



SKIVRE Training Module 3:

MONASTIC PRODUCTS

Product categories and specifics

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In SKIVRE a team of 6 European institutions – all linked to religious heritage preservation - developed a training scheme for manufacturing and marketing of high-quality handcrafted products of European monasteries. The training contents at a glance:

SKIVRE Training Scheme
Module 1: Introduction
Module 2: Marketing Strategies
Module 3: Monastic Products
Module 4: How to Sell Monastic Products Authentically
Module 5: Distribution Channels
Module 6: Social Media and Communication
Module 7: Value Adding Through Networks
Module 8: Creating a Strong Brand
Module 9: Financing Strategies
Module 10: Aspects of Sustainability

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Content

About the module.....	1
Training description.....	1
Objectives of this training module.....	1
Target groups.....	1
Gained knowledge and skills after finishing this module	2
Training method.....	2
 Unit 1. Monastic products	 6
1.1. What makes a product to be a real monastic product?	7
Case Study 1: Examples of products in the monastic field.....	11
 Unit 2. Development of new monastic products	 15
2.1. Successful monastic product development – the eight stages	15
Case Study 2: Examples of new developed products in the monastic field	19
 Unit 3. The Monastery Shop.....	 22
3.1. Monastery shops - a short glance at their history.....	22
3.2. Understanding the difference between a shop and a monastery shop	23
3.3. Identify your target group and shape your product portfolio	23
3.4. The range of tangible monastic products	25
3.5. Intangible monastic products as an access point to monastic products' sales	26
3.6. Balancing different product types	26
3.7. What is the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of a monastery shop?	27
 Good Practices	 29
 Exercises.....	.....
Exercise 3.1. - Original Monastic Products .....	.....
Exercise 3.2. - Classification of the monastic products .....	.....
Exercise 3.3. - Typical and original monastic products.....	.....
Exercise 3.4. - Creating new monastic products.....	.....
Exercise 3.5. - Identify your target group .....	.....
Exercise 3.6. - The Monastery Shop .....	.....
Exercise 3.7. - Check your own monastic products .....	.....
 References.....	.....
 The SKIVRE Partnership: Empowering development of monastic products.....	.....



Acknowledgements.....

About the module

Training description

In this module, you will learn what makes a monastic product and how it can be developed. You will learn about the history of monastery shops and their role until today. You will get to know the target groups for monastic products and what is necessary to create a successful product portfolio for them. You will also learn about the importance of the unique selling proposition of your monastic products and how to identify them. Exercises and good practices will deepen your understanding.

For better understanding, please read Module 3 before you start with Module 4. These two modules build-up on each other and should be worked through in this order.

Objectives of this training module

After having implemented this training module, you should be able to

- define a monastic product;
- characterise the specifics of a monastic product and what makes up a real monastic product;
- decide about the range and categories of products which could be offered in your monastery shop;
- create a tailor-made product portfolio for your monastery shop;
- develop new products and respective product ranges;
- communicate what makes monastery shop special and inspiring for your customers;
- identify the unique selling proposition (USP) of your monastery shop.

Target groups

This SKIVRE-training module is designed to fit the training needs of the monks and nuns, management, staff and volunteers at European monasteries, no matter if they are run by Catholic or Protestant Orders or by the Orthodox Church; by public or private operators.

All modules are relevant for the below mentioned groups of people, but some have a more specific character. They are all interconnected, even if they are not formally complementary. They differ in terms of information and competence level and address three groups:

- **Target group 1:** For people working on the implementation level like those in monastery shops, three modules are recommended: Module 1, as an introduction to the training, Modules 3 and 4 about monastic products and authentic selling of monastic products. People who want to start considering certain strategic aspects may be inspired by Module 7 on adding value through networking.
- **Target group 2:** For people with special knowledge or experiences or a certain background and/or specified tasks in the monastic management, Module 2 on marketing strategies, Module 5 on distribution strategies, Module 8 on creating a strong brand, and Module 6 on social media and communication offer learning content and reflection.
- **Target group 3:** People on a strategy decision level with a highly specialized/experienced background and respective responsibilities in a monastery (Modules 9 on financing strategies and Module 10 on sustainability aspects).

Gained knowledge and skills after finishing this module

After having become familiar with this training module:

- You will understand exactly what a monastic product is and how it can be classified,
- You will have an overview about original, internally and externally produced monastic products and souvenirs linked to your monastery,
- You will have learned about a product portfolio and the development of new products
- You will have learned about the opportunities in a monastery shop and the range of products available,
- You will gain an insight into the unique selling proposition (USP) of your monastery shop.

Training method

SKIVRE focuses on an interactive training approach, whether you use it as a self-learning course or instructed by a trainer. This training module includes:

- Individualized self-learning - a powerful learning method that enables each learner, based on his/her own experience and knowledge, and based on newly acquired knowledge, to reach development decisions on his/her own;
- Self-assessment - ongoing self-assessment tests or homework that learners send to their trainer before proceeding to the subsequent module;
- You might also work in small groups of 2 or 3, e.g. if you decide to implement this module with colleagues as a self-learning group in your monastery or supported by an external trainer.

You gain knowledge individually or in a group using:

- Training materials like this module;
- Training materials in nine more SKIVRE training modules which are closely linked to this module;
- The interactive SKIVRE online training platform: www.skivre.eu/training;
- Facilitated training sessions for learning in a group with a professional trainer.

If you would like to implement the training with a professional trainer, please contact the SKIVRE partner in your country. They are all published on the SKIVRE website: <https://skivre.eu/about/partnership/>.

Training content

Unit 1. Monastic products

Before we get closer to a definition of a real monastic product, let's have a look at the historical need for monastic goods. Monastic products started in the past as a means of monastic self-sufficiency and equipment and provisions for pilgrims. These products gained income for monastic life and for preserving it. The production of these goods created employment opportunities for secular workers – not any different from how it does today. But what exactly is a monastic product and how can it be classified?

