Branding and Marketing Practices in Spiritual Services:
The Monastery of Guadalupe

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Abstract

This paper explores how brands are created and managed in the service sector by looking at the spiritual services provided, in the late Middle Ages, by the wealthiest shrine in the Iberian Peninsula at that time, the Monastery of Guadalupe. Only a few years after the Hieronymites took it over in 1389, it had become a large holding of enterprises devoted to agriculture, stockbreeding, crafts, and charitable and spiritual services (Llopis 1998). We argue that the Hieronymites, which activities were legitimate by the Spanish Monarchy and the Church, were able to pioneerly develop a brand on spiritual services around the icon of Saint Mary of Guadalupe. The successful exploitation of this brand served as the financial basis for the ulterior expansion in other economic areas. Our research, therefore, contributes to business history exploring early forms of brands, examining how brands are created and endorsed in the service sector and, finally, discussing how brands are imprinted by narratives and collective stories.

This paper explores how brands are created and managed in the service sector. It does so by looking at the spiritual services provided, in the late Middle Ages, by the Hieronymite Monastery of Saint Mary of Guadalupe, in southwestern Spain. Only a few years after the foundation of the Monastery in 1389, on the basis of an already well-known shrine, it became a sort of large holding of enterprises devoted to agriculture, stockbreeding, crafts, and charitable and spiritual services, which was cleverly managed by a highly-qualified ecclesiastical staff (Llopis, 1995 and 1998). The economic rise of the monastery, which lasted for more than one century and a half, rested on the exploitation of a powerful intangible asset: The wordship of the Blessed Virgin (Saint Mary of Guadalupe) and all the spiritual services and miracles associated with it. By the early 15th century, Guadalupe was the most popular Marian destination in the Spanish Peninsula, being even ahead the renowned pilgrimage site of Santiago of Compostela.

In this paper, we examine the marketing strategies developed by the hieronymite order to encourage pilgrimage to Guadalupe. We argue that the Hieronymites, supported by

the Spanish Monarchy and the Church (who acted as endorsers as trademark regulation does today) were able to pioneerly develop a "brand" on spiritual services around the icon of Our Lady.[1] These spiritual services consisted on protection against misfortune and miracles to remedy disgrace. The successful exploitation of the Guadalupan brand served as the financial basis for the ulterior expansion in other economic areas.

Marketing literature offers many, more or less comprehensive, definitions of what a brand is. A benchmark explanation might be a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, develop by an organization to differentiate its goods or services from those of competition (Lopes 2007, p. 5; Keller 2000, p. 30). Brands' attractiveness and, therefore, success against competition, depend on their reputation, what is the outcome of a process of endorsement (Kobrak 2013; Lopes 2016, p. 458). Institutions and firms can endorse brands directly, e.g. associating their brands to leading figures of the organization, or through third-party certifications (Lopes 2016, p. 459). Consumer's perceptions about brands connections with certain values (like high quality or honesty) can also act as a sort of indirect endorsement (Lopes 2016, p. 459). Branding, furthermore, also occurs "through the creation of stories or myths surrounding a product or service" which are conveyed into advertising and marketing strategies to position a product or service in the consumer's mind (Einstein 2008, p. 12).

Branding research has been traditionally associated with physical goods, but the basics of branding products and services are quite similar at a conceptual level (Turley & Moor 1995). At an operational level, however, some differences arose mainly because of the intangible and perishable nature of services (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry 1985; Chernatony & Dall'Olmo 1999). So, for instance, quality control is more difficult than in the case of goods, as well as trying to guarantee that consumers' experience matches their initial expectations (Moorthi 2002). Services are, furthermore, produced and consumed simultaneously, so the location of the service product acquires a great relevance (Moorthi 2002).

Spiritual tourism, that is, tourism motivated by faith and which implies an emotional journey, is catching an increasing attention among tourism management scholars and organizations (Jackowski & Smith 1992, Olsen 2003, Sharply & Sundram 2005, Dallen, Timonthy & Olsen 2006, Blomfield 2009, Haq & Wong 2010, WTO 2015, Stolz & Usunier 2018).[2] Spiritual tourism, as well as religious and spiritual services in general, is

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[1] The icon is a simple, rustic Romanesque statue from the late 12th century which was later blackened (Montes 1979, pp. 266-276). Because of the later, it was also known as "The Little Brunette of Villuercas".

[2] Since 2014, the World Trade Organization has organized four international congresses on religious tourism and pilgrimage within the Regional Programme for Europe. Information available at http://ethics.unwto.org/event/1st-unwto-international-congress-tourism-pilgrimages (17-20 September 2014, Santiago de Compostela, Spain); http://europe.unwto.org/event/international-conference-

subjected to various types of marketing strategies, including branding (Haq & Wong 2010, Stolz & Usunier 2018). Well-known pilgrims' destinations, like Lourdes and Santiago de Compostela, have been for instance successfully branded through promotional campaigns, among other strategies (Tilson 2005, Einstein 2008, Stolz & Usunier 2018). As marketing scholars argue, most religions offer the same benefit (e.g. salvation, peacefulness), so the only way to differentiate one religion from the rest is through a differentiated service and all the symbols associated with it (Einstein 2008, p. 13).

