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Brand image in intermedium size cities. Identifying the cities' first-generation effect with high rail speed in Ciudad Real (Spain)

Imagen de marca de las ciudades intermedias. Identificando el efecto de primera generación con alta velocidad ferroviaria en Ciudad Real (España)

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ABSTRACT:

While the increase of accessibility afforded by high-speed rail (HSR) opens up new possibilities for cities connected by it, one of the more significant but intangible benefits involves changes in the brand image of these cities and the range of consequent socio-economic effects this can bring about.

The objective of this work is to study the case of Ciudad Real, as an intermedium size city's first-generation HSR and how the HSR has contributed to the creation of an intermediate city brand of first-generation.

Through a SWOT analysis and evaluating the different phases through which this process of incorporation takes place, we can identify the different strategies that have been produced and the changes and urban adjustments that, as a consequence, have ended up defining a better positioning of the city before its incorporation.

Findings from this study illuminate not only the specific urban history of Ciudad Real but also provide insights for policymaking in newly emerging first-generation intermediate HSR cities.

RESUMEN:

El aumento en accesibilidad derivado de la AVF abre nuevas posibilidades para las ciudades que están conectadas a la línea. Las nuevas interrelaciones que ofrece pertenecer al “club de ciudades de AVF” crea un cambio en la marca de imagen de este tipo de ciudades que da lugar a nuevos efectos socio-económicos.

El objetivo de este trabajo es el estudio del caso de Ciudad Real, como ciudad intermedia de primera generación AVF y de como el AVF ha contribuido a la creación de marca de ciudad intermedia de primera generación.

A través de un análisis DAFO y evaluando las diferentes fases por las que se desarrolla este proceso de incorporación podemos identificar las distintas estrategias que se han producido y los cambios y ajustes urbanos que como consecuencia han acabado definiendo un mejor posicionamiento de la ciudad antes de su incorporación.

Los resultados iniciales muestran que las ciudades de primera generación HSR optan por una imagen equivocada durante la primera década (la imagen de “ciudades dormitorios”), que condujo a un efecto económico más estrechamente ligada a la construcción que al dinamismo socioeconómico. Sin embargo, dos décadas más tarde pueden observarse importantes cambios internos de la ciudad.

1. INTRODUCTION

The positioning of the brand in a company is one of the main objectives of the company. This positioning is achieved through a certain segmentation of the market and a differentiation valued by that.

Applying this positioning of “city brand” is a factor that can contribute or add strength and credibility to the identity of the city. Using this theory to the concept of city, the city brand is of great value for the management of municipal marketing, as it represents a set of strengths and weaknesses linked to the images of the place of origin incorporating or diminishing the value provided by the brand.

The city brand weighs on the market because it acts as an identification element, which in some way amounts to a quality certificate. An adequate management of the brand image of the city will allow any element from that place to obtain a competitive advantage over other intermediate cities that will allow it to obtain rapid national and international identification, as well as, greater economic development and social.

Our starting hypothesis is that one of the elements that offers this competitive advantage and that contributes to the elaboration of the brand, is

the accessibility of the High Speed Rail Train (AVF or HSR) since, it opens new possibilities for the connected cities. The most significant benefits are intangible, since they affect changes in the perceived image of these cities, with socio-economic consequences in the medium-long term.

The aim in this work is to study the case of Ciudad Real, an intermediate city of first generation HSR and how this infrastructure has contributed to the creation of the first-generation intermediate city brand.

Through a SWOT analysis and evaluating the different phases through which this process of incorporation takes place, we can identify the different strategies that have been produced and the changes and urban adjustments that, as a consequence, have ended up defining a better positioning of the city before its incorporation.

Set off from an initial situation, in which Ciudad Real has as starting point a situation of negative city brand and skeptical to the changes that this infrastructure could bring. Ciudad Real as a first generation HSR cities in Spain, opted to become dormitory cities for the nearest large metropolises (Madrid in this case); this effectively implied choosing an image which favored urban rather than other services and commercial sectors development. This commitment to “dormitory city” and the need to create a new station for High Speed, generate the most important urban changes in Ciudad Real. After this phase, the increase in the number of users commuting daily with Madrid, shows that the City does not have the function of a dormitory city for foreigners, but that it allows the natives to benefit from the improvement of the positioning in the national network. Beginning to develop after two decades of implementation the necessary services to turn Ciudad Real into an intermedium size city. From this analysis, we can conclude, what have been the mistakes made and the best strategies taken, to apply them in the future incorporations in HSR.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptualizing HSR and its implications

While high-speed rail (HSR) can bring new challenges to cities-including a need for increased infrastructural and logistical support, potential impacts on existing economic sectors, like taxis, public transportation, and airlines,

and local concerns about population changes and gentrification, (De Rus & Nombela, 2007; Fu, Zhang, & Lei, 2012; Medina, 2016; Rothengatter, 2017)-its benefits, which include urban revitalization, economic growth, and increased access for people both inside, outside, and between cities, may typically outweigh these social and technical challenges (Blum, Haynes, & Karlsson, 1997; Garmendia, Ribalaygua, & Ureña, 2012, p. S26; Murakami & Cervero, 2017).