In Christianity, the monastic life and the associated monastic culture has been known for more than 1500 years. With the rules of Saint Benedict of Nursia in the 6th century, the everyday life of the monastery was given a new twist. His lifelong attitude combined praying with work following the guidelines of "ora et labora" ("pray and work"). There were always reformatory movements and new congregations and orders were formed alongside the Benedictines, some of which recognised the Rule of Benedict as the basis of their community life, such as the Cistercians, Trappists or Carthusians. New congregations using the Order of Saint Benedict were founded like the Benedictines, Cistercians, Trappists, or Carthusians. They were considered as working monastic communities, different from, for example, hermit orders like the Camaldolese whose members concentrated on spiritual tasks alone. Other Orders like the Dominicans and Franciscans tended to work in cities to pursue charitable work, pastoral care, and education.

The Cistercians preferred an independent life in rural seclusion. This Order of Saint Benedict considered besides their spiritual duties, handicrafts as an important part of everyday life. Agriculture and artisan workshops belonged to this monastic model. Many Cistercians monasteries have lived for centuries as self-sufficient communities. However, over succeeding centuries, this model has not been easy to follow and today it has become a big challenge. The economic and social environment changed. Very often, an opening to the secular world was needed. The majority of monasteries as spiritual and cultural centres today are in constant dialogue with their surroundings, such as the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Boniface in Andechs. In 1455 the abbey took over the care of the pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain. From the beginning, the Andechs monks provided spiritual and physical wellbeing to the pilgrims. Initially, the monks brewed beer for their own use, but soon also served pilgrims and visitors, and included homemade goods like sausages and pastries. These first monastic products were created and offered for sale.

The trade in so-called "devotional objects" with spiritual importance in places of pilgrimage and souvenirs to take home were not invented in Christian monasteries. They were already offered by the ancient Greeks or Romans on pilgrimages and were developed into a business

model over centuries. Christian devotional objects are meant to be used for devotional purposes, such as crosses, crucifixes, rosaries, saint figurines and portraits, icons, or medals. They were designed as small objects and were mainly distributed in popular churches until the late 18th century. The items served as a reminder to travelers and protected the works of art from destruction and depredation by ancient tourism. (Source: Duden – Die Deutsche Rechtschreibung, 2013. / In Frömmigkeit und Konfession by Wolfgang Brückner, 2000.)

1.1. What makes a product to be a real monastic product?

Standardized and certified character traits that turn a product into a real monastic product are not defined. Moreover, there is very little to be found in the literature. Rather, it developed in the minds of customers or with the monastery's own rules for production with their guidelines.

A definition for monastic products can be found at "[Manufactum](#)": The German retailer with a broad product range has included monastic products in its portfolio for more than 20 years. With the product line "Gutes aus Klöstern" ("Good things from monasteries") Manufactum became known and reputable in this niche business. The diversity of the monastic section comprises over 300 products from 65 European monasteries. According to Manufactum, a monastic product has to fulfill specific characteristics to be included in the range of products: "A monastic product, no matter where it comes from, must be good, i.e. of high quality and manufactured according to the rules of art. It must be useful and sustainable and not just there to be bought out of compassion or because you want to do a good job. It must function independently of the monastery and at the same time be an ambassador for monastic culture and the genius loci. (Source: <https://skivre.eu/a-good-monastic-product-must-be-an-ambassador-of-monastic-culture/>)

Occasionally, brands developed with specified product characteristics. This applies for example, to the most famous Trappist product - the Belgian Trappist beer - which is offered under the name "Bière Trappiste" and is subject to strict criteria (www.trappist.be). Three product criteria must be fulfilled to use the "Authentic Trappist Product" (ATP) label. These strict criteria also apply to other products that carry this label, such as bread, cheese, liqueurs, and religious artifacts. Please see the Good Practice 3 "The International Trappist Association International Network to Protect Brand and Values" and Good Practice 26 "Trappist Beer – An Authentic Monastic Product".

■ Three ATP guidelines



1. All products must be made within the immediate surroundings of the abbey
2. Production must be carried out under the supervision of the monks or nuns

3. Profits are intended for the needs of the monastic community, for purposes of solidarity within the Trappist Order, or development projects and charitable works.

If we take these three ATP guidelines and bring them together with the definition for monastic products of Manufactum, we can try to make the following classifications of a real monastic product:

1. Original and authenticity, produced in the monastery
2. Purchased original and authenticity
3. Externally produced for the monastery only
4. Souvenirs and other items, related to the monastery, to Christianity, or the values of the monastery.

Authenticity plays a key role in monastic products. In the context of this module, the term is used in the sense of credible, genuine, reliable, or guaranteed. This describes something that is seen as specifically reliable. Please see SKIVRE Module 4 “How to Sell Monastic Products Authentically”, where the term is reflected in detail from different angles.

■ **Table 1: Classification of a monastic product**

Original and authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ produced in the monastery or the immediate vicinity ■ the manufacturing must have been done by nuns or monks or at least under their supervision
Purchased original and authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the same as original and authenticity, but bought in from outside the monastery ■ this can also be products from other monasteries
Externally produced for the monastery only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ produced for the monastery (e.g. according to recipes of the monastery) ■ licensed by the monastery ■ The monastery promotes the product with the monastery image. The brand provides information about quality and origin and transfers trust. <p><i>Note: A monastery logo without a connection is not enough. Moreover, the purchase of a complete monastic label by an external company and the distribution of these products is excluded.</i></p>

Souvenirs and other items

These products cannot be classified in the three categories. None of these products are real monastic products.

Examples: pens with monastery logos, postcards, and guides to monastic gardens

All the products in a monastery shop can be classified into these categories. The first and second categories, "Original and authentic" and "Purchased original and authentic", are of course real monastic products. In the third category "Externally Produced for the Monastery only", it is important to distinguish whether just a label of the monastery is printed on the product or if it stands in direct relationship with it. In most monastery shops you will find a variety of products of category four, "Souvenir and other items".

Many monasteries are no longer producers of monastic products due to lack of manpower or lost knowledge, but they are included in networks of their Orders (see *Module 7 "Value Adding Through Networks"*) and offer products of other monasteries for sale. Use your network and join forces. Arrange special conditions if you offer products from other monasteries.

