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Quality costs in historic hospitality during the Covid-19 pandemic. Case studies of Jelenia Góra and Banska Bystrzyca

Abstract: This publication aims to present the impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic on the quality of management of historic hotel facilities in Poland and Slovakia. A comparative analysis of historical hotels in Jelenia Góra and Banska Bystrzyca was made for publication purposes. The choice made was due to many similarities, including, in particular, the comparable size of both cities, as well as their potential for historical sites. In the theoretical part, the authors showed the specificity of the historical hotel industry in the world and discussed the concept of quality management. To achieve the assumed goals of the work, the authors conducted research in the form of a personal interview with a deliberately selected group of owners and managers of hotel facilities in Jelenia Góra and Banska Bystrzyca. The research sample consisted of about 20 hotels, 10 from each town. The empirical part of the publication presents the results of the conducted research. The research questions concerned the impact of the pandemic on the quality of hotel services and the importance of quality costs in the operation of hotels. The publication was written using compact materials, scientific publications, as well as statistical data and data obtained through a personal interview.

Keywords: cooperation; limitations; prices; quality costs

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INTRODUCTION

Quality is a concept that is inseparable from the market economy and its entities. Ensuring an appropriate level of quality is associated with incurring certain expenses.

The purpose of this publication is to present the impact of the global Covid-19 pandemic on the quality of management of historic hotel facilities in Poland and Slovakia. For publication, a comparative analysis of historical hotels was carried out in Jelenia Góra

and Banska Bystrica. The choice made resulted from both the comparable size of both cities and their potential for historical buildings.

In the theoretical part, the authors showed the specificity of the historical hotel industry in Poland and discussed the concepts of quality management. To achieve the assumed goals of the work, the authors conducted research in the form of a personal interview with a deliberately selected group of owners and managers of hotel facilities in Jelenia Góra and Banska Bystrzyca. The research sample consisted of about 20 hotels from both cities.

The empirical part of the publication presents the results of the conducted research. The research questions concerned the impact of the pandemic on the quality of hotel services and the importance of quality costs in the operation of hotels.

THE ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORIC HOTELS

Historical hotels can be defined as all hotel facilities distinguished by a rich pedigree, historical heritage, architectural values, or links to events, legends, and historical figures (Sala, 2021). Stays in historic hotels are often accompanied by the opportunity to visit them or participate in historical events and feasts (Kachniewska, Cybulski, 2014). Many historical hotels are a characteristic architectural element or tourist value of many cities (e.g., Bristol Hotel in Warsaw, Grand Hotel in Sopot). In addition to their accommodation function, they can offer SPA services or serve as conference facilities (Cieślowski, 2015).

Historical hotels are usually located in historic castles, palaces, mansions, or tenement houses. However, hotels are also situated in historic forts, barracks, monasteries, hospitals, and even post-industrial facilities (e.g., mills and granaries) (Sala, 2020).

The following can be considered a historic hotel in the narrow sense of the word:

- entered in the register of monuments,
- located in both city centers and on the outskirts,
- subject to categorisation requirements.

Characteristic features of historic hotels are also:

- freedom in interior and room arrangement,
- no limits on the number of rooms,
- membership in industry hotel organisations (Sala, 2018).

Many contemporary historical hotels are facilities that have been operating on the tourist market for years, cultivating and referring to their rich traditions. The first historic hotels that have survived to modern times were built in Japan in the eighth century. However, in Europe from the 12th century in Germany and Great Britain. In the USA, only from the 18th century (Table 1).

Table 1. Examples of the oldest historic hotels in the world

Hotel name	Categorisation	Number of rooms	Date of creation	Location
Nishiyama Onsen Keiunkan	****	37	705	Yamanashi, Japan
Gasthaus Zum Roten Baren	****	25	1120	Freiburg/Germany
The Olde Bell	***	48	1135	Hurley/UK
Goldener-Adler	****	39	1390	Innsbruck/Austria

Hotel Krone	****	37	1418	Solothurn/ Switzerland
The Beekman Arms	****	72	1766	Rhinebeck/USA

Source: own study

On the other hand, there is currently a clear trend in creating new historical hotels based on purchased or taken over and then renovated historical buildings (Grabiszewski, 2009).

