

## **Do guidelines grind throughout crisis? Services Blueprint on Hotel Business in Bangladesh during Covid-19 Pandemic**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Hotels services or businesses tremendously affected by COVID-19 pandemic. This study would provide the strategies such as services blueprint guidelines regarding services standard activities, hoteliers managerial decisions as well as future initiative-based yardstick.

**Methodology:** Qualitative research along with thematic analysis is used, and 10 local hoteliers and 10 chain hoteliers were acquired for depth interview data collection for this study.

**Findings:** The outcome of the research is the amalgamation of hotel services adaptations with crisis and updated activities during any pandemic or crisis. This paper suggests that hotel authorities have to adapt well thought standards what are evidenced based scientific dimensions. At the same hoteliers are recommended to put extra exertions and carefulness regarding services innovation, customers (guests) experiences and enhancing welcoming assertiveness but contactless or minimum contact during Pandemic or any crisis situations.

**Originality:** This research provides an authentic theoretical contribution during Pandemic situation towards hotels services industry as well as adequate managerial implications provided not only for Bangladesh but also for overall the world.

**Keywords:** Crisis situations, Covid-19, Services blueprint, Services standard management, contactless services.

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## **1.0 Introduction:**

The extent of COVID-19 virus and impose of travel restrictions affect heavily on hotel industry (Jiang and Wen, 2020). Tourism is facing challenges for survival due to COVID-19 pandemic issue and it has created economic crisis too (Guevara, 2020) and hotel industry is affected and induced economic situation has been slowing down (Hoisington, 2020). COVID-19 pandemic issue somehow has been changing the strategies or ways what travellers interact with hoteliers due to the fear of getting infected. Hence, hotel business undoubtedly would face an enormous business recovery challenge. It seems that travellers may not show the demand for hotels until 2023 and this is why hotel industry would face challenge to reach pre-COVID-19 situation again. There was an outbreak in 2003 named as SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and this outbreak taught the significance of maintaining public health (Kim et al., 2005) and artificial robotics for hotel industry are already being started in response to maintain public health (Tussyadiah, 2020; Zabin, 2019). But it might not possible to apply on developing countries such as Bangladesh.

Covid-19 pandemic actually has been imposing hoteliers to adopt corrective measure for providing adequate and proper services along with precise and effective delivery methods and it is worthy contactless services delivery dimension (Rahimzhan and Irani, 2020). In this situation, successful service blueprint might provide better solutions for upholding the loop of hotel industry. Service blueprint was first introduced in Harvard Business Review in 1984 by G. Lynn Shostack. Service blueprint is basically customer experiencing map that can help to lessen hazard of providing services to customers. Tourism and hospitality services are advised and applied to develop blueprint as per their separate accounts and fashions.

Specifically, hospitality industry is affected tremendously due to several affected countries what were guided by travel and social distancing limitations (Gossling et al., 2020). Hotels in Bangladesh were suffered unquestionably since May 2020. Hotels in Dhaka city literally were forced not to operate their activities during pandemic. Hotel's business is vulnerable since it depends genuinely on guests and roles of hotel employees (Henderson and Ng, 2004).

Several diversified hotels have been trying to follow services standards and precautionary activities since Covid-19 pandemic. A few hotels propelled cleaning standard certifications what provides sanitary policies for all hotels. Marriott showed a new internal manifesto; 'Global Cleanliness Association' what provided hotel hygiene (Marriott, 2020). Hospitality business actually has been facing crisis from the beginning especially in Bangladesh since

natural disasters are not the new things in here. Hospitality business needs to design their services blueprint considering disaster issues and that is why they should take arrangements prior levels, backup, midway, long-term and perseverance stages. It is also true that the management initiatives might vary on the basis of location, severity of the crisis too. However, there are a few recent researches already available (Aliperti et al., 2019) regarding crisis and disaster management and those would be probable guidelines to address any kind of suitable research for tackling such kinds of issues. Therefore, this research would find out the current possible activities regarding services blueprints and updates of hotel business in managerial perspectives in Bangladesh.

Though there is not adequate literature on service blueprint of hotel business, this study would be able to provide an updated services blueprint along arguments as per data from respondents since discussions were done from hotel employees in Bangladesh. This study is qualitative research and it is applied into various stages. Firstly, literature review was drawn from previous researches using preferred research-based journal articles. Then depth interviews were carried out with staffs of the various hotels in Bangladesh. After that data were analysed and a service blueprint was provided. So, it would mention that the reasons of doing research is to explore customer service of hotel industry during COVID-19 situation in Bangladesh and design a service blueprint for hoteliers to consider. This kind of research and study certainly could reveal the changes, processes of management decisions, implementation of any kind of changes and also might help to take emergency initiatives for the future.