To expand the range for sale, souvenirs are also offered in the monastery shop. Visitors like to take something home as a memento, such as a pen with the monastic label or a nice postcard for the loved ones at home. Most of the monastic products are tangible, but there might also be a range of intangible products like services (see *Module 2 "Marketing Strategies"*), which could also be classified according to the table above. To give an example for an original monastic intangible product, this could be a calligraphy workshop based on incunabula from the monastery's historic library with an overnight stay in the monastery.

There is obviously a need for a clear definition of a monastic product like a quality label or certification "made in the monastery". Some monasteries, like the [Münsterschwarzach abbey](#) in Germany, have created an own label that shows their dedication to a consistent standard. The Münsterschwarzach quality label called "Klosterqualität" refers to the essential characteristics of the monastic product as ecological, natural, regional, and artisanal (please see our Good Practice 30 "Münsterschwarzach Monastery"). However, the quality level behind any label should be communicated to the customers for transparency and trust building.

Monastic sites and/or their production and/or brands may be sold to external operators and companies that continue to offer the products under the name of the monastery. This is not per se a bad development as examples show (see our Good Practice 22 "Products of Santa Maria Novella, Florence/Italy"). The product might even not have anything in common anymore with the traditional monastery except the name. This development also affected a number of monastery breweries in Belgium which have been sold. Aiming to separate

themselves from this development, in 1998 the Trappists introduced their quality label “*Authentic Trappist Product*” (ATP).

When characterizing such a quality label, it is crucial to find the right balance. However, it should be noted that if a product is only an authentic monastic product if it was produced by nuns or monks, there would probably be very few monastic products on the market left. Due to the decreasing number of members of the order, there is a lack of work force.

Take a look at Case Study 1, providing a collection of examples of monastic products. Decide which of these examples distinguishes original and authentic monastic products from souvenirs and other items.

Case Study 1: Examples of products in the monastic field

■ Caldey Abbey

Products from the Island of Caldey, Pembroke, Wales

Caldey Abbey is presently a working monastery with Cistercian/Trappist monks. Their business venture is the manufacture of the famous range of Caldey Island perfumes and toiletries (colognes, bath essences, aftershaves, hand lotions, and soaps) The production was inspired by the profusion of local wildflowers and herbs. Since the 1950's lavender bunches from the monastery garden were dried and sold to visitors, giving the idea of creating perfumes commercially.

Products are perfumes from the island:

- “Caldey Island Lavender Toilet Water”
- “Caldey After Shave”

The chocolate-making room, known on the island as the chocolate "factory" (although it's actually more like a large kitchen) is where the **Abbots Kitchen** chocolate bars are hand-made using a fine couverture. Visitors can buy chocolate and fudge and glimpse the process from a small viewing and sales area. The chocolate production is outside the monastic walls, but with a monastic license from the abbey.

- Chocolate from the Abbey “Abbots kitchen”

<https://www.caldey-island.co.uk/>

<https://caldeyislandwales.com/chocolate-factory>

<https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-caldey-island-monks-chocolate-and-perfumes-article1460>

■ Andechs Monastery, Germany

From pilgrimage to a worldwide distribution

The monastery's largest business enterprise is the Andechs monastery brewery. It is the exclusive property of the Benedictine monks of Saint Boniface in Munich and Andechs. More than 100,000 hectoliters of beer per year are exclusively brewed and bottled in Andechs. The distribution is worldwide.

- product of the own brewery: "Andechser Doppelbock Dunkel"
see: <http://www.andechs.de/en/brewery/>

Doing business at Andechs Monastery; Deutsche Welle TV:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqR0u4AHZq0>

Andechs Monastery and the brewery (German)

<https://www.monumente-online.de/de/ausgaben/2009/1/heute-back-ich-morgen-brau-ich.php#.XT3lVi2BqF0>

Interview with Pater Valentin Ziegler / Andechs Monastery (German)

<https://www.monumente-online.de/de/ausgaben/2009/1/wallfahrtsort-und-wirtschaftsbetrieb.php#.XT3JWS2BqF3>

Since 1996, the Andechs Monastery awards "product licenses". In cooperation with other traditional companies the monastery has created new products based on jointly developed recipes. The distribution of the licensed products takes place at the partner companies and in the monastic restaurant "Bräustüberl".

The common specialties that are manufactured or further processed by the partner companies within the product partnerships are:

- Bread: „Andechser Brot mit Biertreber“
- Tobacco: „Andechser Snuff“
- Bacon: „Andechser Klosterspeck“

[\(https://andechs.de/de/gastronomie/lizenzprodukte/\)](https://andechs.de/de/gastronomie/lizenzprodukte/)

■ Adelholzener Alpenquelle GmbH

Adelholzener Alpenquellen GmbH is the largest mineral spring in Bavaria located in Bad Adelholzen. What barely anyone knows is that the only shareholder is the Covenant of the Merciful Sisters of Saint Vincent von Paul. The Congregation acquired the spa and spring in 1907. At that time, more than 1,500 sisters came to Bad Adelholzen to fill the bottles by hand. In the following years, the production and administrative business was modernized and expanded. The first electric bottling plant was completed in 1919. The company bottles around 400 million mineral water products every year. The profits go completely into the charitable activities of the Order.

The beverages are offered in long-distance-trains of the Deutsche Bahn AG or at McDonald's. Moreover, the Adelholzener "Schorlen" (a mix of mineral water and fruit juice) are organic and certified by the German bio-label "Naturland". Adelholzener has sponsored Formula 1 cars and is also an official sponsor of the soccer club FC Bayern Munich.

Some of the products are:

- Mineral water and Medicinal water
- Active O₂ (mineral water enriched with oxygen)
- Fruit Spritzer (apple, cherry...)
- Iced tea
- Lemonades

<https://www.adelholzener.com/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adelholzener_Alpenquellen

■ Maria Laach Abbey

Maria Laach Abbey is a Benedictine abbey situated on the southwestern shore of Lake Laach in Germany. The artisan and artist monks, who originally built numerous businesses, characterize Maria Laach. Today, the monastery employs about 220 people in its ten companies, depending on the season.