The owners, successors, or often heirs of historic palaces, castles, or manors worldwide are looking for sustainable financing opportunities for the maintenance and upkeep of their properties (Billert, 2004). Residing in a spacious historic building is often associated with high and constantly increasing costs (Rouba, 2001). The transformation of a historic building from a typical residential function to a hotel function is a natural continuation of its residential function. Properly performed revitalisation from its original function to a historic hotel is carried out under the supervision of a conservator and with respect for the tradition and past of a given place. The history of a given object can be an advantage. The functions performed in the past by historic buildings can be the leitmotif of original tourist products (Hyski, Bednarzak, 2012).

In Poland, the first historic hotels that have survived to modern times began to appear in the 19th century. They were built mainly in the largest Polish cities. The group of the oldest historic hotels in Poland, which still operates today, is the Hotel pod Różą in Krakow, which was built at the beginning of the 19th century in a historic tenement house from the 14th century (Burek, 2000). The Hotel Europejski in Warsaw should also be considered one of the oldest. One of the oldest hotels is also the Bazar Hotel in Poznań from 1842, which is currently undergoing a revitalisation process and does not operate as a hotel (Bombicki, 1995). Examples of the oldest hotels in Poland are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Examples of the oldest historical hotels in Poland, operating in 2022

Hotel name	Location	Number of rooms	Date of creation	Categorization
Hotel Rzymski	Poznan	87	1840	***
Hotel Europejski	Warsaw, Poland	106	1877	*****
Hotel Europejski	Krakow	41	1884	***
Hotel Pod Orłem	Toruń	49	1886	***
Hotel Grand	Krakow	64	1887	*****
Hotel Grand	Lodz	160	1887	***
Hotel Polonia	Torun	72	1890	***
Hotel Monopol	Wrocław	121	1892	*****
Hotel Pod Orłem	Bydgoszcz	75	1896	****

Source: own study

The oldest hotels in Slovakia were built in the middle of the 19th century in the vicinity of important cities (Bratislava, Košice, Trenčín) or in the hinterland of the highest and most visited mountain range, which is the High Tatras. Generally, the oldest accommodation facility is considered to be the Bankov Hotel, located 3 km northwest of Košice. There were mineral springs at this place that led to the spa. The original spa

building was converted into a tavern/inn/guesthouse with 24 rooms in 1869 (Gašpar, 1988). According to other sources, the oldest hotel in Bratislava is the Savoy-Carlton, whose history dates back to the 13th century. In this period, the tavern “U Labute” stood on its place, and later, from 1760, the tavern “U troch zelených stromov” stood on its right side. The latter provided not only accommodation for guests but also stables for horses. In 1846, the buildings were merged to form the modern three-story hotel U zeleného stromu. In 1860, it was completed by the adjacent hotel ‘National,’ which offered 27 rooms to its guests. Later, both hotels and the building between them were combined and rebuilt, creating the impressive Savoy-Carlton hotel complex, which opened in June 1913 (Ševčíková, Obuchová, 2002).

Hotels in Tatranská Lomnica and Starý Smokovec developed at the beginning of the 20th century as health and recreational facilities of the first climatic spas in the High Tatras. They had a luxurious character and were built as meeting places not only for the Austro-Hungarian nobility but also for the European aristocracy and significant personalities of social and cultural life (<https://www.tmrhotels.com/sk/>). Examples of the oldest Slovak hotels are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Examples of the oldest Slovak hotels operating in 2022

Hotel name	Location	Number of rooms	Date of creation	Categorisation
Hotel Bankov	Košice	28	1869	****
Hotel Lomnica	Tatranská Lomnica	67	1894	*****
Hotel Elizabeth	Trenčín	78	1902	****
Grandhotel Starý Smokovec	Starý Smokovec	84	1904	****
Grand Hotel Praha	Tatranská Lomnica	123	1905	****
Hotel Savoy-Carlton	Bratislava	168	1913	*****

Source: own study

HISTORIC HOTEL MANAGEMENT IN JELENIA GÓRA AND BANSKA BYSTRICA

Jelenia Góra and Banska Bystrica are cities with similar areas and populations. Both cities are surrounded by mountainous ranges and have comparable tourist potential. Both centres developed based on local mining and industry; both cities strongly influenced German culture in the past. Apart from common features, both cities are distinguished by certain specific characteristics. Jelenia Góra is a county town in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship and a centre of subregional importance. Banská Bystrica, in turn, is the capital of the region of regional importance voivodeship (Banská Bystrica region).

