

HYGIENE AND SANITATION THEORY AND PRACTICE: IMPLICATIONS OF SEVERE WATER SHORTAGE TO HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN KENYA, WATER SHORTAGE TO HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN KENYA

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Abstract: The perennial clean water shortage in Kenya calls not only for the review of the country's review of its policies on the ecosystem and water towers, but also for *the re-examination of the sanitation theories and practice of the country's hospitality industry*. The Hospitality industry has a role to play to maintain standards and at the same time influence the country's policies with a view to safeguard the ecosystem and water towers.

The requirement for hygiene and sanitation is core to any hospitality industry world over. Any lapses in the theory and practice will always witness hundreds of thousands of people suffer from food poisoning, water borne infections and other health threats to both staff and guests at the hospitality industries.

This paper examines the space of hygiene and sanitation theory and practices in Kenya's hospitality industry and the larger national water shortage challenges, such as the impacts of tribal politics on the water towers.

Keywords: Hygiene and Sanitation Theory and Practice, Implications of Severe Water Shortage to Hospitality

The hygiene and sanitation theory lays emphasis on cleanliness and the absence of germs. This also extends to the facilities which enable hygiene to be achieved. I propose a paradigm shift to this theoretical approach to include other key stakeholders to the industry, namely, suppliers, clientele and even general visitors. Perhaps if our hygiene and sanitation has to be meaningful, we must cast our net wide.

While contaminated water is a major cause of infectious diseases, it also has an impact on health through the spread of organic and inorganic chemicals that are harmful to health. These include chlorinated solvents (which cause cancer),

trihalomethenes (which cause liver and kidney damage), heavy metals such as lead (which cause nerve and brain damage and birth defects) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) (which cause liver damage, and may also cause cancer).

The hallmark of any hospitality industry revolves about standards, high standards indeed, and safe water is the core of this. The provision of safe drinking water and the effective removal of bodily waste by suppliers and food handlers are vital for human health and well-being. The United Nations covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights (2002) signed by 140 countries observes thus:

“Water is a limited natural and a public a public Good, fundamental to life, and healthy; The human Right to water is Indispensable for leadin A healthy life in human Dignity. It is a prequisite To the realization of other human rights”

Unfortunately, for Africa and other third world countries, political realities are often opposed to the aims of this fine declaration. Political expediency often pushes the claims water supply to the bottom of the priority list; wars and political conflicts may destroy significant infrastructure for the supply of safe drinking water and the removal of waste. Globally, about 3.4 million people die each year from illness associated with contaminated water supplies and inadequate waste removal. The diseases associated with water contamination include malaria, cholera, dysentery, hepatitis A and schistosomiasis.

The challenges presented here could be beyond the mandate of a hospitality industry, yet the industry must meet international standards. The hygiene and sanitation theory lays emphasis on cleanliness and the absence of germs and the facilities which enable hygiene to be achieved. My interpretation of this theory is that it places premium on internal

hygiene and sanitation yet the industry thrives on external factors such as suppliers and clients who, if not well checked, can enormously compromise the otherwise excellent internal standards. The country's policies on safeguarding water towers and the reality as manifested in the regional/tribal politics on environment will be evaluated.

I. INTRODUCTION

The perennial safe water shortage in Kenya calls not only for the review of the country's policies on the ecosystem and water towers but also for the re-examination of the hygiene and sanitation theories and practices of the hospitality industry. Changes in the forest cover in the four water towers; Mt. Kenya, the Aberdares, Cherangani Hills and Mau Complex indicate that encroachment of the residents on the forest cover has contributed not only to water shortage but also drought. A report from a research carried out by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in Kenya (2003-2005) indicates early warning signs which require intervention to check future water shortage. The five water towers are instrumental to Kenya's hospitality industry because they support its very survival and relevance.

One of the challenges that come as a result of water shortage to the industry is food poisoning whose symptoms range from nausea to diarrhea.

In this paper, I make an examination of some theory (ies) that inform sanitation and hygiene in the Kenya's hospitality industry and a follow up on the realizations of such theory in practice.

II. IMPLICATIONS OF SEVERE WATER SHORTAGE

The issue of hospitality industry hygiene and sanitation is not entirely a Kenyan or Africa's matter. A research conducted in England and the Wales between 1985 and 1994 on the incidence of food poisoning for example showed that 50,000 people were victims (Jill Trickett, 2002). In Kenya, a tourist epicenter in East Africa, the statistics must have been higher during the same period. This therefore calls for a water tight execution of theory and practice.

This paper recognized the fact that hygiene and sanitation lapses can happen even when an institution and the whole country have sufficient water supply as in the case cited above.

Keith Proudlove (1987: 59) posits that, if the public is aware of food poisoning, it should report such cases more readily rather than accept their illness as another bilious attack; but her argument is more of a curative than a preventive intervention.