Their own monastic companies are: ironwork, sculpture, ceramic manufacturer, monastery garden centre, hotel and gastronomy, publishing house, bookbindery, monastery kitchen, laundry, plumbing/locksmithing, drinking water supply, and the monastery shop “Books and Art”.

Some of the products are:

- “Cactus” from the tropical house of the monastery garden
- “Carafe” ceramic art of work from the workshop of the monastery
- “Wild garlic salt” It is advertised as “Only salt and dried herbs, more is not in it. The herbs were grown by brother Stephan himself in the monastery garden, handpicked, carefully dried, and mixed with pure salt. Pure enjoyment! Ingredients: 80% evaporated salt, 20% wild garlic”
- Pottery workshop with an overnight stay in the monastery

The companies for lease:

monastery fishing, monastery carpenter, and monastery estate and farm shop

<https://www.maria-laach.de>

<https://www.segensreich.de>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Laach_Abbey

Please carry out Exercise 3.1 “Original and authentic monastic products”, Exercise 3.2 “Classification of a monastic product” and Exercise 3.3 “Typical and original monastic products” at the end of this module.

Tags for Unit 1:

monastic product, devotional object, ATP, original, authentic, purchased original, externally produced for the monastery, souvenirs

Unit 2. Development of new monastic products

Have you ever considered creating and developing new monastic products based on the history of your monastery? This is by no means absurd, especially if you are familiar with the own monastery story. Please have in mind that visitors to your monastery are primarily interested in products that are unique and take into account the very special atmosphere of the monastery. Therefore, with this learning unit, we would like to encourage you to think about what new products from your monastery might look like. Here you can find out what there is to consider during the development phases.

Product ideas mostly develop out of challenges, needs, or in the monastic environment the desire to revive old traditions. This is supported by the current trend of people consciously putting more emphasis on quality, purity, honesty, handwork, and sustainability.

Have a look in the archives of your monastery, you might find information about what the monastery produced in former times. Our Good Practice 28 “Quince products - new trend with old monastic recipes” about the quinces from the monastic garden of German Bronnbach Monastery is a good example of the outcome of browsing through the monastic archives.

If you do not have direct access to historic archives, you may ask the local historians who usually have access to this kind of information or will be helpful in finding out. Ask your colleagues, staff, or visitors which kind of product they would most like, appreciate or need related to the monastery. Use customer feedback collected by the employees who are in direct contact with the customer. The possibly overlooked but most obvious ideas are often the best. Set up a system where all the ideas can be pooled and sorted into categories, and which everyone can contribute to.

2.1 Successful monastic product development – the eight stages

The basis for the development of new products should be established according to the methods of the “Eight Stages in New Product Development Process” according to Kotler & Keller (Fig. 1). (Source: Marketing Management by Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller; 2009.)

Before investing time and effort into product development, these phases should be thought through first. Monastic products do not always go through all phases of product development. Decide what you would like to adapt for yourself. The following eight stages should support you to do so.

■ Eight Stages in New Product Development Process:

1) Idea or Idea Generation:

Includes ideas, needs, and wishes of the producer and customer. Is the idea worth considering? Creating a “pool of ideas” and updating it regularly preferably in a team is a good starting point.

2) Idea Screening and Rating:

The rating takes place under certain criteria such as benefit, price/performance, but also whether the product stands for a monastery or in a relationship with it. It makes sense to set up an “Ideas Committee” to assist the decision-making process.

3) Concept Development and Testing:

During the development process ask yourself the following questions:

- Who will use this monastic product?
- What primary benefit should be achieved by the product?
- What is the best usage case for the product?

The concept should be tested by a target group of typical customers and their reactions collected. This methodical approach can be applied to any product and service.

4) Marketing Strategy Development:

In this step, a preliminary marketing strategy to launch the product will be developed. The following criteria are defined: target market size, structure and behaviour, the planned product positioning and sales, share and profit goals for the first years, products planned price, distribution strategy and marketing budget, long-running sales and profit goals, and long-term marketing mix (*refer to Module 2 “Marketing Strategies”*).

5) Business Analysis:

This economic analysis is used to estimate if sales cover at least the cost of materials, labour, and sales. Does it correspond to the monastic goals? The product must pass a business test for further development. Analyse the state at which the Break-Even Point¹ is reached to achieve gain.

6) Product Development:

The development of prototypes begins with functional and consumer tests.

7) Market Testing:

Market product testing starts. The brand name needs to be attached and suitable packaging needs to be developed. Lastly is the product functional and acceptable? (*Refer to Module 8 "Creating a Strong Brand"*)

8) Commercialization:

Three questions need to be answered:

- **WHEN:** Is the product seasonal? Should the older products or stock be used up first?
- **WHERE:** In the monastery? Regional, national or international?
- **HOW:** In the monastery shop? Online? Through a retailer or network?

¹ Break-Even Point: At this point the revenue is equal to the cost. Everything that goes beyond this point is called a profit zone.