The Jelenia Góra subregion stands out in the region, as well as throughout Poland, with its rich historical traditions. The Jelenia Góra Valley is commonly called the Valley of Palaces and Gardens (www.karkonosze.pl). The number of castles, palaces, and mansions is around thirty. From the beginning of the 19th century, this area was called the “Silesian Elysium,” comparing it to the castles and palaces of the Loire Valley in France. The most splendid European families established their residences here. Apart from the aristocrats, artists, philosophers, and nature lovers (e.g., Fryderyk Chopin, Johan Wolfgang von Goethe, John Quincy Adams) came here. Most residences are inscribed

on the list of historical monuments (the highest award in Poland). Steps are being taken to include the Valley of Palaces and Gardens on the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List. The key defining the entry criteria was the cultural landscape associated with noble residences surrounded by extensive romantic parks, which in the 19th century constituted a homogeneous whole.

Due to its significant potential, the Jelenia Góra subregion has a rich tradition in developing the historic hotel industry. Already in the 19th century, old castles began to be adapted for the hotel business. One of the first was the Chojnik castle near Jelenia Góra (Chorowska, Dudziak, Jaworski, Kwaśniewski, 2009). However, the real heyday of the historical hotel industry in the area discussed occurred after the political transformation at the beginning of the 21st century (Table 4).

Table 4. Examples of historical hotels in Jelenia Góra and its vicinity, active on the market in 2022

Hotel name	Year (age) of creation hotel and/or facility	Number of rooms	Categorisation	Location
Łomnica Palace	1992/XVII w.	26	***	Jelenia Góra
Paulinum Palace	2002/1872	29	***	Jelenia Góra
Staniszów Palace	2002/1787	45	**	Jelenia Góra
Wojanów Palace	2007/1667	92	****	Wojanów
Pakoszów Palace	2012/XVIII w.	44	*****	Piechowice
Karpniki Castle	2014/1846	20	*****	Karpniki

Source: own study

The Łomnica Palace, which currently belongs to the family of the pre-war owners of the palace, is one of the oldest historical hotels in Jelenia Góra. In turn, Karpniki Castle is one of the youngest but, at the same time, the smallest and most luxurious.

Banská Bystrica has rich historical roots dating back to the 12th century. Monuments currently shape the historic urban substance from the 15th to the 18th century. Over time, the historic architecture of the city centre became a natural base for the development of the historic hotel industry (Table 5). The region of Banská Bystrica is located in the central part of Slovakia. Trade routes led through the town were of great importance for the development of the tradition of hospitality and accommodation (Baláž, 2002). Local routes connected the town (trade centre) with the historical mining hinterland, i.e., mining settlements where precious metals and copper were mined.

During the gold mining age (15th and 16th centuries), copper was exported from Banská Bystrica via the most important medieval road, Via Magna. The route led from southern Slovakia through Banská Bystrica and the Veľká Fatra mountains to the Turiec region, then north to Kraków and the Baltic Hanseatic cities. In the vicinity of the town, inns and horse stables were built under the mountain saddles. The town of Banská Bystrica itself was a lively commercial centre, which required the organisation of accommodation for guests and merchants in private houses, inns, and hotels. The first hotel in the city was the Krebs Hotel (Čuka, 2007). Juraj Krebs was the commander of the Dobrá Niva castle. He bought a house on the square, but it was destroyed after the uprising against the Habsburgs. Krebs sold the ruins of the house for 700 gold coins to a merchant and the richtár of the town, Krištof Lehner. He built a dignified mansion from the ruins and

left a sign on the front of the house in the form of a crayfish made of iron sheeting. Krebs is the German word for crayfish. Later, an inn with accommodation was established here (Baláž, 2008). Nowadays, it houses a restaurant with a craft brewery. The development of the hotel industry in the city centre took place after the fall of communism in 1989. Special accommodation facilities such as apartments were established in historic buildings only after 2000. Suitable buildings for this accommodation type were discovered on Kapitulska Street, where up to three such facilities are located (in houses No. 11, No. 13, and No. 15).