As an important area of this increased access and economic growth must involve tourism from cities and territories connected to the HSR network, analysing or measuring this effect poses considerable challenges (Sinclair & Stabler, 1997). Measuring the economics of tourism from known or identified attractions certainly provides insights (Naidoo, Fisher, Manica, & Balmford, 2016; Spalding et al., 2017), but simply the attraction of cultural tourism itself, and the sometimes directly measurable local economic effects as a result of it, are typically more diffuse (Rodrigues & Villasante, 2016; Sigala, 2017; Torre & Scarborough, 2017). Moreover, while any model of tourism economics must inevitably miss some elements and so provide an incomplete picture, not all HSR travel to a city denotes tourism as well. Nonetheless, the notion of an *attraction* –as a draw of some kind to a city– not only usefully describes both tourist and non-tourist travel but also points to the importance of the perceived image of a city as attractive.

Bearing in mind the most accepted approach nowadays (Masson et al. 2009:613-614), that is, the fact that the HSR does not produce an automatic transformation in the city, but it needs to consider the start-up of specific strategies on behalf of the local society, in this project we intend to insist on the hypothesis that the socioeconomic profit of this kind of infrastructure cannot be measured, only and exclusively, taking into account economic quantifiable parameters. On the contrary, we have to analyse other qualitative variables, such as the change of image, as it determines and favours the economic dynamism of the cities high-speed network. The aforesaid dynamism is closely related to the accessibility improvement the HSR provides to the cities and the socioeconomic effects linked to the tourist development

According with Garmendia et al (2012: S30), “On the territorial level two phenomena get most of the scholarly attention: new inter-city relationships and wider spatial implications of HSR”.

Our aim in this work is to study the case of Ciudad Real, as an intermediate size city first generations HSR and how the HSR has contributed to the creation of an intermediate city brand of first generation.

A systematic analysis on a large number of intermedium cities would allow wider understanding on the territorial impact of HSR services and on the role of HSR stations. This paper analyses and the specific policies strategies associated with the launching of HSR services in Ciudad Real, as a pioneer in first-generation HSR intermediate city in Spain.

The Spanish HSR has faced a strong polemic which is derived from its high cost, the use we make of it, the socioeconomic profitability it produces and its usage as a unifying concept in the territory. In this sense, the society demands some studies and decision making to solve or diminish the encountered problems.

2.2. Issues in the Effects of HSR on Urban Systems

Beginning roughly with the second half of the twentieth century, HSR has represented one of the most significant developments for the mobility of people around the world. Currently, more than fifteen countries have HSR with ten thousand kilometres of track, seven thousand of which are in Europe. While annual HSR traffic in Europe averages fifty million passengers, Spain represents approximately nine percent of that traffic. With 17.9 percent of the overall European HSR network, polemics about the high infrastructural costs and economic viability of HSR in Spain comprise an on-going issue for this topic.

HSR opened in Spain in 1992 with the Madrid-Córdoba-Seville route, with a length of 470 kilometres and five stations. A quarter century later, thirty new stations and a 267% increase in track length now provide access to a much wider number of cities (Figure 1).

This HSR network overlapped, but was not meant to replace, the existing rail network built from the nineteenth century onward. As such, the two rail systems coexist, with different technical needs and objectives, and often not complementarily to one another. This double presence, moreover, has tended to afford cities connected by HSR a more attractive –modern, progressive– image than cities within the urban system not connected to the HSR.

FIGURE 1
HSR IN SPAIN (2020)



Source: Adif. 2020. Atlas of High Speed Rail in Spain

A major challenge for HSR in Spain involves the country’s very unevenly distributed population with two major metropolitan centres more than 1,000km apart already readily serviced by air travel (Rothengatter, 2017). Amongst the approximately four hundred urban nuclei in Spain with more than 20,000 inhabitants, only thirty-five have connections to the HSR network (Table 1). According to the Spanish territorial organization, being part of this group of 35 cities affords membership in a group of privileged locales

that effectively restructures the urban system but also affords an enhanced perceived image as well.

