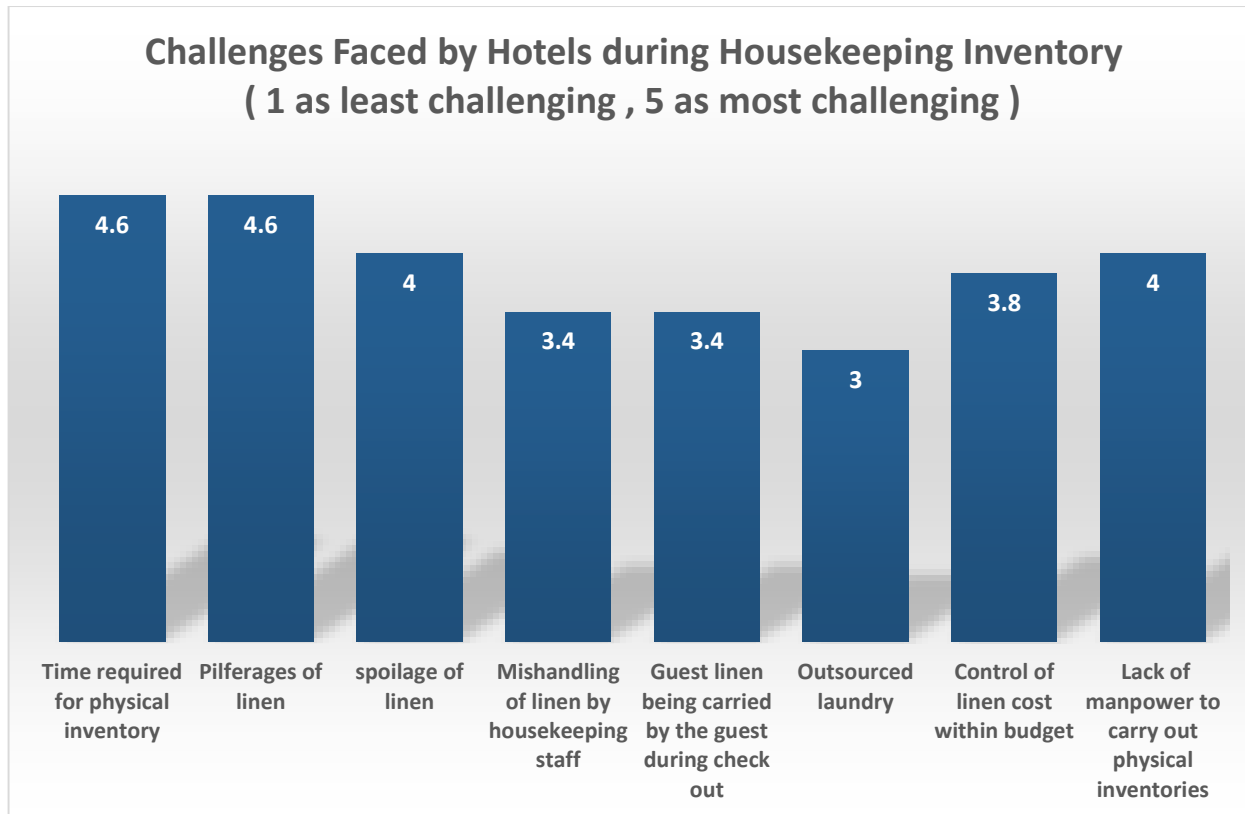
The study adopted interview method. The area of study was star category hotels in Pimpri Chinchwad area of Pune region. The population for the study comprised of the Executive housekeepers of these hotels. The sample size for the study is five hospitality establishments in the study areas. For each establishment, twenty (10) questionnaire were administered. Also data was collected in the form of structured interview with open ended questions. Simple yes/ no statistics was used to analyze objective one and two. An open ended question was used to collect the inputs on objectives three and four.