Table 5. Examples of the oldest hotels operating in Banská Bystrica in 2022

Hotel name	Year (age) of creation hotel and/or facility	Number of rooms	Categorisation	Location
Hotel Arcade	XVI w.	19	***	Baňska Bystrzyca
Hotel Kuria	XVI w.	20	***	Baňska Bystrzyca
Hotel Narodny Dom	1929	40	***	Baňska Bystrzyca
Penzi3n Grand	XVI w.	12	*	Baňska Bystrzyca
Penzi3n Moyzes	XVI w.	9	*	Baňska Bystrzyca
Penzi3n Grajciar	XIX w.	5	–	Lućat3n
Dom u ban3ka	XVII w.	4	–	Ťpania Dolina

Source: own study

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The investigation aimed to test the level of knowledge about historic hotels and their commitment to quality value during the Covid-19 pandemic. To achieve the objectives, the authors used the direct interview method as a research tool.

The interview was divided into two blocks of questions that were structured as follows.

- Block I – Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic
- Block II – Quality costs

The questions for the interview were closed. The basic thesis assumed in the considerations is the assumption that the contemporary economic situation related to the global pandemic has clearly impacted quality costs in hotels. Analysis of the content discussed in the theoretical part of the paper enables one to ask certain questions, which may help explain the investigated problem.

- Q1: Has the pandemic affected the quality of the hotel services provided?
- Q2: Are the managers of historic hotels in Jelenia G3ra and Banska Bystrzyca interested in quality costs?

The questions in Block I allow us to identify the general view on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the quality of hotel services. The investigation of quality costs interests the boutique hotel managers who provide the second part of the interview (Block II).

In the assumption of research, authors use the definition of quality costs, which are defined as costs incurred by a company at all stages of providing a service. These costs contribute to obtaining the highest quality service (Sadkowski, Jedynak 2022).

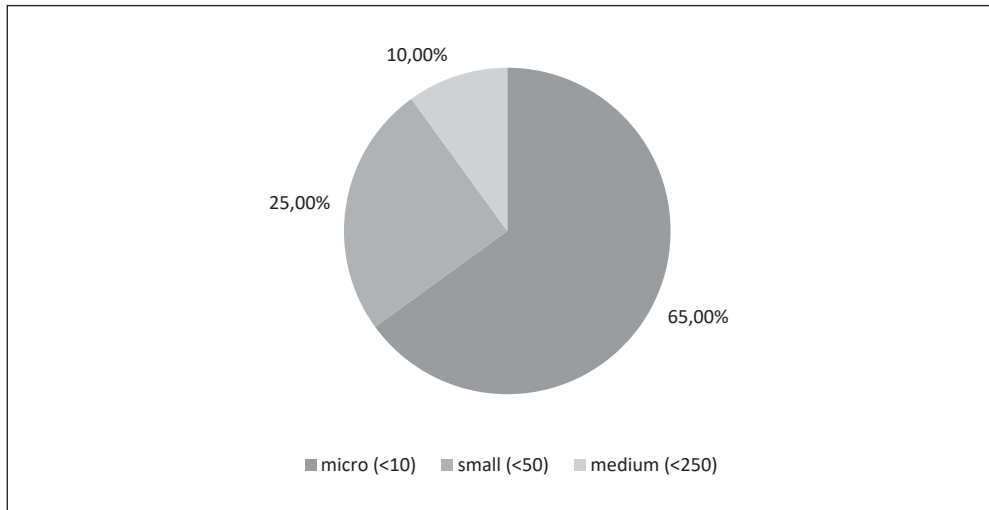
The research was carried out in October-November 2022 on the territory of two European cities that are attractive tourist destinations in Poland and Slovakia, Jelenia Góra and Banská Bystrzyca. The research group comprised 20 hotel facilities, 10 historic hotels selected in each city. The respondents of the facilities surveyed were people holding the following positions: hotel manager, receptionist, owner, and director. The authors chose private entities. This selection of research subjects was deliberate and determined by the possible access to information in these subjects.

