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Origin and consolidation of the hotel sector in the capital of Spanish tourism: San Sebastián between 1868 and 1914

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to study the origin and consolidation of the hotel industry in the city of San Sebastián, the tourism capital of Spain between the last third of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. During these years, modern tourism was born and a Spanish tourism system took shape. Thanks to the presence of the royal family and the so-called elite tourism, San Sebastián played a decisive role in the Spanish tourism panorama. Specifically, the evolution of the tourism industry is studied alongside the evolution of the tourism development experienced in this period. Therefore the evolution of the demand (number of visitors) and of the supply (number of establishments) are both contemplated.

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1. Introduction

From the end of the nineteenth century, San Sebastián became the capital of Spanish tourism (Larrinaga 1999; Walton and Smith 1994, 1996). Located on the European Atlantic coastline, this city benefited from a hygienist movement which, from the last third of the eighteenth century, implemented an initiative to improve a series of beaches from the Baltic Sea to the south of the Iberian Peninsula. This hygienist movement fundamentally sought to raise awareness about the importance of and high degree of influence that the social and environmental context had on the genesis and evolution of diseases. Due to the lack of sanitation in many industrial cities, the coastal destinations were elevated thanks to this movement (Alcaide 1999). In addition, many of these centers were also visited by royalty. This not only enhanced the reputation of these places but also set the tone in them (Boyer 2002, 27–28). Brighton in the United Kingdom or Biarritz in France were the most well-known cases, but not the only ones. In the case of Spain, different members of the royal family began to visit San Sebastián from the 1830s. Subsequently, Queen Isabel II chose it as her favorite place to bathe due to a skin complaint. In 1887, the queen regent Victoria Eugenia decided to build a palace in the city, imitating the previous actions of other royal families: the Royal Pavilion in Brighton or the Palais Royale in Biarritz. From then, San Sebastián became consolidated as the most important tourism center of the Spanish elite classes. Furthermore, its proximity to the French border opened the

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doors to a flow of international tourists at a time when Spain could not be defined as a tourism country as such. A tourism country was understood as one receiving a significant number of foreign tourists with a surplus in its tourism balance.

Nevertheless, Spain could, in fact, be considered as a tourism country, in the sense that tourism possibilities had begun to flourish and it was starting to experience certain tourism activity, both domestic and international. The potentialities of Spanish tourism resided in its historical cities, its monuments, beaches, mountains, etc., although the country still faced many obstacles to developing a tourism industry such as that enjoyed at that time by France, Switzerland or Italy, for example. The deficiencies in the hotel or transport industries undoubtedly constituted some of the more evident shortcomings referred to by the specialists of the day (Arcos 1909). However, from the beginning of the twentieth century, a first tourism system with different regional realities began to take shape in Spain. In this respect, San Sebastián was favored, not only by the presence of the royal family, but also by a better transport infrastructure than in the rest of Spain. The railway line between Madrid and Irún-Hendaya on the border with France had been completely finished by the summer of 1864. In addition, the major investments that the local authorities had made in the road network gave rise to a good connection with the interior of the peninsula and with France. This explains why San Sebastián played a predominant role in the shaping of the afore-mentioned tourism system with respect to other cities or regions of Spain.

The tourism system was composed of the destinations and tourism products, the market, the different agents and the tourism organization (Vallejo 2018, 85). Among the agents, we can refer to the tourists or consumers, the active tourism and inbound tourism associations, the government and the companies. With respect to the latter, it should be noted that, in the early years of the twentieth century, the private agents played a fundamental role in the supply of tourism services. This study focuses exclusively on the companies and accommodation entrepreneurs. Therefore, the objective of this article is to address the hotel sector during these years when the Spanish tourism system was formed. To do this, a case study is used, analyzing the origins and evolution of this sector in the capital of Spanish tourism, San Sebastián. It does not seek to analyze this evolution merely in quantitative terms, but to study the hotel supply as a response to an increase in tourism demand. It should be remembered that we are referring to principally family-run firms, in which ownership and management can be identified. Hence, the need to determine the principal entrepreneurs and their business strategies (from the location of their businesses to the incorporation of all kinds of technological innovations or extensions of their establishments). Precisely, one of the business strategies implemented in these years was the creation of the first organizations of accommodation entrepreneurs to defend their interests and to get their voices heard by the public authorities, as we shall explain later. We should also remember both the national and international context in which this occurred.

It should be noted that, in the last third of the nineteenth century, the hotel supply existing in Spain was not aimed at tourist consumption (Andrieux and Harismendy 2016). On the contrary, most of the accommodation establishments did not fulfil this function. In fact, only a few establishments satisfied the needs of tourists. Until the end of the nineteenth century, we can talk about several types of accommodation, although a new model began to emerge with force, namely the

hotel (James 2018; Lefevre 2011; Sandoval-Strausz 2007), which was very much in keeping with the bourgeois principles of the day (progress, innovation, individuality or hygiene, among others). Unlike the other types of the accommodation, hotels offered more amenities, a dining service and incorporated the latest technical advances. However, many of these hotels were designed for traders, civil servants, liberal professionals, etc., not so much for tourists. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, the tourist guides began to indicate the hotels most apt for tourists (Battilani 2007, 2016). These hotels were characterized by the incorporation of all kinds of novelties and services to ensure the comfort of the guests (Bowie 2018; Lapointe Guigoz 2011).

That said, it should be noted that the study of the hotel industry is necessarily linked to the study of the history of tourism (Walton 2009, 2010). Some years ago, John Walton claimed that the difficulty in finding primary sources meant that a sector as important as the hotel industry had been marginalized in tourism studies (Walton 2011). As we shall see in the following section, this is something that has begun to be corrected in recent years. Ultimately, when studying tourism, the most important primary trades are the passenger transport industry and the hotel and catering industry (Lickorish and Kershaw 1958, 3). Therefore, this article, which focuses on a case study, aspires to contribute to the debate on the sources and methods used to study the tourist hotel industry.

2. Materials and methods

One of the greatest problems in studying the hotel industry is the dispersion of sources and the absence of primary sources. In spite of this, it is true that we can find accounts of the history of some large hotels. This is the case of the Beau-Rivage Palace in Lausanne by Maillard (2008), the Hôtel Bellevue in Brussels by Jourdain (2008), the Grand Hôtel in Paris by Tessier (2012), the Hotel Grand Bretagne in Athens by Vlachos (2015) or Grand Hotel Vesuvio in Naples by Berrino (2022). That said, when seeking to study the evolution of the hotel sector on a local, regional or national level, the afore-mentioned dispersion of sources is usually a major impediment. Nevertheless, some works of reference are available. One now classic book in the history of the hotel industry in Great Britain is that of Borer (1972). This publication was a pioneer in its field. Based on a large number of sources, many of which were primary, it reconstructed the history of the British hotel industry over the long term. It is still an essential work of reference today. There are more recent studies that have decisively contributed to the study of the hotel sector in general. We can refer to the books by Lefevre and Andrieux and Harismendy, which, although concerned with the French case, offer highly interesting material on the evolution of the hotel sector in general (Andrieux and Harismendy 2016; Lefevre 2011). Undoubtedly, one of the works that has had most influence in the history of the hotel industry is that of Sandoval-Strausz (2007) on the history of the hotel sector in the United States. More recently, we can refer to the book by James (2018), which, as well as being an excellent contribution to the study of the hotel industry, has added to the debate on sources and methodology. Along these lines, we can also refer to the article by James et al. (2017). In my opinion, this is an extraordinary study, which not only analyses the problems related to methodology and sources, but also presents a state of the question on the history of the hotel industry in general. For the object of study of this article, it is worth mentioning

other case studies: Lesur's work on Paris (Lesur 2005), Girelli Bocci (2006) and Teodori's (2015) on Rome, Zanini's (2011) for Genoa, Jourdain's on Brussels (Jourdain 2012) or Kawamura's on Naples (Kawamura 2017) are of great interest.

