Journal of Tourism & Development | n.º 45 | 2024 | [43 - 57]
DOI: 10.34624/rtd.v45i0.32038
e-ISSN 2182-1453

Analyzing **Hotel Attributes** for **Business Tourism** in Portugal

ANA FILIPA MARTINS * [afilipanmartins.98@outlook.pt]

LUÍS M. SILVA ** [lmas@ua.pt]

JORGE MARQUES *** [jorgem@upt.pt]

Abstract | This article aims to analyse Portuguese hotels and identify the main characteristics of business hotels. To this end, the Portuguese hotels were identified through the National Tourism Registry, and a database was structured with all hotels and their main characteristics. Statistical analysis was conducted on the data collected, using Python programming language, to better understand business hotels in terms of proportion, size, category, meeting room capacity, existence of leisure facilities and geographical dispersion. Additionally, the study investigated guests' evaluations of these hotels using Booking.com ratings to understand whether business hotels revealed different evaluations. It was concluded that more than half of the hotels are considered business hotels and that, in turn, these tend to be larger, of a higher category (4 and 5-star) and with more leisure facilities. The concentration of these hotels is more evident near the main urban centres, but other regions are also investing in this market. Regarding guest evaluation, business hotel evaluations were similar to other hotels. The conclusions of this study allowed to better understand the characteristics of Portuguese business hotels and contribute to supporting investment options and the definition of tourism development strategies associated with this market. The main limitations are related to the insufficient data that some hotels presented in the National Tourism Registry, thus making statistical analysis more difficult.

Keywords | Business tourism, business hotels, hotel attributes, location, leisure facilities

* **Master** in Data Science for Social Sciences by the University of Aveiro (Portugal)
** **PhD** in Machine Learning by the University of Porto (Portugal). **Assistant Professor** in the Department of Mathematics of the University of Aveiro (Portugal). **Researcher** at CIDMA-Centre for Research and Development in Mathematics and Applications (CIDMA), and funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. (FCT, Funder ID = 50110000187) under Grants https://doi.org/10.54499/UIDB/04106/2020 and https://doi.org/10.54499/UIDP/04106/2020.
*** **PhD** in Tourism, Leisure and Culture by the University of Coimbra (Portugal). **Associate Professor** in the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture of the University Portucalense Infante D. Henrique, Porto (Portugal). **Researcher** at REMIT-Research in Economics, Management and Information Technologies and CEGOT-Centre of Studies on Geography and Spatial Planning

1. Introduction

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), business tourism refers to tourist activity in which visitors travel for a specific professional or business purpose to a place outside their workplace and residence to attend a meeting or an event (UNWTO, 2019). Also known as MICE tourism (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions) or meetings industry, business tourism is recognized as an important economic activity (Pinho & Marques, 2021; Davidson, 2019). As business opportunities continue to expand worldwide, international business travel also increases (Lichy & McLeay, 2018) contributing to the promotion of countries' local, regional, and national economies. In 2019, business travel represented 21.4% of global travel and accounted for around 70% of all global revenue for high-end hotel chains. For airline companies, between 55 and 75% of profits came from business travellers, who made up around 12% of passengers (WTTC, 2021). In Europe, business travel represented 19,2% of global tourism spending, while for Portugal it represented 20% and counted for 6.2 billion U.S. dollars that year (Statista, 2022). With the COVID-19 pandemic, global travel-related spending declined significantly due to restrictions to international mobility and for business travel it represented a 61% decline in 2020. However, despite a slower recovery compared to leisure travel, global business travel spending is expected to recover to its pre-pandemic numbers in 2024 (Hinton, 2023).

Business tourism, therefore, assumes strategic importance for tourist destinations. Some characteristics that make it attractive are its low seasonality, more controlled environmental impact, relative resilience to economic crises, greater demand for higher quality accommodation and other services, increasing occupancy rates in hotels and meeting rooms, increasing revenue in restaurants and catering services and impact on boosting leisure activities (Alananzeh, Al-Mkhadmeh, Shatnawi & Masa'deh, 2019). Furthermore, business tourists often extend their stay beyond professional obligations to visit the destination or are accompanied by family members during their trips, thus creating a greater scope for the impacts of business travel (Tsui, Balli, Tan, Lau & Hasan, 2018). These dynamics reflect the potential of business tourism for local and regional development and the importance of providing excellent service to visitors to ensure high satisfaction levels and, consequently, contribute to a positive destination image and increase competitiveness (Ahn, Kim & Lee, 2016). In this context, the hotel industry plays a critical role. It needs to be dynamic and competitive through innovative services and products to meet the needs and expectations of customers and potential customers (Magalhães, Veloso & Sousa, 2020), including business travellers (Dimitrovski, Marinković & Senić, 2014). Hotels should achieve competitive differentiation, improve business efficiency, increase customer loyalty, and attract new customers by offering high service quality (Román & Martín, 2016). It is essential to know the characteristics of the hotel industry and understand how it meets the specific demands of business tourism. In turn, this process may be useful to allow hotel managers to make correct and strategic decisions aimed at this specific market (Bodet, Anaba & Bouchet, 2017).

This study aims to analyse the main characteristics of Portuguese hotels and, more specifically, the characteristics of business hotels. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the following research question:

What are the main characteristics of Portuguese hotels and how do they meet the needs of business tourism?

