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Brotherhood marketing in Andalucía: prospective analysis through the Delphi method

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INTRODUCTION

Cofrade marketing, or marketing in the context of religious brotherhoods and confraternities, is an increasingly discussed subject in contemporary society, particularly within the Spanish context. Spain is home to more than three million cofrades (brotherhood members), marking this as a highly relevant concept with significant social and cultural implications. The cultural and religious traditions tied to Semana Santa (Holy Week), processions, and other cofrade activities represent an intricate sector of society that blends spirituality, tradition, and modern marketing principles. Cofrade marketing, therefore, plays a vital role not only in promoting these events but also in organizing and managing the communities behind them. It is a unique field of study, diverging from general marketing practices due to its focus on faith, community service, and religious identity, while also intersecting with elements of tourism, heritage conservation, and cultural promotion.

In Spain, where religious traditions such as Semana Santa are pivotal to both local and national identity, cofrade marketing has emerged as an essential tool for brotherhoods and confraternities to promote their cultural significance. The increasing globalization of religious celebrations, coupled with the rise of digital platforms, makes it necessary to explore how traditional organizations can adapt to modern marketing practices. Marketing is no longer limited to the promotion of products or services; it now extends to social, cultural, and religious communities, positioning cofrade marketing as a vital and evolving discipline.

METHODOLOGY

To explore the nuances of cofrade marketing and its impact on brotherhoods and confraternities, a qualitative research approach was adopted. The study used the Delphi method, a well-established qualitative technique



that gathers expert opinions in a systematic way. A panel of eight marketing experts, all with experience in both the religious sector and in traditional marketing fields, was assembled for the study. These experts were selected based on their expertise in marketing strategies, cultural heritage management, and religious or faith-based organizations. The Delphi method enabled iterative rounds of discussion, with the experts providing insights on various aspects of cofrade marketing, including its challenges, strategies, and potential areas for improvement. Their responses were then analyzed to identify recurring themes and key findings. The qualitative nature of this research provided an in-depth understanding of the complexities and potential of cofrade marketing in the contemporary landscape.

The Delphi technique is particularly well-suited for this type of exploratory study, as it allows for a comprehensive understanding of expert opinions while minimizing biases that may arise from face-to-face discussions. By synthesizing these expert insights, the research aimed to develop a well-rounded perspective on cofrade marketing and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing its management and implementation in religious and cultural contexts.

RESULTS

The research findings revealed several key insights regarding cofrade marketing and the management practices of brotherhoods and confraternities. It was evident that while these organizations had a significant presence in local communities, their marketing efforts were often underdeveloped or fragmented. Most brotherhoods were primarily focused on maintaining their religious and cultural traditions, and there was a lack of strategic planning in how to manage and promote their activities, particularly in the context of modern marketing practices.

Several of the marketing experts noted that the brotherhoods and confraternities often operated without clear organizational structures for marketing or public relations. As a result, their ability to attract new members, engage with existing members, and raise awareness of their activities was limited. The traditional reliance on word-of-mouth and local networks was no longer sufficient in the digital age, where visibility on social media and other digital platforms plays a crucial role in reaching wider audiences.

A recurring theme among the expert opinions was the need for a more comprehensive approach to marketing within these organizations. Experts emphasized that cofrade marketing required not only strategies for promoting religious events but also the development of a long-term brand identity that could attract younger generations and tourists. Many brotherhoods struggled with defining their identity in a way that resonated with modern values while maintaining their religious integrity. Additionally, there was a recognition that the cultural and heritage aspects of these organizations were becoming increasingly important in attracting visitors and tourists, particularly during high-profile events like Semana Santa.

The panel also highlighted the lack of professional marketing expertise within many brotherhoods. Many members of these organizations were volunteers with limited knowledge of modern marketing techniques. As a result, marketing efforts were often inconsistent and lacked a cohesive strategy. There was also concern about the potential commercialization of religious events, which could detract from their spiritual significance if not handled carefully.

In terms of specific marketing tactics, the experts pointed to the importance of digital tools, particularly social media, in reaching younger audiences and promoting the values of the brotherhoods. They also discussed the potential for cross-promotion with local businesses, cultural organizations, and tourism agencies to enhance the visibility of these traditions. The panel concluded that a more professional and strategic approach to cofrade marketing was essential for the long-term sustainability of the brotherhoods, particularly in a highly competitive cultural and tourism market.



CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that cofrade marketing is a distinct discipline that shares similarities with both religious marketing and the marketing of non-profit organizations but also has unique characteristics. One of the most important distinctions of cofrade marketing is the need to balance commercial interests with the preservation of religious and spiritual values. While marketing is often associated with promoting goods and services, cofrade marketing must also respect the sacred traditions and cultural heritage of the organizations involved.

Furthermore, cofrade marketing requires a careful integration of faith-based and cultural promotion with modern marketing techniques. The digital transformation has fundamentally changed how audiences engage with religious and cultural content, making it essential for brotherhoods to adopt more modern and professional marketing practices. This could include the creation of digital content, the strategic use of social media platforms, and the development of partnerships with tourism and cultural organizations.

In terms of implementation, the study found that there was significant room for improvement in the way brotherhoods and confraternities managed their marketing efforts. A more structured and professional approach could help these organizations not only enhance their visibility but also ensure their continued relevance in the changing landscape of religion and culture in Spain. The implementation of more robust marketing strategies could also aid in attracting younger generations, who are increasingly turning to digital platforms for information and engagement with cultural and religious activities.

Finally, the study stressed the importance of understanding the broader socio-cultural context in which cofrade marketing operates. While cofrade marketing shares some commonalities with other forms of cultural or religious marketing, it also requires a deep understanding of the traditions, values, and social dynamics that shape these organizations. By approaching cofrade marketing with sensitivity and respect for its religious roots, these organizations can enhance their appeal to both local communities and the broader public, ensuring that their traditions continue to thrive in the 21st century.

In summary, cofrade marketing is an emerging field that blends religious, cultural, and marketing principles in a unique way. It represents a key opportunity for brotherhoods and confraternities to adapt to modern challenges while preserving their spiritual and cultural heritage. The implementation of more strategic, professional, and digital-focused marketing approaches will be crucial in securing the long-term sustainability and relevance of these organization.