In the Spanish case, the history of the hotel industry has begun to play a relevant role in recent years. Although there are still few academic studies in this respect, they make major contributions. This research has displaced the studies carried out by amateur researchers. A pioneer study on Madrid, the book by Gutiérrez Ronco (1984), constitutes an important contribution for this study as a good part of the research is based on the professional guides of the period under study. The same can be said of the book by Suárez Botas (2006) for Asturias. Meanwhile, Vallejo et al. (2016) and Larrinaga and Vallejo (2021) use financial sources in order to study the hotel sector in Spain in general and in Barcelona in particular, respectively. Furthermore, Arribas (2007) and Larrinaga (2018a) examine the hotel industry in Madrid at the beginning of the twentieth century, using the Companies Registry of Madrid, among other primary sources. These same sources have been used by Larrinaga (2018b) to study the luxury hotel industry in Spain in the first third of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, San Román (2017) accessed the archives of the hotel company Iberostar with excellent results. It is also worth mentioning two studies which, based on primary sources, particularly of an economic nature, have addressed the study of the hotel sector in Spain between 1900 and 1959 (Fernández-Paradas and Larrinaga 2021; Larrinaga 2021; Vallejo 2021a). They are three studies which take into account the different political contexts in which the hotel sector in Spain was immersed in these decades. Finally, Lindoso (2022) focuses on the Hotel Compostela of Galicia, based on primary sources mainly fiscal in nature.

Following the same lines as these academic studies, this article seeks to analyze in greater depth the history of the hotel industry in Spain based on a case study. To do this, it analyses a timeframe between the end of the nineteenth century and 1914, a period marked by the transition from the inn to the hotel. The sources used to reconstruct the hotel supply during these years are mostly qualitative. As there are no statistical series for these years, tourist and hotel guides have been consulted. The systematic analysis of these guides is not new, as they have already been successfully used in the study of the hotel industry in Italy, Spain or Madrid (Barke and Towner 1996; Battilani 2016; Gutiérrez Ronco 1984). In light of these three examples, we consider that these sources are ideal for our research. Specifically, several series of guides have been used. First, particularly valuable for our study is the guide *San Sebastián y sus alrededores*, which began to be published at the end of the nineteenth century and was printed until the 1930s. We can confirm that it was the longest series, although, unfortunately, we have not been able to locate it in its entirety. In any case, although all of the issues have not been consulted, we have been able to fill the gaps with other guides. For example, and in second place, with the *Guía ilustrada para el viajero en San Sebastián*. This is quite a long series which was printed until 1935. The first issue that we have been able to consult was published in 1911 and we have not been able to analyze the whole collection. We do know that it was the only guide subsidized by the City Council of San Sebastián, as indicated in the cover of the 1914 guide. A third group of guides were those that did not form part of a series, such as *Indicador general para el forastero* (1908); *Guía comercial de San Sebastián* (1912); and *Guipúzcoa en la mano* (1914). We have also used the Baedeker guide for Spain and Portugal for the years 1900 and 1908. Finally, in order to elaborate Figure 2, we have also consulted the *Guía oficial de San Sebastián y de la provincia*

de Guipúzcoa, which was published by the Centro Municipal de Propaganda e Información (Municipal Centre of Propaganda and Information), created in 1926 and which was in circulation until 1928, when the Centro de Atracción y Turismo (Attraction and Tourism Centre) was constituted, the successor of the former and which continued the same publishing work (Sada 1997, 59–75).

It is necessary to point out that when analyzing these guides in depth, apart from focusing on the lists of hotels, it is also very important to analyze the advertisements, as they inform us of the owner or director, of the amenities of the hotel, the type of cuisine offered (French and/or Spanish) in the case where it had a restaurant or its location with respect to the beach. All of these aspects are highly important for studying the formation and evolution of the hotel sector in the city. In this sense, the first guides allow us to follow the development of hotels within the context of the second half of the nineteenth century. We are able to compare the changes that took place, such as the growth of cities and their transportation networks (roads, railways, and steamships) with those occurring in 'modern' tourism, which we will analyze in the next section. The case of San Sebastián is ideal for analyzing this relationship between hotel development, urban expansion and modern tourism.

3. Modern tourism and the hotel industry

When we talk about modern tourism, we are referring to tourism that is characterized by the desire to travel for pleasure, the increase in the number of tourists and the development of a whole industry at their service (accommodation, transport, travel agencies, all kinds of entertainment, etc.) (Moreno 2022; Vallejo 2018, 68; Vallejo and Larrinaga 2018). At the beginning of the twentieth century, some authors of the time began to conceive tourism in this way, considering it as a new industry (Amengual 1903; Farges 1903). A few years later, a book was published that we can consider as a classic, *The Tourist Industry*, by Norval (1936). In greater depth and with accumulated experience, this author once again insisted on the idea of modern tourism as an industry that should be fostered due to the economic implications involved. It was not in vain that tourism began to be contemplated as a basic pillar of some national economies and even the international economy after the First World War (Clerget 1935; Ogilvie 1933; Trimbach 1938). In fact, it began to represent an increasingly larger share of the GDP of countries such as Italy or Switzerland, for example (Incerpi 2019).

It is true that in the Spanish case, tourism did not account for such a notable weight of the national economy, but it is no less true that in the early decades of the twentieth century, a modern tourism industry began to form in Spain. In this respect, Spain was not exempt from the cycles described for the rest of the European continent (Ogilvie 1933), even though the foreign tourist flows were smaller than those of countries such as Italy, Switzerland or France (Vallejo 2018, 2021b). As previously mentioned, Spain began to construct a first tourism system with regional differences. It was precisely from the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century when the foundations of the Spanish tourism industry were laid. During these years, the physical and human capital endowment and the tourism business fabric were expanded. This can be clearly observed in the hotel sector, in the network of tourism companies and associations and in the institutionalization of tourism policy (Lindoso 2022, 171). In fact, despite the regional differences, the

tourism industry was becoming increasingly robust over these decades. One of the epicenters of this industry was San Sebastián, which already had a clear tradition in tourism, given that it had been a tourist destination for the Spanish elite classes since the 1830s.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, apart from San Sebastián, other emerging tourist destinations were becoming more prominent and also had a hotel industry that was gaining increasing relevance. This was the case, for example, of Santander, also graced by the presence of the royal family and with characteristics that were very similar to those of San Sebastián: elite tourism and very high quality hotels (Larrinaga 2021, 55–78). However, it was not only the Cantabrian coast that stood out for the quality of its establishments as there are also good examples on the Mediterranean coast. For instance, the Grand Hotel in Palma de Mallorca was opened in 1903, which constituted the introduction of the ‘Ritz model’ in Spain (Vives 2005, 34–35). Meanwhile, Barcelona, as a large industrial and commercial city and a winter tourist destination, also had a high quality hotel supply (Larrinaga and Vallejo 2021; Rosselló and Valdía 2016).

While sea bathing for hygiene and therapeutic purposes was popular in the United Kingdom and other regions of the north Atlantic at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century, in the Spanish case, the first bathers, especially from Madrid, did not visit the Cantabrian coasts until the 1820s and 1830s. In particular, in the 1820s, San Sebastián became the favorite bathing spot for Madrid society (Aguirre 1995, 88–92). Therefore, San Sebastián came to form part of this sea bathing trend which was spreading along the whole of the European Atlantic coastline. This awakening of sea tourism in San Sebastián in particular and along the Cantabrian Coast in general, occurred somewhat later than in other countries of western Europe (Walton and Smith 1996). However, the improvements in land transport, both by road and rail, and the presence of different members of the royal family from the mid-nineteenth century favored the tourism activity of San Sebastián (Larrinaga 1999, 505–508).

