

## BUSINESS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: A PORTUGUESE PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

Over time, not only new leisure practices were developed but also new types of work, with globalization leading to a greater need for commercial, industrial and knowledge expansion, stimulating business travel. Therefore, long ago that tourism does not only refer on travel motivated by leisure and recreation. Travels motivated by business and professions, which consist of one of the oldest forms of travel, saw their “tourist status” officially recognized by the end of the twentieth century. Today, Business Tourism (also known as Meeting Industry) represents a significant role on local and regional economies and reveals a considerable potential for development. In this context, Destination Management Organizations (DMO), and more specifically Convention & Visitors Bureaus (CVB), play a key role in providing the structure associated with the territory and the management, planning and development of destinations, especially those who want to position themselves as Business Tourism destinations. This article aims to explore a few topics concerning the evolution of Business Tourism, its importance and context in Portugal.

**Keywords:** Business Travel, Business Tourism, Destination Management Organizations, Convention & Visitors Bureau.

### Desarrollo del Turismo de Negocios: una perspectiva portuguesa

### RESUMEN

Con el tiempo no sólo se desarrollaron nuevas prácticas de ocio, sino también nuevos tipos de trabajo, con la globalización llevando a una mayor necesidad de expansión

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comercial, industrial y de conocimiento, estimulando los viajes de negocios. Por lo tanto, hace mucho tiempo que el turismo no se refiere sólo a los viajes motivados por el ocio y la recreación. Los viajes motivados por los negocios y profesiones, que consisten en una de las formas más antiguas de viajar, vieron su “estatus turístico” oficialmente reconocido a finales del siglo XX. Actualmente, el Turismo de Negocios (también conocido como Meetings Industry) representa un papel importante en las economías locales y regionales y revela un considerable potencial de desarrollo. En este contexto, las Destination Management Organizations (DMO), y más concretamente los Convention & Visitors Bureaus (CVB), juegan un papel clave en la provisión de la estructura asociada con el territorio y la gestión, planificación y desarrollo de destinos, especialmente aquellos que quieren posicionarse como destinos de Turismo de Negocios. Este artículo pretende explorar algunos temas relacionados con la evolución del Turismo de Negocios, su importancia y contexto en Portugal.

**Palabras clave:** Viajes de negocios; Turismo de Negocios; Destination Management Organizations, Convention & Visitors Bureau.

## 1. BUSINESS TRAVEL THROUGH THE AGES

What we now call Business Tourism is a phenomenon of modern society; however, the journeys motivated by business and professions consist of one of the oldest forms of travel (Shone, 1998; Spiller, 2002; Davidson & Cope, 2003; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007; Rogers, 2008). Long ago, communities began to use agricultural goods in trade for other products that did not exist in their regions, resulting in the development of trade markets which in turn boosted the development of urban communities through the production and demand for new products (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001). The emergence of the great empires such as Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome, further contributed to the development of trips through the implementation of roads and routes (Silk Road, Incense Route, Spice Route, trade route from the Varangians to the Greeks, Royal Road, Via Maris, among others), driven by such prevailing market systems. That served to bring essential supplies to all geographic locations, thus boosting the development of cities as ideal places for trade activities and human interaction (Gartrell, 1994). In this context, the development of Roman roads was very important, as major communication channels, linking Rome to the expanding empire, allowing Roman merchants to extend their commercial fleet. Exchanges in the continental interior were boosted, causing an effulgent mercantile expansion. Entire regions have specialized and marketed together (wine and olive oil in Hispania, cereals in Numidia, ceramics and meat in Gaul, for example). The extent and functionality of this road network lasted well beyond the end of the empire, with many current roads to follow the Roman route.

During the medieval period, the trade market was solidly implemented in Europe, leading to the development of trade fairs, which were physically structured in major cities and where traders flocked from all over. Effectively, the development of roads and trade routes enhanced the development of trade and business places which brought together

people from different origins. It was from the twelfth century that this type of business places more developed, especially in countries such as France (where the Champagne region assumed an important role), Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Spain and Italy. (Beier & Damböck, 2006; Swarbooke & Horner, 2007).

