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Identification of modern amenities in accommodation services—Analysis for Polish business tourism

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Abstract

This paper presents an overview of the issues related to the readiness of Polish hotel establishments to develop business tourism services. Hotels that support business tourism need to constantly evaluate the potential competitiveness of tourism offers, to enable them to improve their product development. Modern trends in these services are forcing the industry into continuous improvement and innovation. The aim of this paper is to identify new innovative amenities for business tourism around the world and, consequently, to diagnose the competitiveness of facilities in Polish hotels. Statistical data shows that business tourism in Poland has many development opportunities. However, for their effective utilisation, hotel establishments should develop their resources in terms of both quantity and quality.

Keywords: Business tourism, accommodation services, amenities.

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1. Business tourism—Theoretical and terminological issues

In recent years, significant changes have occurred in the hotel services market. Poland is not unaffected. One of the most influential is the rapid development of offers for business travellers (Sala, 2008). The concept of business tourism has several, often ambiguous interpretations. Davidson and Cope (2003) define it most comprehensively. In their view, business tourism means all types of trips where the goals are related to professional work. Thus, they can be journeys necessary to conduct work itself or to help the employee to perform tasks more effectively, they can also be the rewards from the employer for well-performed tasks. Thus, business tourism can be defined as any or all journeys whose purpose is closely related to their profession, work or other interests of travellers.

The essence of these trips is usually participation or organisation of conferences, congresses, training, fairs or exhibitions, as well as straightforward international meetings. Participants are usually from various fields of science or business and are often members of widely varying organisations. They can also be companies' management staff and employees, or diplomats travelling for commercial, scientific and other reasons. Business travellers usually use the same service facilities as those who travel for leisure purposes, such as accommodation, catering, transport, etc., but have other, more specialist needs and hence, services should be specifically organised for them.

The destinations are usually large cities or capitals from the given country. Obviously, these are often places offering a commercial and industrial character that interest the business tourist. These cities are also popular for business tourists due to the fact that the headquarters of large companies, and good conference and trade fair facilities, are often located there, and have well-developed and convenient transport connections.

The basic rationale for the trip is a business meeting. This concept is clearly an organised and timetabled event, the meeting or congress at which participants meet, to solve a problem or debate topics of interest to them, exchange views, improve communication or discuss other important issues. These journeys are also carried out to improve communication with and between employees or clients. Business meetings may be commercial or non-commercial and often take place outside the organiser's office, because of the facilities required. They can last anywhere from several hours to a week, and the number of participants can range from single figures to several thousand people (Rogers, 2003).

The basic features of business travels that distinguish them from other types of tourist events are defined by Berbeka, Borodako, Klimek, Niemczyk and Seweryn (2011), who indicate that it is a 'tailor-made' product focused on the individual needs of the customer, which is why it is different every time—this especially applies to corporate tourism products. The components are similar to those for leisure travel but the business event programme is original, tailored to a carefully selected group of recipients. The outcome is a product or tool used to achieve the marketing goals of the company/corporation or to achieve statutory goals: often a specific need of institutional clients.

There are many criteria, classifications and divisions for defining these types of business events. One of the attempts to systematise the types of business travel was made by the World Tourism Organization: separating business trips for individuals and groups (Sidorkiewicz, 2011).

Individual business trips are related to those professions that require frequent travel and stays outside of their permanent place of residence. For example, journalists, politicians and businessmen, etc. The most important forms of this individual travel, carried out by one or several people for purposes related to their work, (but for no longer than 12 months) are: trade trips to other enterprises, entering into contracts and visits, giving lectures and performances at concerts, equipment installations, journeys made in connection with professional sporting activities, government and diplomatic missions carried out by the members of national governments, including diplomatic and military personnel.

On the other hand, group business trips, involving several or many individuals with a common purpose, include participation in training, seminars, symposia, study tours, site inspections and conferences (congresses and conventions), motivational trips, fairs and exhibitions.

In the past, business tourism/business trips were briefly described as MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions, exhibitions). This means four separate types of individual and group business tourism products. Business meetings include both individual B2B journeys, as well as presentations, consultations, scientific research, as well as group trips, for example, state, business or diplomatic delegations. Incentives are motivational trips—exclusive trips organised to attractive tourist regions (usually outside large urban agglomerations), financed by employers in order to reward employees for achieved results and motivate them to improve and work more efficiently. Conventions are group meetings that include the following types of business events: conferences, congresses, symposia and training/seminars. Exhibitions concern trade fairs and exhibitions. They relate to the presentation of products or services to the invited public, to inform visitors about new products and to stimulate their sale.