This emerging tourism development occurred in parallel with the reality of marginalized and impoverished sectors, which was also occurring in other cities across the country. One of the main problems of San Sebastián during these years was its walls, as it was a stronghold. The interior of the city seemed constrained with a mottled assortment of dwellings that were beginning to suffer from serious hygiene problems. In this respect, the emergence of neighborhoods outside of the walls had not been able to mitigate the problem. In fact, the voices demanding the demolition of the walls to enable the expansion of the urban fabric were becoming increasingly insistent (Calvo Sánchez 1983, 35–43). Meanwhile, the beach was gaining importance: beach huts were becoming more popular, the regulations for separating the sexes and bathing times were reinforced, the bathing system was municipalized and new inns and accommodation establishments (predominantly owned by French hoteliers) opened their doors in the city (Luengo 1999, 44). Even so, it should be noted that many of these establishments were not designed for this emerging tourism market, but for the economic activity of the city (trade, industry, administration, etc.). The Baedeker guides of 1900 and 1908 indicated, for example, that in the Hotel Berdejo there was a predominance of business travelers. However, as we shall see later, the foundations of what we could call the tourist hotel sector had begun to be laid.

Obviously, the hotel sector constitutes one of the essential agents in any tourism system. In fact, without a sufficient accommodation infrastructure, it is difficult for a tourist destination to become consolidated. Hence, the enormous relevance of the role played by hotel entrepreneurs in the tourism market (Lickorish and Kershaw 1958, 3). According to a defender of tourism of the time, 'the hotel industry is one of the most advantageous industries for the nation: if we are able to improve it in Spain, it would constitute a true source of national wealth' (Arcos 1909, 22). In fact, the importance of the hotel industry aimed at tourists was reflected in the proliferation of congresses for hoteliers in different European cities, such as Toulouse in 1904 or Rome in 1908. Spain also played an active role and in 1907 the National Assembly of Innkeepers was held in Madrid, where precisely the Association of Innkeepers and Similar of Spain was created (1908). This was the first national association of its kind and its objective was to defend the interests of the hoteliers and innkeepers against the government and to initiate the modernization of the Spanish hotel supply. In other words, to promote investment in hotels in keeping with the times: 'Modernly constructed hotels', understood as 'clean, comfortable and hygienic hotels' (Arcos 1909, 25), incorporating the existing technical advances. This process had begun in San Sebastián two decades earlier, with the construction of the expansion of the city.

The documentation consulted makes no mention of the existence of an innkeepers' association in San Sebastián similar to that the one in Barcelona, for example, created in 1883 (*El Viajero*, July 1920, 1). The last third of the nineteenth century was marked by the Long Depression, and thus, the classical liberalism patterns were gradually abandoned and a new era of organized capital began. This situation did not only arise in industry or trade but also in the hotel sector. Hence, the first organizations of accommodation entrepreneurs emerged in Germany, France, the United States, Switzerland or Italy, for example (Teodori and Zanini 2012; Humair 2014a).

In Spain, which suffered a delay in terms of its economy and its tourism sector, this associationism only had any weight in Barcelona. It was precisely from this city that the promotion was carried out for the afore-mentioned National Assembly of Innkeepers to be held in Madrid. It is precisely in this city that The National Assembly of Innkeepers was held. Approximately one hundred of the most important hotel owners and innkeepers in Spain attended the event (*El Imparcial*, 17 March 1907, 2). From the topics discussed in the Assembly, we can deduce that at that time there was a true entrepreneurial spirit in the hotel sector in Spain, which felt the need to organize itself formally, share common problems in the sector, discuss ideal ways to resolve them and unite their interests in a corporation that enabled them to interact with a single voice with the Government, following the logic of the corporatism prevailing since the end of the nineteenth century. In this respect, some of its immediate objectives were to introduce changes in the Penal Code and in the Civil Code, to create an innkeepers' school and seek a greater promotion of tourism in Spain by the authorities.

In this regard, the greatest achievement of the Assembly was the constitution of the Association of Innkeepers and Similar of Spain. In fact, the draft statutes were proposed in the meeting and subsequently approved on 1 April 1908, with some modifications. The role of the Association, now formally constituted, was not only to defend the interests of the hotel sector, but also to improve the quality of the establishments and promote tourism in Spain. The organization of international tourism congresses in Zaragoza (1908),

San Sebastián (1909), Toulouse (1910), Lisbon (1911) and Madrid (1912) contributed to these objectives. In parallel, in November 1908, a congress for hoteliers and innkeepers was held in Rome to constitute the *Fédération des sociétés d'hôteliers et sociétés affiliées*. A total of 1,073 delegates from eleven European countries attended this congress, only two of whom were from Spain (Teodori and Zanini 2014, 203). Undoubtedly, it was a very low representation, but significant if we take into account that the Association of Innkeepers and Similar of Spain had only just been created.

In light of the objective of our study, these organizational origins of the hotel industry in Spain occurred precisely at a time when the number of hotels in San Sebastián was increasing and when tourism in this city was also experiencing considerable growth, coinciding with what we have called the first generation of accommodation entrepreneurs, which we will examine later. Without a doubt, these entrepreneurs saw the opportunity to defend their interests together with the rest of the businessmen in the sector in Spain as a whole. In fact, there is a record of the presence of several hoteliers from San Sebastián at the Assembly of 1907, although their names are not mentioned (*La Época*, 20 March 1907, 2). The Assembly and the Association constituted clear evidence of the muscle of the Spanish hotel industry.

4. From the Old Quarter to the expanded city. The pioneers of the hotel industry

The insistence of the local authorities in favor of eliminating the walls of San Sebastián bore its fruits. On 5 March 1863, the demolition works began, marking the start of a new stage in the city, characterized by the construction of its extension (Martín Ramos 2004), a phenomenon that was similar to those of other European cities, such as Paris, for example. In this way, the aspirations of the vital forces of the city were fulfilled. However, it was not long before a debate arose regarding the type of extension that was desired. In other words, a choice between city models had to be made, namely between either a trading-port city, in which infrastructures such as the railway and port were predominant or a more tertiary and service-based city, in which tourism could play a prominent role. Eventually, the second option was implemented as the port of San Sebastián was too small for it to be converted into a trading-industrial port and because the Bay of Pasajes was barely ten kilometers away. At the time, this bay was filled with mud deposits, although it had enormous possibilities to undertake this function as the industrial port of the province once the dredging and cleaning works were initiated, which they were. This was the option that was finally chosen, constituting a boost for tourism development in San Sebastián, which was in danger due to the poor urban and hygiene conditions of the city within the walls and, also to the desire of some traders and industrialists for their economic model of the city to prevail. After establishing the type of extension to be carried out, two events occurred which were particularly negative for local tourism: on the one hand, the serious economic crisis at the end of the 1860s, which culminated in the exile of Isabel II, who had bathed in the city and, on the other hand, the Second Carlist War, which interrupted the tourist flows, although they resumed again from 1876 once the conflict was over. In this respect, when María Cristina established her official summer residence in San Sebastián in the 1880s, a new tourism expansion phase began.