Many reasons account for food poisoning in the hospitality industry; this range from lack of hygiene education, proper sanitation, to poor

attitude among staff working in the hospitality facilities, lack of proper equipment, and even space for effective enforcement of laws which govern the hospitality industry.

Although the challenges presented here could be beyond the mandate of Kenya's hospitality and tourism industry, the country must endeavor to meet international standards. High standards apply to all hospitality facilities small or big, local or international, as long as a facility is selling hospitality products and services.

The whole Kenyan hygiene and sanitation system in the hospitality and tourism industry had to be critically analyzed in order to identify gaps between the theory and practice on the ground. According to the Susan F. Robinson ed (1992:2), the absolute safety of a food or an ingredient can never be guaranteed. This theory is applicable in hospitality institutions especially where no appropriate precautions are taken during purchasing of raw materials, development, through manufacturer into products, processing, and final preparation and in distribution. This argument indicates that, the risks from any food can be kept to an absolute minimum i.e. any level of contamination from the source of raw materials used in the preparation of food items in the hospitality and tourism facilities can be prevented to avoid disasters.

The use of contaminated water at any point in food preparation, for drinking or even cleaning of the hospitality facility to washing the hands of the food handlers could be the root cause of all contamination. In all food institutions, micro-flora on the hands and outer garments of food handlers generally reflect the environment and habits of individuals, James M. Jay, (2005:19).

I propose a paradigm shift to this theoretical approach to include other key stakeholders to the industry namely suppliers, clientele and even general visitors. Perhaps if our hygiene and sanitation has to be meaningful, we must cast our net of caution beyond the industry to the public domain. Hazardous chemicals which originate from chlorinated solvents such as trichloromethenes that cause liver and kidney problems. Metals such as lead, mercury selenium and iron are responsible for nerve and brain damage, birth disorders and bone deformities. Polychloromethenes on the other hand are responsible for liver damage and cancer.

In a country such as Kenya where the hospitality and tourism facilities owners have own set standards, it becomes increasingly difficult to attain the set targets as required by the international standards. Even with the ever overzealous policy makers who proclaim to ensure standards are met by all sundry in the industry, without proper

planning and implementation of policies, it will take long to have any head ways.

Many proposals have been presented in order to salvage the remaining value in the industry. The proposals ranged from hygiene awareness campaigns which would be intensified in the water scarce hospitality facilities to sensitizing staff on observation of proper personal hygiene and the use of safe water in the operations of such facilities.

In hotels, scarcity of water or lack of it, will no doubt compromise personal hygiene practices such as staff reporting on duty without having duly observed basic personal hygiene such as bathing or washing their clothes. Not when a liter of water goes at Kshs 1 in the residential estates. This occasion a possibility of a wide range of germs delivered to the industry especially at the kitchen, restaurants and hostels. In order to check this, I propose a host of campaigns delivered in the form of workshops, seminars, refresher training, charts, posters, notices targeting staffs, suppliers and the general public. Proper training of hospitality and tourism facilities staff would help to ensure that each one is trained in food safety.

On this I propose, certification of all staff working in such facilities by ensuring that they are examined by a one examination body then certified to work in the industry. This could be made possible through establishment of the Kenya school of hospitality and tourism or Kenya school of cookery. Such a move would ensure that any person working in any hospitality or tourism facility has been certified by a common training body and hence their level of skill and knowledge can easily be gauged against a specific standard.

I also propose that all workers, especially those who handle food be supplied with water storage tanks by their employer to enable them harvest water for themselves in times of plenty. The management of hospitality and tourism facilities should occasionally visit them for spot check to ensure this requirement is effected.

According to Knowles Tim (2002:149), it is important to be able to determine at first hand whether a particular supplier can be relied upon to produce a commodity of acceptable quality and one that is safe. Scarcity of safe water implies in my view, the presence of contaminated water. Some unscrupulous suppliers will definitely use any water available to them to wash their farm products before supplying them. Some contaminated water used could be so toxic that internal cleanliness may not wholly remove the germs. In view of this I propose a clear process of handling and cleaning suppliers be established in all hospitality and tourism facilitates.

With a proper purchasing and receiving procedure should be practiced by all hospitality and tourism facilities. Relevant authorities should ensure high

standards of hygiene and sanitation are met by all practioners by the checks made by health officer to ensure all facilities practice appropriate standards of hygiene and sanitation. ensuring such standards should the made by ensuring Those supplying farm products should have their suppliers go through and washing process before they deliver their suppliers to the central store.

All these proposals are intimately tied to the hallmark of any hospitality industry which resolves about standards high standards indeed, and safe water is core to this. The provision of safe drinking water and the effective removal of bodily waste by supplier and food handlers are vital for human health and well being.

The United Nations covenant on economic, cultural and social rights (2002) signed by 140 countries observes thus;

“Water is a limited natural resource and a public good fundamental to life and health the human right to water is indispensable for leading a healthy life in human dignity. It is a pre-requisite to the realization of other human rights.”