Primary Data Collection: The first set of primary data was collected with the help of information based on the structured questionnaire to the Executive housekeeper who has the main responsibility of linen inventory in hotels. The executive housekeepers were interviewed to get inputs on the details procedure for linen stock taking.

Secondary Data Collection: Secondary data is collected with the help of articles from literature reviews from published journals, published research papers, newspapers, magazines, books etc.

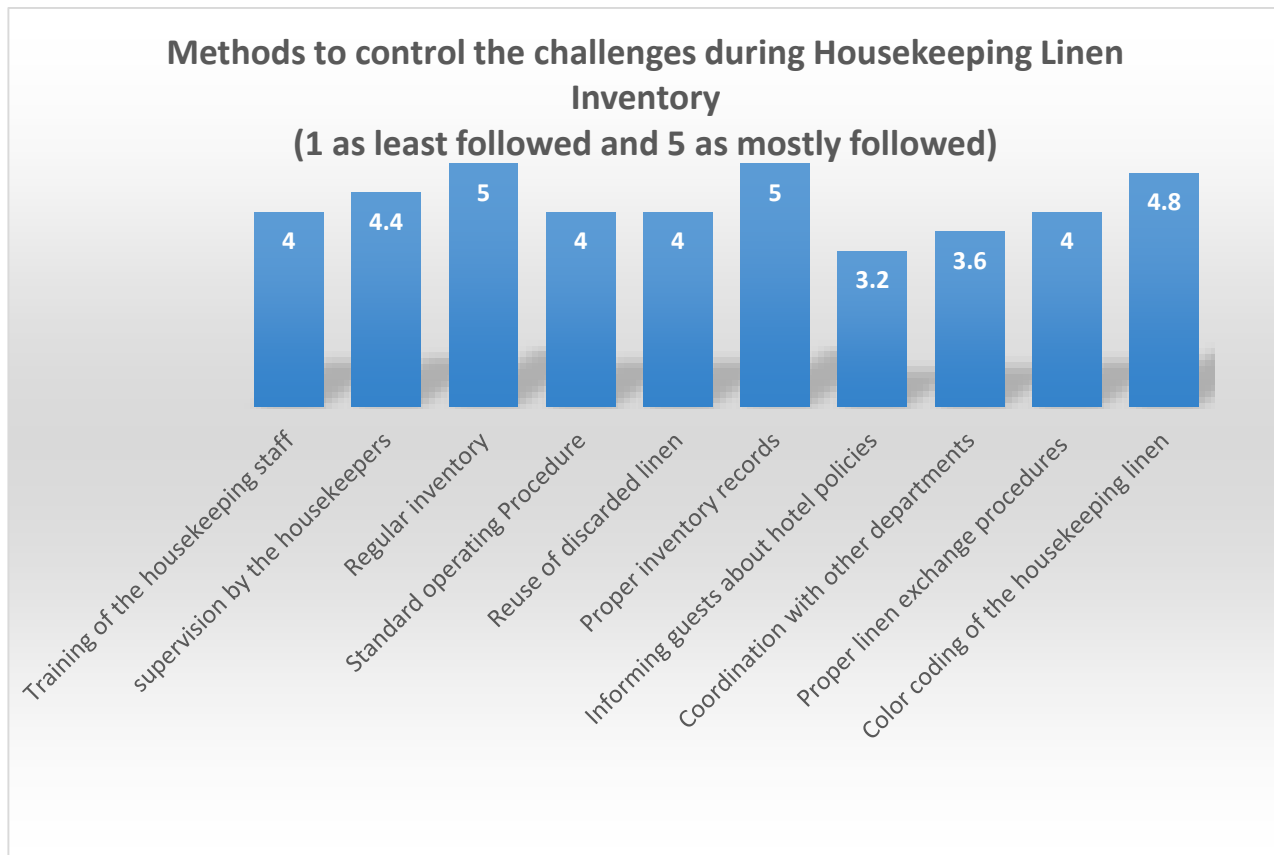
5. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Figure 1:



- Hotels mentioned that the time required to complete the physical stock taking of the linen in one day is a challenge especially during high occupancies.
- Another challenge faced by the hotel properties is to keep a track of linen due to pilferage. The reasons for the pilferages could be various depending on the size of the property.
- It is difficult to avoid spoilage of linen due to stains, for example: linen may get stains while handling, storing, and use by the guest. Some hotels also mentioned that the staff may misuse the hotel linen while cleaning tasks.
- Lack of manpower is another challenge for the hotels due to high rate of turnover. Hotels in such cases may not complete housekeeping inventories on time.
- Other challenges includes, guest linen being taken by the guest during checkout, mishandling of linen by the staff and an outsourced laundry. Though staff can be supervised and the laundry operations can be checked and controlled, it is difficult to control the linen being taken by the guest while check out. In case the hotel could find out that the guest has carried linen, they sometimes charge the guest for the linen.

Figure 2:



Different methods to control the challenges during housekeeping linen inventories are as follows:

- Most important method is to follow regular inventory of linen which means physically counting the stock of linen in the operation cycle. This includes linen in stock (linen room), linen in laundry for washing, linen in floor pantries, linen on the maid's cart and the linen in use in the guest room. This entire procedure has to be completed in a day, as linen is continuously in use. Hotels usually do this procedure in the last week of every month.
- Another most important things that the hotels follow while taking the physical stock is to maintain the records. Though hotels specifically do not have a specific software, proper data entry of linen in hand, discarded linen, pilferages, etc gives them the exact count. This becomes the closing stock for that particular month and the opening stock of the next month.
- Color coding of the linen is another methods followed by most of the hotels. For example: different color codes are followed for the dusters used for glass cleaning, floor cleaning and for dusting purpose. This helps them to reduce the misuse of the linen by the hotel housekeeping staff.
- Supervision by the housekeeping staff is very important. Housekeeping supervisors should keep a close watch on the floors while the room attendants are cleaning the rooms. This allows them to control on the misuse of linen and help to reduce the pilferages.
- Record keeping of housekeeping inventories is the most important function. While the stock taking is done by the room attendants or the linen room attendants, a skilled, trained staff is needed for the data entry. Trained housekeeping personnel
- Most of the hotels follow sustainable practices of recycling the discarded linen. For example, Bed sheets can be recycled to make pillow cases. It adds to the monetary and environmental benefits to the industry.

- Coordination with other departments is very essential for the smooth flow of linen supply. Housekeeping should provide linen on timely basis to Food & Beverage service Department and they should also in turn coordinate with the housekeeping department.
- Amongst one of the method to overcome the challenges in housekeeping inventory if to inform the guest about the charges applicable in case the guest wish to carry the linen during check out. This will reduce the loss of linen when there are group check outs and it becomes difficult for housekeeping to physically check all the check out rooms for linen.

6. Conclusion of the study:

- Inventory management is one of the most important functions of the housekeeping department. There are different challenges faced by the housekeeping department while conduction the physical stock taking of the linen. Some of these may include, linen being misused by the staff, pilferages of linen, etc.
- Time management and timely inventories on one particular day is another challenge for a bust property.
- Amongst various methods adopted by the hotels to control on the issues related to linen inventory and are implemented by the hotels are regular inventory with proper recors maintained, color coding of linen for different use, and strict supervision and training of the staff.

7. Recommendations:

- Radio Frequency Identification process (RFID) tags can be followed by the hotels for linen for easy counting during inventory.
- Guests can be informed during check in / check out for the charges of linen in case they wish to carry the linen while checking out.
- Strict supervision should be done by the Housekeeping supervisors to avoid misuse of linen by the staff.
- Proper forecasting and plan for contingency in budgets for linen requirement should be made.
- Timely records should be maintained for linen inventory. Use of software for maintaining records can be recommended to the hotels .

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