Marketing scholars have also segmented religious tourists (Finney, Orwig & Spake 2009; Haq & Wong 2013). Authenticity, for instance, is the key for attracting pilgrims, as they are truly looking for a connection with something that they feel real and rooted within the destination –hence the connection with an "spiritual experience" (Finney, Orwig & Spake 2009). Other religious tourism might be just motivated, for example, by the cultural heritage associated with the tourist site (Sharply & Sundram 2005; Finney, Orwig & Spake 2009). Usunier (2014) and Stolz and Usunier (2018) have recently applied the so-called "4Ps of marketing" or four principles of marketing (Product, Price, Promotion, Place) to religious services.[3] That is, they provide illustrative examples to describe the product (service) offered, the direct or shadow price (like membership fees) assigned to it, the promotional tools launched and the characteristics of the places where the product is delivered.

Pilgrimage in history has been extensively studied by historians, particularly for the Middle Ages (Nolan & Nolan 1992, Birch 2000, Webb 2007, González Paz 2010, Whalen 2011, Dyas 2015).[4] In the Medieval Christian world, there were three major pilgrimage destinations, Jesuralem, Rome, and Santiago de Compostela (Melczer 2008). The latter, in north-western Spain and the alleged resting place of St. James the Greater's bones, was the most popular between the 11th and 13th centuries (Melczer 2008), what explains the attention it has received by scholarship (Dunn & Davidson 1996, Graham & Murray 1997, González Paz 2010). But there were other popular sites among pilgrims in Medieval Europe. Regarding Marian shrines, we can include, apart from the Sanctuary of Guadalupe, the *Santissima Annunziata* (Most Holy Annunciation) in Florence, *Notre-Dame de Rocamadour* (Our Lady of Rocamadour) in Rocamadour (France) and the Santa Casa di Loreto (Holy House of Loreto) in Loreto, Italy (Moroni 2000). None of them,

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religious-heritage-and-tourism-types-trends-and-challenges (27-28 November 2014, Elche, Spain); http://europe.unwto.org/event/conference-religious-heritage-and-tourism-how-increase-religious-heritage-tourism-changing-soc (5-7 October 2016, Utrech, The Netherlands); and http://europe.unwto.org/event/international-congress-religious-tourism-and-pilgrimage (22-23 November 2017, Fátima, Portugal).

[3] In this "marketing mix", today marketers increasingly add three additional elements (people, process and physical evidence).

[4] See the ongoing research project on Pilgrimage and England's Cathedrals led by Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture at the University of York (http://www.christianityandculture.org.uk/research/pilgrimage-and-englands-cathedrals).

however, seems to have been so successful managing spiritual services as the Hieronymites of Guadalupe were in the period here studied.[5] Literature on pilgrimage, by the way, has focused on religious and cultural aspects rather than in the economic and management strategies followed by the orders in charge of running pilgrimage sites.[6]

The history of branding, on the other hand, has focused on commodities.[7] Looking for the origins of this marketing practice, historians have gone back to the guild activity (Belfanti 2017, Bastos & Levy 2012, De Munck 2012, Maitte 2009, Richardson 2008, Wengrow 2008), with the exception of Moore & Reid (2008), who includes even Anquity. And a new wave of branding research is looking at how narratives, and history in general, are used to associate brands with certain and unique values and perceptions (Mordhost 2014, Belfanti 2015, Pinchera & Rinallo 2017).[8] Our research, therefore, aims to contribute to the business history scholarship in three ways: Exploring early forms of brands, examining how brands are created and endorsed in the service sector and, finally, discussing how brands are imprinted by narratives and collective stories.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we explain the origins of the Guadalupe shrine, to understand what the Hieronymites inherited when they founded the monastery in 1389 and why they acted as endorsers of the already existing spiritual services. Then, we reconstruct the economic rise of the monastery throughout the 15th and 16th centuries. In section 3, we examined how the Hieronymites exploited the spiritual services associated to the wordship to Saint Mary of Guadalupe and how they invested the revenue obtained from such an exploitation in a wide array of agrarian and other tangible assets. Finally, in section 4 we discuss how our research contributes to business history scholarship on branding and marketing innovations in the pre-capitalist era.

1. The origins of the monastery of Guadalupe

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[5] The most comprehensive work about these destinations is Moroni's on Loreto (Moroni 2000).

[6] In a pioneering work, Roehl examined the reforms introduced in the monastic economy by the Cistercians in their attempt to find the best way to achieve their desired pristine life (Roehl 1969). Like Hieronymites in the early years of the Order, they rejected any mean of income. Cistercian economic practice, however, included the acquisition of land and other assets for their later exploitation. Their income, therefore, was not based on the marketing and branding of spiritual services, as we discuss here for the Sanctuary of Guadalupe.