TABLE 1
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SPANISH POPULATION AND THE CITIES WITH HSR

Nuclei Population	Population nuclei	Population 2020	% population	Nº HSR nuclei	HSR nuclei
More than 500,000	6	7,635,419	16.2	6	Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Sevilla, Zaragoza, Málaga
100,000 to 500,000	57	11,196,460	23.8	5	Córdoba, Valladolid, A Coruña, Alicante, Granada
50,000 to 100,000	85	6,075,765	12.9	18	Guadalajara, Toledo, Ciudad Real, Cuenca, Segovia, Huesca, Puertollano, Santiago de Compostela, Girona; Albacete, Lleida, Tarragona, Ourense, Vigo, Cadiz, León, Zamora, Castellón
20,000 to 50,000	265	7,765,329	16.5	7	Antequera, Calatayud, Puente Genil, Requena, Villena, Figueras, Antequera
0-20,000	7,718	14,353,235	30.5	1	Medina del Campo
TOTAL	8,131	47,026,208	100.0	35	

Source: Own data from INE.

These privileges and enhanced perception notwithstanding, an analysis of the role and actual structuring effects of HSR infrastructure for regional development is currently underway (Bazin, Beckerich, Delaplace, Blanquart, & Vandebossche, 2011). A key question here involves whether gains from HSR infrastructure occur “automatically” or not. An abundant literature to the contrary -including how economic conditions, geographic location, and quality of resources and services can serve as the actually strategic actors in economic gains (Bazin, Beckerich, & Delaplace, 2011)- has yet to dispel this assumption of automatic or inherent gains. One purpose of this

paper, then, is to focus on observable socioeconomic effects arising from HSR infrastructures, including any new inter-urban relationships as well as management of perceived images of a city as attractive, in order to more accurately frame discussions around this topic.

2.3. The Effects of HSR on Tourism

Enormous complexity attends efforts to define or characterize the tourism impact that HSR can exert on a city (Clavé, 2008) given the range and interconnectedness of factors that may have an influence (Cordente Rodríguez, Talaya, & Mondéjar Jiménez, 2011). Acknowledging this contingency and complexity, some tentative conclusions can be drawn for leisure and business tourism alike (Bazin, Beckerich, Delaplace, Masson, & Petiot, 2004; Perrin & Delaplace, 2013).

Business tourism comprises a strategic key in the orientation of cities and large urban areas (Bazin et al., 2004). For instance, while the number of day-return business trips increases, the visitors' average length of stay decreases, with negative repercussions for the hotel industry; in Lyon, for instance, the average stay-length declined from 2.3 to 1.7 days (Perrin & Delaplace, 2013). Conversely, there have been an increase in the number of congresses (Bazin, Beckerich, & Delaplace, 2011); in the case of Zaragoza, the number of congresses increased from 458 to 540 between 2002 and 2007 (Carmen Bellet & Alonso, 2008), with similar increases seen as well in Le Mans, France (Masson & Petiot, 2009).

The above approach requires a known or identified attraction, whether business opportunities or congresses, to measure the economic affordances of HSR. Coronado, Garmendia, Moyano, and Ureña (2012), in contrast, devised a methodology for measuring the effect of HSR on day tourism in Spain, distinguishing between "commuting" trips (<1 hour), day/business trips (<2.5 hours), and other occasional trips. Similar other work has sought to classify travel to cities with respect to distance and time (Chen & Hall, 2011; Ureña, Menerault, & Garmendia, 2009). A strength of this approach is to more generally characterize and capture HSR use but remains open to question whether these traveller uses have measurable or actual economic gains due to HSR.

Little disputed is that HSR access introduces a change of brand image of places connected to the network, as modern, progressive, and innova-

tive (Bazin, Beckerich, Delaplace, et al., 2011, p. 120). In this respect, a perception of improved quality of railway service by HSR is one of its main innovations and may be more significant than the service itself, especially for business tourism (Bazin, Beckerich, & Delaplace, 2011). In general, HSR is perceived as adding modernity to the conventional railway system, providing a “fashion brand” and giving a fashionable distinction to the areas that it connects, much as the “romance” of conventional railways themselves once did for its destinations (Skidmore, 2016). Making a destination attractive, in any case, seems prerequisite to increasing voluntary business and leisure visits to destinations over and above any dreary necessity that might otherwise motivate travel to a destination. HSR both facilitates access to and enhances that prerequisite.