## **2.0 Literature review:**

### 2.1 Hotel services canons

Hotel service provide strategies for the services to assemble customer expectations. These standards are often referred by hotel managers as customary operating procedures. Service providers can find it challenging to certify high-quality facility due to the intricacy, immateriality, proximity, and heterogeneity (King,1984). Extraordinary service standards can merely be maintained if the strategy, implementation, and apprising of services are ready appropriately. Former study has divided service principles into two categories: solid and lenient. (Zeithaml, et al. 2018; Ueno 2010.). Solid standards refer to the actions and features that can be dignified, timed, or calculated through inspections. Lenient standards provide path, direction, and response to employees about how to achieve customer fulfilment. Lenient vs. solid qualities of services are also used by academics to define interpersonal vs. non-

interpersonal service worth qualities (Driver and Johnston 2001). Earlier study has shown the significance of administrative patterns and plans that are designed to encounter the security and confidence requirements of service canons.

Divergent kinds and locations can have diverse service canons. Inexpensive hotels are more likely to worth eminence facility and reliable housekeeping than luxury hotels (Nasution and Mavondo 2008; Senior and Morpew 1990). Continuous updates are required to encounter consumer hassles (Min et. al. 2002). Service characteristics that are pertinent to customers are the most significant of all attributes for a hotel. This is because it serves the decisive determination of the friendliness industry. The relative significance of service is decorated in the literature. This research assesses the facility canons and customer service canons and analyses the solid and lenient canons.

## 2.2 Hotel service excellence

Grounded in expectancy-disconfirmation theory, service excellence refers to meeting and surpassing customers' prospects unflinchingly (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Services must be continuously developed to encounter varying customer opportunities (Manhas and Tukamushaba 2015). Because service quality is immaterial, benchmarking can be acute for maintaining service excellence. Benchmarking is the constant capacity, evaluation and analysis of business implementation and practices (Hemmington et al. (2018)). Benchmarking is used in many schemes, including environmental certifications (Geerts 2014), franchising and hotel categorizations. The outmoded benchmarking development involves thinking, performing and forecasting. Because the COVID-19 pandemic has extent speedily and so hastily, it is not conceivable to consider the significance of benchmarking service excellence as a reaction.

## 2.3 Hotel servicescape

Hotels are businesses where guests pass a lot of periods. They are more likely to be influenced and influenced by the hotel's servicescape (Xu and Li, 2016). Servicescape refers to the environment and interactions that influence guests' experience in the hospitality industry (Bitner 1992; Tombs and McColl-Kennedy 2003). Servicescapes are important indicators and cues about the quality of intangible services. Customers rely on these atmospheric cues to make their initial impressions of a service provider or to assess its performance before they interact with staff members (Zeithaml and co., 2018). Servicescape is a key component in customer evaluations of service. It influences customers' cognitive, physiological, and emotional states, and their subsequent purchasing decisions (Lin, 2004). Servicescape allows customers to have

a strong understanding of the business environment. This can help businesses progress their image and create a constructive impression (Durna, et al. 2015). Servicescape components (i.e., Customers can use substantial and communal components to support them assess the service (Walls, et al. 2011). The substantial servicescape denotes to the substantial elements of an environment in which service can be provided (Bitner, 1992), an applied psychologist, classified servicescape in three measurements:

- (a) Four-dimensional layout and functionality (furniture's location and furniture);
- (b) Ambient conditions (e.g., temperature, lighting);
- (c) Marks, characters, and objects (signage or ornamental style)

Latest study has shown that hygiene is a noteworthy aspect in customer pleasure and reliability. With rising cleanliness concerns and COVID-19, cleanliness has been identified as a noticeable substantial pointer that must be accomplished and rationalized to uphold customer satisfaction and avert frustration. (Jiang and Wen, 2020). The community servicescape is often denoted to as an addition to Bitner's (1992), notion of the substantial landscape. It refers to the environment that includes the appearance, behavior, and social similarities of customers (Hanks and Line 2018). In the past, hospitality companies emphasized interaction between guests and service staff (Butcher, 2005). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to help contain the virus, changes have been made in these traditions. Some hotels have adopted mobile keys to allow guests to bypass the front desk. Service information can be accessed through a mobile app and thus eliminates the need to speak with a concierge (Paraschiv, 2020).

#### 2.4 Hospitality disaster management

The hospitality industry is extremely vulnerable to crises and disasters (Aliperti, et al., 2019). The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the hospitality industry has been unprecedented (Goodell, 2020). Disasters that result from unanticipated actions are frequently multifaceted and encompass countless stakeholders. They necessitate instant responses and can pressure the company's tactical purposes. Hotel and travel actions can be strictly damaged by calamities and disasters (De Sausmarez, 2007). The pandemic poses noteworthy contests to hotels' marketing, maintenance, and human resource exercises (Lai and Wong, 2020). Modifications in perspective have occurred in the hotel industry, including product design, investment, service standards and product design.