This stage was also determined by a greater supply of entertainment, as years before, the journalist and writer Ramón de Navarrete noted the following about San Sebastián: 'it is true that there is not a wide range of pleasures, the days are usually monotonous' (*Seminario Pintoresco Español*, 25, 18 June 1848, 194). There was, therefore, a need to find new amusements. It should be remembered that the distractions of the summer colony and the bourgeoisie of San Sebastian were limited almost exclusively to bathing, walking, cafés, get-togethers, the theater and bullfighting (Luengo 1999, 44). However, San Sebastián lacked one feature of the classical infrastructure of all the major spa resorts (thermal and coastal), namely a casino. Hence, from the mid-1860s, several initiatives were presented and two casinos were opened in 1869. The first was called Cursaal and was located in the Balda-Matheu palace on the bathing promenade (today, La Concha), and the second was in the Indo palace, in Oquendo street on the corner with Camino. When the roulette game was banned by a government order, both were closed in 1871 (Manterola 1871, 291–292). In any case, neither of these establishments was on the same level as those of Biarritz and other large tourist cities. Therefore, it was not until after the Second Carlist War that steps were taken to construct a much larger project: the Gran Casino of San Sebastián, which opened its doors on 1 July 1887. Its opening marked the beginning of the golden age of summer holidaying in San Sebastián. This new casino became the driver of the leisure and entertainment activities. In fact, during the summer season, the Gran Casino organized dances and concerts, but also different festivities and shows, such as bicycle races, bullfights, fencing courses, horse races, etc. Although, together with the Casino, the City Council also began to organize a series of leisure and sporting activities during August and September to attract the highest number of visitors possible (Luengo 1999, 70).

With the development of the city extension, conceived as a new part of the city adapted to the tastes of the bourgeoisie, the first hotels in the true sense of the word emerged. The hotel was created as an expression of a very specific lifestyle, that of the bourgeoisie, a class that sought to differentiate itself within society and did not take long to adopt a very unique way of traveling, namely tourism, with its resulting type of accommodation (Díaz López 2013, 69). Specifically, it was a hotel model closely linked to the major advances taking place in transport, thanks to the Industrial Revolution and its effects on mobility and, therefore, society as a whole (Sandoval-Strausz 2007, 3–9). In this case, we are referring to establishments that were highly influenced by the comfort features characteristic of the large foreign hotels (Harismendy 2016). Precisely, these hotels incorporated the main advances of the period (gas lighting, hot water, heating, individual bathrooms, electric lighting, lifts, telephone, etc.) (Humair et al. 2014b) to make the stay of their guests increasingly more comfortable. These hotels were constructed in 'the modern style' to which Carlos Arcos would refer years later, as previously mentioned.

In the case of San Sebastián, the extension of the city was an opportunity for the construction of these hotels. Unlike the inns and lodges in the Old Quarter or the neighborhood outside the walls called San Martín, new and luxurious buildings were constructed. Some of the former innkeepers disposed of their businesses and moved to the new part of the city, such as, for example Martín Ezcurra, Antonio Berdejo, Édouard Dupouy and François Estrade. In fact, one of the first hotel establishments of the extended part of the city was the Hotel del Cursaal, which, as previously mentioned, also had a casino. It opened in the summer of 1868, beside the La Concha beach, becoming,

years later, in 1881 the Hotel Inglés y de Inglaterra, which became a branch of the Gran Hotel de Londres (Delatte 1891), owned by Édouard Dupouy. In 1871, this French innkeeper bought the Fesser Palace, named after the financier who commissioned its construction for his personal residence and who transformed it into the Gran Hotel de Londres. In 1902, Dupouy bought the La Concha building (Peña 1987, 31) and transferred his business there, giving it the name Hotel de Londres y de Inglaterra. This was when the former Fesser Palace became the Hotel du Palais, opened on 1 July 1903. It was now managed by the same company that directed the Hotel du Palais in Biarritz, with Fernand Journeau being the manager in San Sebastián.

Meanwhile, on 15 May 1884, the Hotel Continental opposite the beach was opened. It was an initiative of the Basque banker based in Madrid, Agustín Galíndez. The building was leased first to Émile Lestgarens, then to Pierre Hourcade (1887) and finally to François Estrade (Gómez Beldarrain 2012, 29–30), who became the owner of the hotel at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1884, the Hotel de Francia opened its doors, owned by Albert Bonnehon, and also the Hotel Berdejo. Antonio Berdejo, a liberal exiled in Bordeaux, on his return to San Sebastián, ran an inn which was opened at least at the beginning of the 1860s in the neighborhood of San Martín. Estrade had also opened an inn in 1853 in a two-storey building very close to the beach (Aguirre 1995, 100, 110–111; Peña 1987, 15). At the end of the nineteenth century, the Hotel Internacional (of Francisco Ariño), the Hotel Arrese (Gómez Beldarrain 2012, 56–58) and the Hotel Central owned by Pantaleón Tremino all opened their doors (Guides Joanne, *Saint-Sébastien*, 12). This hotel soon changed hands to Plácido Carrión.

All of these accommodation ventures were undertaken by those whom we could call the pioneers of the hotel industry in San Sebastián. We are referring to local family-run establishments, which, in some cases, remained open for decades, as we shall see. Not only did they change their location, moving to the extended part of the city, but the businesses were also transformed in response to the new possibilities arising from tourism. Hence, they opted for new buildings, incorporating the new comfort technologies of the day (Bowie 2018). In this respect, we should emphasize that, from the mid-nineteenth century, a good part of the hotel establishments were in the hands of French businessmen or Spanish entrepreneurs who had resided in France, such as the aforementioned Antonio Berdejo and who introduced the good taste and gastronomy of that country in their establishments (Aguirre 1995, 100; Luengo 1999, 71). This is not insignificant, if we take into account that the majority of the foreign clients who visited Spain were French and at that time Spanish cuisine had a very bad reputation among foreigners, as we can observe in the travel guides of the day. Except in the cases of Martín Ezcurra and Antonio Berdejo, these pioneers ran their businesses themselves until the First World War.

These initiatives should be contextualized within the emergence of the first hotels in Spain. In Madrid, for example, the first establishment of this kind, the Hotel de París, was opened in August 1864 on the corner of the Puerta del Sol with the streets of Alcalá and the Carrera de San Jerónimo. Before its construction had been completed, it was leased to the Fallola brothers from Italy (Gutiérrez Ronco 1984, 62). Similarly to the case of San Sebastián, this early phase in the hotel sector in Madrid was characterized by the strong presence of foreign entrepreneurs, particularly French and Italian. This was also the case in Barcelona (Bignotti 1911) or Asturias (Suárez Botas 2006, 93–96), for example. As in Madrid, the Hotel Peninsular was also opened in Barcelona in 1864 (Rosselló and

Valdía 2016, 58). Later, with the Universal Exhibition of 1888, the Gran Hotel Internacional was built, marking the beginning of a period of the construction of large hotels that incorporated all kinds of technical and comfort innovations: the Gran Hotel Continental (1892), the Gran Hotel Ambos Mundos (1893) and the Gran Hotel Colón (1902) (Larrinaga and Vallejo 2021, 3–4; Rosselló and Valdía 2016, 48–65).

Within the context of the birth of this emerging hotel industry in San Sebastián, we should not forget that an area annexed to the beach was reserved in the extension of the city for a line of houses on the waterfront with back gardens. There is no doubt that these new hotel establishments located in the extended part of the city, close to the beaches and new leisure infrastructures, enjoyed considerable locational income advantages with respect to the inns and lodges existing in the Old Quarter of the city. Therefore, in the advertisements that they published in the tourist guides they often emphasized their location. From the end of the nineteenth century, and particularly in the first third of the twentieth century, the extended part of the city had become the best area to locate a large hotel. This can be observed in the hotel evolution in the city.

