



The strategic role of cleanliness in enhancing service quality: a case of green world hotel zhongxiao taipei

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyse the role of cleanliness in supporting service quality at Green World Hotel Zhongxiao, Taipei, Taiwan. The research methodology used is a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation. The research focuses on the implementation of cleanliness standard operating procedures (SOPs) by the hotel post-pandemic recovery challenges. The research results show that Green World Hotel Zhongxiao has optimally implemented cleanliness through the use of cleaning tools according to the hotel's established SOPs, periodic cleaning of hotel areas, monthly disinfectant spraying, and regular monthly evaluation meetings with all hotel staff. In addition, guest rooms are cleaned according to applicable SOPs, and all hotel facilities are cleaned periodically to maintain cleanliness and guest comfort standards. Therefore, cleanliness plays a significant role in maintaining the quality of service and the hotel's positive image at Green World Hotel Zhongxiao.

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1. Introduction

Taiwan is one of the fastest-growing countries in Asia, rapidly becoming a favourite tourist destination for international travellers. Its strategic geographical location, natural conditions with four seasons, and diverse tourist attractions make Taiwan globally appealing. The Taiwanese government views the tourism sector as a strategic economic

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opportunity and continues to develop tourism infrastructure to accommodate this potential.

Tourism is one of the important economic sectors that contributes significantly to the country's foreign exchange earnings, alongside the electronics and automotive industries. In this context, the hospitality industry plays a crucial role because it is an integral part of the tourism system, providing accommodation services for tourists. Role Theory emphasizes that organizational effectiveness depends on the alignment between role expectations, role enactment, and stakeholder evaluation. In hospitality settings, cleanliness operates as a socially recognized performance standard embedded within multiple organizational roles. Guests implicitly evaluate whether employees fulfil expected behavioural scripts related to hygiene, orderliness, and environmental care. When role expectations concerning cleanliness are clearly defined and consistently enacted, they reduce ambiguity and strengthen perceived service reliability. Conversely, role conflict or ambiguity in cleanliness-related responsibilities may weaken service evaluations. Therefore, positioning cleanliness within the framework of Role Theory allows it to be conceptualized not merely as an operational variable, but as a structured behavioural expectation that strategically shapes perceived service quality.

Hotels are one of the highest-earning sectors in the tourism industry, considering that the primary need of tourists is safe and comfortable accommodation. Besides providing rooms, the hotel also offers various supporting facilities such as restaurants, laundry services, a business centre, and transportation services. The hotel is managed commercially and professionally, and requires human resources with adequate skills and competencies. The operational success of a hotel is significantly influenced by the quality of service provided, with cleanliness being one of the main factors determining guest comfort, health, and satisfaction during their stay. In hotel literature reviews, cleanliness is considered a fundamental element in hotel service quality and directly impacts guest perception and hotel image. Room cleanliness, public facilities, and service areas are key indicators that guests often use as the basis for their evaluations, especially thru reviews and ratings on digital platforms. The importance of hygiene has been further strengthened after the Covid-19 pandemic, when hygiene and health standards became a global demand.

In Taiwan, the establishment of the Central Epidemic Command Centre (CECC) by the Taiwan Centres for Disease Control (CDC) reflects the government's seriousness in integrating various sectors, including tourism and hospitality, to ensure public health and the safety of travellers. This places hotel cleanliness not only as an operational necessity but also as part of social responsibility and public health. Although most hotels have implemented cleanliness standards thru their respective operational procedures, various constraints are still encountered in practice. Issues such as guests' lack of adherence to cleanliness rules, limited or damaged cleaning equipment, and inconsistent implementation of SOPs by hotel staff pose unique challenges. Therefore, this research focuses on examining the implementation of cleanliness at the Green World Hotel Zhongxiao Taipei, a four-star hotel operating in the heart of Taipei.