[7] The number of works published in the last years in too large as to be all referred here. See, for instance, the pioneering works of Lopes (2002 and 2007, among many other), the collective work of Lopes & Duguid (2010), the recent special issue "The Brand and its History (part 1 and 2)" in *Business History* (forthcoming, edited by Rafael Castro and Patricio Sáiz).

[8] See also the session "Branding through History" in the WEHC Boston 2018 (Boston, 29 July – 3 August 2018), organized by Carlo M. Belfanti and Valeria Pinchera (http://wehc2018.org/branding-through-history/).

In the year 1389, the Order of Saint Jerome (the Hieronymites) accepted to manage the shrine of Villuercas, in the region of Villuercas (southwestern Spain), as well as its attached church and the surrounding manor (named La Puebla of Guadalupe) with the corresponding right to ask for the tithe and other rents.[9] The Hieronymites inherited from the previous managers an already notable territorial and immaterial heritage, as well as a few agrarian enterprises in full operation, which they were able to extent ever much further (Llopis 1989, pp. 32-38). In fact, by that time the worship to Santa Maria de Guadalupe (Saint Mary of Guadalupe) and the pilgrimage to Villuercas were already widespread among the Castilian devotees (Rubio 1926, pp. 49-50).[10]

This early success of the Guadalupan sanctuary is certainly explained by the boom of the Marian devotions across Western Europe from the 12th century onwards, against the old devotional centres based on the thaumaturgic attributes of bodies and relics of martyrs, hermits and holy bishops (Christian 1990, p. 27; García Rodríguez 1993, p. 12). But the most important reason for the rise of Guadalupe was the extensive rights and privileges granted by the Castilian monarchs since at least the 1330s, and which included, apart from the concession for the aforementioned church and manor, land for the construction of a new temple and houses for clerics and neighbours, fields for the cultivation of cereals and vineyards, tax benefits, the allowance to organize a weekly market and an annual trade fair, legal protection against the surrounding councils and clerical administrations (due to its border location, there were a few which tried to control the Guadalupe region and assets), and the right to move the livestock all around Castile, among other advantages.[11] The latter was particularly important as the Guadalupan neighbours practiced, as most sheepmasters in Medieval and Early Modern Spain, transhumance – sheepmasters, organized around a guild called the Mesta, ultimately constituted a powerful lobby at court, being granted by the Castilian Monarchs with special permissions to enjoy pastures and move cattle across the country–. The Castilian monarchs, furthermore, allowed the sanctuary managers (secular clergy) to organize a network of *demandaderos* (alms collectors) at a national scale.[12] This proved to be an

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[9] Archivo Histórico Nacional (Historical National Archive, AHN hereafter), clero (Church), folder 391/19; AHC, clero, file 1429/1-b; Cerro (1987b), pp. 214-215.

[10] Until the marriage of the Catholic Monarchs ("Reyes Católicos", the Iberian Peninsula was constituted by several kingdoms, being Castile the largest one. These monarchs also consolidated the Reconquest process, sponsored Columbus in his travel to the West Indies and, with the Church's support, expelled the Jews en 1492.

[11] The privileges granted have been documented by; Écija (1953), pp. 90-92; Bernal (1978), pp. 33 and 39; Pérez de Tudela (1982), p. 280; Cerro (1983), pp. 125-127; Díaz Martín (1982), pp. 322-323; Díaz Martín (1983), p. 594; and Klein (1985), pp. 268-269. See also AHN, sellos 17/3 and 4; and AHN, clero, file 1422/10 and 13-14.

[12] Talavera (1597), ff. 24r-24v; Rubio (1926), pp. 38 and 54; García Rodríguez (1993), pp. 30-32.

important source of income for the sanctuary, but also of dispute with the neighbouring clerical administrations.[13]

Why were the Castilian monarchs so interested in promoting the difficult-to-reach sanctuary of Guadalupe? Apart from worship to the Virgin of Guadalupe (which Alfonso XI, the first advocate of the shrine, entrusted to in his successful fight against the Muslim reigns), the Castilian rulers also pursued a few strategic goals. After the conquest of western Andalusia, the territorial attention centre of the Castilian crown had moved towards the south. The marriage of Alfonso XI, in 1328, with María of Portugal, probably increased the interest of this monarch in the area near the border with that country. On the other hand, the colonization of Extremadura had been relatively late and weak, while the pastures of this region were increasingly necessary to consolidate the growth of transhumant livestock in various Castilian areas (Llopis 1998, pp. 423-424). Thus, the development of the Villuercas sanctuary, at a time when the pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela had practically disappeared due to the situation of anarchy prevailing in that area, facilitated the repopulation of a considerable territory and, therefore, the transit of goods, cattle and people across Castile (Linehan 1985, pp. 291-293 and 300-303; Moxó 1979, pp. 251-258).

