

Challenges of Hotel Management in Historic Buildings

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Objectives | This study is an exploratory approach to the concept of historic hotels, aiming to identify management's main challenges. Adapting historic buildings to hotels can be seen from the perspective of innovation, market differentiation and increased quality of service. However, this adaptation process challenges hotel management from an operational and conceptual perspective. The study is based on work carried out in the classroom, involving teachers and students from different curricular units through an interdisciplinary project. The research work was structured through subsequent phases: literature review and concept clarification of historic hotels; identification of the main challenges related to historic hotels' management; identification and development of adequate tools for collecting primary data; and application of the primary data collection tools.

Methodology | The research is based on a qualitative approach supported by interviews conducted among directors of historic hotels. The interview scripts were structured according to a set of criteria that included applying the concepts covered in the literature review, as well as matching the questions to the objectives of each study to answer the following questions:

- i. What conservation strategies have been implemented in the buildings that house historic hotels?
- ii. What are the characteristics and employee profiles most frequently associated with this hotel segment?
- iii. What are the sustainability challenges most associated with this hotel segment?
- iv. What are the accessibility challenges most associated with this hotel segment?
- v. What marketing strategies are most frequently associated with this hotel segment?

Main Results and Contributions | Research into historic hotels has played an important role in tourism and hospitality literature (Chhabra, 2008; Timothy & Teye, 2009; Waitt, 2000; Mendiratta, 2013; Lee & Chhabra, 2015; Ong et al., 2014; Khalil & Kozmanl, 2020; Al Riyami et al., 2021). Historic hotels are associated with authenticity, a concept gaining prominence in tourism (Chhabra, 2008). By staying in a historic hotel, the guest has direct contact with material heritage and

simultaneously with intangible cultural heritage due to the atmosphere experienced in these environments, broadening the tourist experience, and reinforcing cultural values and characteristics of the historical eras in which they were initially built (Chhabra, 2008). Historic hotels can appear in different buildings such as palaces, forts, mansions, factories, shops, castles, convents, post offices, churches or even prisons (Lee & Chhabra, 2015). Due to their original architectural features and conservation requirements, these buildings represent an attempt to link the past with the present. However, they can often pose demanding challenges to modern hospitality at various levels, which the hospitality industry must respond to guarantee the quality of the experience. This study aims to shed some light on the challenges that this trend in hospitality presents to managers and operational professionals in the sector.

Limitations | The study presented is part of an ongoing investigation, and it is not yet possible to present more detailed results or objective conclusions.

Conclusions | Considering that this is a work in progress, from the literature review, it was possible to verify that hotel management in historic buildings is faced with a set of challenges for which not all the most appropriate solutions have yet been identified, especially (but not only) in terms of the conservation and correct valorisation of developments that are not always structurally adaptable to the needs of modern hotels and their consumers, namely about accessibility issues, coinciding with the conclusion of the study developed by Pinho and Eusébio (2017). Therefore, this study aims to identify objective proposals that can help identify the main challenges and development opportunities associated with the topics under analysis, namely heritage conservation and valorisation, human resource management, sustainability, accessibility and appropriate marketing strategies.

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