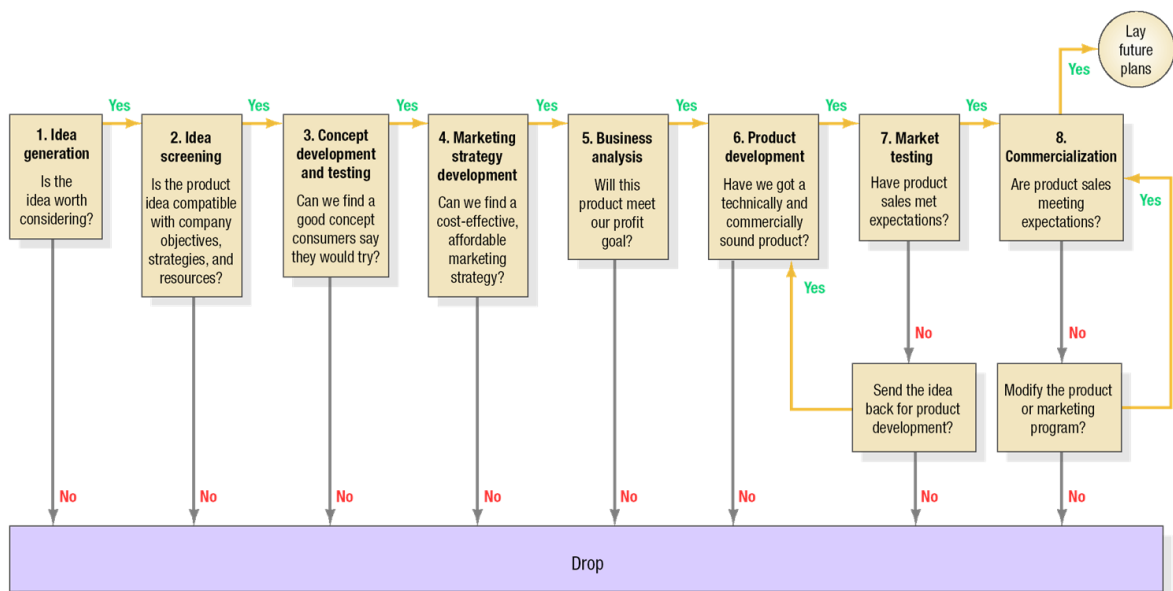


Figure 1: Eight Stages in New Product Development Process (Kotler/Keller 2009)

Sometimes new product development is necessary to expand or complete the monastery range. These eight phases are for the establishment and may assist in the development but are not essential for product development in the monastic environment. The eight stages for product development also apply to intangible products. Everyone can and must decide for themselves and their monastery whether a new product development is needed and how it could be completed.

Neither short nor long term marketing is completely rigid and irreversible; it must be constantly checked for success and adapted to the respective market development. As rapidly as consumers' tastes change, so must marketing strategies.

The following case studies implement the eight phases of product development with varying intensity.

Case Study 2: Examples of new developed products in the monastic field

■ Monastic Dry Gin - Made in Silence



The monastic gin was created in the Cistercian monastery Bochum-Stiepel in 2017. The idea for the gin came when they realized that the product range in the monastery shop in Stiepel needed to be expanded. They kept in mind that it should be something that could be produced in the monastery or at least with monastic ingredients. In addition, the experience and knowledge of the brothers should be brought in. The monks were able to fall back on product knowledge with their existing monastic liqueur. The monastery tries to keep the financial commitment as manageable as possible; they rely on a slow growth starting with small batches of 300 litres.

Slogans like “This gin springs from monastic walls, it breathes the power of silence” made the product stronger. The gin was highly praised in the press and got headlines like: “Mission gin”, “A high-proof mission”, “Mission with 42% alcohol or “The gin of life”

(Source pictures: <https://www.monasticdrygin.de/>)

Refer to:

www.monasticdrygin.de

www.monastic.de

<https://youtu.be/nYNgMtrqfdE>

■ Quinces from the monastic garden



In the former Cistercian Bronnbach Monastery in the Tauber valley, a couple of years ago old varieties of quince trees have been planted. Already Hildegard von Bingen assigned the fruit a healing effect. The quince is not cultivated too often despite its good use. In German-speaking countries the amount is only 0.5% of all fruit trees. The preservation of old varieties is therefore of particular importance. The quince is processed according to historical recipes such as liqueur or jam. These monastic products are still in their infancy and are being slowly introduced to the market and being sold in the local monastery shop.



© Sabrina Rota

■ Monastic Country Beer (Kloster Landbier)

Another product from Bronnbach Monastery is the “Monastic Country Beer” (Kloster Landbier). This beer is developed in co-operation with the local brewery. On the occasion of the “350 years of brewing tradition in Bronnbach” anniversary, 250 liters of beer will be brewed exclusively for this purpose. The introduction takes place at a beer tasting before Lent in 2020. This is supported by an exhibition about the Bronnbach brewing tradition in the associated archive.

www.kloster-bronnbach.de

A detailed explanation of both Bronnbach monastic examples can also be found in the section Good Practice, see Good Practice 2 “Bronnbach Monastery Shop, Germany”, Good Practice 28 “Quince products - new trend with old monastic recipes” and Good Practice 29 “The New Traditional Monastery Beer”.

Please complete Exercise 3.4 “Creating new monastic products” at the end of this module.

Tags for Unit 2:

eight stages, product development, break-even point

Unit 3. The Monastery Shop

Let us have a look at your monastery shop and its typical range of products. Let's discuss whether the monastery shop is a good sales opportunity for monastic products and what its unique selling point (USP) is. Let us ask what exactly is a monastery shop? Is it only a business part of your monastery with a commercial purpose or does it have other functions as well? Of course, the shop provides a platform for the sale of internally and externally produced products of the monastery, but maybe it can be used for additional purposes as well. Strictly speaking, monastery shops are the best example of centuries-old sustainability, because which shop can look back on 700 years of history? In this chapter, you will learn about the history of monastery shops, their spirit, and ambition. We will answer the question 'can a monastery shop be run like any other shop?' You will gain knowledge of why they are special and what it means for their operation. The following learning unit will sensitise you to this.

3.1 Monastery shops - a short glance at their history

Monastery shops have been listed in monastery literature since the Middle Ages, initially for the sale of devotional objects, images of saints, rosaries, literature, and candles. Later the range expanded for practical reasons: They supplied believers in the surrounding area and above all pilgrims with remedies, food, and equipment. Ointments and tinctures were produced in the monastery pharmacies and sold in the monastery shops. These included practical items such as soaps, ointments against blisters, tinctures against sprains, and herbal mixtures to keep vermin away from the sleeping areas of pilgrims. Among the foodstuffs were frequently preserved pastries, fruit, vegetables, and sausages, which were suitable for taking along on pilgrimages, as well as tea blends for many occasions. The equipment included leather goods such as belts or special pilgrim sandals, metal goods such as knives, and textiles such as work coats and headgear.