After all, San Sebastián had become the capital of summer holidaying. The presence of the royal family, particularly María Cristina, as previously mentioned, attracted aristocrats, politicians, diplomats and businessmen, giving an aristocratic tone to the city's summer season. Although many of these figures of high society stayed in private villas, owned by themselves or rented, the hotel supply with quality establishments and increasingly more sophisticated elements of comfort also accommodated many of these summer visitors.

5. Hotel evolution. From pioneers to the first generation

By the beginning of the twentieth century, we can confirm that the hotels were gaining reputation while the inns and lodges were falling into disrepute (Gutiérrez Ronco 1984, 45–46). During these years, the inn and the hotel diverged from one another and, as previously mentioned, in San Sebastián there was even a spatial disaggregation, whereby the new extended part of the city was reserved for hotels. The hotels offered more services and the inns were relegated to an inferior rank (Table 1). Therefore, in San Sebastián, at the beginning of the twentieth century there were already hotels visited by tourists. Specifically, the Hotel Londres, the Hotel Inglés, the Hotel Continental and the Ezcurra (Guides Joanne, *Saint-Sébastien*). Public limited hotel companies began to be constituted at the beginning of the century, coinciding with the investment boom at the turn of the century, driven partly by the repatriated capital of the last colonies which was also being invested in spa and hotel businesses. We should also remember the foreign capital that was invested in the Spanish hotel industry (Larrinaga 2021, 27–32). Taking the form of this public limited company, the Fomento de San Sebastián was constituted in 1902 (Companies Registry of San Sebastián, Sheet 431). This company was created with the backing of the City Council, which was interested in boosting tourism and summer holidaying in the city (Gárate and Martín Rudi 1995, 137). In fact, it was established by some of the most prominent members of the local bourgeoisie. The company was created to exploit a bullring and to construct a theater and a hotel, for which a capital of three million pesetas was established, divided into 5,900 series A shares at 500 pesetas and 500 series B shares at 100. With doubts about its location, it was eventually decided to construct it in Zurriola, on the mouth of the Urumea river, which had been duly

channeled. Exploiting the resulting esplanade, Fomento de San Sebastián chose this site for the construction of the hotel and theater, renouncing the bullring. The City Council accepted to transfer the land with the condition that the company build a palmarium, which, when finished, would belong to the municipality. Furthermore, the theater would also become property of the City Council seventy years after its opening. Fomento de San Sebastián accepted and the project was approved in 1903. However, the operations moved slowly and the company did not receive the land until 1908. The palmarium project was ruled out due to the high costs involved and it was then decided that the statutes of the company would be modified, restricting its activity to the construction of a theater and a hotel, the future Victoria Eugenia and María Cristina, both opened in July 1912 (Rodríguez Sorondo 1985, 159–163). In any event, this initiative must be contextualized within the framework of a period of strong growth of the hotel supply throughout the whole of Spain. This can be deduced from the statistics of the Contribución Industrial y Comercial (Industry and Commerce Tax Contribution) (Vallejo et al. 2016, 173).

Table 1. Most important hotels and owners in San Sebastián before 1914.

HOTEL	LOCATION	OWNER	NATIONALITY
Hotel Continental	Concha Prom.	François Estrade	French
Hotel Londres	Extended part of the city	Éduard Dupouy	French
Hotel de Inglaterra	Concha Prom.	Éduard Dupouy	French
Hotel Berdejo	Extended part of the city	Antonio Berdejo*	Spanish
Hotel Central	Old Quarter	Pataleón Tremino	Spanish
		Plácido Carrión	Spanish
Hotel du Palais**	Extended part of the city	Hôtel du Palais de Biarritz	French
Hotel Ezcurra	Extended part of the city	Widow and daughters of Ezcurra (1904)	Spanish
		Daughters of Ezcurra (1908)	
Hotel de France	Extended part of the city	Albert Bonnehon	French
Hotel de la Playa	Concha Prom.	Carlos Manes (1904)	Spanish
		Francisco Palacián (1908)	Spanish
Hotel Albéniz	Extended part of the city	Jualán Albéniz	Spanish
		Víctor Erro Graz ¿?***	Spanish
Family Hotel	Extended part of the city	Mr. Betbédé	French
Hotel de París	Extended part of the city	Isidoro Sesma	Spanish
Hotel La Perla	Extended part of the city		
Hotel Arana	Extended part of the city	Hermanos Arana	Spanish
Hotel Internacional****	Extended part of the city		
Hotel Biarritz	Extended part of the city	Juana Eguren	Spanish
Hotel Úrsula	Extended part of the city	Ricardo Ezcurdia	Spanish
Hotel Méjico	Boulevard	Benigno Ruiz de Galarreta	Spanish
Hotel La Urbana	Extended part of the city		
Hotel María Cristina	Extended part of the city	Fomento de San Sebastián, S.A.	Spanish
Hotel Aramendi	Extended part of the city	Francisco Aramendi	Spanish
Hotel Reina Victoria	Extended part of the city		
Hotel Niza	Concha Prom.	Juana Eguren	Spanish
Hotel Hispano-americano	Extended part of the city	Martín Altuna	Spanish
Hotel Fombellida	Extended part of the city	T. Fombellida	Spanish

These hotels were considered the most important due to the category of the services that they offered to their guests, according to the hotel guides that we have analyzed.

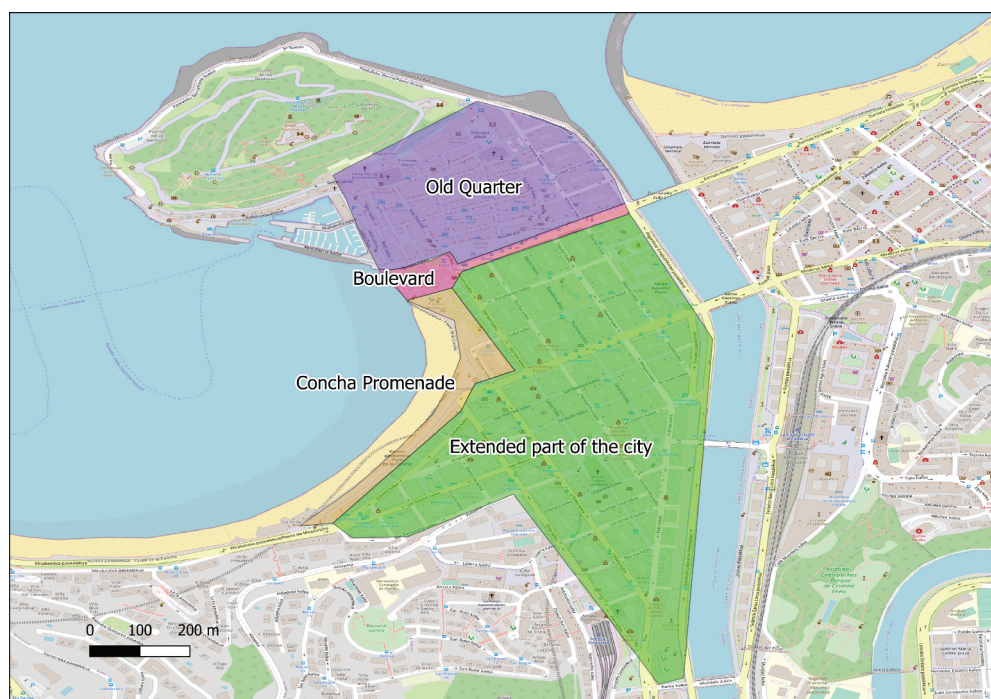
*Date of death unknown.