It should be noted that the examined hotels constitute a small fragment of the analysed reality; therefore, drawing far-reaching conclusions is unjustified. However, the results and conclusions presented may constitute the basis for a further detailed investigation of hotel services in the near future. The authors are cautious with the results obtained.

RESULTS

The results of the research carried out at the Jelenia Góra, and Banská Bystrzyca hotels are presented in the following part of the work. Feedback from 20 entities allowed us to determine the size of the surveyed organisations and their share in the sample. Figure 1 presents the distribution of the hotels surveyed.

Figure 1. Size of the surveyed hotels



Note: own elaboration

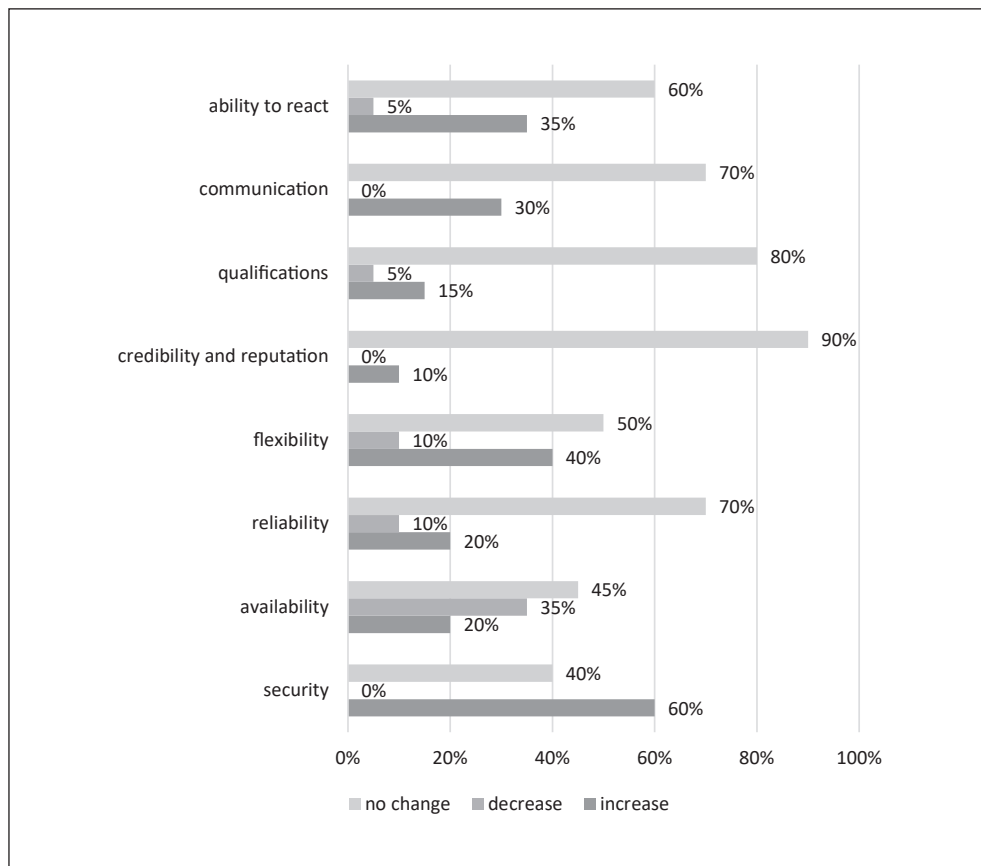
The largest part of the surveyed group are micro-entities, whose share is 65% (8 units in Slovakia, 5 in Poland). Small units account for 25%, and medium organisations cover 10%. Entities operating on the market for at least 11 years (65%) dominate, and 35% are hotels with less than 10 years of service. The representatives of the facilities surveyed during the research held the following positions: hotel manager 45%, receptionist 30%, owner 15% and director 10%. The main goal of most of the organisations analysed is to provide the highest quality services to customers and ensure their satisfaction

(70%). 20% of the respondents indicated that they optimised costs and maximised profits by 10%. The distribution of responses for both locations is interesting. All hotels in Jelenia Góra have declared that providing the highest quality services is their primary goal. There is much greater variety in this regard among Banska Bystrzyca hotels (4/10).