Products were mainly manufactured and distributed by the monasteries that encouraged manual labour, i.e. with the Catholic Orders - Benedictines, Cistercians, Trappists, and Carthusians, and with the Orthodox Church. For these monasteries, in addition to prayer and deliberate retreat, manual labour is also important, as it is carried out in workshops and agricultural enterprises.

Handiwork is still an important feature of monastic products today. Handmade products are an important sales feature in monastic shops, even if it might be difficult to offer them exclusively. But it is precisely these products that bridge the gap to the history of monasteries.

3.2 Understanding the difference between a shop and a monastery shop

Can a monastery shop be run like any other shop? Certainly, in some respects, but in other respects the exclusivity of a monastery shop becomes obvious and you better not underestimate these aspects when building up a 'customer base.

The special thing about monasteries and their products is that, in the best case, they possess an invaluable treasure: they have recipes, experience, and knowledge that have been tried and tested over centuries, expanded and always renewed. No matter whether it is about remedies, plant protection, tools or preparations, monks and nuns have passed on knowledge, observed nature with patience, established business relationships across continents - and were able to document this knowledge in writings and store it in libraries. From a sustainability point of view, monastery shops are extraordinary examples for sustainable businesses.

Monastery shop customers enter it in the awareness that they will receive a special and proven knowledge converted into products. In doing so, they not only acquire a product, but also benefit from expert knowledge in which they have confidence. Would we have this confidence, for example, when entering the shop of any food chain? Certainly not! But that also means there is a demand for monastic products and their quality, longevity, and sustainability that must be met.

This awareness should guide you as the operator of a monastery shop through the decisions of organising your shop: What is the difference between my products and those that my customers can buy in any shop? The criteria described in Unit 1.1 will make your decisions easier. Who runs the monastery shop, the monastery itself with nuns, monks, and own employees, or is the shop leased to an external partner? Intermediate solutions are also possible, such as the operation by a circle of friends (in German: "Freundeskreis"), a sponsoring association ("Förderverein"), or an own company if the operator is a public authority ("Eigenbetrieb").

3.3 Identify your target group and shape your product portfolio

Did you ever sort out and classify the people coming to your monastery shops? Knowing these people and their needs and expectations is directly linked to running a monastery shop successfully. The reasons for faith-based travels are well known: pilgrimage, monastic retreats, religious events, memorial and religious sites as elements within a given cultural landscape. The motives for visiting religious sites beyond spiritual reasons are also well identified. "must have seen"-sites, an interest in architecture, art, and history, or finding places

of rest. (Source: *Religion und Tourismus. Ergebnisse einer bundesweiten Repräsentativuntersuchung der Universität Paderborn und Akademie Bruderhilfe, 2011.*)

It is not decisive whether the motivation for buying products is spiritual or touristic. Rather target groups shape the monastic shop portfolio. This is a suggestion for four target groups whom we expect to come to your monastery and your shop:

- **Locals**
(local population, buyers from your region, locals who bring their own visitors)
- **Tourists**
(people from outside your region coming by car, bus, or as hiking and cycling tourists; all of them behave differently when it comes to purchases in your shop)
- **Spiritual tourists/people of faith**
(pilgrims / people with a Christian orientation who want to strengthen their religious faith through a visit or stay in a monastery)
- **Educationally motivated monastery visitors**
(tourists, schools, participants of seminars and workshops offered by your monastery, not necessarily interested in the spiritual offers)

Knowledge about these groups is of crucial importance in order to orient the monastery shop according to its range of products. So first of all, find out who your target groups are, why they come to your monastery, and what they expect from a visit. There are very different kinds of potential buyers of your monastic products: there might be locals like the customer who comes regularly to buy the monastery's herbal blend. There are visitors from your region who come with their friends and relatives on special occasions, there are visitors from abroad who are passing through your region and would like to take a break and visit a cultural site. Some people might come with a cultural interest in the site and they expect books and brochures about your monastery (do you have different literature in stock?), there might be the bikers who cannot carry much (do you offer a packaging and mailing service?) or persons who are looking for spiritual guidance (are there monks and nuns available for a short meditation?). In several of the SKIVRE modules you will find information about how to learn more about your target groups and how to benefit from this information in your product range (see *Module 5 "Distribution channels"*, *Module 6 "Social media and communication"*, *Module 8 "Creating a strong brand"* and *Module 10 "Aspects of sustainability"*, and respective exercises there).

3.4 The range of tangible monastic products

In the previous learning unit, we differentiated between product properties that were crucial in identifying a monastic product. To get an initial assessment and a better overview of the product variety, we classified the monastic product according to product groups (class of goods). This classification can be made quickly according to obvious characteristics and the applicability of a product.

We distinguish between the following product categories:

- monastic handcraft
- body care
- food
- wine & spirits
- media
- spiritual
- souvenirs

■ **Table 3: Typical tangible monastic product portfolio**

monastic handcraft	■ ceramics	■ wood handcrafts
	■ clothing	■ needlecraft
	■ shoes	■ monastic remedies
	■ smithery handcrafts	
body care	■ skin care	■ perfumes
	■ hair care	
food	■ meat & sausages	■ oil
	■ fruits & vegetables	■ mustard
	■ pastries & sweets	■ vinegar
	■ jams	■ honey
	■ teas	■ juices
	■ spices	
wine & spirits	■ wine	■ liqueurs
	■ beer	■ brandies

media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> books music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> movies
spiritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> devotional: rosaries, crosses, statues 	
souvenirs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> postcards pencils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wine glasses beer mugs

3.5 Intangible monastic products as an access point to monastic products' sales

Intangible products are mostly services or courses. This type of goods does not have a physical nature; it is non-material and cannot be touched. A service or course typically increases the customer's knowledge, directly or indirectly. (Source: Economics: Principles in Action by Arthur O'Sullivan and Steven M. Sheffrin, 2003.) It could be a pottery course or a meditation workshop with an overnight stay and full board in the monastery. Guided tours through the monastery, concerts, or wine tastings are further intangible products of a monastery.