The research questions in this study include: (1) how is cleanliness implemented at the Green World Hotel Zhongxiao, (2) what are the obstacles in implementing cleanliness at the hotel, and (3) what efforts are being made to overcome the obstacles to cleanliness implementation. This research approach uses a descriptive method to deeply examine the

hygiene practices implemented, the constraints faced, and the solutions implemented by hotel management. The novelty of this research lies in the contextual assessment of hotel cleanliness by linking internal operational practices, post-pandemic public health policies, and guest perceptions reflected in digital reviews. This research is expected to provide practical contributions to hotel managers in improving cleanliness strategies as part of service quality enhancement, as well as academic contributions to the development of cleanliness studies in the international hotel industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The concept of role (role theory) in hotel organizations

The concept of role in organizational studies is explained by Biddle [1] and Kahn et al. in [2], who state that a role is a set of behaviors, responsibilities, and expectations inherent in a specific position within a social system. In the context of hospitality, the role of each individual and work unit is crucial to the operational success of the hotel, particularly in maintaining service standards. Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Matteson [3] assert that role clarity for employees will enhance work effectiveness and the quality of service provided to customers. This literature is used in the Introduction section to differentiate this manuscript from previous research, as this study not only assesses cleanliness as a technical activity but as a strategic role systematically carried out by hotel management and staff. In the Results and Discussion section, role theory is used to analyze how the division of tasks among housekeeping staff and related units at the Green World Hotel Zhongxiao contributes to the successful implementation of cleanliness.

2.2. Cleanliness as a dimension of hotel service quality

Cleanliness is one of the main dimensions of service quality in the hotel industry. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry [4], thru the SERVQUAL model, identify tangibles (the cleanliness of physical facilities) as an important indicator of perceived service quality. Furthermore, Jones and Lockwood [5] stated that the cleanliness of hotel rooms, public areas, and facilities directly influences guest satisfaction, comfort, and their intention to stay again. Post-Covid-19 pandemic, cleanliness is no longer understood solely as aesthetics, but as a guaranty of health and safety. WHO [6] and UNWTO [7] emphasize that implementing hygiene protocols in tourist accommodations is a key requirement for the recovery of the global tourism industry. This literature is used in the Introduction to emphasize the urgency of the topic, in the Methods section to formulate hygiene observation indicators, and in the Results and Discussion section to assess the alignment of hotel hygiene practices with theoretical standards.

2.3. Central epidemic command centre (CECC)

Taiwan's Public Health Policy Taiwan is known as one of the countries that successfully controlled the Covid-19 pandemic thru an integrated policy approach. Wang et al. [8] explained that the formation of the Central Epidemic Command Centre (CECC) by the Taiwan Centres for Disease Control (CDC) was key to cross-sector coordination, including the tourism and hospitality sectors. The CECC serves as a decision-making center, oversees health protocols, and integrates national policies with on-the-ground practices. Literature

on the CECC is used in the Introduction section to illustrate the national policy context underlying the importance of hotel hygiene in Taiwan. In the Results and Discussion section, the CECC policy serves as the basis for analysis in assessing the extent to which hygiene practices at the Green World Hotel Zhongxiao align with national public health policies, thereby strengthening the contribution of this research in an international context.

2.4. Sanitation standards for general foods in taiwan

Food sanitation standards in Taiwan are officially regulated by the Taiwan Food and Drug Administration (TFDA) thru the Sanitation Standards for General Foods. These regulations govern the cleanliness of food ingredients, equipment, kitchen environments, and worker hygiene to ensure food safety. According to the TFDA [9], the strict implementation of sanitation standards in the Food and Beverage sector is an integral part of the public health system and the tourism industry. This literature is used in the Methods section as the basis for evaluating food facility hygiene practices in hotels, and in the Results and Discussion section to assess the compliance of hotel facility hygiene with Taiwan's national standards. Integrating food sanitation standards into the hotel hygiene study sets this research apart and adds value compared to previous studies that generally only focused on room cleanliness.

2.5. Research position and novelty based on the literature review

Previous research generally discussed hotel cleanliness from the perspective of service quality or customer satisfaction in general. This research has novelty because it integrates role theory, hotel cleanliness concepts, CECC policies, and Taiwanese food sanitation standards within a single analytical framework. This literature is consistently used in the Introduction to demonstrate manuscript innovation, in the Methods section to formulate research steps, and in the Results and Discussion section to strengthen the empirical analysis of the role of cleanliness at the Green World Hotel Zhongxiao Taipei.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the role of cleanliness (cleanliness) in hotel operations at Green World Hotel Zhongxiao, Taipei, Taiwan. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of processes, practices, and meanings related to cleanliness implementation, which cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement. This approach is considered appropriate to address the research questions concerning the implementation of cleanliness, existing constraints, and strategies used to overcome those constraints.