The study uses a comprehensive methodology that encompasses literature review, data analysis and geographic mapping. The data under analysis was taken from the National Tourism Registry database and the Booking.com platform in October 2021.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Business tourism and destination competitiveness

The strategic importance of business tourism for destinations reinforces the need to better understand its characteristics and the way in which tourist destinations position themselves within this segment. This need becomes more evident in the post-COVID-19 period and when the business tourism market is beginning to show strong signs of recovery (Hinton, 2023). To reinforce this dynamic, destination managers must find new ways to increase competitiveness, especially through innovation and creation of complementary activities that enhance the overall business tourism experience (Carvalho, Márquez, Ángel & Díaz, 2016; Colombo & Marques, 2019). Therefore, it is important to pay attention not only to the specific destination attributes (e.g., conference venues, business hotels, transportation) but also to the complementary activities that the destination has to offer (Alananzeh et al., 2019). Crouch and Ritchie (1998), in their breakfront work about determinants for convention site selection, identified the accessibility, local support, extra-conference opportunities, accommodation facilities, meeting facilities, information and site environment and destination novelty as determinant factors for business tourism destinations. Hankinson (2005) indicated as particularly relevant the functional attributes such as the quality of venues and hotel facilities. Tsui et al. (2018), found two economic factors (economic policy uncertainty index and bilateral trade volumes) and two noneconomic factors (flying distance and total direct flight seats) as statistically determinants in explaining business tourism flows. More recently, Carvalho, Márquez and Diaz-Méndez (2018) identified what they called 'controllable' and 'uncontrollable' determinants of business tourism destinations. Under the uncontrollable factors, they pointed climate and natural disasters, natural environment, physical, cultural and linguistic distance, physical built environment (architecture, buildings and historical monuments), size of destination and cultural elements. As controllable determinants they identified accessibility, accommodation and meeting venues, country's information, dynamism of leisure tourism, urban, commercial and economic regeneration, security, opportunities for cultural and recreation activities, financial and trade opportunities, dynamism of the industry, local support services and infrastructures.

Therefore, accommodation facilities, and more specifically, business hotels, are of foremost importance for business tourism destinations. Not only because they provide accommodation for business tourists, but also because they offer in the same space other complementary services related to meeting rooms, food and beverages and leisure activities.

2.2. Business hotels

According to Sidorkiewicz and Puciato (2017), there is some difficulty in theoretically defining a business hotel, although, in practice, this distinction seems easier. Considering that business tourists have high expectations regarding standard hotel requirements and services, business hotels are expected to be able to work fast and efficiently toward their client's specific needs and expectations. Frequently located in city centres or nearby cities and industrial areas, business hotels usually have a good communication network, conference and meeting rooms, food and beverage services, and wellness facilities (Sidorkiewicz & Puciato, 2017). Clarke and Chen (2007) define business hotels as hotels with a higher average revenue per room due to greater consumption of food and beverages, characterized by demand that focuses on weekdays. These hotels tend to have larger dimensions and accommodation capacity, have at least one meeting room and leisure facilities, and the rooms are equipped with work desks and high-speed internet access. However, other specific attributes and characteristics are often identified.

Dolnicar (2002) conducted a literature review on this topic and identified three main attributes that are critical for business hotels: i) location, ii) reputation and iii) price (or value for money). Similar work was conducted by Yavas and Babakus (2005) by developing a more extensive and specific list of the most critical attributes that weigh when choosing a business hotel. Those attributes are related to access to a computer/modem (or internet connection), entertainment lounges, exercise facilities/fitness centre, meeting facilities, and quick dry cleaning/ironing (Yavas & Babakus, 2005). Another comprehensive work was developed by Dimitrovski et al. (2014) in identifying four set of dimensions that, in turn, are related to more specific attributes: (i) comfort, which is related to a greater predisposition of business tourists to pay higher prices to guarantee levels of comfort that exceed their expectations. Although the feeling of comfort is difficult to measure and varies between guests, comfort can be associated with room temperature, silence, cleanliness, and room amenities, among others; (ii) security and safety, related to creating a safe, worry-free environment that respects privacy issues. Electronic locks in the rooms, fire sprinklers, smoke detectors, the existence of emergency plans, and control of people's access to the hotel are some of the most valued aspects; (iii) staff service quality, which has to do with the quality of service resulting from direct face-to-face contact. Since the hotel service is characterized by a high level of interaction with guests, it is crucial to develop continuous training programs to enhance the technical and behavioural skills of employees; (iv) business-related facilities and operations, as business tourists often choose hotels that have the specific characteristics that allow them to develop their business objectives (e.g., meeting rooms, high-speed internet, and suitable plug for electronic equipment).

More recently and based on previous work of Kim and Perdue (2013), Román and Martín (2016) explored the main attributes that influence the choice of a hotel and grouped them into three levels: cognitive, affective, and sensory. Thus, according to Román and Martín (2016), affective attributes can be related to friendliness from staff and area security; cognitive attributes can relate to price, food quality, spa facilities, waiting time at check-in, waiting time at the restaurant, and accessibility to the beach/attractions nearby; sensory attributes can be associated with swimming pool and gardens, noise level and hotel room views. While some attributes have a linear and symmetrical construct, others are related to performance. Bodet et al. (2017) explore an approach towards core attributes (cleanliness, bed/pillows, front desk, safety, and security) and facilitating attributes (personalized services, hot tub/sauna, public areas, and complimentary snacks). Also, Sidorkiewicz and Puciato (2017) summarize the main specific requirements that characterize the business hotels: location, service offer, meeting rooms, media technology, level of room equipment, dining services, leisure service, meetings and conferences support service, and professional hotel staff. Business tourists usually have higher hotel service requirements and are willing to pay more for those services (Clarke & Chen, 2007). They look for comfortable accommodation, the possibility of using the hotel's restaurant, and prefer the short distance or good accessibility between the hotel and the airport or train and metro station. The location is, therefore, critical, as the hotel must be accessible from the main access roads and transport infrastructure (Yavas & Babakus, 2005).