By the late 14th century, however, it seems that the former managers of Guadalupe had not been able to maintain among pilgrims and neighbours the fervent and religious behaviour that such a sacred, and strategic, place deserved (Rubio 1926, p. 43). For this reason, and in the context of a much profound reform in the Spanish church, the Castilian monarch of the time (Juan I) decided to look for a religious order to run the sanctuary (Rubio 1926, p. 43; Bernal 1978, p. 55; Suárez Fernández 1977, pp. 354-369). The order selected was the recently founded Order of Saint Jerome. This decision was supported by key people within the Spanish church, but it resulted surprising anyway. The first Hieronymites had originally been hermits in search of isolation, silence, complete dedication to pray and high frugality, values that were still pursued after the foundation of the order and the building of its first monastery in Spain in 1373.[14] The management of the Guadalupe sanctuary implied to abandon this life of religious reclusion to be involved in more practical issues, what explains the initial rejection by part of the order. However, the Hieronymites leaders of that time, with strong political connections as well as business and diplomatic experience, finally found the monarch's offer and insistence as an excellent opportunity to grow and increase their economic and political influence.[15] So

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[13] Confrontations have been documented by Rubio (1921), pp. 122-123; Rubio (1922-23), pp. 226-228 and 244-248; Rubio (1926), p. 56; Écija (1953), pp. 76-78; and Moreta (1978), p. 72.

[14] About the origins of the Hieronymite Order, see Coussemacker (1994), above all chapters 1 and 2. On the values pursued by the first Hieronymites, see also Vizuete (1986), pp. 1335-1346; and Starr-Lebeau (2003), pp. 20-32.

[15] The leaders of the order, Fernando Yáñez and Pedro Fernández Pecha, came from the Castilian aristocracy, had received a very good education and, in the case of the latter, had been married and had

they accepted, what in the future would lead to an incredible rise of the sanctuary assets, but also to many confrontations within the order.[16] In the following sections, the bases for the Hieronymites' success are summarized.

2. The economic and social rise of the Monastery of Guadalupe (1389-1560s)

Without neglecting the large and important heritage received, the Hieronymites accelerated the economic development of the Guadalupe monastery in the 15th and the first half of the 16th century. For instance, cattle figures rose from 2,107 animals in 1389 to 33,418 in 1527; while the number of meadows (mainly for pastures) outside the manor from 17 to 60 in the same period.[17] A similar increase took place in the arable land, as well as in the monetary income.[18]

Soon after their arrival, the Hieronymites realized that their economic and social rise relied, first of all, on how successfully they were able to manage the sanctuary´s liturgical potential. The priority task was the construction of the monastery, including cells, a refectory, a cloister and a choir large enough to accommodate all the friars during the many hours they had to dedicate daily to pray. Places for artisan workshops and administrative units were also enabled, as well as several hospitals, better systems of water conduction, water mills and grain stores, among other facilities. The works were almost uninterrupted throughout the whole 15th century and the first decades of the 16th.

Another of the key objectives pursued by the first Hieronymites was to institutionalize, increase and diversify the charitable services that had been providing the preceding secular priory up to 1389. The main policies developed in this area focused on low-income pilgrims (to extent pilgrimage far beyond the wealthiest groups) and the poorest families living around Guadalupe. Regarding the former, the monks gave them accommodation and food for three days, a pair of shoes, health-care services and some bread and wine for their way back.[19] Aristocracy was also welcome, as they were on pilgrimage for fervor (that is, they did not travel looking for charitable services), but hosted on special rooms (Talavera 1597, f. 447r). In the case of Guadalupan neighbours, the poorest received some economic help, particularly in kind, as well as

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occupied various political positions at court before embracing an eremitic life (Revuelta 1982, pp. 74-128).

[16] Two eremitic movements merged into the hieronymite order, a group of anchorites coming from Italy and others, not so much devoted to a life of religious seclusion, from Castile. The latter would be the ones that finally headed the order (Revuelta 1982, pp. 74-128).

[17] AHC, clero, file 1429/1-b; Archivo Municipal de Guadalupe (City Archive of Guadalupe, AMG hereafter), codex 229, ff. 1-143; and Gérbet (1982), appendix II.

[18] AMG, file 72/1; AMG, codex 229, ff. 166-183.

[19] "Libro de Oficios", AMG, codix 99.

medicines for free from the monastery.[20] In case of crop failure or particularly severe economic difficulties, the aid increased and was furthermore extended to other nearby villages (De la Rambla 2016, pp. 90-93; Rubio 1926, p. 84; Écija 1953, p. 342). The number of residents in La Puebla (the manor attached to the monastery) grew as a result, from around 300 people in 1407, some 500 towards 1446 and more than 1,200 in 1480 (Perrin 1982, pp. 129-130; Llopis 1991, p. 18).

Medicine and surgery were both taught and practiced in the hospitals of Guadalupan monastery. The quality and fame of their health-care services, which reached their peak in the second half of the 15th century, was part of the Hieronymites' strategy for attracting pilgrims.[21] Some visitors went to the sanctuary for the purpose of healing from their ills thanks to the intervention either of the Virgin, or of the doctors and surgeons of the monastery's hospitals (Cremoux 1993, pp. 348-349).

