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FOOD SAFETY AND HYGIENE MANAGEMENT: POST-COVID STANDARDS AND CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered public health priorities, with food safety and hygiene emerging as critical concerns in the hospitality industry. This research examines the evolving standards of food safety management and how these shifts have influenced consumer expectations in a post-pandemic world. Drawing on responses from 285 hospitality consumers and 65 food service professionals across India, the study investigates awareness levels, perceived hygiene practices, and trust factors affecting dining decisions. The research further evaluates the implementation of new safety protocols such as contactless dining, enhanced sanitation, employee health monitoring, and digital menus. Findings indicate a marked increase in customer sensitivity toward hygiene ratings, transparent kitchen operations, and visible cleaning practices. Moreover, food safety has transitioned from being a back-of-house function to a front-facing branding tool. The study concludes by highlighting the need for hospitality establishments to maintain rigorous hygiene standards, train staff regularly, and communicate safety efforts clearly to reassure customers. These findings provide valuable insights for hospitality operators aiming to align operational practices with heightened consumer expectations in a post-COVID landscape.

Keywords: *Food Safety, Hygiene Management, Post-COVID Hospitality, Consumer Expectations, Contactless Dining, Health Protocols, Hotel Restaurants*

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