Leisure possibilities are also critical, not only in the hotel itself (spa facilities, gym, sports facilities, among others) but also in the surroundings, as business tourists value opportunities for leisure and recreation around the hotel (Lipianin-Zontec & Szewczyk, 2019). All this is part of the premise that business hotels must structure their offer to meet the specific needs of the business tourism segment, thus contributing to the quality of service and increase competitiveness (Swart & Roodt, 2020). Therefore, the assessment that hotel managers make of their hotels' characteristics concerning the positioning in the market they intend to achieve is critical.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted with data from the combination of the individual hotel information from the Portuguese National Tourism Registry (RNT) with the corresponding Booking.com consumers' ratings, collected in October 2021. The RNT is an online platform where all hotels operating in Portugal are listed. This registration is mandatory and includes information about specific characteristics of the hotels, such as location, star rating, amenities, number of rooms, room capacity, and capacity of meeting rooms, among others. Some specific attributes of the Portuguese hotels were analysed, namely, the proportion of business hotels, category (star rating), capacity, the average capacity of meeting rooms, location, leisure facilities and guest rating (retrieved from Booking.com), to try to understand if the hotels meet some of the attributes identified in the literature.

For data analysis, Python programming language was used. First, the data was pre-processed by selecting relevant variables for this study and checking for missing data. Then, the hotels were grouped by the criteria of having or not meeting rooms, which resulted in two sub-data frames to facilitate further analysis. Univariate exploratory analysis of each variable was performed, as well as some multivariate analysis where variables relevant to the purpose of the study were combined. This analysis was performed using visualization techniques like density plots, boxplots and heatmaps. As the information about leisure facilities (such as outdoor pools, indoor pools, gyms, tennis courts, and golf courses) was regarded as relatively sparse, an additional variable related to the number of facilities was computed to help understand if there is a tendency for hotels with meeting rooms also to have other leisure facilities for participants to use.

Regarding hotel location, the QGIS geographical analysis tool was used, allowing a visual mapping of the business hotel distribution within the Portuguese territory (municipality level).

4. Results

4.1. Main attributes of Portuguese business hotels

Proportion

From the 1426 hotel valid records, 775 hotels have at least one meeting room, corresponding to 54% of the total number of hotels, while 651 (about 46%) did not have any. This shows that more than half of the hotels in Portugal have one of the main criteria to be considered a business hotel (Lipianin-Zontek & Szewczyk, 2019) and thus are specifically adapted to work within the business tourism market. These 775 hotels with at least one meeting room constitute the business hotel data that will be analysed in more detail.

Star rating

The analysis of the category of business hotels aimed to verify if there was a trend in terms of star classification. Table 1 shows that 49% of business hotels are 4-star and 16.9% are 5-star. Lower category hotels of 1 and 2 stars show a much smaller predominance, representing only 6.2% of the total number of business hotels. This means that 65.9% of Portuguese business hotels are of a superior category, thus showing that business hotels are associated with higher levels of service quality.

Analysing the evolution of the number of business hotels over the last few years, by star rating, it is possible to see in Figure 1 on the left that there has been a greater increase in the number of 4 and 5-star hotels, which reveals that there has been a greater trend in investment in higher category hotels. Moreover, Figure 1 on the right shows a relative comparison to the year 2008 where it is noted that the number of 5-star hotels almost doubled until 2021 while 4-star hotels increased by around 45%. This shows that Portugal, as a tourist destination, has evolved positively in the development of a greater qualified offer of accommodation aimed at business tourism.

Table 1 | Distribution of business hotels by category

Hotel category	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
1	3	0.4%	0.4%
2	45	5.8%	6.2%
3	216	27.9%	34.1%
4	380	49%	83.1%
5	131	16.9%	100%

Source: Own elaboration

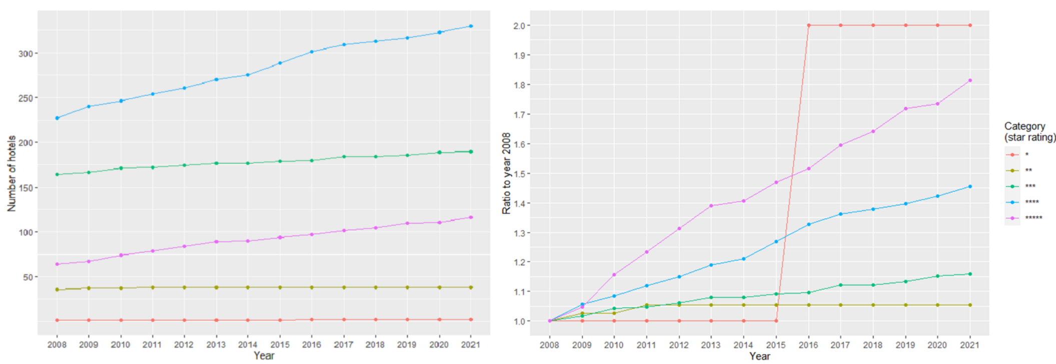

Figure 1 | Evolution of the number of business hotels between 2008 and 2021, by star rating. On the left, the total number of hotels; on the right, the ratio relative to the year 2008
Source: Own elaboration

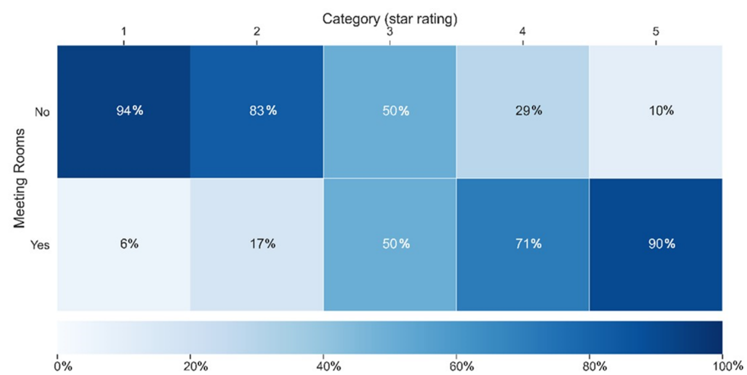

Figure 2 | Distribution of business hotels (Yes) and other hotels (No), by star rating
Source: Own elaboration

A comparative analysis was conducted using a heatmap to understand better whether this trend towards higher quality accommodation was a characteristic strongly associated with business hotels or whether it was transversal to all hotels (Figure 2). It was found that of all 5-star hotels, 90% correspond to business hotels, and of all 4-star hotels, 71% refer to business hotels. 3-star hotels have a balanced distribution, and lower quality hotels have a more significant predominance in hotels that are not considered business hotels (those that do not have at least one meeting room).