Currently, this concept is being extended to include new forms of business events (e.g., meetcentive trips) that go beyond the four types presented above. There are more and more frequent terms: meeting industry, business travel and tourism.

2. Facilities in business tourism hotels and additional services for business clients

Business tourists are a group with relatively high requirements compared to other groups of tourists. This applies to both the type of services expected and their quality. Mostly, the stays of these tourists are one or a few days associated with a specific event. Due to the nature of their stay, they require above all: comfortable accommodation, the possibility of using the hotel restaurant and a small distance between the hotel and the station or the airport. These are the basic factors determining the choice of a hotel as a place for business meetings. According to Sala (2011), business and conference hotels should meet certain requirements as to location (allowing easy and quick access both by means of public transport and individual transport, near motorways, airports, railway stations etc. Also, it is preferable if the location is in the vicinity of areas with natural assets and nearby attractions for spending free time). The service should offer a comprehensive ‘under one roof’ package of services including accommodation, conference rooms, technical equipment, catering, services and equipment including leisure time management, professional service of business meetings including conferences and congresses.

The next important aspect is the conference rooms themselves and their professional service. (such as adjustment of the appropriate number of equipped rooms and especially conference rooms.) The rooms should be of various sizes and combinations, allowing for various business meetings including conferences, plenary sessions, group classes, panel discussions and workshop classes. The rooms should be designed in the form of multifunctional rooms that have sliding walls or rotatable boards allowing to arrange the rooms according to the needs. This allows users to adjust the size of the room to the needs of the event organised in it. It should also have a direct connection to the gastronomic base, such as buffets, restaurants, coffee services etc. In addition, auxiliary and office rooms and facilities need to be located at or near meeting rooms. A further requirement may be separated driveways, parking and entrances, allowing private, secure and easy access to the conference rooms, business centres, possibly a store or a warehouse with other equipment needed to carry out the meetings and provide any necessary technical background.

An important element is to ensure comfort in the conference rooms, e.g., adequate air conditioning, comfortable furniture and seating etc. The rooms should be equipped with good lighting, audiovisual equipment, boards, computers, sound equipment including microphones, as well as equipment and connections for video conferencing. The conference part should have a large foyer where conference reception can be organised and a place for conversations during breaks. It is

recommended that the conference part adjoins terraces and gardens, which facilitates the organisation of buffets and bars serving conference participants. Detailed requirements most often concern media facilities (standard equipment includes: multimedia projector, projection table, photocopiers and booths for translators).

Business-focused hotel rooms should have a separate sleeping area and a part in which guests can perform activities related to work, ergonomic office space, adequate lighting and modern means of communication (including a telephone servicing several lines, Internet, fax, laptop printer and TV). It is desirable to have air-conditioning, a basic fridge, household appliances such as a kettle or a coffee maker and a safe place. The rooms should be cleaned daily, and the hotel staff should meet the customers' wishes at the highest level through room-service (Kensbock, Patiar & Jennings, 2017).

The range of catering services should meet the individual needs of participants in business meetings. Usually, participants of meetings meet over many hours; therefore, participants should be offered varied food often and probably in small portions. Ethnic and dietary needs should be catered for. Service should be efficient and uncomplicated. The catering complex should be sufficiently spacious, diverse and large, enabling organisation of meetings, banquets and events.

Hotels should offer additional accompanying services for leisure time (Ali, Hussain & Ryu, 2017). Spa & Wellness services, sauna, swimming pools, bowling alleys, gym services, massage rooms, solariums etc. are recommended. For the basic offer of cultural services: cinema, theatre or tour organisation to attractive places.

It should be mentioned that the effective functioning of business hotels depends to a large extent on the competence and professional preparation of staff. The staff has the greatest impact on the tourist's assessment of the product. The main tasks of the staff can be supplemented by providing professional information, advice, flexibility and quick response to emerging problems during the business meeting.

Business clients are demanding customers, both in terms of amenities in hotels and in terms of service. They expect a comfortable stay, efficient organisation of the meeting as well as service at a very high level. More and more hotels meet these requirements and the element distinguishing them from the competition are increasingly introduced innovations (Fraj, Matute & Melero, 2015). Trends in the development of the hotel industry testify to the growing pursuit of the services offered. Multifunctional, hybrid and flexible offerings are preferred, which are able to meet expectations (Patelrenz, 2017).