The Hieronymites' opened in addition a school as soon as they arrived to Guadalupe. Children could learn there for a maximum of three-year period to read and sing for the choir service, although the educational offer was extended over time to grammar and major science studies.[22] Towards 1462 a teacher and an assistant were in charge of 25 students.[23] Students, which grew over time, helped in the monastery's concierge as well as in some religious services. And, also as part of the charitable services provided to the community, a "cradle of foundling" existed since the late 14th century (Talavera 1597, ff. 208v y 209r). After being cared for breeding, the surviving children were incorporated as apprentices into the monastery, being often in charge of weaving, once they were seven years old.[24]

But, probably, the most innovative action in terms of care assistance was the development of a sort of social security for the regular workforce. The reliable servants who were no longer able to work were provided with free medical service and a lifelong pension. Benefits were also granted to some servants' widows (Llopis 1980, p. 214).

All these services required of large sums of money. The Monastery's main source of income, at least in its early years, where the alms collected by an extensive network of voluntary collectors. Unfortunately, we know little about how this network was managed. But according to the available documentation, it had a hierarchical structure

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[20] "Libro de los Oficios" (puerta), AMG, codix 99, ff. 24v-44r); Libro de Oficios" (puerta), AMG, codix 99, ff. 21r-23r.; "Libro de Oficios" (puerta), AMG, codix 99, ff. 23v-24r; "Libro de Oficios" (puerta), AMG, codix 99, ff. 35r y 35v).

[21] Beaujouan (1966), pp. 374-417; Sánchez Prieto (1978), pp. 574-575; Arana (1990), pp. 88-93; García (2003), pp. 11-77; and Muñoz Sanz (2008).

[22] Labrador (2007), tomo II, p. 85; "Libro de Oficios" (puerta), AMG, códice 99, f. 17v; Rubio y García (1978), pp. 102-103; Perrin (1982), pp. 94-95

[23] "Libro de Oficios" (puerta), AMG, codix 99, f. 17v.

[24] *Instrucción de un passagero*… (1697), p. 137.

and operated in the largest clerical jurisdictions.[25] Alm collectors were not probably paid by the monastery.[26] The activity was carried out by fervor and by the honor and the real or intended privileges attached to this task. Some profit could be also obtained by means of fraudulent practices difficult to detect.[27] But, in spite of thefts, the collection system was tremendously inexpensive and the net revenue had to be very similar from the gross one. Although the available documentation on this issue is scarce, it seems the money collected increased throughout the whole 15th century, reaching its peak by 1530 (more than 2,800 thousand of constant *maravedís*) but being still high until the 1560s (around 87% of the previous figure).[28]

The effectiveness of the Order's diplomatic efforts allowed, in addition, to extend the pontifical prerogatives to collect money for Our Lady, and to exempt the monastery from tax payment to bishoprics and from asking them for permission to collect alms.[29] The Castilian monarchs, furthermore, gave protection to the alms collectors, what ultimately was crucial to avoid the attempts of several bishops and other ecclesiastical organizations to appropriate from the money collected –these other organizations were worried for their social decline as a result of the Guadalupan rise–.

The Hieronymites acted, summing up, as important agents of rent redistribution. A large part of the income collected through donations and the exploitation of real state was used for a wide range of charitable services. The Order was convinced that this was crucial to both foster the sanctuary fame and going on collecting alms in the long term.[30] In short, the image that was projected to society through charitable services was vital for the long-term economic, social and religious success of the sanctuary. But to maintain a so large, and long-lasting assistance needed of a stable

[25] AHN, codix 1123, f. 169 v.; AHN, file 1424/94. The geographical origin of those that claimed the miracles attributed of the Virgin of Guadalupe suggests that the shrine was particularly popular within Castile and Portugal (Cremoux 1993, pp. 123-144). But the Guadalupe Virgin was known even in remote regions of Europe, Asia, Africa and America. In the latter, the Hieronymites tried to organize another network of alm collectors, but without success (AMG, codex 128, p. 528; Llopis 1980, pp. 370-371). It was very difficult to monitor the network from Spain (Campos 1993, pp. 410-434). The cult around the Virgin of Guadalupe successfully spread, anyway, in Mexico (Brading 2001, Peña 2011).

[26] One of the collectors, for instance, took a vow of going on with this activity for life (Cremoux 1993, p. 239). This vow had any sense if collectors had been paid.

[27] There are many references to these thefts in the books of the Chapter Acts. "Libro de Actas Capitulares del Monasterio de Guadalupe, 1498-1538", AMG, codix 74, ff. 29v, 35v, 39, 42v and 113.

[28] Calculations based on Ladero (1986), 425; "Relación, sumario y valoración hecho este año del Señor de MDXXXVIII...", AMG, file 72/2; "Libro y memorial de todas las heredades y dehesas, rentas y juros...", AMG, codix 229, ff. 166v y 174v; "Rentas que esta casa de nuestra señora de Guadalupe tiene en dinero –1565–", AMG, file 95. The lack of information on this issue (when is abundant for others) responds probably to the fact that the Order destroyed or hided it when Phillips II decided to control and limit the activities of the Guadalupan alms collectors.