With the Age of Discoveries, triggered by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, new maritime trade routes were implemented, especially with the discovery of the sea route to India, contributing to enhance mercantilism in Europe. Piracy (English, Dutch and French, among others) although illegal, was also linked to the business activity with strong impacts on the commercial activity of that time. Also, colonization, the slave trade, the spread of religion, the scientific expeditions (Lewis and Clark in the United States, Livingstone in Africa, Darwin and the Beagle voyage, among many others), the Gold Rush in the nineteenth century, can be presented, among others, as travel motivated by business and professions, increasing and developing communications and business networks which in turn boosted the business travel market, that needed infrastructure and appropriate support services.

From the beginning of industrialization, business travel increased significantly, particularly in Europe. Between 1750 and 1900 three main reasons contributed on a large scale for this situation (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001):

- 1) Industrial Revolution, which had its beginnings in the UK and quickly spread to the rest of Europe, resulting in a substantial increase in production of goods that had to be sold, distributed and transported. To carry out this tasks, the archetype of the salesman arose, which meant (and still means today) often travelling for business;
- 2) Colonization in Africa, Middle East and Asia, from European countries, which lead to dislocation of people and goods to the colonized countries;
- 3) Transport system development, especially with the development of the automobile (and road network) and rail transport, allowing people to travel longer distances more quickly and more frequently.

In this context, the industrial progress of nations, driven by all the reasons just stated, is inseparable from the dissemination of technical and technological advances. This dissemination process takes different forms (trade fairs, conferences, congresses, workshops, etc.) and different scales (local, regional, national, international, world). However, its peak in terms of size and projection consists of the world fairs which have been promoted continuously since the nineteenth century (Martins, 1998). The first Universal Exposition (EXPO) was held in London in 1851, at the legendary Crystal Palace which was built specifically for the event under the theme “Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations”. In fact, this kind of mega events implies major investments in infrastructure and equipment, because the size they represent. The EXPO 98 held in Portugal illustrates this fact. Organized under the theme “The Oceans, a Heritage for the Future”, chosen to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Portuguese Discoveries, this mega event was responsible for the creation of a new urban space in the eastern edge of the city of Lisbon, with the construction of infrastructure, equipment and recreational areas, which is still a reference in the city, known as the Park of Nations.

We can say that participation in events is also linked to the Business Tourism. Nevertheless, the strategic importance for destinations lies not only in mega events but also in all other events which, although on different scales, promote travel and permanence of visitors at the destinations. As such, the importance of uptake the different types of meetings and events to destinations, is evident. They represent higher flow of visitors and hence a greater economic and social dynamism to the destination areas, where the performance of specialized organizational structures, such as the Convention & Visitors Bureaus, takes a vital importance.

## **2. CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAUS**

At the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, a new era in business travel arose, specifically originated in the US where the concepts of conference and convention began to appear with more frequency. Industrial, commercial and scientific associations, along with political bodies began to organize meetings on a large scale. The development of such events attracted the attention of potential destinations able to host such meetings for the economic and social benefits they represented. Consequently, cities began to promote their resources and attractiveness to captivate the largest possible number of events, emerging the CVBs as specialized organizations in this field. The appearance of the first Convention Bureau is due to the publication of a newspaper article on February 6, 1896, written by a journalist from "The Detroit Journal" called Milton Carmichael, in questioning the passivity of businessmen from Detroit regarding the benefits of the arrival of visitors to this city. Carmichael managed to awake the interest of some businessmen and local merchants who, in turn, through contacts with hoteliers, sales agents of the railway system and other merchants, decided to start an organization to coordinate, in a joint and cooperative way, the attraction of conventions to the city, originating this way the Detroit Convention and Businessmen's League, which in 1907 changed its name to Detroit Convention & Tourism Bureau. The economic benefits generated by the conventions and the important role played by CVBs in the captivation of these events began to be widely recognized. As such, other organizational structures of this kind emerged in other cities such as Cleveland in 1904, Atlantic City in 1908, Denver and Saint Louis in 1909 and Louisville and Los Angeles in 1910 (Spiller, 2002; Gartrell, 1994; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001; Rogers, 2008). In Europe, the first CVB has appeared in London in 1905, a few years before hosting for the first time the Summer Olympics 1908. In Portugal, the first CVB came much later through the creation in 1990 of the Office of Incentives and Congresses of Lisbon, having been framed in 1997 in the Tourism Association of Lisbon - Visitors & Convention Bureau, in a decade that was marked by the EXPO 98.