3.2. Research location and duration

The research was conducted at Green World Hotel Zhongxiao, located at No. 180, Section 4, Zhongxiao East Road, Da'an District, Taipei City, Taiwan 106. The hotel was selected due to its status as a four-star hotel, its strategic location in Taipei, and its relevance as a representative accommodation facility within Taiwan's tourism industry. The research

was carried out over a period of October 2023 to August 2024, allowing sufficient time for field observation, data collection, analysis, and verification of findings.

3.3. Research participants

This study involved eight participants (N = 8) who were directly responsible for the implementation and supervision of cleanliness practices at the hotel. The participants consisted of: 1 Hotel Manager, responsible for overall strategic decision-making and service quality control; 1 Executive Housekeeper, overseeing cleanliness standards and housekeeping operations; 4 Housekeeping Staff Members, directly involved in daily room cleaning and public area maintenance; 1 Front Office Supervisor, responsible for guest interaction and service feedback; 1 Maintenance Staff Member, supporting environmental hygiene and facility upkeep.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on three criteria: (1) direct involvement in cleanliness management or execution; (2) minimum one year of working experience at the hotel; and (3) active participation in service quality monitoring processes. This sampling strategy ensured that participants possessed both operational and managerial perspectives on cleanliness practices, thereby strengthening the credibility and depth of qualitative insights.

3.4. Data collection techniques

Data were collected using multiple techniques to ensure depth and accuracy of information:

- 1) Literature study
Relevant literature such as books, academic journals, government regulations, CECC policies, and sanitation standards in Taiwan were reviewed to establish a theoretical framework and contextual background.
- 2) Direct observation
Observations were conducted to examine cleanliness practices in guest rooms, public areas, hotel facilities, and the use of cleaning equipment in accordance with the hotel's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- 3) Interviews
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Hotel Manager and staff to gather detailed information regarding cleanliness procedures, SOP implementation, challenges faced, and solutions applied by the hotel management.
- 4) Documentation
Supporting documents such as cleanliness SOPs, cleaning schedules, evaluation meeting records, and photographic documentation were collected to strengthen the empirical evidence.

3.5. Data analysis

The data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman qualitative analysis model, consisting of:

- 1) Data reduction: involving selection, simplification, and categorization of relevant data.
- 2) Data display: presenting the data in narrative and thematic forms to facilitate interpretation.
- 3) Conclusion drawing and verification: identifying patterns and drawing conclusions while continuously verifying findings with the collected data.

3.6. Data validity

To ensure data credibility, this study applied method triangulation by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Cross-checking information from different sources and methods was conducted to confirm consistency and accuracy. Repeated observations and clarification with informants were also performed to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Implementation of cleanliness at green world hotel zhongxiao

The findings indicate that Green World Hotel Zhongxiao has implemented cleanliness practices in accordance with established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Cleanliness management is carried out systematically through standardized cleaning equipment, routine cleaning schedules, monthly disinfectant spraying, and regular evaluation meetings.

The Hotel Manager emphasized the strategic importance of cleanliness:

“Cleanliness is not only about appearance. It is part of our brand reputation and guest trust. If guests see a clean environment, they immediately feel safe and confident staying with us.” (HM)

Similarly, the Executive Housekeeper highlighted the structured implementation process:

“We follow daily, weekly, and monthly cleaning checklists. Every staff member understands their specific responsibilities, and supervisors conduct regular inspections.” (EH)

A housekeeping staff member explained the operational discipline involved:

“Before starting our shift, we review the cleaning SOP. Each room must follow the same procedure to ensure consistency. If something does not meet the standard, we redo it.” (HS2)

These interview excerpts demonstrate that cleanliness is institutionalized through clearly defined role expectations. From the perspective of Role Theory (Biddle, 1986), employees

enact role-based behaviors aligned with organizational expectations. Cleanliness thus operates as a strategic operational role that reinforces service reliability and perceived quality (Grönroos, 2007). The structured SOP implementation reflects role clarity and accountability, reducing ambiguity and strengthening service consistency.