A good crisis management strategy can help reduce the negative effects of a crisis (Novelli and co., 2018). The majority of previous research on crisis management focused on preparation for

the crisis (Hilliard and colleagues, 2011; Lai and Wong, 2020). It is therefore important to conduct a systematic study on crisis management in the event of a pandemic like COVID-19. While previous research has provided frameworks for managing crisis situations (Prideaux et al. 2003; Ritchie 2004), many hotels still face difficulties in dealing with crises. A study of the impact of the Turkish political and economic crisis on Northern Cyprus showed that many hotels were unable to predict the effects and therefore failed to take precautions (Okumus et al., 2005). This study also revealed that many managers and owners of small and medium-sized hotels do not have crisis management plans or teams. Panic and fear were more damaging than the direct effects of the SARS virus during the 2003 outbreak (Tse et al., 2006). The knowledge of hoteliers was inadequate to handle an epidemic (Chien and Law, 2003). Similar to the Ebola outbreak, the tourism sector in Africa was severely affected by a lack of communication, strategy formulation and multi-level collaboration (Novelli et. al., 2018). Although specific strategies for crisis management are different depending on the case, Evans (2005) and Elphick (2018) assert that there are three common aspects to crisis management.

- (a) Formulate comprehensive contingency plans;
- (b) Describe decisional and informational positions, responsibilities and
- (c) Uphold a certain degree of elasticity to counter rapidly and assertively at a prepared level, but not to urgency to extra tactical stages of policymaking.

Remarkably, although earlier studies might have presented overall representations for disaster management, they may not have been able to tackle the particularity and complexity of an exact disaster.

## 2.5 Service modernization

Progression is the most differentiating characteristic between manufacturing and service industries (Bitner, et al. 2008). Service employees should be revived to be original and innovative in order to accomplish process development (Chen, 2011). Previous research in the hospitality industry has revealed that hotel visitors are more likely to select a hotel with a service modernizer (Victorino et al., 2005). In a crisis, hotel modernization is proven to be a long-term value (Campo et al., 2014). There are numerous tactics to service innovation. These contain active capabilities and service-dominant logic. Bitner et. al. (2008) defines the conventional method of service modernization. Numerous service innovations are characterized by a "fuzzy front" at the commencement. This is characterized by unrealistic procedures and unplanned choices. This can be mainly challenging in times of emergency when

managers are under burden and have to create speedy and precise judgements. To lessen the undesirable effects of a crisis, managers must take fast and competent conclusions. The application of new service components will demand comprehensive descriptions, directions, and explanations of the concerns of customers as well as service providers. Before they can be finalized, the new service canons and strategies will need to be developed (Bitner et. al. 2008). Bitner et al. (2008) recommended components that encompassed customer activities, onstage/visible employee activities and backstage/invisible employee movements, support procedures, and physical confirmation to support service blueprinting. Barrett and colleagues (2015) also consider knowledge is the key to service revolutions in the digital phase. The hospitality industry is slower than other industries in operating technological facility modernization due to a lack acquaintance, assistances and belief, and probable risks (Wu and Cheng, 2018). After the COVID-19 epidemic has lessened, there is a strong necessity for services development and invention.

## 2.6 Services blueprint:

Service blueprint helps service providers to plan, deliver and handle innovating strategies for customers. It shows and reflects how the total service operation will run and who would do according to their accountabilities. Service blueprint helps to find out the discrepancies if any and could find the services interfaces for customers, employees and other support services. Then they might achieve the ultimate potential outcome. Complicated services phenomenon can be seen and identified more clearly through visual services blueprints and it is also better than any sort of verbal explanations (Holdford, 2019). Service blueprint helps to find out difficulties for services delivery process and it might help to improve service performance continuously. So, at present during this COVID-19 pandemic situation existing services blueprints need to be updated for prevailing safety and hygiene measures. Previous researches already shown that service blueprints could change if any sort of emergency situation arises.