Unfortunately for Africa and other third world countries, political realities are often opposed to the aims of this fine declaration. Political expediency often pushes the claims on water supply to the bottom of the priority list. Wars and political conflicts may destroy significant infrastructure for the supply of safe drinking water and the removal of waste. Globally, the report continues to observe about 3.4 million people die yearly from illness associated with germ-infected water suppliers and inadequate waste removal.

A high degree of reliability and safety would also be through the implementation of the Hazard Analysis, Critical Control Point (HACCP) system of food safety, Susan F. Robinson Ed (1992:30). The HACCP principles apply to the Microbiological, physical and chemical hazard. Microbiological Hazards are the leading causes of food poisoning occurrences.

Since the kitchen is where all manufacturing packing and forwarding goes on, an appropriate HACCP chart will guide staff on the dos and don'ts of hygiene in the kitchen and especially during instances of water shortage like the recent occurrence. This chart can be applied in any facility that values its position in the food industry. This noble system implements checks in food institutions which are capable of predicting and preventing food poisoning threats before they occur. This chart if used as a tool of practicing appropriate hygiene in the Kenyan hospitality facilities endeavors to act as a preventive measure. This is evident as shown by the very first step on the chart which says ‘STOP HAZARD’ .According to this study, the interpretation of this phrase is reference to the conduct of suppliers, staff

and even customers, as earlier identified in the prevention of the effects which may occur as a result of severe water shortage in the hospitality industry. The rest of the steps like “SPEED LIMIT” and “HACCP plan” then fit in; whereby ‘speed limit’ indicates the precautions taken by staff, suppliers as well as customers in the prevention of effects which may come as a result of severe water shortage in the hospitality industry.

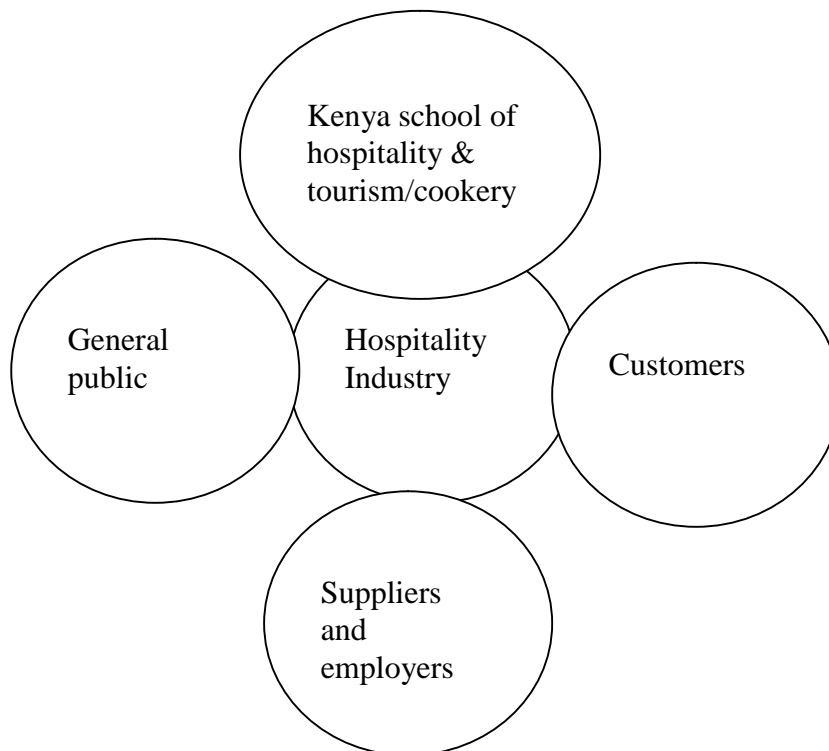
These papers recognize the importance of such a system and recommends that application, assessment and follow up of the HACCP system in all hospitality and tourism facilities is fundamental to the success of hospitality industry not just in Kenya but all over the world. Safety of customers in any facility which sales hospitality products would be guaranteed. The hospitality sector will therefore have reason to celebrate uniform standards not just in one region but throughout the world. This, would be a dream come true.

Finally, I posit *that there is need to revise our hygiene and sanitation theories* so that they encompass the suppliers, potential customers and the wider society because hospitality industries are not an island. They are not complete unto themselves. I propose a kind of a model, in fact a hygiene and sanitation model. *The figure below represents* my thought of the relationship I have so far belabored to espouse:

III. CONCLUSION

In view of this, the industry has a major role to direct on matters of hygiene and sanitation. I do not in any way claim that the demand for water comes just from the need to drink, the need to wash and the need to deal with human waste, enormous though these are, the real great claim on water comes from processing industries and agriculture in our country. However, the direct if the challenges of water shortage can occur in places with sufficient water, then what will happen in places with a shortage, it will be a disaster which no one wants to be a part, it is therefore time that each one of us has to do something to prevent such disasters. Let us all join hands to support implementation of the hygiene model and the HACCP system to prevent future incidences.

THE HYGIENE MODEL



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