4.2. Cleanliness practices and CECC (cleanliness, environmental sustainability, and customer care)

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4.3. Compliance with sanitation standards for general foods in taiwan

The hotel's sanitation practices also comply with Taiwan's Sanitation Standards for General Foods, particularly in terms of routine cleaning, sanitation control, and monitoring procedures. Documentation records and periodic inspections are consistently maintained.

The Maintenance Staff explained the monitoring mechanism:

“We conduct routine checks on kitchen sanitation equipment and water systems. Everything must be documented because inspections can happen anytime.” (MS)

The Hotel Manager further stated:

“Compliance with TFDA standards is mandatory. We cannot compromise on food safety because it directly affects our credibility and guest confidence.” (HM)

However, challenges related to equipment limitations were also identified. One housekeeping staff member noted:

“Sometimes older cleaning tools reduce efficiency. It takes more time to complete tasks, especially during peak occupancy.” (HS3)

In response, management upgraded cleaning equipment and modernized facilities to maintain compliance and operational efficiency. These findings indicate that sanitation compliance is not static but requires continuous resource investment and role coordination. From a Role Theory perspective, regulatory compliance reinforces formal role expectations, ensuring that employees perform according to institutionalized hygiene standards.

4.4. Discussion

Overall, the findings confirm that cleanliness plays a critical role in supporting service quality, regulatory compliance, and sustainable hotel operations. The integration of SOP-based cleaning, CECC principles, and national sanitation standards demonstrates an innovative and comprehensive cleanliness management model. This study contributes to the hospitality literature by highlighting cleanliness as a multidimensional role encompassing operational, environmental, and customer-related aspects, rather than a purely technical activity.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings on Cleanliness Implementation
at Green World Hotel Zhongxiao

Aspects of Findings	Implementation in Hotels	Theoretical Analysis	Implication
Hygiene SOP	Use of equipment according to SOP, routine cleaning of hotel areas and rooms.	Role Theory (Biddle, 1986)	Service consistency and improved service quality
Periodic Sanitation	Monthly disinfectant spraying and staff evaluation	Service Quality (Grönroos, 2007)	Ensuring the safety and comfort of guests
CECC	Waste sorting, sustainable cleanliness, guest care	Sustainable Hospitality (Chan et al., 2018)	Supporting the image of an environmentally friendly hotel
Regulatory Compliance	Implementation of Sanitation Standards for General Foods Taiwan	Food Safety Regulation (TFDA, 2020)	Increasing food safety and security
Constraints	Guest behavior and damaged cleaning tools	Customer Participation Theory (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2016)	Guest education and facility upgrades are needed.
Solution	Modernization of equipment and improvement of facilities	Continuous Improvement (Deming, 1986)	Operational effectiveness and cleanliness sustainability

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the role of cleanliness in supporting service quality and guest satisfaction at Green World Zhongxiao Hotel, Taipei, Taiwan. As outlined in the Introduction, cleanliness was positioned as a critical operational and strategic factor within hospitality management. The findings presented in the Results and Discussion confirm that the implementation of standardized cleanliness practices—through structured SOPs, periodic cleaning and disinfection, regular staff evaluation meetings, and compliance with CECC-based sanitation standards—has been effectively executed and contributes positively to the hotel’s attractiveness and operational sustainability. The study demonstrates that cleanliness at Green World Zhongxiao Hotel functions not only as a routine housekeeping activity but also as a managerial strategy embedded across departments. Despite several challenges, including limited guest compliance with waste segregation, improper disposal of cigarette butts, and outdated cleaning equipment, hotel management has implemented corrective measures such as equipment upgrades, improved facilities, and strengthened staff coordination. These actions reflect a proactive managerial approach that aligns operational practices with health, safety, and environmental sustainability objectives. From a managerial perspective, the findings imply that hotel management should continuously reinforce cleanliness as a core service value, supported by regular training, systematic supervision, and clear communication to guests. Cleanliness management should be integrated into long-term risk mitigation strategies, particularly in relation to public health preparedness and sustainable hospitality practices. This study is limited by its qualitative scope and single-case design. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches, expand the research context to multiple hotels or regions, and examine guest perceptions and technological innovations in cleanliness management. Such studies would deepen understanding of the strategic role of cleanliness in enhancing competitiveness and resilience in the hospitality industry.

CREDIT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author1 : Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Project administration, Supervision. Author2: Software, Writting – original draft. Author3: Writing – review & editing and validation.

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