The importance of universal expositions was already discussed earlier in this text; however, we would like to highlight also the Olympic Games as truly exceptional events. Held every two years, alternating Summer Olympics with Winter Olympics, they involve the direct participation of thousands of athletes in hundreds of events, linked to dozens of sports, from 205 countries (each country is represented by an Olympic Committee). To accommodate all this structure is built an Olympic village in the destination area. In a certain way, this phenomenon reminds us of the working-class neighbourhoods that in

the nineteenth century were built in Portugal to house industrial workers who travelled from across the country to settle in urban peripheries where the industries were located. The Olympic villages, such as the working-class neighbourhoods of the past, gather in a delimited area infrastructures and equipment able to accommodate and satisfy the needs (including the leisure and entertainment) of people, who remain there for extended periods of time. Although Olympic villages have a very intensive use in time, the planning and development of these areas should consider its future uses and practices, post event.

Other types of events, such as major business meetings, can also produce a great impact on tourism image and projection of the destination area, as it was the case of the Rotary International Convention in 2013 with 30.000 delegates, or the Web Summit in 2015 with 50.000 delegates, both events held in Lisbon in the MEO Arena venue.

It will not be surprising therefore that cities begin to try to define together the top positions in a global hierarchy of leadership and image that precisely leads to the creation of professional structures capable of continuous monitoring in foreign affairs, image promotion and attractiveness, bringing investment to the cities. So, it is not surprising that in Portugal, the city of Porto is trying to convert its “Palácio de Cristal” into the convention centre for 6000 delegates while Coimbra opens its first Convention Centre with capacity for 1200 delegates, resulting also of the recovery of an historical building (named Convention and Cultural Centre of S. Francisco Convent). Throughout this process, the role of CVBs is very important to capture the more events for destinations.

As noted above, the appearance of the first CVBs is associated to a set of cities that were differentiated 1) by the presence of industrial activity, 2) important tourist resources (equipment and infrastructure connected to the game and sport, landscape and natural resources) and 3) due to the organization of important events. An International Association of Convention Bureaus (IACB) was created in 1914 with the aim of providing the exchange of information and knowledge among its members to make this economic activity more strong and professionalized. In 1974 the organization started to designate as International Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus (IACVB) (Spiller, 2002).

The introduction of the term “visitors” was due to the interest in captivating the largest possible number of visitors, in addition to attracting the greatest number of events, hence the need to make the destinations more attractive for this segment of visitors. Currently this association is called Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) and represents about 4100 professionals from nearly 600 destination marketing organizations in over 15 countries ([www.destinationmarketing.org](http://www.destinationmarketing.org)). Indeed, the creation of associations has as main objective the strengthening of the sectors of activity.

If, in the United States by the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, holding conventions grew quickly, becoming an increasingly important sector, in Europe had still little meaning. However, it was in Europe that took place a major landmark in the recent history of the conventions and congresses and hence the phenomenon we now associate with the Business Tourism. We are talking about the Congress of Vienna, which took place between 2 May 1814 and 9 June 1815, summoned to restore the territorial divisions in Europe after the Napoleonic wars. At this congress were representatives of some of the major world powers of the time, such as the Russian Emperor Alexander I or the British representative Duke of Wellington. Each representative was accompanied by a