Responses to Block I have been collected in this part of the work. It should be noted that, according to half of the historic hotels, the Covid-19 pandemic had no impact on the quality of their services. The second half declared the impact of the pandemic. The effect of the pandemic is noticed by 5 facilities located in Banska Bystrzyca and 5 in Jelenia Góra.

The authors asked respondents about the dimensions of the services affected by the pandemic. Figure 2 presents the responses obtained.

Figure 2. Influence of the pandemic on selected dimensions of the quality of hotel services



Note: own elaboration

The most significant changes caused by the pandemic occurred in the following dimensions: security, flexibility, and ability to react, where there was an increase. On the other hand, the greatest negative changes in the quality of the services provided were mainly observed in the field of availability. The dimensions of the services that have not changed are primarily: credibility and reputation, qualifications, communication, and reliability. Respondents from Polish and Slovak hotels have a similar view on the subject.

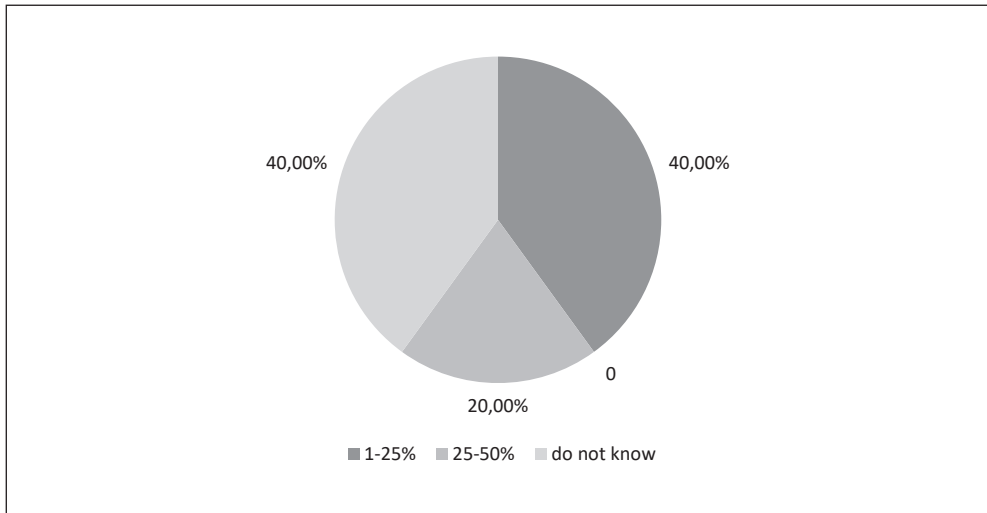
The crisis related to the pandemic will increase the prices of hotel services in the near future. This is confirmed by almost all of the responses (90%) of the facilities surveyed that plan to raise prices. All hotels are located in Banska Bystrzyca (10) and Jelenia Góra. The answers suggest a similar economic situation in Poland and Slovakia. The neighbourhood of both countries can also determine these results.

Most of the organisations in the research group (70%) forecast that the resulting financial losses will be able to be recovered in a period of up to 5 years. For 25% of entities, losses are irrecoverable, and 5% will work with them in a period of 5–10 years.

40% of hotels believe that the current situation with Covid-19 will affect the development and health of historic hospitality in the future. 25% say otherwise, and 35% do not have an opinion on this matter.

The responses to Block II are collected and presented in the next paragraph. Quality cost problems are identified in less than half (40%) of the hotels surveyed. The authors

Figure 3. Estimated share of quality costs in the cost structure of the surveyed organizations