**The Hotel du Palais was established in 1903 on the site of the Hotel de Londres. From this moment, the former Hotel de Inglaterra became known as the Hotel de Londres y de Inglaterra.

***We do not know the exact date when this hotel was built.

****The Hotel Internacional was replaced by the Hotel Europa.

Source: see text. Own elaboration.



Map 1. Location of the most important hotels in San Sebastián before 1914.

As already mentioned, from the end of the nineteenth century, the hotel establishments were frequently housed in buildings in the extended part of the city. The most highly demanded spaces were the Concha Promenade and the corner plots where a hotel could have two facades. The construction of these installations required large capital investments, although the public limited company was an exception, with a predominance of family businesses, a reality similar to the case of, for example, Italy (Battilani 2016). For this reason, the owners were usually also the directors of the establishments. In only a few cases were the owner and management separate. The Hotel Niza, as we shall see later, was one of these cases. This was also true of the Hotel María Cristina, although it was a public limited company not a family-run company.

Some of the family-run accommodation firms even remained in the same family for many generations with all family members engaged in the business. An example is the Ezcurra family. Lorenzo Ezcurra and his wife María Manuela Irazoqui opened their inn in 1843 in the Old Quarter of San Sebastián (Peña 1987, 18). From 1855, their son Martín Ezcurra directed the inn (Aguirre 1995, 126). In 1870, he transferred the business to the new extended part of the city (Peña 1987, 18). Meanwhile, his sister, Ignacia, continued with the inn under the name La Estrella. We do not know the year of Martín's death, but by 1898 his widow and daughters appeared as the owners of the business (Guides Joanne, *Saint-Sébastien*, 11). In 1906, the architect Ramón Cortázar extensively renovated the hotel in order to modernize it after more than three decades in operation. The works took eight months to complete and it opened its doors on 24 June 1907 (Gómez Beldarrain 2012, 22). The following year, the daughters of Martín Ezcurra (*Indicador* 1908, 4) appeared as the

sole owners and they continued with the business until 1924 (*Guía* 1924, 74), when the Hotel Ezcurra was bought by the owners of the Hotel Central. In 1926, the name of the owner was Vda. de Carrión y cía (*Guía* 1926, 41).

Víctor Erro Graz was also a prominent innkeeper. He was born into a family from Navarre with a long tradition in innkeeping. Víctor and his sister Ignacia were the children of Miguel Erro and Teresa Graz (<file:///C:/Users/Carlos/Downloads/Dialnet-SanferminesDeSarasateEnLaPerla-7,610,122pdf>, 4). Under the business name of Miguel Erro y Compañía, Fonda La Perla opened its doors in 1881 in the center of Pamplona, at number 9 of the Plaza de la Constitución (or Plaza del Castillo) (<http://www.granhotella-perlablog.com/2013/06/comidas-3-pesetas-en-la-fonda-la-perla.html>). Miguel Erro, who had worked as a chef in Casa Alzugaray in Pamplona, married Teresa Graz from Burguete where her family ran the Fonda Graz. With experience in the sector, they joined Silvestre Ripalda to form the company Miguel Erro y Compañía and establish a new inn. It only operated for a few months there and was quickly transferred to number 1 of the same square where they leased almost the whole of the four storeys of the building from the Arraiza family. On 15 December of the same year, the company was dissolved and the business remained entirely in the hands of the Erro-Graz family. The close ties that Teresa Graz's family had with Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port enabled her to supply the restaurant with exquisite French products which converted La Perla into a renowned high quality and prestigious restaurant in just a few years. That said, a few years after its establishment, two events occurred that were particularly detrimental to La Perla. First, in 1884, the establishment was partly burnt which required the repair of the fire damaged parts and the restructuring of the whole of the inside of the building. By then, Miguel Erro and Teresa Graz had bought the whole of the building. Second, in 1885, a cholera epidemic, which was particularly virulent in Navarre, caused the death of Miguel Erro, who died in the Betelu spa, then under his management. This tragic event did not deter Teresa Graz, who, with the help of her sister-in-law Micaela Erro, decided to continue with the business, although from 1 January 1888 it was renamed as Hotel La Perla.

Víctor Erro Graz continued the family tradition and it may be assumed that a good part of his training was acquired within the family business. He inherited the Hotel La Perla and later expanded the business to San Sebastián. Taking into account the relevance of this city in the Spanish tourism panorama, it is not surprising that Victor Erro took over the Gran Hotel Restaurant Albéniz, in the heart of the extended part of the city. The exact date of its opening is unknown, but by 1905 it was already operating under the ownership of Julián Albéniz (*El Viajero*, July 1908, 1). In October of the same year, advertisements began to be published regarding the transfer of the Hotel Albéniz of Tudela. In these advertisements the Hotel Albéniz of San Sebastián was cited as a source of more information. Therefore, it may be assumed that the two establishments were then under the same management (*El Eco de Navarra*, 22 October 1905, 4). We do not know when Víctor Erro became the owner of this hotel, but, it was in 1915 at the very latest (*Industria e Invenciones*, 12 June 1915, 264).

A similar case is that of Juana Eguren, born in 1871 in a hamlet in Villarreal de Urrechua (Guipúzcoa) and who also came from a family that ran an accommodation business, specifically, the Hotel Paraíso of Zumárraga. Therefore, we can assume that she learnt about the business by working in this establishment. This is where she must have acquired the knowledge necessary to run the business (<https://www.noti>

ciascidenavarra.com/actualidad/sociedad/2021/08/23/caserio-urretxu-abrir-hoteles-biarritz/1175188.html). In 1891, Juana Eguren married Juan Pedro Juantegui Olano in Zumárraga (DEAH/F06.163//3329/001-01(f.80 r,nº17/M,28 November 1891), with whom she had four children. They moved to San Sebastián at the beginning of the twentieth century. Juana Eguren is a clear case of a hotel entrepreneur. She founded the Hotel Biarritz in 1906 in the heart of the new extended part of the city (Gómez Beldarrain 2012, 59). However, subsequently she bought the stables of the Hotel Continental Palace, located close to the La Concha beach and this is where she established the new Hotel Biarritz (<https://www.noticiasdenavarra.com/actualidad/sociedad/2021/08/23/caserio-urretxu-abrir-hoteles-biarritz/1175188.html>). Furthermore, in 1908, she bought a villa on the beachfront (where the Hotel de la Playa y Bella Vista was located) and transformed it into the Hotel Niza, which opened in July 1911 (Gómez Beldarrain 2012, 59). However, the establishment was managed by her niece María Luisa Álvaro, so that Juana Eguren could focus principally on managing the Hotel Biarritz (<https://www.hotelniza.com/historia/>). Juana Eguren and her niece were not isolated cases of women managers of accommodation businesses in San Sebastián, as we shall see. Although they were in the minority, women played a prominent role in the hotel industry at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. This was not new as there are similar cases in other well-studied countries, such as England (Walton 1978) or Italy (Battilani and Bagnaresi 2022).