## 2.7 Elements of services blueprint:

There are no perspicuous policies as to how the services plans or blueprint needs to be created. Usually, service blueprint has a few significant components. One is customer action that communicate and pay for a service specifically. This is kind of customer touch points where customers get to touch and get to access themselves. In hotel, front desks as well as hotels

rooms and food delivery processes would be considered here. Next one is frontstage action. This is basically visible operational activities of hotel business. Front desks employees engage themselves towards guests due to provide concerned facilities. Another one is backstage actions that are not directly evident towards customer. Firms' human resource manage this process by themselves with just-in-time, TQM (Total quality management). The employees try to support backstage services all around. Another one is support services such as housekeeping, maintenance common services, room services, parking facilities and overall general maintenances. There is another element in service blueprint and that is horizontal line. The main sequence of this horizontal element is interaction, line of visibility and internal business line. Horizontal line of contact shows lowest-level workers from higher-level ones. If hotel business would make this horizontal line in smooth way such as minimum contact during this COVID-19 pandemic situation, then it might help them to communicate and serve the guests more efficiently.

### **3.0 Methodology:**

In this study, exploratory and qualitative research design along with interpretivist approach are applied to focus solid meaning from the depth interviews (Creswell, 2013). The research methodology usually is drawn from literature reviews. Literature review and thematic analysis have established guidelines that show adequate pathways to do qualitative research along with thematic analysis (Akter et al. 2019). The literature reviews and in-depth interviews assist to capture the findings (Carter et al. 2014). Depth interviews do not embrace survey in maximum times. Surveys might not show exact behaviours that capture the individuals' real-life situations and behaviours. This is a limitation of survey. During Covid-19 pandemic situation, hoteliers of Bangladesh have been facing their own sorts of limitations that are related and closed to their hotel guests' real-life perceptions and behaviours and they might not get any kind of right pathways or blueprint to attend their hotels guests. This is why this study was applied qualitative interviews to unearth the perspective of hoteliers and guests' situations regarding services blueprint in services systems such as settings, structure and context (Silverman, 2011).

Qualitative research is diverse and thematic analysis is considered as foundational pillar method of qualitative research (Holloway and Todres, 2013). Thematic analysis is a major research platform rather than a specific approach and it has the capability to do its own featuring. It is a flexible analysis too. It has also its particular epistemological position.



However, the reason of using thematic analysis should be the objectives of the research itself, not for easy to do. Thematic analysis is a powerful method that can be applied to bring experiences, thoughts and behaviours across the data set. As thematic analysis is designed to bring out common experiences from data set, it is not suited for investigating unique experiences from data set. Thematic analysis comes from repeated assumptions across the data (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). In thematic analysis, code is captured from data. This code could be word or phrase. This code can come from the data itself; inductive coding and can come from particular theoretical or epistemological positions; deductive coding. Qualitative research along with thematic analysis offers a useful lens that present the degree of data transformation during analysis. Thematic analysis is not topical survey analysis since it brings the topics raised from the data set (interviews) as frequencies and percentages and it does not have purposeful sample participants or findings. But thematic analysis should be highly interpretative analysis that should have considerable transformation of the data.

This research was used snowball sampling as it has theoretical alignment with grounded theory approaches (Creswell, 2012). The data collection participants were recruited from November 2020 to August 2021. The respondents were recruited from association sources and then one respondent provided the sources of other respondents and this is the reflection of snowball sampling. The interviews from different respondents had been collecting until repetitive answers were found and nothing new information was being come out from them, or it is brought any kind of point of theoretical saturation (Robinson, 2014). The participants who were interviewed are the best people to provide answers and they might have the organisational authorities to change or make any organisational decisions. Most of the respondents were managers of the hotels in Bangladesh. Their info is specified a bit in below:

<u>Participants</u>	<u>Name of the hotel</u>	<u>Position/Designation</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Years of Work Experiences</u>
Chain 1	Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden	Manager	48	10
Chain 2	InterContinental	Manager	46	8
Chain 3	Sheraton	Senior Manager	46	7

Chain 4	Westin	Assistant Manager	48	8
Chain 5	Golden Tulip	Manager	39	8
Chain 6	Pan Pacific Hotels and Resorts	Manager	46	9
Chain 7	Le Meridian	Assistant Manager	49	10
Chain 8	Ascott Palace	Manager	52	8
Chain 9	Holiday Inn	Manager	49	11
Chain 10	Peninsula	Manager	53	9
Local 1	Grand Sultan	Supervisor	45	4
Local 2	Six Seasons	Manager	43	6
Local 3	Hotel Cox's Today	Manager	45	6
Local 4	Mermaid Eco Resort	Shift Manager	48	10
Local 5	Amari Dhaka	Manager	54	8
Local 6	Lakeshore	Manager	55	9
Local 7	Hotel Purbani Ltd.	Manager	54	11
Local 8	Hotel Sea Crown	Senior Assistant Manager	48	9
Local 9	MomoINN	Supervisor (Room Service)	52	7
Local 10	The Way Dhaka	Assistant Manager	48	8

**Table:1 Participants' (Data collection) Profile**

Most of the interviews were conducted through online platform such as zoom due to Covid-19 pandemic situation. The language of the interviews was respondents' native as well as convenient language (e.g., Bengali, English). Most of the interviews lasted one hour and data were collected basically with open-ended questions. The questions were about meeting research objectives. The participants were given consent forms. All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed into English.