3. METHODOLOGY

Through a SWOT analysis and evaluating the different phases through which this process of incorporation takes place, we can identify the different strategies that have been produced and the changes and urban adjustments that, as a consequence, have ended up defining a better positioning of the city before its incorporation.

3.1. *SWOT analysis method*

This paper uses SWOT analysis method to comprehensively analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of changes of city's brand image with the arrival of HSR. (Table 2).

When looking the whole SWOT analysis, it can be concluded that HSR services have more advantages than disadvantages. However, we need to take into account that those opinions are after more than twenty-seven years of the arrival of HSR.

TABLE 2
**SWOT ANALYSIS METHOD FOR HIGH HIGH-SPEED RAIL TO
 CHANGES OF CITY'S BRAND IMAGE**

STRENGTHS <i>Advantages for High-speed Rail to changes of city's brand image</i>	WEAKNESSES <i>Disadvantages for High-speed Rail to changes of city's brand image</i>
S1. Good global image of HSR service	W1. High infrastructure costs
S2. Short station time (to city centre)	W2. Coverage of the HSR network
S3. High Frequency (especially against low cost service)	W3. Little strategic planning over the impact infrastructure
S4. Rich Experience in Construction and Operation Construction	W4. Poor coordination between heart quarters of the cities
S5. Greater mobility	
S6. Increased exchange of specialized professionals	
S7. provide large variety of connections with cities' HSR	
OPPORTUNITIES <i>Opportunities for High-speed Rail to changes of city's brand image</i>	THREATS <i>Challenges for High-speed Rail to changes of city's brand image</i>
O1. Job opportunities with HSR net cities	T1. Uncertainty involved with HSR projects (whether they will be built and when)
O2. National socio-economic and educational Opportunities (Tourism, commercial, innovation...)	T3. Connections outside Europe
O3 International socio-economic and educational Opportunities	T4. Capital and Cost Risk for cities
	T5. Barriers to the High-speed Rail Standard (needed special rail)

Source: Author's own work base on 100 interviews

3.2. Acquisition of infrastructure: changes of city's brand image with the arrival of HSR

Agreeing with Masson and Petiot (2009, pp. 613-614) that merely providing HSR does not automatically or inevitably produce a transformation in a city, this study more exactly characterizes aspects that HSR can enhance in order to affect that transformation.

The multidimensional nature of the tourist image and study of tourist communication and information tools that influence its creation, which is considered of vital importance in view of the right promotion and marketing

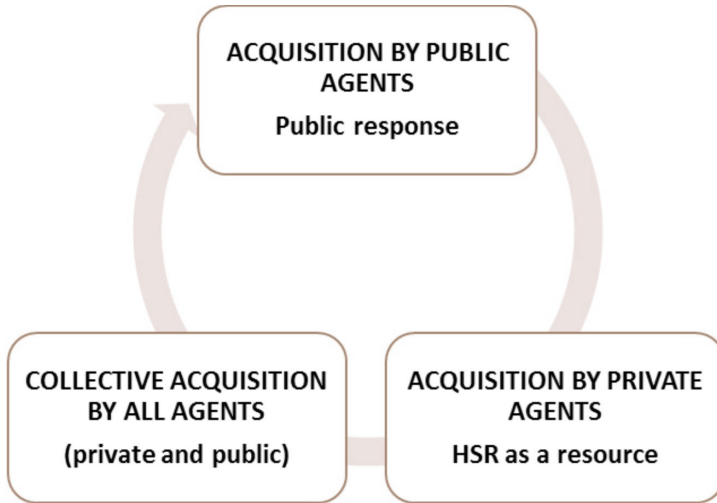
of it. Specifically, after a theoretical approach to the process of image formation, the empirical study conducted a total of 391 questionnaires, has been applied to rural tourism in Galicia and has shown that there is a moderate relationship between two variables (Andrade, 2012: 38).

In general, three kinds of expectations inform travellers to destinations: people who have little or no previous knowledge of the place, people who have developed positive or negative associations based on from personal research, reports by others, or the media, and experienced travellers who have visited the destination at least once before and have some concrete, if limited, impressions and experiences of the place. In encountering these different expectations (or lack of them) in travellers, the design of a city brand image benefits from striking, positive, differentiated, memorable, or recognizable images (Beerli & Marti n, 2004); problems like perceived dangers from drug trafficking in Mexico or terrorism in the Middle East, as well as icons like the Pisa's Leaning Tower or the United States' Statue of Liberty, are exemplary for their effect on a destination's image in this respect. To arrive at a destination by HSR in itself similarly can function in a striking, positive, memorable, even iconic way.