Thus, it is possible to verify that business hotels are associated with the highest star categories

(4 and 5-star hotels) compared to other hotels. Therefore, business hotels are more often associated with high-quality services (Lipianin-Zontek & Szewczyk, 2019; Swart & Roodt, 2020).

Capacity

To understand whether business hotels in Portugal tend to be larger, as evidenced in the literature (Clarke & Chen, 2007), the number of hotel beds was analysed. Figure 3 shows density plots (an estimate of the probability density function that uses the kernel method) (Silverman, 1998) of the number of beds for hotels with and without meeting rooms. It is possible to see a different distribution between the two (Figures 3 and 4), which is supported by a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for a two-sample comparison. With a p-value<0.001, it rejects the null hypothesis of equality between the two distributions. Although both are right-skewed, hotels without meeting rooms are more concentrated between 36 and 99 beds (interquartile range) with an average and median capacity of 83 and 56 beds, respectively, and a standard deviation of 86 beds. In contrast, hotels with meeting rooms have their capacity distribution located around 83 e 253 beds (interquartile range) with an average and median capacity of 197 and 150 beds, respectively, and a standard deviation of 161 beds. Thus, Portuguese business hotels tend to have a larger capacity when comparing to other Portuguese hotels. The sample measures also show a great variability among the capacity (very high standard deviations) mainly due to the existence of hotels that clearly surpass the average capacity in the respective categories (outliers in the right tail of the distribution as shown in Figure 4).

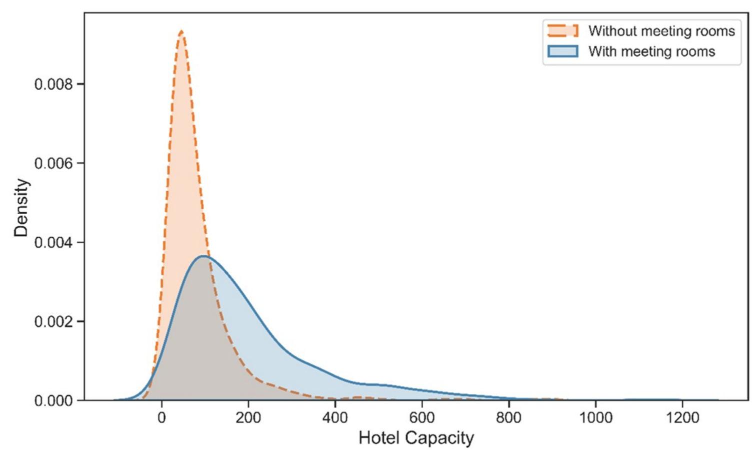

Figure 3 | Distribution (density plot) of the number of beds as a measure of hotel capacity
Source: Own elaboration

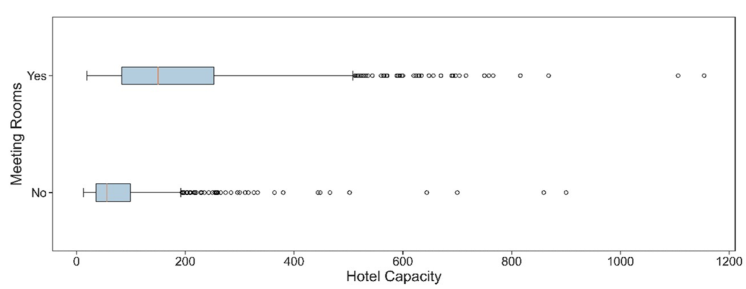

Figure 4 | Distribution (boxplot) of the number of beds as a measure of hotel capacity
Source: Own elaboration

According to the heatmap in Figure 5, business hotels tend to have a higher average number of beds than other hotels. The exception is 1-star hotels, where business hotels have a lower average capacity than the rest. It should also be noted that the higher the hotel category, the higher the average capacity and that business hotels tend to have around double the average capacity of other hotels (except for 1-star hotels).

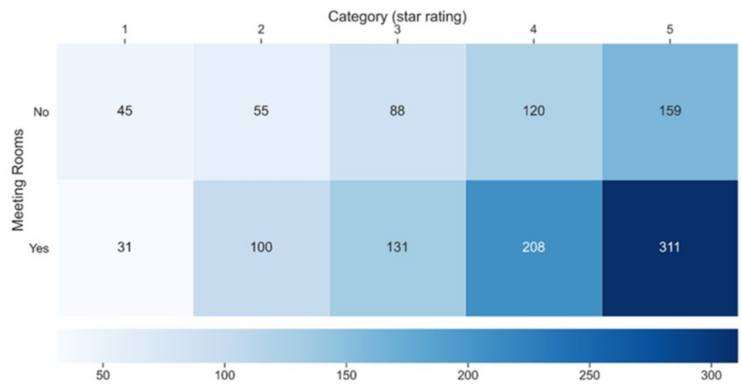

Figure 5 | Distribution of the average number of beds segmented by stars
Source: Own elaboration

Therefore, this analysis reinforces that business hotels tend to be larger and, within these, the larger the category, the larger the average size.