[29] Vizuete (1980), pp. 89-90. See also "Libro de la Hacienda que la Santa Casa de Nuestra Señora Santa María de Guadalupe tiene en heredades, rentas y iuros y otros aprovechamientos. Por el Padre Fr. Pablo de Alhobera. Año de mil y seiscientos quarenta y uno", AMG, codix 128, p. 527.

[30] *Instrucción de un passagero*… (1697), pp. 35, 41 y 49; Ladero (1986), p. 411.

source of income. That was achieved through the exploitation of the sanctuary icon, the Virgin of Guadalupe. The next section is devoted to the marketing and branding strategies developed to such a purpose.

3. Marketing spiritual services in the Guadalupe shrine

The first leaders of the Guadalupan monastery were soon fully aware of the impressive capacity of generation of resources that the icon of Our Lady involved. Focusing on marketing innovations, the Hieronymites first tried to build a very attractive place devoted to pray in order to maximize pilgrims' thaumaturgic experience. That's the reason behind the excellent health-care services and the nice accommodation granted to travelers, as explained in the previous section. The Order, in addition, enlarged the sanctuary for the same purpose. The strategy was not only to mobilize as many pilgrims as possible, but also that they enjoyed a so intense emotional experience as to induce them afterwards to proclaim the power and the greatness the Virgin of Villuercas. Many travelers, when approaching to the sanctuary, were already impressed by the majesty of the monastic constructions. Then, the beauty of the temple, the richness of its ornamentation, the solemnity of the Prayer of the Divine Office carried out by dozens of friars, the showiness of their garments and of the liturgical objects, as well as the surrounding choral music, fed the pilgrims' fervor (Talavera 1597, f. 437v).

But their astonishment and admiration reached their peak when they could "feel" the powers attributed to the Virgin. It was very common, in fact, that pilgrims observed by themselves a miracle or that, at least, heard of them by those who did in the past. Reputation was endorsed, moreover, by the fact that the Castilian monarchs often visited the monastery (above all the powerful *Reyes Católicos*), and the Church granted with special "spiritual benefits" to those who traveled to Guadalupe in certain religious festivities.[31] The monarchy, as we mentioned in the previous section, also supported the sanctuary over decades through several economic rights and privileges. The Hieronymites, on their part, took care that the monarchs, and the aristocracy in general, had an excellent impression about the services provided in Guadalupe.

The Hieronymites soon realized that they had to "design" and monitor anything related with the dissemination of the Miracles attributed to the Virgin of Guadalupe. Their own survival was actually based, at least initially, on their intermediary role between pilgrims and the Virgin (Talavera 1597, f. 5v). It was their responsibility, therefore, to determine which "supernatural" events could truly be attributed to Our Lady's action and which couldn't. So as a way to develop the Guadalupe brand and

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[31] Álvarez (1993), p. 67; Llopis (1993), pp. 251-252. On the Catholic Monarchs, see note 10.

avoid counterfeiting, the friars first gave a definitive form to the legend of the origin of the Virgin of Villuercas and began to select and to compile in codices the Miracles attributed to the Virgin (Talavera 1597, f. 190v). These codices were read systematically to pilgrims in the sanctuary entrance.[32]

The Hieronymites, in addition, defined the sanctuary's specialities in terms of miracles: The liberation of Christians in Muslim prisons and sea rescues.[33] The first one arose a great support within the Christian society of the time. The publicity of the sanctuary made by the pilgrims who had managed to escape or be liberated from Muslim prisons, who sometimes even carried their irons to Guadalupe, demonstrated to be very effective. And sea rescues helped to spread the devotion to the Gualupan Virgin due to sailors' contact across regions. According to Fr. Gabriel de Talavera, who studied deeply the history of the monastery using primary resources, for a long time it was not necessary to advertise directly the miracles of Our Lady (Talavera 1597, f. 228v). Pilgrims did.

The economic success achieved thanks to the exploitation of spiritual services was the basis for the later growth of tangible assets and, therefore, the diversification of the monastery's sources of income. The hieronymites invested above all in meadows to foster the monastery's specialization in cattle raising. This demonstrated to be a success, as the price for cattle sub-products such as wool, oxen and meat was favourable to producers till, at least, 1530. Cattle raising, furthermore, did not require of a large workforce (as mentioned in the first section, the region where Guadalupe was located had a low population density and therefore labour was scarce and relatively expensive) and could be used as livestock in agriculture (Casado 1994, pp. 188-208; Martín Martín 1987, p. 57; and Llopis & Pavón 1999, pp. 67-77). Results were in fact very positive until the second quarter of the 16th century (Llopis & Pavón 1999, pp. 72-76). However, given the high transportation costs of the time and the long distance that separated Guadalupe from the main Castilian markets, the Hieronymites tried to promote self-sufficiency in the territory they managed. So part of the investments done went to arable land and craft production, as well as real state.[34]

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[32] "Libros de Milagros de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe" (Book of Our Lady's Miracles), AMG, codices 1-9.