3. Source data—Facilities for business tourism in Poland

The structure of the hotel market in Poland is quite diverse. Based on the official data, in the first quarter of 2017, there were 10,681 entities in Poland that provided accommodation services. The population, classified in the 'hotel' type of facility, has 4,064 properties, which accounts for 38.1% of the entire classified accommodation base. The segment of highly categorised hotels (four and five stars), analysed for the purposes of this paper, is around 2% in the entire structure of hotels (Central Statistical Office, 2018). These facilities are perceived as the guarantor of the highest quality in terms of infrastructure and customer service. The positive image of the object and the good preparation of its employees is equated with the high needs of business tourists and is the subject of the study.

Most five-star hotels in Poland, possibly as many as 68, have an offer adapted to the service of business tourism and actively promote their conference space for the purpose of servicing business tourists (Sidorkiewicz, 2014). According to the data available on the Internet portal in Poland (2018), there are 344 facilities promoted as conference facilities. The majority of hotels offer rooms for 200–300 people.

In Poland, international hotels are also large-scale hotels. It is estimated that there are currently 15 international hotel chains operating on the Polish market, which offer more than 25,000 hotel rooms in 158 hotels. There are 24 Polish hotel chains and these offer a total of 145 hotels with over 16,000 hotel rooms. Most of these hotels address their offer to business travellers (Property Report, 2015).

In recent years, numerous conference and leisure centres have been created, which are based on former holiday centres. They are located in attractive natural locations and offer above all, a rest. They have good catering facilities adapted to a large number of tourists and are equipped with sports and recreation facilities. However, currently, operating conference and recreation centres are usually not very large and are distant from larger cities and communication centres. This prevents the organisation of large congresses and large-scale events.

However, there is a shortage in Poland of large congress and hotel centres in good locations that meet world requirements in organising such events. The establishment of such large congress centres in a tourism region requires the cooperation of many entities involved in creating a comprehensive tourism product, as demonstrated by the previous results (Henn & Bathelt, 2015; Lipianin-Zontek & Zontek, 2017; Marques & Santos, 2017). Among the best ones, there are a few with a high standard. The largest business tourism complex identified so far has a congress hall for 1,200 people with full technical facilities and 32 functional conference rooms for 2,370 people, 1,600 m² of event space on one level and the ability to accommodate 600 people, four restaurants with a varied gastronomic offer, club with an entertainment zone with professional multimedia and technical equipment, aqua park complex, SPA, creative fun centre, business centre, parking for 500 cars and 14 hectares of green area with a private beach and marina.

In Poland, extensive statistical data on amenities in hotels for business tourism is not collected. Only the equipment is indicated for business tourism with conference amenities such as in Table 1.

Table 1. Elements of conference amenities equipment in all accommodation facilities in 2009, 2013 and 2017 in Poland

Specification	2009	2013	2017
Tourist accommodation facilities (Total), including:	6,992	9,775	1,081
○ hotels	2,836	3,485	4,064
○ tourist accommodation facilities with a conference room	2,851	3,467	3,680
Conference rooms	6,014	7,651	8,193
Places in conference rooms	376,941	508,480	555,594
Amenities in tourist accommodation facilities (number):			
• Professional sound system	2,166	2,824	3,159
• Wireless microphones	1,886	2,577	2,918
• Slide projector	-*	2,731	-*
• Video set	-*	2,244	-*
• Multimedia projector	-*	-*	3,272
• Video conferencing kits	-*	-*	973
• Technical support	1,656	2,158	2,132
• Multimedia screens	2,375	3,217	3,547
• Flipchart (dry erase board)	1,854	2,855	3,230
• Overhead projector	-*	1,794	-*
• Computers/laptops on equipment	-*	2,555	2,623
• Wi-Fi network	-*	5,131	7,289

*no data.

Source: Central Statistical Office. (2018, February 23). *Local Data Bank, GUS (Central Statistical Office) 2017*. Retrieved from <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/BDL/dane/podgrup/tablica>

The number of elements of conference facilities for accommodation facilities in the analysed period is increasing. This increase is particularly visible in the case of facilities that have conference facilities with sound systems (the increase in 2009–2016 amounted to 45.8%).

In the case of other facilities, the increase was respectively: with a wireless microphone (54.7%), with technical support (77.7%), with a screen (66.9%) and with a flipchart (57.4%). There is a big increase in all analysed equipment categories. The result from the fact that the demand for business meetings offers services in accommodation facilities increases (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of meetings and events according to their category in the years 2009–2016 in Poland

Category	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Congresses/conferences	2,127	6,420	9,873	10,622	9,186	10,318	15,043	16,386
Corporate events	1,221	9,669	10,715	4,657	6,202	5,558	11,221	22,629
Incentive events	295	903	4,051	5,305	2,029	2,272	6,914	-*
Trade fairs	357	1,008	2,421	1,716	693	672	802	551
Total	4,000	18,000	27,060	22,300	18,100	18,820	33,980	39,566

*no data (Celuch, 2017).