Meeting room capacity

The capacity of meeting rooms was also analysed to understand the relationship with the business hotel category. From the total number of business hotels, those that did not present information regarding the capacity of their meeting rooms and those whose information presented was very low or very high (less than 10 and more than 1500, respectively) were removed to eliminate or minimize the influence of outliers. Thus, after removing these observations, there were 578 business hotels for this specific analysis.

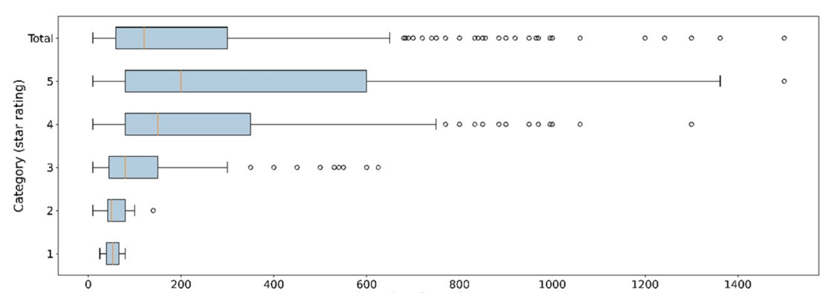

Figure 6 | Distribution of meeting room capacity by category for business hotels
Source: Own elaboration

The average capacity of meeting rooms is 221, showing a high variability (standard deviation of 245.2, minimum and maximum values of 10 and 1500, respectively). When considering meeting room capacity per hotel category, it is possible to conclude that higher-star hotels have larger meeting rooms, with 5-star hotels having the highest average meeting room capacity. Table 2 and Figure 6 summarize these findings.

Table 2 | Sample measures of meeting room capacity

Stars	Minimum	Average	Median	Maximum
1	25	52	52	80
2	10	59	50	140
3	10	122	80	625
4	10	241	150	1300
5	10	375	200	1500
Total	**10**	**221**	**120**	**1500**

Source: Own elaboration

However, the full capacity of a meeting room depends on its configuration. As stated by Lipianin-Zontec and Szewczyk (2019) business hotels can have meeting rooms of various sizes, allowing different combinations to be able to host different types of business events. Nevertheless, it is possible to relate the average size of hotel meeting rooms with the international market for associative meetings, which is one of the most relevant types of business events for destinations. According to the study 'A Modern History of International Association Meetings', which analyses the evolution of associative meetings over half a century (1963-2012), presented by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA, 2013) and quoted by Marques and Santos (2016), most of the registered associative meetings (56.3%) hosted fewer than 250 participants. It also reports that the percentage of increase in the number of meetings (50%) is significantly higher than the percentage of reduction in the number of participants (20%). There is a clear trend in reducing the number of participants in associative meetings over the past few decades and, simultaneously, a continued increase in the number of meetings held. Therefore, according to these numbers, Portuguese business hotels, especially 4- and 5-star hotels, are well-positioned to compete in this strategic market.

Leisure facilities

Regarding leisure facilities, in the National Tourism Registry it is possible to identify whether hotels have the following facilities: spas, outdoor swimming pools, indoor swimming pools, tennis courts, gymnasiums, and golf courses. Table 3 shows that most business hotels (67.6%) have at least one leisure facility, while almost half of them (48.6%) have more than one, contrasting with other hotels (75% of hotels without meeting rooms do not have leisure facilities).

Table 3 | Distribution of the number of leisure facilities

Number of Leisure facilities	Number of Hotels	
	With meeting rooms	Without meeting rooms
0	251 (32,4%)	491 (75,4%)
1	147 (19,0%)	96 (14,7%)
2	119 (15,4%)	35 (5,4%)
3	96 (12,4%)	15 (2,3%)
4	108 (13,9%)	11 (1,7%)
5	46 (5,9%)	3 (0,5%)
6	8 (1,0%)	0 (0%)
Total	775 (100%)	651 (100%)

Source: Own elaboration

Considering the segmentation by star rating, Figure 7 further shows that the best-rated hotels tend to have more leisure facilities. However, only eight hotels offer all types of facilities, corresponding to three 4-star hotels and five 5-star hotels.

Therefore, hotels with meeting rooms are more likely to invest in other facilities, while hotels without meeting rooms also mostly lack leisure facilities. This reflects the strategic diversification of the market, as hotels that invest in business tourism can also drive their attentions to leisure segments. Hotels are also exploring the fact that business tourists appreciate the existence of leisure facilities so that they can carry out sports or recreational activities when they are not working, thus reinforcing the complementary relationship between business tourism and recreational and leisure activities (Harris & Pressey, 2021). Still in this context, a more detailed analysis was conducted to understand which types of leisure facilities are most associated with business hotels.