large delegation of professionals from various fields. These delegations, because of their size and requirements level, significantly moved the economy around accommodation, catering, entertainment, venues, among others (Rogers, 2008). Its duration has led us, of course, to a situation of presence outside of usual residence for more than one year and therefore outside the scope of what today is known as tourism. However, it was to recreate the boundaries of Europe after the Napoleonic wars, restore real power and take on the importance of the bourgeoisie in the social economy, involving time-consuming issues and weighted talks. The congress was attended by most European statesmen, although it was Austria, Prussia, the United Kingdom, Russia and France, initially excluded from the negotiations, the main parties. Also, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the German states were present. Towards a non-plenary organization of the work, many delegations had lots of available time (free time) and to help pass the time were carried out by the host, Francisco II (Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire), festivals and other events for the entertainment of the delegates, which led an aristocrat, Prince de Ligne, saying that “the congress does not walk, it dances.” This proves to be of great interest, since it is the mainstay of today’s Business Tourism ideal. The “empty” time should be filled with activities that can keep participants busy and preferably in a good mood for the work that they must make. Thinking about the Congress of Vienna in 1814/1815 as the event that triggered the current concept of Business Tourism seems very suitable. Considering all this, we can say that by the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century appeared a new paradigm associated with travel motivated by business and professions: cities, regions and countries (destinations) began to compete to attract the largest number of events and visitors through the promotion of their resources and attractions. And it is probably at this stage that started to develop on a larger scale what we now call Business Tourism, where activities related to culture, entertainment and leisure, whose evolution follows the very evolution of societies, have an important role during the stay of visitors.

In Europe, the Belle Époque, developed in the late nineteenth century and lasting until the outbreak of World War I in 1914, produced a set of new cultural, technological and social transformations in societies. This new era associated with the spectacle, the fun, the artistic expressions, provided not only new forms of leisure and entertainment for residents and visitors but also new forms of business and professional activities, for example, linked to cinema, cabarets, shows, architecture and visual arts. However, during the first half of the twentieth century the two World Wars came out to curb the rapid growth of business travel in Europe. Like what was observed with tourism in general, the great boom of travel and Business Tourism emerged after the end of World War II, strongly driven by the development of commercial aviation (Shone, 1998). In this context, it is possible to identify a set of key factors that led to the development of business travel in the post-war (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001; Lawson, 2000):

- 1) Technological advances in transport;
- 2) Rise of the global economy;
- 3) Reduction of barriers to free trade through the emergence of transnational trading blocs such as the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA);

- 4) Development of communication skills by increasing language skills of the population (higher level of training and education);
- 5) Growth in the number of professional and commercial associations, with common interests and with an important role in providing meetings or other events;
- 6) Relative world peace, which provides greater ease and security to travel;
- 7) Growth of new industries related to information and technology, which boosted travel to market new products and assist customers;
- 8) Demographic growth in the world;
- 9) Efforts made by governments through strategic planning policies to attract business tourists with high purchasing power;
- 10) Development of new forms of travel and tourism related to business and professions, such as incentive travel and product launches.

Some of these factors are related, directly or indirectly, with a set of economic and political changes that occurred in this period and that influenced the economic, scientific, technological and social development, particularly in Europe, as was the case of the implementation of the Marshall Plan, the creation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the signing of the Warsaw Pact.

