



*Picture: Bernard Higonnet, Source: Wikipedia*

**Good Practice 15:  
The Hieronymite Monastery of  
Saint Mary of Guadalupe -  
Branding and Marketing  
Practices in Middle Ages**

SKIVRE Training Scheme



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## Good Practice 9: The Hieronymite Monastery of Saint Mary of Guadalupe - Branding and Marketing Practices in Middle Ages

Order of the Hieronymites (O.S.H.)



Source: Wikipedia

The Royal Monastery of Santa María of Guadalupe - UNESCO World Heritage Site



Source: Wikipedia

### Description

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#### ■ Introduction

This good practice gives an overview about the earliest brand development in Europe dating back to the late Middle Ages. It is based on research dedicated to the topic of branding, and specifically on 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.

The text below is based mainly on a research paper prepared by Enrique Llopis (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) and Adoración Álvaro Moya (CUNEF) for the EBHA 22nd Annual Congress of Università Politecnica dell Marche in Ancona on 6-8 September 2018.

The full text, you can receive by contacting us on the following email: [angela.ivanova@innovation.com](mailto:angela.ivanova@innovation.com).



## ■ Hieronymite Monastery of Saint Mary of Guadalupe

In 1389, only a few years after the Hieronymites took over the Monastery of Saint Mary of Guadalupe, in southwestern Spain, 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 worship of the Blessed Virgin (Saint Mary of Guadalupe) and all the spiritual services and miracles associated with it.

## ■ Steps to success

What were the steps followed by the monks to achieve this amazing success?

1/ **The main 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.

2/ **Places for artisan workshops and administrative units were enabled**, as well as hospitals, better systems of water conduction, water mills and grain stores, among other facilities. 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. Students, who grew over time, helped in the monastery's concierge, as well as in some religious services.

3/ **Alms collection**. The Monastery's main source of income, at least in its early years, were the alms collected by an extensive network of voluntary collectors.

4/ **A wide range of charitable activities**. A large part of the income, collected through donations and the profits 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's fame and to go on collecting alms in the long term. 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.

5/ **The monks had a strategic approach**. But to maintain such a large, and long-lasting assistance a stable source of income was needed. This was achieved through the exploitation of the sanctuary icon, the Virgin of Guadalupe. Special marketing strategies were developed



by the hieronymite order to encourage pilgrimage to Guadalupe and to popularize the related spiritual services consisted on protection against misfortune and miracles to remedy disgrace.

**6/ The monks were able to develop a “brand” on spiritual services around the icon of Our Lady.** The brand has been part of the marketing strategy to popularize the related spiritual services. Its successful exploitation has been served as the financial basis for the ulterior expansion in other economic areas.

How did the Hieronymites create such a successful brand around the icon of the Virgin of Guadalupe?

- First, providing pilgrims with a specialized spiritual service as attractive spiritual prerogatives in the case of them staying for certain religious festivities, and, above all, a particularly intense liturgical experience, which was achieved thanks to the impressively beautiful buildings of the sanctuary, the elaborated liturgical items, the solemnity of the monks’ prayers, how the church was illuminated, and the active diffusion of the miracles attributed to the Virgin of Guadalupe.
- They promoted the visit of pilgrims to the sanctuary by offering extended accommodation and medical services.
- The latter were finally registered and read to travellers, creating narratives that strengthened the authenticity of this spiritual journey.
- 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 were 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 Virgin of Guadalupe.
- The brand was implemented successfully into their 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).

**7/ Investments.**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. Cattle raising, furthermore, did not require of a large workforce. Other part of the investments done went to arable land and craft production, as well as real estate.



**8/ Division in management responsibilities.** The management of the monastery's tangible assets 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"). The monastery's operations, anyway, largely relied on a highly qualified ecclesiastical staff. 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.

**9/ The monastery was strongly supported.** The analysis says that the Hieronymites were supported by the Spanish Monarchy and the Church who acted as "brand" endorsers such as the trademark regulation does today. 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.

#### ■ The Result

The successful exploitation of the Guadalupan brand served as the financial basis for the ulterior expansion in other economic areas. 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.

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. A similar increase took place in the arable land, as well as in the monetary income.





*Picture: Our Lady of Guadalupe in Extremadura, Spain. Author: Bernard Higonnet, Source: Wikipedia*

## Source/link

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The text represents selected citates from the analysis “Branding and Marketing Practices in Spiritual Services: The Monastery of Guadalupe”

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■ **Links about the monastery:**

<https://everything-everywhere.com/royal-monastery-of-santa-maria-de-guadalupe/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monastery\\_of\\_Santa\\_Mar%C3%ADa\\_de\\_Guadalupe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monastery_of_Santa_Mar%C3%ADa_de_Guadalupe)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our\\_Lady\\_of\\_Guadalupe\\_in\\_Extremadura](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_Guadalupe_in_Extremadura)<https://www.kloesterreich.at>

## Country

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Spain

## Topic

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