Note: own elaboration

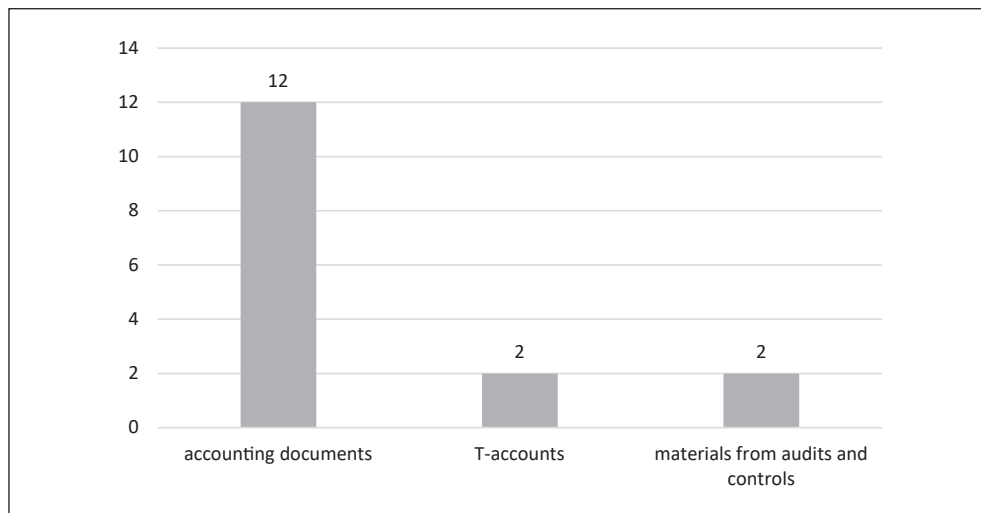
also asked about the estimated level of quality costs in the cost structure of these companies. The answers obtained are shown in Figure 3.

The figure analysis shows that quality costs constitute a share of no more than 1/2 (60%) in the cost structure of the surveyed organisations. In 40% of the facilities, it is 1–25%, and in 20% of the units, it is 25–50% of all costs. 40% of the respondents could not indicate the possible level of quality costs. Slovak hotels have a dominant share not exceeding 1/4, and in Polish hotels – 25–50%.

The answers to the next question allow us to formulate a statement that quality costs are recorded in half of the historic hotels (50%). Only 5% of enterprises record quality-related costs. The rest do not have this knowledge on this topic (45%).

The authors also tried to identify the sources of information on quality costs in the entities studied. Figure 4 presents the results obtained.

Figure 4. Sources of information on quality costs



Note: own elaboration

The most important source of information on quality costs is accounting documents. Quality costs are also identified in the T-accounts and the materials from the audits and controls. Among Banska Bystrzyca hotels, accounting documents and accounts, i.e., sources related to the company's accounting system, dominate, while in Polish hotels, they are materials from audits and controls and also accounting documents.

Respondents were also asked about the increase in quality cost levels in their organisations due to the new customer service guidelines in the Covid-19 era. 35% answered this question affirmatively, and 25% negatively. The nature of the results for Jelenia Góra and Banska Bystrzyca is varied. Managers of historic hotels in Banska Bystrzyca see an increase in the level of quality costs caused by the pandemic; most representatives of the facilities located in Jelenia Góra do not see such an increase.

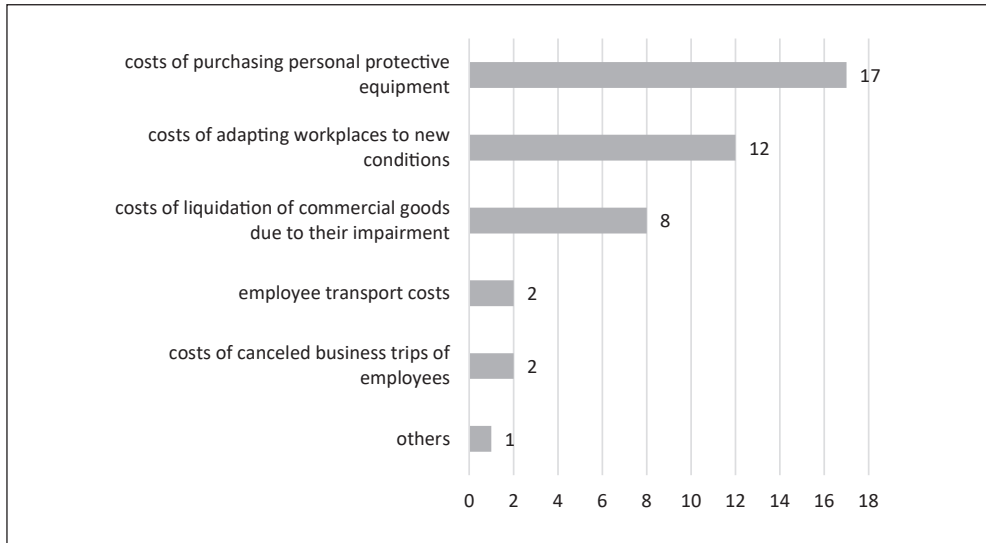
In connection with the previous question, the authors decided to obtain information on the categories of additional costs incurred by organisations in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. The responses are summarised in figure 5.