The second half of the twentieth century corresponds to a period marked strongly by the increase in demand for meetings and other business events, highlighting further the economic potential that this sector accounts for destinations which, in turn, began to invest heavily in creating specific infrastructure and promotional structure of their resources and attributes (Lawson, 2000). The gradual increase of investment in infrastructure dedicated specifically to business events took place mainly from the 60s and reached its peak in the 90s (Shone, 1998; Rogers, 2008). Today, we continue to verify the accomplishment of significant investments in infrastructure specifically for the meetings industry, either by building new equipment, either through the conversion of degraded or poorly explored buildings that find in this segment new ways of optimization and profitability. Thus, we can consider that the existence of CVBs in destinations that wish to develop Business Tourism should be an important factor to value, due to skilled and qualified contribution to the destination management and to the specialized action they represent on the attraction and management of events. As an example, in the Portuguese case, the tourism planning and development policies point out to the need to invest in 1 or 2 mega events per decade to contribute to the valuation of tourism offer, the projection and the notoriety of the destination. It was the case with the hosting of the UEFA 2004 European Championship and the EXPO 98. These policies also highlight the need to organize and promote a national events calendar, composed of 10 to 12 large internationally renowned events, as was the case of the Lisbon-Dakar Rally, the Portugal's Moto GP Grand Prix, the Portugal's Golf Masters, the MTV European Music Awards, the UEFA Champions League Final, the Rotary International Convention, the Web Summit, among others, that contribute to strengthen the value proposition and the destination brand image. The major international conferences are part of this strategy precisely because they bring to Portugal many international visitors and contribute to the international projection of the destination, being possible to take different scales, from few hundred to many thousands of participants.

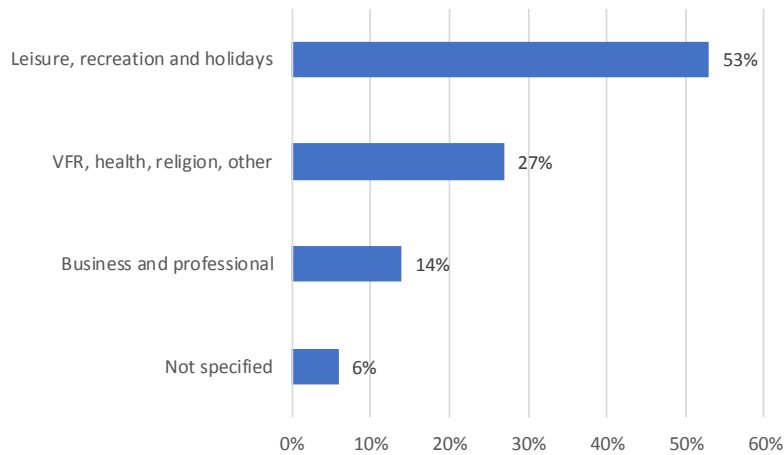


On the other hand, the realization of mega and major events, related to culture, music and sport, for example, will also help to increase tourism offer associated to the destination and to enhance the tourism experience of the business visitors. To all this we must add the development and performance of CVBs to maximize the territories where they are located as Business Tourism destinations. This promotes not only the specific features related to this segment but also the characteristics associated with the leisure components the destinations must offer to increase destination attractiveness and enhancement of the tourism experience.

3. THE ASSOCIATION MEETINGS MARKET

In 2015, international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) reached a total of 1186 million, an increase of 52 million over the previous year, representing approximately 5% of growth rate. It's the 6th consecutive year of above average growth following the 2009 global economic crisis, with international arrivals increasing by 4% or more every year since 2010 (UNWTO, 2016). Considering the purpose of visit, Business Tourism takes 14% of the global international tourist arrivals, with travel for holidays, recreation and other forms of leisure accounting for just over half of all international tourist arrivals (53%) and travelling for other reasons such as visiting friends and relatives (VFR), religious reasons and pilgrimages, health treatment, representing 27% (Figure 1).

Figure 1  
INBOUND TOURISM BY PURPOSE OF VISIT IN 2015



Source: UNWTO, 2016.