Due to audit track of this research, field notes and memos were preserved along with the transcriptions, and initial coding were saved in transcription files (Charmaz, 2011). Participants were given a pseudonym to maintain the anonymity of them as if they could be differentiated or separated from each other instantly.

Several researchers advised guidelines of how to conduct diversified versions of thematic analysis (Attire-Stirling, 2001; Joffe, 2011), but for this study the method that was given by Braun and Clarke (2006) was applied since it is widely adopted method of thematic analysis of qualitative research (Clarke and Braun, 2017). According to them, the method of analysis consists of six steps and this is designed to be a recursive, rather than linear. To show these steps, the experiences of hoteliers of Dhaka city were considered as respondents. However, recognising the personal experiences of hoteliers during Covid-19 pandemic situation will be designed by subjective experiences of the hoteliers in different perspectives. Here an inductive approach to thematic analysis and constructivist epistemology were employed.

In thematic analysis the first step is to familiar with the data set. This is why, at first active reading through the data set was carried on. It provided a valuable orientation to the raw data and a foundation for subsequent steps. Here it is needed to mention that data transcription was time-consuming, but it is a fabulous way to become familiar with the data. After that data were organised in a meaningful and systematic way. I tried to address on specific research questions and keep it in mind while organising the data. I captured and coded the data according to interesting part of research question. Line-by-line coding was done, and open coding was applied from the transcript. But one thing I gave close concentration on research question and relevant research questions. From each transcript, I tried to fix relevant code specifically in terms of research question. The comparison among all the transcripts had been done one by one. I generated new theme and also, I modified it if needed.

#### **4.0 Findings of the Study:**

During Covid-19 pandemic, the hotel business operational activities have been changed in Bangladesh. During data collection, it was revealed that the hotel business authorities have been following local government's instructions fully here. They followed local government's advices completely. The most significant and common instructions were temperature check, wear surgical mask, health declaration during check-in, last 14 days travel and living history,

and finally if guests have any respiratory symptoms/illness already. Most of them took more concerns than government advices since they have the concerns of their own business and reputations. That is why during this pandemic situation, hoteliers in Bangladesh are frequently observing and experiencing their changes. The changes they considered as sustainable changes. The hoteliers revealed the guest profiles and most of the guests were young and businesspeople. The following themes were applied during interview periods:

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Percentage</u> <u>(%)</u>
How to operate the procedures/operations	46
Feedback from guests or customers	16
Measurement of services quality	14
Management process within premises	10
Marketing procedures within boundary	8
Monitoring the services and measure	4
Prevention route and activities	2

**Table: 2 ‘Themes in data collection’**

There are some more insight findings are given below:

#### 4.1 Chain and local self-regulating hotels:

At Dhaka city in Bangladesh, it is come out from data that international chain hotels what are available in Bangladesh have been following class one restrictions and advices for Covid-19 whereas local hotels of Dhaka city were much more malleable in executing the operational activities towards the guests. Participants explained that adequate and proper yardsticks and standards of protections were kept when it comes for chain hotels what have branches around the world. Whereas a few respondents of local hotels in Bangladesh shared about the absence of proper guidelines and maximum times they followed their own maintained guidelines and autonomies. A few of the participants were much more experienced participants in terms of years of work. They shared their experiences about other pandemic situations such as SARS

and how they have faced and monitored during those periods of time. They ensured again and again that before Govt. rules and regulations were reached, they started doing their own mechanisms what they actually did during SARS. One of them narrated:

‘When the Covid-19 germ was identified, our hotels took the decisions to take health declaration forms from the guests or customers before government’s advices arrival. And these experiences were adapted from SARS pandemic. It helped us to grab more rapid actions than others.’ (Chain-03)

Thus, the above narration from the participants revealed that chain hotels were experienced to handle the issues of the pandemic initially. Another significant outcome was come out from the respondents. The outcome was:

‘As part of our chain hotels, we were asked to follow local government’s guidelines appropriately’. (Chain-5)

So, some chain hotels were instructed to follow their local restrictions and guidelines. Maybe they did not find any conflicts between local advices and their top management’s advices. But it needs to mention here that independent local hotels might had more flexibilities than chains. This might allow them to do their best services towards the guests or customers. One of the participants uttered during interview:

‘As we used to take our own action plan during Covid-19, we developed our customised food and drinks for the guests such as lemon tea, warm water repeatedly.....offering exercises especially breathing exercises for them though it was not mandatory’ (Chain-09)

The above mentioning narration from the participants reflect that chain hotels were much more structured based services providers during Pandemic periods whereas local hotels were relaxing and customised in terms of their own values, choices and preferences.