All of these afore-mentioned pioneers and others were joined from 1908 by new entrepreneurs in the sector who formed the first generation of accommodation entrepreneurs who saw in the hotel sector a profitable business at a time when the summer visitors to San Sebastián were increasing. This increase in demand (Figure 1) led to a response in the supply. Peak demand was reached in 1906–1908 and was not exceeded again until 1919–1920. These figures only refer to the months of July, August and September, that is, to the demand most closely related to tourism. However, we should not forget that San Sebastián was also an important, trading, industrial and administrative city (Larrinaga 1999), so it is reasonable to assume that the hotel business also covered non-tourist demand for a good part of the year. Therefore, although the data in Figure 2 are fragmented, we can observe, first, an increase in the number of hotels between 1900 and 1908, followed by a further increase in 1912, since the prospects for improving the business were good (Gárate and Martín Rudi 1995, 272–275), which would be confirmed in the years immediately before the First World War. This increase in hotel supply was clearly dominated by companies run by families who, mostly either came from the accommodation business (as in the cases analyzed above) or had obtained sufficient capital to form their own businesses by working in the sector for other entrepreneurs. This was the case of Mr. Betbédé, who had been the head chef of the Hotel Gassion in Pau (France) (Gómez Beldarrain 2012, 66) and who, with the capital obtained, established the Family Hotel in San Sebastián (Baedeker 1908, 10). This, undoubtedly, constitutes a clear example of social mobility. Moreover, we should also remember the repatriation of capital from America. We know the case of the Pamplona-born Benigno Ruiz de Galarreta, who made money in America and on his return to Spain decided to establish the Hotel Méjico in San Sebastián, opened in July 1911 (*Novedades*, 9 August).

As we have already mentioned, these first hotel entrepreneurs were, on the whole, owners and managers of their own establishments. Therefore, as the majority of the

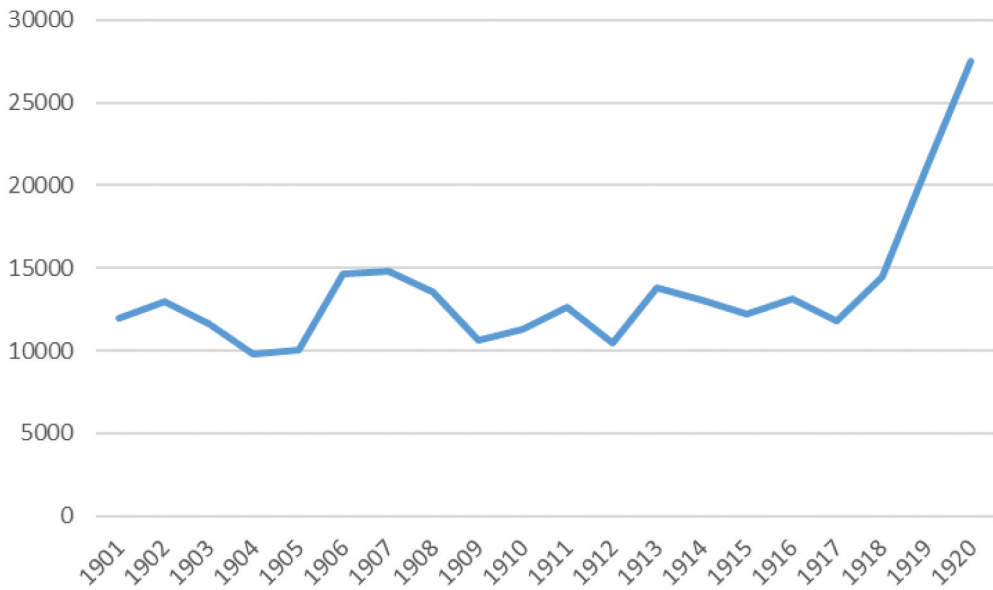


Figure 1. Average floating population in the months of July, August and September between 1901 and 1925. * Floating population: the people on holiday in the city of San Sebastián during the three afore-mentioned summer months. **Unlike the Mediterranean, which became a winter tourist destination, it should be noted that San Sebastián was predominantly a summer destination. Source: Anabitarte (1971), 210. Own elaboration.

hotels were family-run businesses, the staff working in them were mostly local. It should be taken into account that as San Sebastián was an important trading and tourist city from the 1830s it had a prominent hotel tradition, so the technical staff were fundamentally local, save for the exceptions mentioned in this study. It is true that Italian labor, for example, was abundant in the Spanish hotel sector prior to the First World War (particularly in Barcelona), but this was not the case of San Sebastián (Bignotti, 1911; Touring Club Italiano 1923, 31).

In the majority of cases, each owner possessed one hotel establishment although the first hotel chains had also begun to emerge in this period. In the Spanish case, there is evidence of them from the end of the nineteenth century (Larrinaga 2018b, 699). In fact, at least by 1912, in addition to owning an establishment in San Sebastián, the Arana Brothers also had hotels in Bilbao and Zaragoza (*Guía* 1912, 23). Unfortunately, we do not know where the capital came from, although we do know that by 1908 there was a Hotel Arana in San Sebastián (Baedeker 1980, 10).

However, contrary to this predominant family business model, we have also referred to the construction of the Hotel María Cristina by the public limited company Fomento de San Sebastián, which, as mentioned, not only built this hotel but also the Victoria Eugenia theater. Therefore, with the erection of these two buildings, a high quality urban space was generated beside the mouth of the river. This hotel became one of the most

prestigious accommodation establishments in Spain of the time, on the same level as the large luxury hotels in Madrid, namely the Ritz and the Palace. In this case, the Hotel María Cristina was not managed by Fomento de San Sebastián, but by a company specialized in hotel management. This operating company, the Sociedad de Explotación del Hotel María Cristina de San Sebastián (España), was recorded in the Companies Registry of San Sebastián on 4 January 1911 (Sheet 792).

This company was founded by Fernand Journeau Denis, an innkeeper based in San Sebastián and Pierre Darricades Hour de Caigt Larrusse, a hotel director based in the French spa town of Salies-de-Béarn, in the Pyrenees. They established a capital of 350,000 pesetas, divided into 700 shares, while at the same time creating 300 bonds with an interest of 5% of 500 pesetas each. These shares and bonds were delivered and released to Journeau in exchange for contributing to the company the lease contract of the Hotel María Cristina signed with the Sociedad de Fomento de San Sebastián, its furniture and operating equipment (with a value of 500,000 pesetas) and the contracts to be established for wine and liquor. The principal purpose of this company was the management of this hotel, although its corporate objective also contemplated the possibility of managing villas, cafés and restaurants and establishments related to the hotel and the purchase or lease of land and constructions or the participation in companies for retail, industrial or financial operations. Due to the need to secure more capital for the company, on 1 July 1912, a few days before the hotel was opened (9 July 1912), the company issued 200 bearer bonds of 500 nominal pesetas each with a total value of 100,000 pesetas at an annual interest rate of 5% and amortized in six years by the drawing of lots. The hotel was managed by two professionals in the sector. Specifically, as already mentioned, in 1903, Journeau had taken over the management of the Hotel du Palais, one of the most important establishments in the city. Therefore, he was a person with extensive experience and who knew the Spanish tourism market perfectly.

In the period in which elite tourism (characterized by the presence of aristocrats, large proprietors and the high bourgeoisie of trade, industry and finance) predominated in the city, apart from the initial set-up costs to create the hotels, these accommodation entrepreneurs had to make continual investments in maintenance or even extensions of their facilities. The renovations and improvements in comfort were the order of the day so as to maintain the quality of the service. It is true that some hotels were newly created, but in other cases, as already mentioned, they dated back to the last third of the nineteenth century. Therefore, at the turn of the century it was necessary to introduce improvements, particularly those of a technical nature. For example, in 1901, the Hotel Inglés y de Inglaterra decided to install a lift, build a fourth floor with a sloping roof and a spacious terrace beside the beach. Years later, in 1915, the establishment was completely refurbished (Gómez Beldarrain 2012, 36–37). A change of ownership or management of a hotel establishment was usually accompanied by reforms. This was the case of the reconversion of the Hotel de Londres into the Hotel du Palais in 1903 as its management had changed hands to the company that managed the Hotel Palais de Biarritz. The idea was to mark the

difference with respect to the previous owner, Édouard Dupouy (Peña 1987, 29–30). Moreover, when François Estrade became the owner of the Hotel Continental, renovation works were carried out in 1904 and 1905 under the direction of the architect Francisco Urcola (Gómez Beldarrain 2012, 33). Furthermore, in 1908, when Juana Eguren bought the villa in which the Hotel de la Playa y Bella Vista was housed, she completely refurbished it to open the Hotel Niza in 1911 (Gómez Beldarrain 2012, 59).