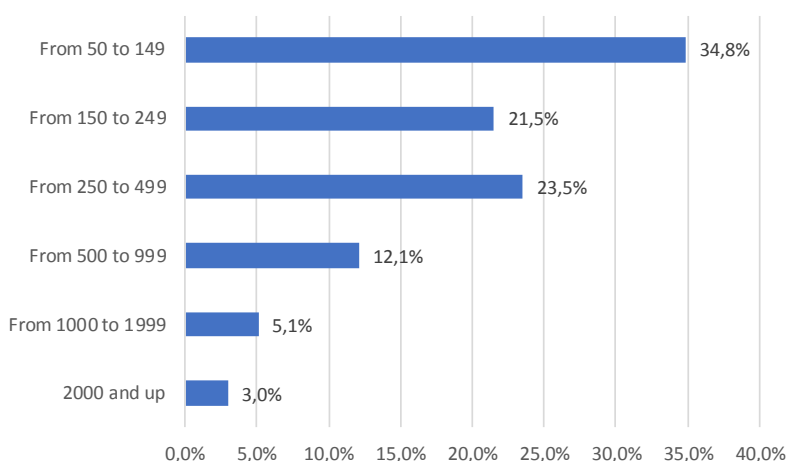
Considered one of the main tourism segments, expected to grow approximately 3.1% per year until 2030 (UNWTO, 2011), Business Tourism has an important economical weight in local and regional economies and corresponds to a tourism sector with potential for development. The low seasonality, the controlled environmental impact, the higher



revenue for accommodation and meeting venues, the high demand for food and beverage (lunches, gala dinners, coffee breaks, etc.), the boost in leisure activities and the relative resilience to economic crisis, are some of the main factors that make Business Tourism so attractive to the destinations.

However, it's important to demystify the idea that business tourism refers mainly to major urban centres with very large venues, accommodation, structures and infrastructure. The study "A Modern History of International Association Meetings", held by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA, 2013), analyses the evolution of associative meetings over half a century (1963-2012). The data shows that of the 54.844 meetings registered by ICCA between 2008 and 2012, about 34.8% hosted between 50 and 149 participants, about 21.5% hosted between 150 and 249 participants and about 23.5% hosted between 250 and 499 participants (Figure 2). This means that the clear majority of the registered meetings (79.8%) hosted less than 500 participants.

**Figure 2**  
**PERCENTAGE OF MEETINGS BY NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS, 2008-2012**



Source: ICCA, 2013.

The study also shows that the average number of meetings held annually has increased about 10% per year, which means that the number of meetings doubles every 10 years. It's also noted 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%). We are thus in the presence of a clear trend in reducing the number of participants in associative meetings over the past few decades and, at the same time, a continued increase in the number of meetings held.

Portugal has a very interesting positioning in the worldwide meetings industry context, taking the 12<sup>th</sup> position in the world ranking, with 278 international meetings (Table 1). Analysing the territorial scale of the leading countries and the position of Portugal, we can consider that these results are outstanding. Although these results are due in a large

scale to the contribution of Lisbon (145) and Porto (60), there are other smaller cities in Portugal that have contributed to the global performance (Table 2). This is the case of Aveiro (7) and Coimbra (5) in the Central region of Portugal, among others. These smaller urban centres, as we say earlier in this text, may find interesting strategic advantages in joint action, considering that these geographic areas can complement each other in the integrated supply of tourism products, experiences, services and facilities.

**Table 1**  
**WORLDWIDE RANKING PER COUNTRY IN 2015**

Rank	Country	Number of meetings
1	USA	925
2	Germany	667
3	United Kingdom	582
4	Spain	572
5	France	522
6	Italy	504
7	Japan	355
8	China – P.R.	333
	Netherlands	333
10	Canada	308
11	Brazil	292
12	Portugal	278

Source: ICCA, 2016.

**Table 2**  
**WORLDWIDE RANKING PER CITY IN 2015**

Rank	City	Number of meetings
1	Berlin	195
2	Paris	186
3	Barcelona	180
4	Vienna	178
5	London	171
...		
9	Lisbon	145
...		
42	Porto	60
...		
301	Aveiro	7
...		
373	Coimbra	5

Source: ICCA, 2016

For all this, we consider very relevant the investigation of this theme associated to the management of the territory and its resources, as it is expressed in the current tourism policy in Portugal (Turismo 2020), specifically in smaller urban centres with relevant touristic assets. As stated in the Tourism 2020 Action Plan, preserving the territory is to enhance the touristic asset, because a degraded territory becomes a liability for tourism and increasingly the demand requires sustainability and quality in the tourism destinations. Therefore, we must consider the territorial elements such as the weather, the geographic location, the inhabitants, the diversity of landscapes, the architectural, historical, cultural and natural monuments, the culture, the traditions, the gastronomy, and the biodiversity. These elements, can contribute effectively to influence the decision of the destination choice.