[33] Cremoux (2001), pp. 163-171; and Talavera (1597), f. 74. Based on "Libros de Milagros de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe" (Book of Our Lady's Miracles), AMG, codices 1-9.

[34] Only one third of the monastery's assets around 1625 came from donations. These donations, coming mainly from the Spanish aristocracy and ecclesiastical institutions, obviously also contributed to the economic rise of the Guadalupan monastery. But their role was not as important as in other monasteries of the Middle Ages. See Talavera (1597), f. 199v; Vizuete (1980), p. 600; Rincón (1984), pp. 16 y 71-75; Ladero (1986), pp. 428-429; García Rodríguez (1990), pp. 73-86 y 151-167; ¨Libro y memorial de todas las heredades y dehesas, rentas y juros…", AMG, codix 229; "Hojas de Gracias", AMG, file 143; and "Cuentas de la Mayordomía", AMG, file 152.

The above decisions, and the management of the monastery's tangible assets as a whole, were taken by the *mayordomo* (the "steward"). But spiritual services, and how the icon of the Virgin of Guadalupe was exploited, were managed by another director, the *arquero* (the "archer").[35] This division in management responsibilities was a novelty in itself. We have not found something similar in other monastic economies. It could respond to the scope of the activities carried out in the monastery, but also to disagreements among the Hieronymites regarding the type of life they must follow and, in particular, to what extent the Order had to be engaged in business activities and to pursue economic growth.[36]

The monastery's operations, anyway, largely relied on a highly-qualified ecclesiastical staff. For the foundation of the Monastery, the Order already counted with its most qualified members. Later on, the rise of the monastic economy and all the wide arrange of activities that friars could develop there as a result, as well as the growing fame of the Guadalupan shrine, caused a rapid growth of those who aspired to enter into the community. The latter was integrated by more than 100 religious in 1424, by 120 in 1435, by 150 to 1467 and by about 140 in 1495.[37] Until the introduction of the *estatuto de limpieza de sangre* (the "blood purity" laws) within the Order in 1496[38], a high percentage of the monastery's leaders came from noble or convert accommodated families, what meant that they had frequently carried out a professional activity before entering the Order.[39] Their geographical origin was, furthermore, very diverse (Perrin 1982, pp. 39-42). The large number of young and not so young who wished to join the religious community, including lawyers and converts, indeed allowed the Hieronymites to select the better candidates to join the Order. So the monastery managed to gather a valuable human capital, a fundamental aspect when explaining the accurate management of the monastic rectors and, therefore, the economic success of Guadalupe. A kind of virtuous circle worked: The spiritual, social and material rise of Guadalupe attracted a large number of high-skilled people, the monastery had the opportunity to select the best candidates and their incorporation in

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[35] The archer, therefore, managed the network of alms collectors. "Libro de Oficios", AMG, codix 99.

[36] On the disagreements within the Order, which together with the family origins of some friars seem to be related somehow with the intervention of the Holy Inquisition in the monastery of Guadalupe in the late 15th century, see Llopis (forthcoming). About the Holy Inquisition in Guadalupe, see Starr-Lebeau (2003).

[37] Ecija (1953), p. 128; Rubio y García (1978), p. 144; Alvárez Alvárez (1993), pp. 66 y 86-87; Münzer (1991), p. 229.

[38] The first blood purity laws dated of the mid-15th century and spread afterwards with the support of the Spanish monarchy and Church. They aimed to distinguish the "Old Christians" for the Jews and Moorish who had converted to Catholicism. According to the law, the latter, and their descendants, could not occupy top positions within any type of organization. About the impact of the blood purity procedures in the Hieronymite order, see Azcona (1973), pp. 349-380; Carrete (1975), pp. 97-116; and Sicroff (1985), pp. 107-122.

[39] "Necrológico de frailes", AMG, codix 60; CPS, AMG, codix 266; Libro de Oficios", AMG, codix 99. Converts (those that had converted to Christianism), particularly former Jews, were traditionally engaged in artisan, trade and financial activities.

the monastery's human capital progressively contributed to maintain and accelerate the growth of the Hieronymite monastic economy.

4. Discussion: Creating a brand in spiritual services?

Before the foundation of the Monastery of Guadalupe in 1389 by the Hieronymite Order, the wordship towards the Virgin of Villuercas was already widespread across Castile and was even endorsed by the Castilian monarchs' support. But it was under the Hieronymite's rule when the spiritual potential of this place was fully exploited. The rise of the Guadalupan monastic economy was certainly favoured by the spread of Marian devotions across Europe (in their peak throughout the 15th century) as well as the rise of the Castilian economy for most of the 15th century (Chistian 1990, Casado 2002, Yun 2002). The success achieved by the friars of Guadalupe, however, cannot be explained without taking into consideration other three interrelated aspects: the human capital accumulated around the monastery management; the marketing innovations introduced by the Order to exploit the spiritual potential of the Guadalupan shrine, particularly the creation of a reputed brand of "Guadalupan spiritual services"; and the support granted by the legal authorities of the time, the Monarchy and the Church. For the purpose of this discussion section, we will focus on the two last ones.