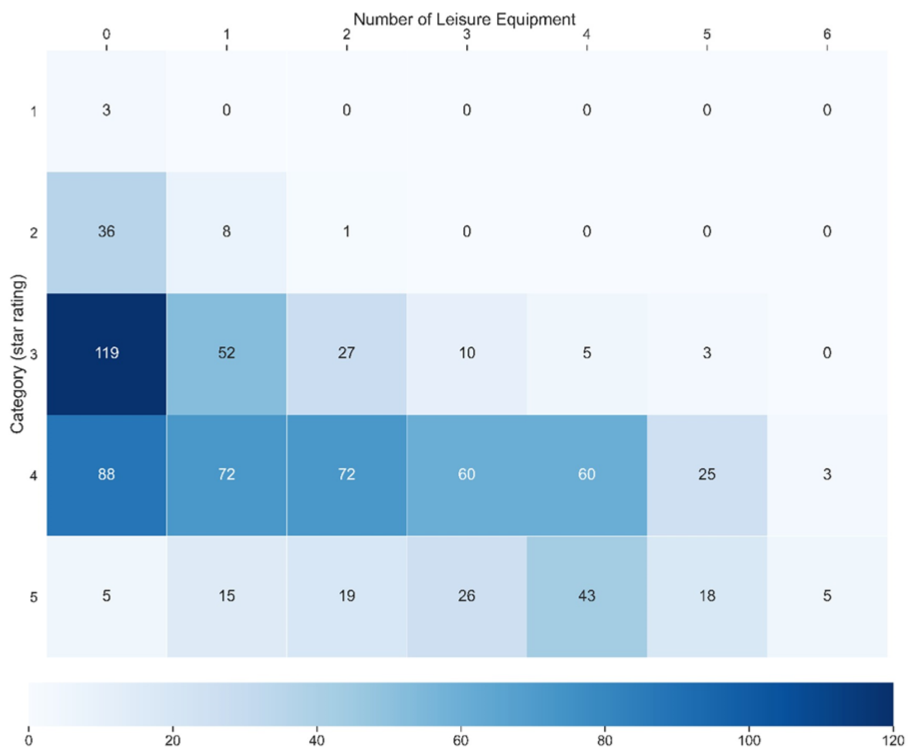

Figure 7 | Distribution of leisure facilities in business hotels, segmented by category
Source: Own elaboration

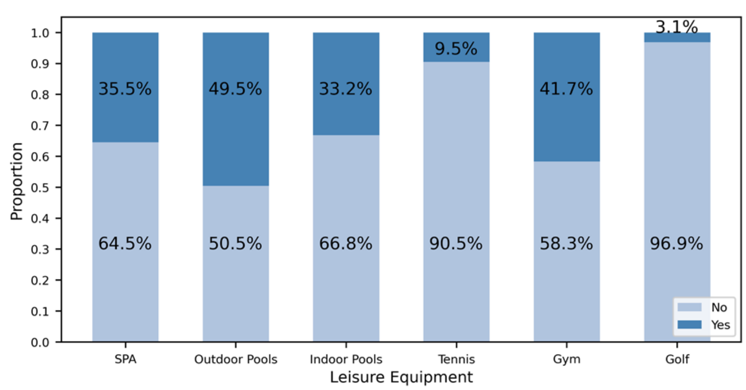

Figure 8 | Distribution of leisure facilities in business hotels (Yes – with facility; No – without facility)
Source: Own elaboration

It is possible to conclude that half of the business hotels have outdoor swimming pools or gyms, while only about 35% have spas or indoor swimming pools. It is less frequent to have business hotels with tennis courts or golf courses, corresponding to only 15% and 3% of the hotels analysed. Therefore, it seems that hotels with golf courses and tennis courts are more looking towards the leisure and sports segment, associated with sun and sea destinations and, often, located in beach resorts. However, there has been a growing trend of hotels in sun and sea destinations increasingly focusing on the business tourism segment to diversify their markets and reduce seasonality, as is the case of the Algarve (see Figure 9).

4.2. Geographical distribution of Portuguese business hotels

A geographic analysis was conducted at the municipality level to understand how business hotels are located along the Portuguese territory (Figure 9). As expected, the large urban centres of Lisbon and Porto are the municipalities with most business hotels, with 106 and 49 hotels, respectively, followed by the municipality of Funchal (in the Madeira archipelago) with 34 hotels, and the Algarve region, with Loulé having 19 hotels and Albufeira 18 hotels. It is worth noting a greater concentration of hotels with meeting rooms on the coast of mainland Portugal. The Algarve is, in the same way, a region where several municipalities have hotels with this characteristic. However, it is also clear that there is a focus by some municipalities located further inland, such as the municipality of Évora with twelve hotels, and Covilhã with nine hotels. In the case of Covilhã, this hotel offer is supported by the presence of a university (Universidade da Beira Interior) and a vital business fabric, especially in the wool sector. The existence of a big data centre in this location (Covilhã Data Centre, Altice Portugal) also helps to contribute to a greater dynamism of this territory. Also, in the tourist context, Covilhã plays a key role, as it is the closest city to the main snow resort in Portugal, Serra da Estrela. In Évora, there is an important aeronautical industry park with leading companies in the sector, namely Embraer. The city is also a reference tourist destination and is where the University of Évora is. This context helps to explain Évora's prominence in the range of business hotels.

Also noteworthy is the municipality of Ponta Delgada, in the Azores archipelago, one of the most important destinations for nature tourism, with 14 hotels. It should also be noted that around 30% of Portugal's municipalities do not have business hotels (according to the RNT).

Despite the evident concentration in the main cities, it is noted that there is an offer of business hotels throughout the entire territory. This means that not only urban centres have invested in the business tourism segment, but also other territories with lower population density (Marques & Santos, 2016) or even tourist areas typically associated with the sun and sea product, as in the Algarve case. Although business hotels are also called urban hotels, as they are often located in medium and large cities or close to industrial areas or main access roads and airports (Sidorkiewicz & Puciato, 2017), there has been a trend toward geographic dispersion of business hotels. On the one hand, hotel managers and touristic agents have seen this segment of business tourism with greater strategic importance; on the other hand, because business tourists have increasingly valued the surroundings and the tourist experience associated with business meetings (or other professional events) (Marques & Santos, 2016).