#### **4. TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS TOURISM**

Like any other segment, Business Tourism is influenced directly and indirectly by the global economic environment. However, compared to leisure tourism, it presents greater resilience and stability in times of crisis. On the one hand, the economic difficulties lead to a reduction in expenses related to the organization and participation in business events, on the other, it is in the most difficult periods that many companies decide to plan and organize meetings, conferences, workshops or incentive travel (among other events) to contribute to the revitalization of business and to the motivation of employees (Duffy & McEuen, 2010; Rogers, 2008; Davidson & Cope, 2003). All this associated with the phenomena of globalization and internationalization that the development of enterprises entails.

Apart from the economic crisis triggered in 2008, in recent years there have been other very relevant situations whose impacts are also found in tourism, such as:

- 1) Terrorism, as the attacks of September 11/2001, the 2002 Bali bombings in Indonesia, the 2004 attacks in Madrid, the bombings in London's Underground in 2005, the attacks in Egypt in 2005 and 2006, the attacks in India in 2008, the attacks in Paris in 2015, among others;
- 2) Epidemics and natural disasters, such as the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which emerged in 2003, the outbreak of bird flu (H5N1) that emerged in 2005, the tsunami that struck Southeast Asia in 2004, the hurricane Katrina which devastated several cities of the United States in 2005, the tsunami that struck Japan in 2011, among others;
- 3) Revolutions and wars, such as the conflicts that have occurred in several Arab countries since late 2010 (Arab Spring). These events originated strong negative impacts on the respective destinations. Paradoxically, they also stimulate demand for various types of meetings related to crisis management, support and assistance to local communities, among other reasons (Rogers, 2008).

Also, technological advances have affected Business Tourism. The development of satellite communications has allowed event participation and hosting remotely through videoconference, using communication tools at no cost or very low cost, such as Skype or VoIP. On the other hand, technological development allowed increasing the quality in

planning, organization and implementation of events, enabling, for example, promotion of events and registration over the Internet, wireless Internet access at the event and simultaneously translation at international events. According to Rogers (2008), the various venues for business events have invested in the installation of technological equipment to enable them to adapt to these new market trends. However, despite constant technological advances and the increasing number of online meetings, the human need for face-to-face meetings tends to predominate due to the socialization aspect, relational strengthening, rupture with daily life and opportunities of leisure and recreational activities posed to the participants (Graham, 2010; Rogers, 2008; Davidson, 2008; Ladkin, 2006). In this context, Rogers (2008) identifies social factors and work patterns as main influencers of Business Tourism. This author states that as increases the tendency for people to work from home, will also rise, by these people, the demand for conferences and other events, as a primary need for socialization and training. Also, some changes that occur in the business and commercial environment of the countries, such as mergers of enterprises, organizations and associations, can be reflected at the level of major events organization.

Ladkin (2006) explores the various changes in consumption patterns and trends that are taking place in Business Tourism. Technological development, as mentioned before in another perspective, here assumes another important role. The increase in online communication through social media and other digital tools can be important support elements for business meetings. Service providers, intermediaries and other stakeholders use technologies to make information available and to promote and market their products and services, making easier the process of choosing a destination or a specific venue for the event. Even the planning, organization and event management finds in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) important support tools that reduce operating costs. As such, these trends should lead to a greater need in the field of ICT by suppliers and intermediaries. This results in greater demand for qualified human resources in this area due to the need of structures and support equipment to be constantly updated with the latest technology to increase their competitiveness. At this point, it should be noted, once again, the growing importance of the CVBs and their efforts in strengthening the destination's image and identity where the relational marketing is particularly important to leverage and strengthen a relationship of trust and mutual benefit between supply and demand (Ladkin, 2006). Davidson (2008) also explores some key trends that have characterized the sector, namely:

- 1) Rise of emerging markets, as is the case of countries like China and India [which are part of the BRICS group - Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa], two of the economies with fastest growth in recent times, which have driven the demand side;
- 2) Greater awareness of the corporate sector regarding the quality-cost ratio observed by increasing competitiveness of destinations and venues, resulting in a greater negotiating strength by the corporate sector and consequently more advantages in terms of reducing costs while maintaining the required quality levels, which has led the trend to organize more events with tighter budgets per participant, resulting in a higher return on investment;

- 3) Increase in the proportion of women participating in business events, due to the growing number of positions held in management and administration that has been seen in recent years and that has caused changes also in terms of events organization, such as sanitary facilities [more toilets for women] and food [lighter and healthier food];
- 4) Higher age average of the participants, due to the aging population and the retirement age;
- 5) Trend observed in the associative sector, for the younger generations to give less importance to participation in face-to-face events, due to the strong influence that ICTs exercise in their daily lives;
- 6) Greater social responsibility on the part of the business sector, to the extent that more and more companies are sensitized to achieve their business goals while respecting the ethical, social, cultural and environmental values of the societies where they are located or where they operate.

Thus, more and more business events are organized considering the benefits that can contribute also to local populations (Davidson, 2008).

## 5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The concepts of work, free time and leisure changed over time, either in its forms or in its valuations by the societies. It was noted not only a valuation of time, space and leisure activities, but also a valuation of work itself. The development of economies and the globalization boosted business travel, originating the phenomenon we now understand as Business Tourism (or Meeting Industry) that is increasingly seen as a tourism segment with great potential for development (Marques & Santos, 2011). Low seasonality, controlled environmental impact, greater profitability of the rooms and other venues, higher occupancy rates, significant increases in the consumption of food and beverages, developing of leisure activities and relative resilience to the current economic crisis, are factors that make Business Tourism an attractive product to the destinations. It constitutes one of the most important segmentations of the tourism market (International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008<sup>1</sup>), proactive in a variety of activities that range from the specific equipment and structures, such as conference and exhibition centres, meeting rooms, accommodation, catering and transport, to the complementary activities related to cultural and sporting activities, small and large commerce, among others. Therefore, it is not surprising the growing attention that the various agents of destinations (public, private and public-private) have dedicated to this market, especially because this segment is very associated with the destination management and development processes, planning and definition of the tourism destination policy and this makes their presence a factor of competitiveness and sustainability. Thus, Business Tourism proves to

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1 The International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 (UNWTO, 2010) suggests the following classification of tourism trips according to main purpose: 1. Personal (Holidays, leisure and recreation; Visiting friends and relatives; Education and training; Health and medical care; Religion/pilgrimages; Shopping; Transit; Other); 2. Business and professional.

be of great strategic interest to the tourism development of the regions, especially those with differentiating tourism attractions. These attractions, together with the existing venues, regardless of their size, and the performance of a body responsible for the management of the supply associated with the Meetings Industry, may be of great importance for the development and strategic positioning of the territories along this segment. The presence of a CVB in Business Tourism destinations is thus very important because we are in the presence of an organizational structure which is specialized in the management of resources associated with the territory and in the development and promotion of the destination's image within this specific segment, trying to attract not only more meetings, conferences and other events, but also the largest possible number of visitors. All this considering the interaction and cooperation with the different stakeholders, the local communities and the influences of the environment to contribute to the sustainability and economic and social development of the regions.

We believe that this reflection around Business Tourism, contributed in a certain way to a better understand about this theme and reinforce the idea of Business Tourism potential, not only in big urban areas and large scale contexts, but also in territories with lower urban density and lower supply of facilities and services, especially in the case of smaller urban centres that are relatively near each other and may find interesting strategic advantages in joint action, in complementing each other in the integrated supply of tourism products, experiences, services and facilities

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