In this paper, we have shown that the Hieronymites and their strong original commitment towards the "Divine Office" acted as an endorser for the increasing known spiritual services (protection against, and remedy to, misfortune) associated with wordship to the Virgin of Guadalupe. But it was their ability to pioneerly develop a "brand" around these spiritual services and the icon of the Virgin of Villuercas what explains the definite rise of the Guadalupan shrine. The successful exploitation of this brand served as a financial basis for the ulterior expansion in other economic areas. There were other popular Marian destinations in Medieval Europe, such as The Most Holy Annunciation in Florence, Our Lady of Rocamadour in Notre-Dame de Rocamadour and The Holy House of Loreto in Loreto (Moroni 2000). But, according to the existing literature, they did not develop the marketing strategies we have identified for the Hieronymites in Guadalupe. None of the aforementioned shrines, furthermore, develop a network of alm collectors such as the Guadalupan or accumulated so much power as the Spanish Hieronymites did.

How did the Hieronymites create such a successful brand around the icon of the Virgin of Villuercas? First, providing pilgrims with a differentiated spiritual service. In a time of fervent popular religiosity, they promoted the visit of pilgrims to the sanctuary offering extended accommodation and medical services, attractive spiritual prerogatives in case of staying for certain religious festivities, and, above all, a particularly intense liturgical

experience, achieved thanks to the impressively beautiful buildings of the sanctuary, the elaborated liturgical items, the solemnity of the monks' prays, how the church was illuminated and the active diffusion of the miracles attributed to the Virgin of Guadalupe. The latter were finally registered and read to travellers, creating narratives that strength the authenticity of this spiritual journey. The definition of the sanctuary's specialities (the liberation of Christians in Muslim prisons as well as sea rescues, both very popular at that time) was, finally, another way to build a differentiated service.

The Hieronymites had to be sure that they were the only intermediaries between pilgrims and the Virgin. It was very dangerous for the Guadalupe's image, moreover, a rampant increase of miracles everywhere in the area. In other words, it was necessary to avoid imitation and counterfeiting, what was fought through the aforementioned registration of the miracles attributed to the Guadalupan Virgin. This leads to another issue, what legitimized the Hieronymites' actions? Why did people believe in their guidance regarding which miracles were true and which were not? On one hand, the general perception on the Order's founding values, and, on the other, the support provided by the two institutions of reference in legal and spiritual issues at that time: the Spanish Monarchy and the Church. They endorsed the Hieronymites' activities in Guadalupe, through regular visits to the sanctuary, economic privileges, and spiritual prerogatives for pilgrimage at particular festivities. This helped, furthermore, to enlarge the network of alms collectors. Not surprisingly, and contrary to other eremitic movements, the Hieronymites never criticized the Castilian ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Looking at how spiritual services were managed by the Hieronymites in Guadalupe during the 14th and 15th centuries, we can identified, therefore, the main characteristics attributed to brands according to the brief literature review included at the beginning of this paper. Also, the so-called 4Ps of marketing: the service (protection against misfortune and miracles to remedy disgrace), the price (the donations of the wealthiest, but also the economic privileges granted), the promotion strategy (narratives, miracle specialization, liturgical environment…) and the delivery place (a lavish shrine). Branding development and exploitation, together with an extensive network of donation collectors, allowed the monks to increase the sanctuary's tangible assets (land and cattle). It also made possible to improve the facilities and services for pilgrims, what enhanced, in turn, the Guadalupan brand. We contributed, therefore, to scholarship looking at how brands are founded and managed in services, in particular in spiritual services, and exploring early forms of branding and of marketing practices.

Although this goes beyond the scope of this paper, our research shows that the Guadalupe brand started to decline by the mid-16th century. This is explained by several reasons (Llopis 1995). First, image deterioration due to the increasing criticism within the Spanish Church regarding the economic power achieved by the monastery, the high number of frails condemned in 1485 by the Holy Inquisition for judaizing practices, and

the rise of thieves and tramps among pilgrims in the context of the mid-16th century economic crisis (quite severe so far). In addition, popular religiosity changed across Europe against apparitions and wordship in specific places such as shrines, in line with the new Erasmus' ideas (Erasmus of Rotterdam totally rejected the idea that it was easier to "connect" with God in certain places, what ultimately was the basis of pilgrimage). Finally, the arrival of the House of Habsburg to power (with Charles I of Spain and V of Germany in 1516) meant a progressive reduction of the royal distinction that the Guadalupan monastery had always enjoyed. Summing up, changes in consumers' preferences and perceptions, as well as the end of the legal support, largely explain the decline of the Guadalupe brand. The Hieronymites tried in different ways to avoid it, but with limited results.

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