Another reason for undertaking renovations in the hotels was the alteration in the ownership or management of the business. For example, after the death of Martín Ezcurra, his widow and daughters, then owners of the hotel, commissioned the architect Ramón Cortázar to renovate the establishment in 1906. In addition to gaining light and ventilation and remodeling some of the spaces, a lift was also installed and bathrooms were incorporated into the principal rooms. After eight months of reforms, the Hotel Ezcurra reopened on 24 June 1907 (Gómez Beldarrain 2012, 22). Furthermore, an extension also implied several transformations in a hotel establishment. We know, for example, that the Gran Hotel Continental, one of the best in the city, located on the Concha Promenade, was considerably extended in 1913, doubling its capacity, although without affecting the comfort that characterized it in any way (*San Sebastián y sus alrededores* 1913, 51).

Another characteristic to take into account in this early formation of the hotel industry of San Sebastián is the continuity of the accommodation business in the same building, although with different names, and, in general, with different owners. There could be several causes for this, namely: that the building was leased and, therefore, was not the property of the owner of the hotel; that a more appropriate location was sought to better exploit income advantages derived from location and implement a different sales strategy; or generational changes had occurred in the business. The Hotel Central was housed in the same building in which, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Parador Real had been installed, in the Old Quarter of the city. Meanwhile, the Hotel Berdejo, which was initially located opposite La Concha, was transferred to a building in the extended part of the city in the mid-1890s (7 Guetaria Street) which had previously housed the Hotel Internacional of Francisco Ariño. Years later, in the same building, Xavier Lafitte opened the Hotel Suisse in 1916. In the 1920s, the Hotel Regina was established in the same building. However, without a doubt, one of the most remarkable cases is that of the building at 8 Guetaria Street. This was where Juana Eguren originally opened the Hotel Biarritz, as previously mentioned. In 1912, it was home to the Hotel Robinson and two years later to the Hotel Fombellida (owned by T. Fombellida). In 1916, it changed its name to Hotel Roma but had the same owner. In the 1920s it became known as the Hotel Excelsior and was owned by Arriaga and Yurrita. Finally, another example is the Hotel Internacional, which was established in a newly constructed building in 1907 in the extended part of the city and had a lift. Subsequently, in 1909, this building became the home to the Hotel Reina Victoria and years later, in 1914 to the Hotel Europa de Eleuterio Arana (Gómez Beldarrain 2012, 64; *Guipúzcoa en la mano* 1914, 125).

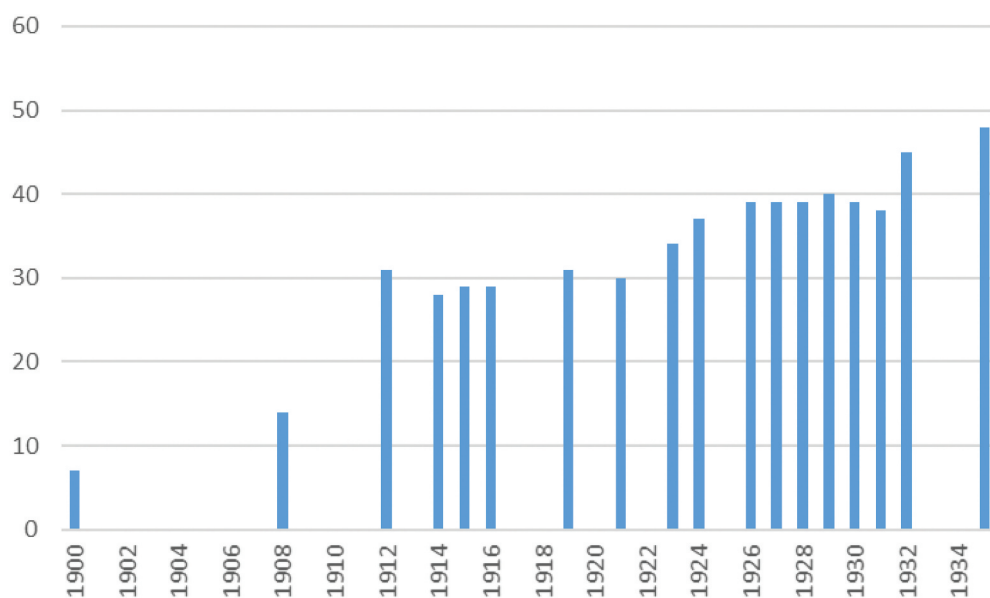


Figure 2. Hotels in San Sebastián, 1900–1935. Source: see [section 2](#). Own elaboration.

Although the chronology of this article ends in the mid-1910s, this graph is included to provide a better perspective of the evolution of the hotel sector in San Sebastián. The data are somewhat fragmented, but we can observe a first expansion phase of the hotels until the eve of the First World War. It is true that, between 1908 and 1912, when the aforementioned pioneers were joined by the first generation of hoteliers, a remarkable increase in the number of hotels took place, but not as much as that reflected in the graph. The figure of 1912 has been taken from *La guía comercial de San Sebastián* of that year, but despite the refinement that we have made, we believe that the data provide are not exact, with a certain level of confusion between hotels, inns and restaurants, leading to overrepresentation. We believe that the figure is exaggerated and, based on a study of the rest of the available guides, the number of hotels may possibly have been under thirty. There was, therefore, an expansion of the hotel sector, but less marked than indicated in the source and graph. Therefore, the difference between the number of hotels in 1912 and 1914 should be, in fact, very small.

6. Conclusions

Among the different actors that participated in shaping a tourism system, the private agents played a decisive role. In this article we have sought to focus on the hotel entrepreneurs, analyzing the origins and the consolidation of a hotel industry, which was already fully established at the time of the First World War. Therefore, at that time very robust bases had already been laid for the development of the sector in the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s, until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936. To do this, we have carried out a case study on San Sebastián between 1868 and 1914. This city, on the shores of the Cantabrian sea, had been developing a tourism activity worthy of mention from the 1820s, although it was not until the 1860s and particularly from the 1880s that this activity

became more consolidated as the royal family chose it as a place to spend the summer. The presence of royalty gave rise to the arrival of many visitors, not only from Spain but also from abroad. Therefore, the hotel supply had to respond to this increase in demand. It was precisely at this time when a true tourist hotel industry began to consolidate, located in the urban space of the extended part of the city and close to the beach. The establishments immediately incorporated the different technical advances in order to enhance their comfort.

Many of the first entrepreneurs were French innkeepers or had been trained in France. At the turn of the century, these pioneers were joined by members of the first generation of entrepreneurs, mainly Spaniards, among whom women were no exception and who, as in other areas of Europe, also played a relevant role. On the whole, the establishments were family-run businesses and we can only refer to public limited companies in a very few cases. Therefore, the owner and manager were more often than not the same person. It was fairly common for these businesses to remain in the hands of the same family, giving rise to true family sagas. In this way, this first generation of hotel entrepreneurs who began to forge the industry a few years before the outbreak of the First World War paved the way for other entrepreneurs, greater in number, who entered the accommodation business in the 1920s and 1930s, at the time of a significant expansion of tourism demand in San Sebastián.

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