#### 4.2 Sophisticated layer and minor layer hotels:

Diversified hotels are available in Dhaka city, Bangladesh such as upper level (sophisticated layer) or lower level (minor level). That is why during Covid-19 pandemic, protection and services availability had been differing from hotel layer to layer. The more sophisticated the hotel, the more safety and advices they followed, maintained and monitored. They made their

provisions especially for pandemic period. One of the participants from higher layer hotels in Bangladesh of this study averred the following:

‘We discouraged visiting the guests who travelled from abroad within the past 14/15 days. The guests are obliged to do reservation prior to arrive in the hotel. In addition, they (Hotel guests) must go through a process such as body temperature checks several times with the help of heavy equipped thermometer, health declaration form, guests’ transpiration checking to reconfirm from where the guests travelled to our hotel. We ensured the dinning hygienic practices as well. We also investigated the papers of the guests from their documents what they provided us for check-in room such as passport or NID card and driving license.’ (Local-08)

These all activities reflect that sophisticated hotel were much shielding and meticulous. Other participant from low layer hotels stated:

‘We did not allow guests who called from high Covid-19 affected locations, but we trusted our guests and believed what they told us about their locations from where they came from. If they are looked healthy and paid adequately, we used to allow them in. If they were in their 14 days quarantine, we tried to maintain tight distances from them in all aspects. They just kept themselves inside the room. We also informed them that if they went out leaving their quarantine period, we would take legal actions for them.’ (Local- 10)

The above narration clearly denotes that minor layer hotels do not have all-inclusive requirements at their services availabilities. They just imposed basic requirements what are not sole.

#### 4.3 Services; physical innovation:

Many chain hotels maintained high level of hygiene products what enriched the mechanism of sanitization such as they maintained sanitizations into elevators, dinning rooms, rest rooms if it not private in every hour. One of the participants stated:

‘We kept record of our employees’ who were assigned for this job. Sometimes we appointed assistances from professional cleaner who disinfected the guest rooms adequately. We also kept masks in front of the gate so that guests would avail that free’. (Chain- 08)

The above revealing clearly indicates that chain hotels in Bangladesh were extremely chockfull services oriented during pandemic. Some local hotels avoided face to face services, and it was revealed from one of the participants. He said:

‘Guests were provided a bag what was flattened with mask, sanitiser, spray, hotel room key, main doors keys. Guests were informed that one kit would be kept for him or her in front desk. Guests used to get that easily and stayed in our rooms without any face to interactions totally’ (Local-06)

Thus, chain hotels and local hotels maintained their services along with physical evidences. In services organisation, services along with visible physical evidences matter and are appealing to customers too.

#### 4.4 Social Innovation:

Some local and chain hotel tried to allocate employee shifts in different schedules in a strategic way by reducing numbers of people in entry and exit points and it facilitated them highest social distances Another interesting social innovation was locker for each and every guest along with lock and key. So that they could keep something for the hoteliers and the authority could provide them the services in return. One of the chain hoteliers uttered:

‘There was a week-based employee work scheduled. One of them stayed in hotel for five days and get disinfected. Then they were sent to their home and another group were brought through hotel’s own transportations from home for next week. This is how by rotations different groups had been working during Covid-19 pandemic situation.’ (Chain-07)

The above mentioning kind of policies were not available by the local hotels in Bangladesh since it is much more costly for both; hoteliers and guests too. But local hoteliers tried in utmost level to make face to face distances indeed. One of the respondents of this study simply said:

‘We maintained face to face interactions and at the same time we tried to provide our utmost levels care for our guests. We talked them over phone 24 hours services, we showed them empathy so that psychologically they could be strong and above all we provided them homely services along with physicians’ services, sympathy, empathy and care.’ (Local-03)

Actually, pandemic requires social interactions, love and confidences. Local and chain hoteliers provided the efforts to ascertain their all those social cues or services in their ways.