Almost all facilities (17/20) tested incurred additional costs related to the provision of personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, disinfectants, and ozonators). 12 out of 20 hotels also indicated the costs of adapting workplaces to the new conditions (partitions, plexiglass casings). In 8 surveyed entities, there were also costs of liquidation of commercial goods due to their impairment. The 2 surveyed also indicate the costs of canceled business trips of employees (canceled nights, hotel stays, plane flights, advances, or prepayments) and employee transport costs. A hotel responded that they used this time for all kinds of renovations.

The respondents were also asked to indicate the most significant costs related to the operation of hotel facilities. The dominant cost is utility costs (16 out of 20 hotels), and the second highest cost is employee costs (8 units) and rent costs (5 units). The rent costs identified only Slovak hotels.

In the last question of Block II, the authors asked for their opinion on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the level of costs (including quality costs) in the coming

Figure 5. Additional costs incurred due to the Covid-19 pandemic



Note: own elaboration

years. The responses indicate that the hotel industry expects an impact of the pandemic on the level of costs (45%). 25% are of the opposite opinion, and such a forecast cannot be indicated by 30%.

DISCUSSION

The research results obtained allowed the authors to find answers to the research questions. Q1 was concerned about the impact of the pandemic on the quality of hotel services. In historic hotels in Slovakia and Poland, the dominant belief is that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the quality of services. The most significant changes were observed in the dimensions of services, such as the ability to react, flexibility, and security. Furthermore, the pandemic will catalyse a rise in hotel prices in the near future.

The answers in Q2 indicate that the quality costs are of interest to the historical hotel managers of Jelenia Góra and Banska Bystrzyca. These responses indicate that 40% of the objects examined identified the quality-cost problem. The research conducted by Rajko, Sala & Sadkowski (2022) also confirmed interest in this topic. The estimated share of quality-related costs throughout the cost structure is not greater than 50% for most of the organisations surveyed. Quality costs are taken into account in half of the historic hotels. The most important sources of information on these costs are accounting documents and T-accounts. In 35% of the hotels surveyed, the new customer service guidelines increased the level of quality costs. Additional costs were incurred for the provision of personal protective equipment, the adaptation of the workplace to new conditions, and the liquidation of commercial goods. Almost half of the respondents believe that the impact of the pandemic on the level of costs in the hotel industry will be visible in the coming years.

CONCLUSIONS

The intention of the paper was to present the issue of historic hotels and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their operation in terms of cost of quality. The main research methods were the study of sources and historical and geographic works, as well as a questionnaire conducted in the form of personal interviews. The issue was investigated using the example of two cities: Jelenia Góra in Poland and Banská Bystrica in Slovakia. Both towns have similar characteristics, such as the number of inhabitants or the cultural and historical potential for developing tourism and hotel business in historic buildings. The comparative analysis showed that the origins of hotels in both countries date back to the 19th century. In Poland, they were established in large cities, e.g., Poznań, Warszawa, Kraków, and Toruń. The first hotels in Slovakia were built in cities (Bratislava, Trenčín). Still, another factor at work in their creation was the development of spa traditions (Hotel Bankov Košice, Vysoké Tatry). In the Jelenia Gora region, historic hotels are mainly located in palaces and castles, while in Banská Bystrica, they are located in townhouses that were rebuilt in the Renaissance period.

The empirical part of the thesis presents the results of the questionnaire survey, based on which we also found answers to two research questions that we established at the beginning of the investigation. In general, we can assess that the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the quality of service in only half of the 20 accommodations studied. All Slovak establishments also experienced a decrease in the number of visitors, and there were even periods when they were completely closed. In connection with the pandemic, accommodation establishments incurred increased operating costs and had to increase accommodation prices for this reason.

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