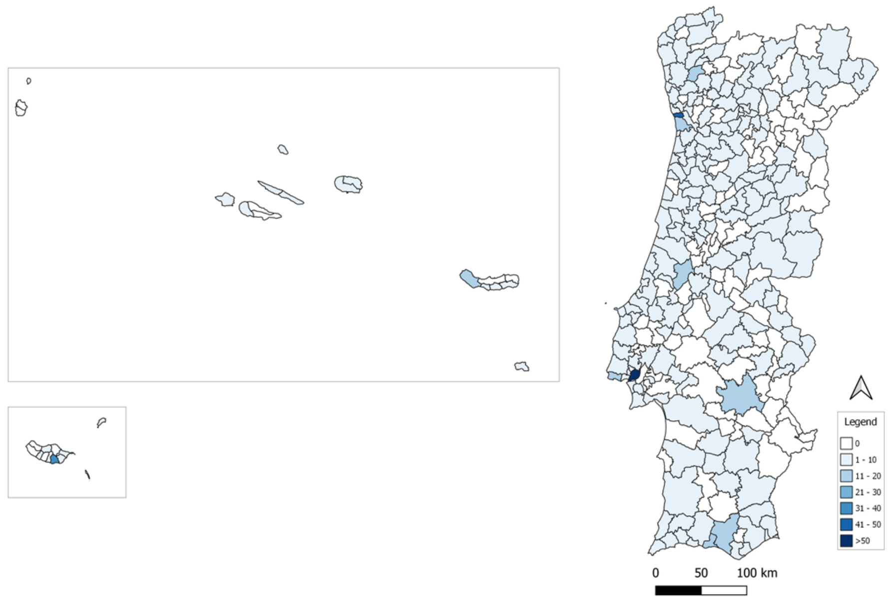

Figure 9 | Distribution of business hotels, by municipality
Source: Own elaboration

4.3. Guests' evaluation according to Booking.com ratings

Finally, it was interesting to compare Booking.com ratings between business hotels and other hotels to try to understand whether business hotels revealed different evaluations, and, in this context, higher quality standards were evident. Figure 10 shows density plots of Booking's general ratings comparing the two types of hotels.

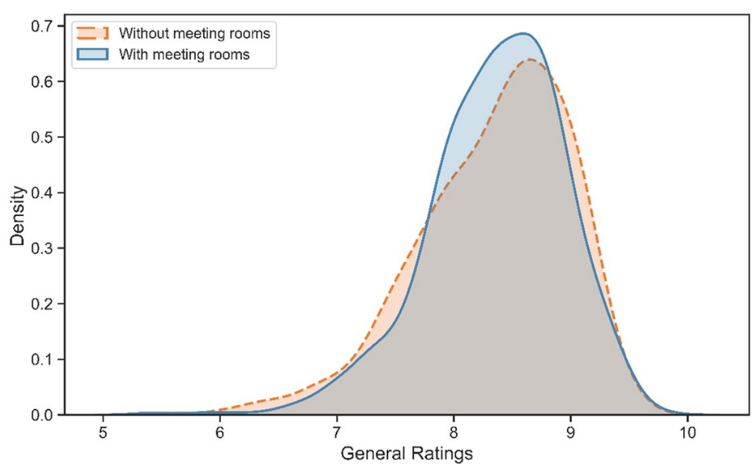

Figure 10 | Density plots of Booking.com ratings
Source: Own elaboration

Having or not meeting rooms is not a characteristic that significantly influences the general ratings of hotels on Booking.com, as the estimated densities are similar and overlapping. The p-value=0.39 of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test corroborates this finding. This indicates that, regardless of the market segment or type of facilities, this guest satisfaction rating will be more related to the quality of the service provided. The quality of service is, therefore, a transversal factor in the competitiveness of the hotel sector and to which high importance should be given. Online reviews are essential tools that make it possible to compare hotels (according to the rating system), collect consumer feedback, and enable hotel managers to interact and improve their products and services and adjust or resolve any failures. On the other hand, online reviews and rating systems also give consumers a closer idea of the perceived quality of the hotel's service and facilities. They also allow consumers to understand how hotel managers deal with the frustrations or failures detected in the service by analysing the response to the comments (Jang, Liu, Kang & Yang, 2018). In this specific analysis, it was not possible to draw conclusions in a disaggregated way, as the assessment taken from hotels with and without meeting rooms did not show significant differences.

5. Conclusions

Through this study, it was possible to analyse the Portuguese hotels and, more specifically, the main characteristics of business hotels. It was concluded that more than half of the hotels in Portugal are considered business hotels, as they have at least one meeting room, and that they tend to be of a higher category (4 and 5 stars). This trend is especially evident when analysing the evolution of the number of business hotels in Portugal over the last few years, through which it is possible to see that there has been a more significant proportional increase in 4 and 5-star business hotels compared to the rest. These higher categories are associated with better services. As such, it is not surprising that business hotels also have a higher range of leisure and recreational equipment. In this way, business hotels can provide more comprehensive and qualified tourist experiences, not only for business tourists but also for leisure tourists. In terms of size, it was also possible to conclude that business hotels tend to be larger, with a direct relationship between category and size. In other words, the higher the hotel category, the larger the number of beds and meeting room capacity. Regarding the geographical distribution, despite the evident concentration in the main cities, it is noted that there is an offer of business hotels throughout the entire territory. This means that not only urban centres have invested in the business tourism segment, but also other regions with lower population density or even tourist areas typically associated with the sun and sea product. Finally, the level of evaluation that guests gave of Portuguese hotels on the Booking.com platform was analysed, and it was concluded that whether being a business hotel is not a characteristic that significantly influences the general ratings of hotels on Booking.com. This indicates that, regardless of the market segment or type of hotel, this guest satisfaction rating will be more related to the quality of the service provided. The quality of service is, therefore, a transversal factor in the competitiveness of the hotel sector and to which high importance should be given.

Therefore, the conclusions of this study allowed to better understand the characteristics of Portuguese business hotels. In turn, this could help define hotel investment options and the definition of tourism development strategies associated with the territory in a more sustained way. The limitations of this study are related to the lack of data noted for some of the hotels presented in the National Tourism Registry, thus making statistical analysis more difficult. As this is an official platform, greater accuracy in the information provided was expected. Also, the scarce literature in this area made it difficult to provide a deeper understanding of the topic under study. In any case, this study contributes precisely to increasing scientific knowledge in this area and motivating the development of more studies.