### **5.0 Discussion and analysis of this study:**

Providing adequate and standard services in pandemic period (crisis) are quite challenging (Bitner, 2008). The outcome of this research indicates that most of the hoteliers in Bangladesh tried their utmost levels efforts in updating their services and precautionary measures during Covid-19 pandemic crisis. This research could be a piece of guidance for other locations around the world:

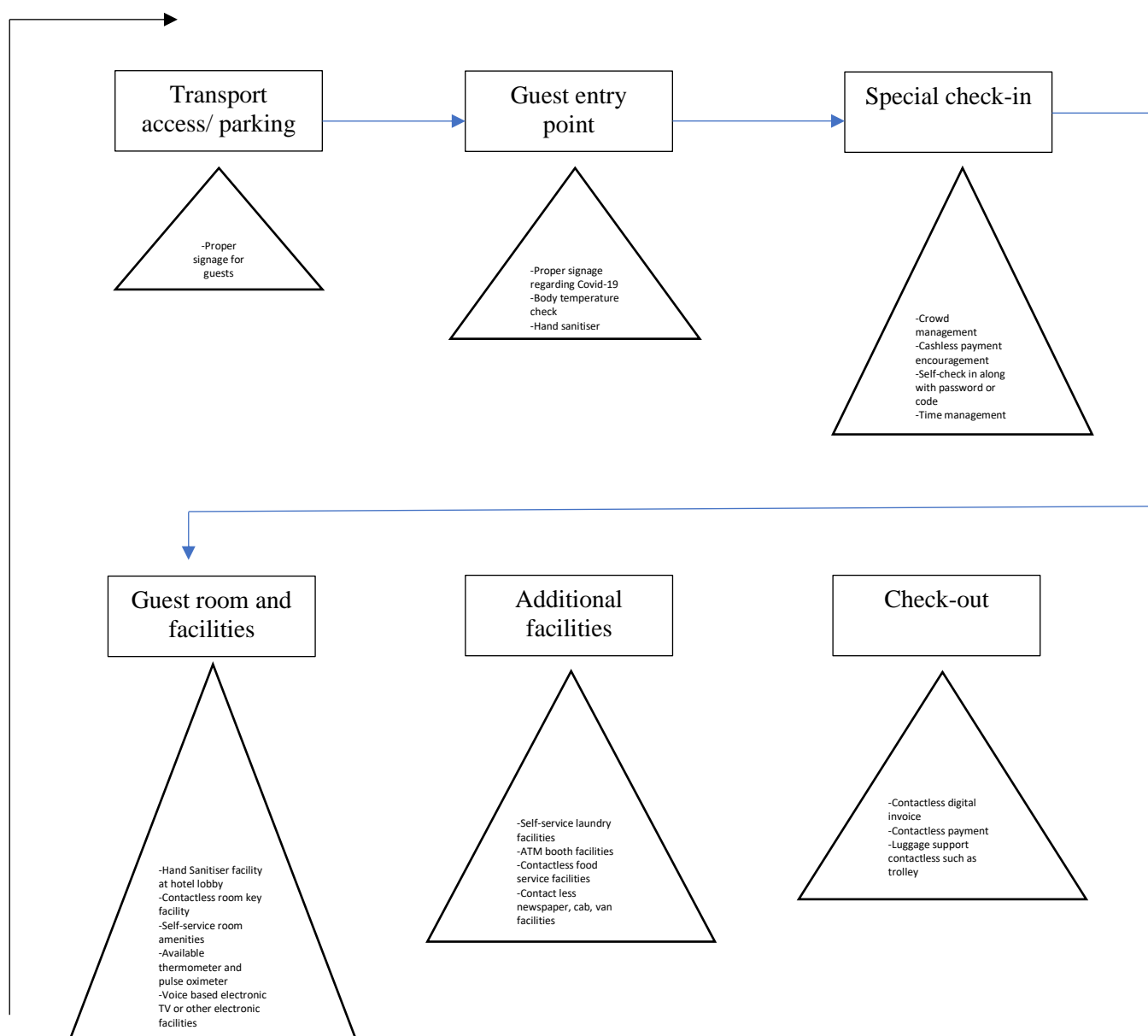
Pandemic requires response and recovery at quick and utmost level. Many countries tried imposing restrictions in their own strategies. Most of the hoteliers in Bangladesh applied their strategies what were mostly traditional. The participants of this study shared that they did not have any specific action plan from the beginning of the pandemic. But while they came to realise the situations, they started serious about the situations and tried to entertain guests along with applicable standard and feedback. Though the control was in national or government level in Bangladesh, but still individual hoteliers have their own autonomy too.

Since the huge development of technology has been already been in market, the mobile phone track records and QR codes would help to justify the actual health conditions of the hotel guests very effectively and easily. However, hotels in both chain and local might offer some marketing promotions since pandemic literally affected everyone's income luminously. Livestream sales would be quite acceptable since they could offer lower prices.