There are monasteries, like the Orthodox Kremikovtsi Monastery "St. George the Victorious" in Bulgaria, which offers childcare and workshops for young people during their school holidays. (Source: http://bulgariamonasteries.com/en/kremikovtsi_monastery.html).

Bronnbach Monastery in Germany offers a whole range of workshops, guided tours, and talks. (Source: <https://www.kloster-bronnbach.de/Veranstaltungen.html>). All these intangible products are a unique chance to create a bond between visitors, clients, and the monastery.

When the service or course takes place in the monastery or is organized by the monastery, it is an original monastic product. The sale of material products in the monastery shop is partly supported by the services of the monastery and the thus created access to the people.

3.6 Balancing different product types

Now you are probably wondering what a well-balanced range of monastic products should ideally look like. We cannot give you the absolute answer, but we can give you a few decision aids for the design of your offers.

In our collection of good practices, you will find many different types of monastery shops. Have a look at them and get inspired! There are shops that focus on a very small range and there are shops that offer many different things. We would recommend the following approach:

- First concentrate on the products that are made in your monastery and that make your offer unique. Present them in a way that shows their quality and your pride.
- If it is intended or necessary to supplement your offer with other products, you are recommended to offer products from other monasteries, possibly from the same order.
- Avoid making your monastery shop look like a general store. Every single product should have a connection to monastic life and work, if possible also to your region.
- Make sure you create a relaxed, friendly atmosphere. Provide seats.
- If possible, monks and nuns should be present in the shop themselves - but not people wearing a monk's or nun's habit as a costume!
- In monasteries that are no longer run by an active order, product selection requires particular sensitivity. Try to make relations to the history of the monastery in your offer. For example, you can offer products from active monasteries of the same order.
- Have additional information on your products or make sure that the sales staff is trained to give information.
- Never forget that people who may not be interested in the products may also come to you in the monastery shop, but rather for a prayer or a meditation with a monk or a nun. Your sales staff should be prepared and able to organise this, if possible.
- Always invite your customers to visit the adjoining church and let the silence and atmosphere of the place work its magic on them.
- Your monastery shop should be easily visible and accessible. A sufficient number of parking spaces within walking distance of the shop are also an advantage.

3.7 What is the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of a monastery shop?

The Unique Selling Proposition or often-called Unique Selling Point (USP) is an outstanding performance feature, which clearly sets an offer apart from the competition. Which is the unique advantage of a monastery shop in comparison to other shops? The success of the monastery shop depends on many factors, but none of them is as important as the USP. Which are these points regarding your monastery shop? Every monastery needs to know about these special features to set-up a selling strategy.

These features (which are closely linked to our recommendations for your product range) give the monastery shop a unique touch, which cannot be found anywhere:

- the shop is in an active monastery with live traditions
- the shop offers its own monastic goods
- the offered monastic products are: authentic, natural, healthy, made with organic ingredients, high quality, special, cannot be bought everywhere else, and are strongly related to the local place or region.
- the visitor or customer is ideally served by nuns or monks with a natural and authentic personality or
- by well-informed staff that know the monastic range and how to give additional information or an anecdote about the provided products
- traditional products or products which expand with something new
(see *Unit 2: Development of new monastic products*).

The goal is to offer something that does not exist yet, or to provide the visitor a unique sales experience in the monastery shop and offers satisfaction with the product at home.

Please complete Exercise 3.6 “The monastery shop” and Exercise 3.7 “Check your own monastic products” at the end of this module.

Tags: for Unit 3

Monastery shop, Middle Ages, handicraft, handmade, sustainability, tangible monastic product, intangible monastic product, unique selling point, unique selling proposition, USP

Good Practices

There are several good practices referring to this module. These and more can be found below and the SKIVRE library:

- Good practice 2: The Bronnbach Monastery Shop “Bronnbacher Klosterladen”, Germany
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP2-EN>
- Good practice 3: The International Trappist Association - International network to protect brand and values, Belgium
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP3-EN>
- Good practice 22: Products of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, Italy
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP22-EN>
- Good practice 26: Trappist Beer – Authentic Monastic Product, Belgium
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP26-EN>
- Good practice 27: Monastic Gin – a New Product from the Cistercian Monastery Bochum-Stiepel, Germany
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP27-EN>
- Good practice 28: Quince Products - new trend with old monastic recipes, Germany
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP28-EN>
- Good practice 29: The New Traditional Monastery Beer, Germany
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP29-EN>
- Good practice 30: Abteiwaren – Königswinter Abbey, Germany
Download link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP30-EN>
- Good practice 31: The Role Model Monastery Shop in Athens, Greece
Download Link: <https://training.skivre.eu/gp.php/GP31-EN>

Check your Knowledge

Exercises



Exercise 3.1. - Original Monastic Products

Answer the question: Which characteristics apply to an ORIGINAL monastic product?

ANSWERS:

*authentic, natural, healthy, made with organic ingredients, high quality.
Uniqueness, special, cannot be bought everywhere, strongly related to the local place or region.*

Exercise 3.2. - Classification of the monastic products

Which of the defined classification should necessarily be met to still be regarded as a monastery product?

ANSWERS:

right: original and authenticity; purchased original and authenticity; externally produced for the monastery only

wrong: souvenirs and other items

Exercise 3.3. - Typical and original monastic products

Decide which of the example products in [Case Study 1: Examples of products in the monastic field](#) are typical and original monastic products and which not. Try to find more examples.

Typical and original monastic products	YES	NO
Caldey Island Lavender Toilet Water		
Caldey After Shave		
Chocolate from the Abbey "Abbots kitchen"		
product of the own brewery: "Andechser Doppelbock Dunkel"		
Bread: „Andechser Brot mit Biertreber“		
Tobacco: „Andechser Snuff“		
Bacon: „Andechser Klosterspeck“		
Adelholzener: Mineral water and Medicinal water		
Maria Laach: "Carafe" ceramic art of work from the workshop of the monastery		
Maria Laach: "Wild garlic salt"		
Maria Laach: Pottery workshop with overnight stay in the monastery		

Exercise 3.4. - Creating new monastic products

Create ideas for new monastic products and follow the method of the “Eight Stages in New Product Development Process” (2.1). Apply and adapt them regarding the attitudes or guidelines of your monastery/abbey and customize them for your shop.