According to the results of the research carried out by the Poland Convention Bureau, Polish Tourism Organization in 2016, in Poland, a total of 39,566 business meetings and events were held (Table 2). This amount has been increasing since 2009, especially in the main business tourism categories. It is clearly visible that the number of business events reduced in 2011, also for consecutive events and until the end of 2012; corporate events. 2014 was a year of slow rebound in business tourism in Poland and a marked increase in 2015 and 2016. The results of research both on the demand and supply side indicate an increase in the importance of business tourism in Poland.

4. Levels of preparation of Polish hotels for business tourism, in the opinion of industry representatives

The detailed objective of this study was to identify which modern facilities and additional services for business tourism are necessary, in the opinion of hotel managers. To achieve this objective, a survey was conducted in the period from July to October 2017. A questionnaire was used, which was sent by post. The units of the research sample were service providers for business tourism, among which should be mentioned: hotels located in Poland, other accommodation facilities (motels, pensions, etc.), holiday and recreation centres.

The subject of the study was hotel managers and other facilities organising business meetings. The selection of the sample was random. The source file was a list from the central list of hotel facilities in Poland (CWOH, 2018). The general population was all objects from the list (645 objects), from which every third respondent was drawn. The study questionnaire was provided to 215 entities from the database.

The survey involved and correctly filled out a survey of 60 agents of tourist facilities with infrastructure enabling the organisation of meetings and business events. It should be noted that many entities refused to participate in the study. As a result, the rate of return was 27.9%. The examined entities were dominated by hotels, including two-star hotels and three-star hotels—34.5%, (four-star and five-star hotels accounted for 26.3%). An important part of the group was also created by other entities organising business meetings (9.1%).

The actual survey contained eight questions. This paper presents one questions, in order to achieve the intended objective of the paper. Table 3 presents the results of the answer to the question: what kind of facilities provided in the field of technological innovations do you consider necessary for the development of services for a business client?

Table 3. The importance of technological innovation facilities in the development of services for a business client

Specification	Strongly disagree		Strongly agree		
	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
Wireless Internet access throughout the entire facility	3.3	5.0	20.0	26.7	45.0
Electronic equipment available to clients (smartphone, tablet, etc.)	11.7	10.0	11.7	36.7	30.0
Application of 'telepresence' technology	5.0	13.3	35.0	31.7	15.0
Self-service check-in & check-out kiosks	15.0	21.7	45.0	10.0	8.3
Interactive movie, e-books rentals	18.3	30.0	36.7	8.3	6.7
Interactive information boards	1.7	11.7	21.7	45.0	20.0
Regulation of air conditioning, lighting available in the rooms	6.7	28.3	25.0	26.7	13.3
The possibility of providing services via mobile applications (bills, maps, attractions, etc.)	0.0	1.7	20.0	36.7	41.7
Availability of medical and rehabilitation services and equipment	5.0	23.3	46.7	20.0	5.0
Facilities for the disabled people	5.0	40.0	28.3	15.0	11.7
Availability of sports and recreation services (fitness trainer, sport equipment rental, etc.)	0.0	8.3	23.3	36.7	31.7

The results of the research indicate the great attention of hotel managers and other hotel facilities for technological facilities such as wireless Internet access throughout the entire facility (45% of managers indicated this amenity as the most important) and the possibility of providing services via mobile applications (41.7%). Among the important facilities in the opinion of managers, one should indicate electronic equipment available to clients (36.7%), interactive information boards (45%) and availability of sports and recreation services and equipment (36.7%). Average importance was attributed to the following facilities: application of 'telepresence' technology (35%), interactive movie, e-books rentals (36.7%) and availability of medical and rehabilitation services and equipment (46.7%). The answers 'rather disagree' were most often indicated in the case of regulation of air conditioning, lighting available in the rooms (28.3%) and facilities for the disabled people (40%). Particularly, small interest attributed to additional facilities for the disabled, however, similar results were obtained in Poland in this area Szewczyk (2015; 2017).

5. Conclusions

The business tourism market in Poland is developing dynamically. The number of business meetings and conferences is increasing. In response to this demand, an increasingly wide range of accommodation facilities in Poland is seen. The management of hotel facilities should be supported by innovative solutions, both technological and organisational (Zontek, 2015). This need is also noticed by managers of hotels and other facilities for business tourism which were included in the survey. A business client should have at his disposal an ever wider range of services and facilities that will enable him to organise an ideal business meeting. Modern solutions in business tourism not only enrich the offer but also enable the improvement of management and communication systems in hotels.

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