References

Ahn, Y., Kim, I., & Lee, T. (2016). Exploring visitor brand citizenship behavior: The case of the 'MICE city Busan', South Korea. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 5, 249- 259. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.01.002

Alananzeh, O., Al-Mkhadmeh, A., Shatnawi, H. S., & Masa'deh, R. (2019). Factors influencing MICE tourism stakeholders' decision making: The case of Aqaba in Jordan. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism, 20*(1), 24-43. https://doi.org/10.1080/15470148.2018.1526152

Bodet, G., Anaba, V. & Bouchet, P. (2017). Hotel Attributes and Consumer Satisfaction: A Cross-Country and Cross-Hotel Study. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 34*(1), 52-69. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2015.1130109

Carvalho, P. M., Márquez, M. Ángel, & Díaz, M. (2016). Determinantes de competitividade no turismo de negócios internacionais: uma análise exploratória de dados espaciais. *Revista Turismo & Desenvolvimento*, (25), 117-129. https://doi.org/10.34624/rtd.v0i25.10873

Carvalho, P., Márquez, M. & Díaz-Méndez, M. (2018). Policies to increase business tourism income: A dynamic panel data model. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism, 19*(1), 63-82. https://doi.org/10.1080/15470148.2017.1380546

Clarke, A., & Chen, W. (2007). *International Hospitality Management* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080547312

Colombo, A. & Marques, L. (2019): Motivation and experience in symbiotic events: an illustrative example grounded in culture and business events. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2019.1657437

Crouch, G., & Ritchie, J. (1998). Convention site selection research: A review, conceptual model and propositional framework. *Journal of Convention and Exhibition Management*, 1, 49-69. https://doi.org/10.1300/J143v01n01_05

Davidson, R. (2019). *Business Events* (2nd Ed.). Oxford: Routledge

Dimitrovski, D., Marinković, V. & Senić, V. (2014). Staying in business hotels – understanding the relationship between service quality and satisfaction among business travelers. *3rd International scientific conference contemporary issues in economics, business and management- EBM 2014*, Kragujevac, Serbia.

Dolnicar, S. (2002). Business travellers' hotel expectations and disappointments: A different perspective to hotel attribute importance investigation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 7*(1), 29-35. https://doi.org/10.1080/10941660208722107

Hankinson G. (2005). Destination brand images: a business tourism perspective. *Journal of Services Marketing, 19*(1), 24-32. https://doi.org/10.1108/08876040510579361

Harris, L. C., & Pressey, A. (2021). The myth of business tourist idiosyncrasy. *Annals of Tourism Research, 91*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2021.103186

Hinton, T. (2023). Business travel isn't going anywhere, despite growing digital connectivity. *https://www.statista.com/chart/31002/global-business-travel-spending-timeline/*

International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) (2013). *A Modern History of International Association Meetings 1963-2012*. ICCA, Amsterdam.

Jang, S., Liu, T., Kang, J. H., & Yang, H. (2018). Understanding Important Hotel Attributes from the Consumer Perspective over Time. *Australasian Marketing Journal, 26*(1), 23-30. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2018.02.001

Kim, D. & Perdue, R.P. (2013). The effects of cognitive, affective, and sensory attributes on hotel choice. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 35*, 246-257. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2013.05.012

Lichy, J., & McLeay, F. (2018). Bleisure: Motivations and typologies. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 35*(4), 517–530. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2017.1364206

Lipianin-Zontek, E. & Szewczyk, I. (2019). Adaptation of business hotels to the needs of disabled tourists in Poland. *Problems and Perspectives in Management, 17*(4), 392-403. https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.17(4).2019.32

Magalhães, D., Veloso, C., & Sousa, B. (2020). Lealdade dos hóspedes nacionais: um estudo aplicado à Hotelaria do Douro. *Revista Turismo & Desenvolvimento*, (34), 191-207. https://doi.org/10.34624/rtd.v0i34.22363

Marques J., Santos N. (2016). Developing business tourism beyond major urban centres: the perspective of local stakeholders. *Tourism and Hospitality Management, 22*(1), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.22.1.3

Pinho, M. & Marques, J. (2021) The bleisure tourism trend and the potential for this business-leisure symbiosis in Porto. *Journal of*

Convention & Event Tourism, 22(4), 346-362. https://doi.org/10.1080/15470148.2021.1905575

Román, C., & Martín, J. C. (2016). Modelling Hotel attributes: Asymmetries in guest payments and gains: A stated preference approach. *Tourism Management, 52*, 488-497. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.08.001

Sidorkiewicz, M. & Puciato D. (2017). Location as a determinant of development of business hotels operating in the meeting industry. *KNUV, 4*(54), 186-197.

Silverman, B. W. (1998). *Density Estimation: For Statistics and Data Analysis*, Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315140919

Statista (2022). *Business travel spending in Europe 2019-2020, by country.* https://www.statista.com/statistics/1267445/business-travel-spending\-europe-by-country/#statisticContainer

Swart, M. P. & Roodt, G. (2020) Mapping the constructs of a business tourist service quality scorecard model. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism, 21*(1), 26-56. https://doi.org/10.1080/15470148.2020.1719947

Tsui, W. H. K., Balli, F., Tan, D. T. W., Lau, O., & Hasan, M. (2018). New Zeland business tourism: exploring the impact of economic policy uncertainties. *Tourism Economics, 24* (4), 386-417. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354816617731387

UNWTO (2019). *UNWTO Tourism Definitions, UNWTO*, Madrid, https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420858

WTTC (2021). *World Travel & Tourism Council: Adapting to Endemic Covid-19: The Outlook For Business Travel*. https://shorturl.at/qtuQ8

Yavas, U. & Babakus, E. (2005). Dimensions of hotel choice criteria: congruence between business and leisure travelers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 24*(3), 359-367. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2004.09.003