During Covid-19 pandemic, this research reveals an in-depth understanding on service update understanding applying thematic analysis. This research shows us a context in tourism and disaster management (Jones and Comfort, 2020) regarding hotel management experiencing in pandemic situation, responses and revival stages. Also, the outcome of this research indicates that local government or authority's guidelines should follow during pandemic situation. Local operation could be an effective strategy to prompt the scheduled work properly in crisis such as Covid-19 pandemic (Sutthijakra, 2011). In addition, global chain hotels could take initiatives to provide guidelines on service customary and service eminence. Remarkably, this study gives a stand of organisational adoption practise of up-to-the-minute technology in emergency moment. This research also brings an absolute innovative strategy what stimulate hoteliers to



capture ideal resources so that they could engage guests or customers. In services marketing, physical innovations and social services innovations matter in improving guest accommodates and treats and this physical innovation creates different dimensional ways too (Campo et al., 2014). Thus, this research is revised a practical service blueprint for hoteliers in Bangladesh especially during COVID-19 pandemic situation. This might help hotel managers to notice potential customers' dissatisfactions and failures. The proposed blueprint is provided in below:





## Line of Visibility of Services of Hotel Business

Figure 1: ‘Proposed hotel service -blueprint during COVID-19 pandemic’

The proposed services blueprint is given only in case of line of visibility and it is derived from literature review. It is suggested along with hotel guests’ present satisfactions and expectations; contactless as well as hygienic service delivery. It might help hoteliers to regain trusts of the hotel guests during COVID-19 pandemic situation. This proposed services blueprint might help to reduce and face challenges of emergency situations.

### 5.1 Practical Application:

The whole world has been facing the devastated situation due to Covid-19 and hotels or hospitality industry has been facing the same challenges too. Since environmental changes are going through, infectious diseases might come frequently and that is why hoteliers should have a good thought along with adequate scientific evidences. Hotel businesses might need a specific services blueprint design during any pandemic situation. Maybe they do not need to apply this blueprint during normal/non-pandemic period, but during pandemic, they should have the preparation to follow up and adjust the service blueprint. Customers (guests of the hotels) desire utmost levels safety services during pandemic, so customers should be given continuous contactless or minimum contact-based services along with updates throughout the period. Local policy of protecting the virus or crisis frequently could change and hoteliers should align themselves with the changes and also, they need to arrange additional disclosing services for the crisis. Technological cleanliness devices are available at present and they are not expensive and not time consuming too. So, hoteliers might prepare themselves along these kinds of instruments for facing uncertain circumstances. Services innovation strategies such as ‘safety and security kit’ should be confirmed by hotels though this is insignificant area of deploying, but still it is needed to work on. Hoteliers might introduce QR codes, so that they could avoid

face to face contacts with customers. Since these would be the new experiences for customers, hoteliers need to be cordial as well as consider responsiveness to adapt the new services blueprint designs. There is a high-tech apparatus such as electrostatic sprayers what could use to disinfect the hotels' premises. Facial recognition devices might also help to reduce face to face interaction what would be considered as safe and innovative services design as well.

Hotel guests or customers expect warm welcome and facilities. But due to pandemic, it would not be possible as much as they expect. This might create inconvenience into guests' minds, because usually guests desire memorable experiences. In this circumstances, motivational and inspirational messages, texts and precautionary measures should be provided and at the same time the reminding of this kind of precautionary messages should be continued. This would help them to presume the seriousness of hoteliers regarding to protect guests from any kind of crisis or pandemic such as Covid-19 pandemic.

Market segmentation and handling marketing segmentation are really burning issue during pandemic period. But it is necessary to redo market segmentations along with proper services blueprint strategies. Guidelines of proper consumer (guests) behaviour should be guided for short and long term too. In addition, local guests would get entertained after the flexibility phase of covid-19 since international travellers were banned or restricted. Feasibility access would also necessary to be measured too. Hoteliers might offer promotional efforts for long-term staying packages to guests since after Covid-19 crisis people would plan a complete memorable holiday for themselves including food delivery, spa, meeting rooms and exercise facilities. The crisis or issues of vaccination of Covid-19 was not approached or solved yet, so hoteliers of Bangladesh would fix a rate or price strategies and booking cancellation policies along with most flexible manner.

Covid-19 pandemic reflects new reality into operational level in hotel business. Hoteliers need to be flexible and unfolded towards their guests (customers). They should have contingency policies along with mitigation mechanisms with the customers. Risk tolerance and flexible approach might provide exceptional outcome for hoteliers. Asian culture is higher power culture whereas western culture is low power culture (Mattila, 1999). Therefore, guests (customers) also might have diversified dissimilarities especially during this pandemic period. So, marketers of hotel industry in Dhaka city need to consider and adapt the customer perceived expectation based cultural issues since visitors or guests from around the world use to visit.

### Limitation of this study:

This study considers only hotels in metro and divisional area or locations. But hotels in non-prominent area or remote area might provide different outcomes or results. The blueprint of this study is provided only in terms of line of interaction and line of visibility of services, but line of internal interaction is absent in this study. So, further research might be conducted both of these issues.

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