8 stages of the development of monastic product	Creation of a new monastic product
Step 1: Idea or idea generation	
Step 2: Idea screening and rating	
Step 3: Concept development and testing	
Step 4: Marketing strategy development	
Step 5: Business analysis	
Step 6: Product development	
Step 7: Market testing	
Step 8: Commercialization	

Exercise 3.5. - Identify your target group

It is recommended to take this exercise by starting exercise 6.2 in Module 6. This exercise helps to create a survey to learn about your visitors and their expectations. You will experience: The answers will reveal a lot of useful information about your target groups. Please fill in the table below accordingly:

Visitor group according to Unit 3.3	Expectations of this group concerning your monastic products (according to a survey or staff experience)	Which of your products fits these expectations?
Locals		
Locals from the region		
Locals who bring their visitors		
Other		
Tourists		
National visitors		
International visitors		
Bus tourists		
Hikers		
Cyclists		
Couples aged 20 – 30		
Couples aged 30 – 60		
Couples 60+		
Families with small children		
Families with teenagers		
Other		

Spiritual Tourists / people of faith		
Pilgrims		
People who come primarily for reasons of religious faith		
Other		
Educationally motivated monastery visitors		
People interested in building history, art history, monastic garden		
School classes		
Participants of seminars or workshops at your monastery		
Other		

According to the results of this exercise:

Please re-evaluate your product range: What do you think about your product range? Does this offer meet the needs of all target groups? Is there anything obviously missing?

Exercise 3.6. - The Monastery Shop

Can you find other products and add them to table 3: Typical monastic product portfolio?

monastic handcraft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ceramics clothing shoes smithery handcrafts wood handcrafts needlecraft monastic remedies
body care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> skin care hair care perfumes
food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meat & sausages fruits & vegetables pastries & sweets jams teas spices oil mustard vinegar honey juices

wine & spirits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wine beer liqueurs brandies
media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> books music movies
spiritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> devotional: rosaries, crosses, statues candles and incense
souvenirs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> postcards pencils wine glasses

Following the table 3: Typical monastic product portfolio, please check the products in your own shop according to their origin. Now identify the different categories of the products on a percentage basis. This gives you a good overview of your range. Is it a balanced offer or not?

[illegible]



wine & spirits		
media		
spiritual		
souvenirs		

[illegible]

References

■ Books and articles

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Kotler, Philip; Keller, Kevin Lane: Marketing Management. 13th Edition. Pearson Prentice Hall, New Jersey 2009

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O'Sullivan, Arthur; Sheffrin, Steven M.: Economics: Principles in Action. Upper Saddle River, Pearson Prentice Hall, New Jersey 2003, Page 3

■ Weblinks

Concerning the Manufactum rules for monastic products, please see the SKIVRE blog here:
<https://skivre.eu/a-good-monastic-product-must-be-an-ambassador-of-monastic-culture/>
<https://skivre.eu/ein-gutes-klosterprodukt-muss-ein-botschafter-der-klosterkultur-sein/> (in German)

http://bulgariamonasteries.com/en/kremikovtsi_monastery.html

<https://www.kloster-bronnbach.de/Veranstaltungen.html>

■ **Weblinks on online shops and other monastic product distribution:**

Most of the major monasteries have their own online shop, see some examples below.

Other web links show platforms offering a variety of monastic products:

Frauenwörth Abbey: <https://www.frauenwoerth.de/klosterladen/online-shop/>

Königswinter Abbey: <https://abteiwaren.de/>

Community of Saint Benedict: <http://www.communityofsaintbenedict.org/>

International Trappist Association (with reference to the respective website of the monastery:
<https://www.trappist.be/en/products/>

The Manufactum range “Gutes aus Klöstern” offers a large product variety from different monasteries. The single products are described in detail and explained in the context of their origin: www.manufactum.com

Online shop for monastic products: <https://www.holyart.co.uk/>

Monastery shop greetings: https://www.monasterygreetings.com/prod_detail_list/Sale-Items

Platform for handmade products, special category “religious”:
<https://www.pinterest.de/jackieahlers/catholic-religious-orders-that-sell-handmade-produ/>

The SKIVRE Partnership: Empowering development of monastic products

SKIVRE is an Erasmus+ project aimed at empowering management, staff, monks, and nuns at monasteries with a most interactive training approach in gaining relevant skills for raising revenues for the preservation of religious heritage sites:

The **SKIVRE** homepage www.skivre.eu (including access to many social media tools) provides you with an inspiring multi lingual blog on monastic products, data and analyses, training material and training events in seven European countries.

The partnership comprises a multidisciplinary European team, which represents the target groups and expertise needed for training development:

media k GmbH | GERMANY **(coordinator)**

media k GmbH offers long-year expertise in religious heritage preservation and in the management of heritage preservation projects.

www.media-k.eu

Future for Religious Heritage F **| BELGIUM**

Future for Religious Heritage is a non-faith organisation open to all. It brings together those working to protect religious heritage all over Europe.

www.frh-europe.org

GUNET | GREECE

GUNET is a Greek specialist in creating online learning platforms, which offer different kind of learning experiences adapted to different topics.

www.gunet.gr

INI-Novation Bulgaria OOD | BULGARIA

INI-Novation is an education provider specialised in generating economic effects from cultural heritage.

www.ini-novation.com

Bronnbach Monastery | GERMANY

Bronnbach monastery is a former Cistercian monastery now operated by a public authority in the German Tauber valley. The monastery started to develop monastic products based on the history of the site.

www.kloster-bronnbach.de

Wissenschaftsinitiative

Niederösterreich | AUSTRIA

Wissenschaftsinititative is an education provider with longstanding experiences in developing learning platforms and learning material for heritage preservation.

www.wissenschaftsinitiative.at

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