Towards the formation of a city's image is the "imaginarium" or the expectations generated by HSR for the city's local actors. Bazin, Beckerich, Delaplace, et al. (2011, p. 122 and ss.) coin the phrase "acquisition of infrastructure" to capture how a developmental infrastructure goes beyond simply the physical, instrumental aspects of HSR. Such acquisition of infrastructure, then, further implies a change of behaviour in the participating actors and involves a territorialisation of the infrastructure whereby the area's specific resources become converted into values and commitments (Saarinen, 2017).

This process is further reflected in city projects developed by local agents and institutions in light of the role they interpret for the infrastructure. For HSR, this especially involves the form that the project finally adopts with respect to site location, network itinerary, location of stops, sites of interconnection with other networks, and so on; it embodies decisions whether HSR will serve only or principally like a "tunnel" that passes between destinations without noting destinations along the way or will, itself, be a destination and experience when transiting from place to place. Bazin, Beckerich, and Delaplace (2011) specifically distinguish three steps in the acquisition of infrastructure for a local area (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2
STEPS IN THE ACQUISITION OF HSR IN THE CREATION OF THE CITY'S BRAND IMAGE



Source: Own data from Bazin, Beckerich, Delaplace, et al. (2011, p. 123).

- Phase I: installation of whatever infrastructure and innovation services are possible from the capacity of local response to generate new dynamics, and thereby to assign the necessary perspectives, for the area's future development. This involves above all the delivery of the physical infrastructure of HSR but in conjunction with a vision associated with it.
- Phase II: getting the private actors, e.g. a travel agencies that integrate HSR into their products, committed to project's infrastructure as a support for HSR development locally. Specifically, the image associated with HSR vis-à-vis the area here is presented as an attribute usable by local area actors as well as a distinguishing feature of locales. This involves not only buy-in by local actors to support and take advantage of the phase I infrastructure but also to commit to, or be motivated, by the change of image the physical HSR infrastructure affords.

- Phase III: coordinating and networking any possible actors (individual, corporate, governmental) to create projects across whole of the local area that integrate elements of the economy, culture and local heritage, tourism, territory and so on. If phase I brings the physical infrastructure and phase II “inwardly” changes local actors’ ideas about the area’s image, phase III turns that image “outward” to other areas. Generally, to coordinate this activity across as much of the area as possible generates stronger results than individual actors acting singly, e.g., citywide festivals as draws for tourism compared to individual businesses.

The acquisition of infrastructure that HSR affords around the perceived image of an area generates changes in the area’s relations with its environment, especially around any new or revitalizing services it supports. For tourism specifically, the effects generated by HSR depend significantly on local strategies of planning, management, and promotion (Carne Bellet, Alonso Logroño, & Casellas, 2010). Without this, the “automatic” benefits of HSR will be sporadic at best, if they materialize at all. While this sounds like a self-evident platitude, it bears repeating because the economic sector committed to building the physical HSR infrastructures is not necessarily or automatically committed to that infrastructure’s subsequent economic viability. Responsibility for that viability shifts from the infrastructure’s builders to its managers and local actors who benefit from its use, along with other non-area users who access it. While we might radically propose that, in some sense, even the builders should remain committed to the long-term viability of physical HSR infrastructures they provide, at a minimum we cannot lose sight of the disconnect of interests between the provider and manager of local HSR. As such, any approach where phase I of an acquisition of infrastructure consists only of providing a physical HSR infrastructure and its logistics, without a longer-term vision for its use and a specific strategy for implementing phases II and III of infrastructure acquisition (Bazin, Beckerich, & Delaplace, 2011), then this not only begins to illuminate how the “automatic” gains of HSR sometimes do not come about but also suggests that any such approach should not be called “infrastructure” at all.

4. CASE STUDY: THE SOCIOECONOMIC EFFECTS AND CHANGE OF IMAGE IN CIUDAD REAL

For Ciudad Real, the arrival of HSR changed its position within the hierarchy of Spanish cities and was accompanied by a makeover of image prompted by two major impacts on tourism: the Central Ciudad Real Airport and the *Don Quixote's Kingdom* leisure complex.

4.1. Background

In 1992, the Ciudad Real and Puertollano HSR stations opened –coinciding with the first Madrid-Sevilla AVE line and Sevilla's EXPO (Ureña et al., 2005; Marquez Guererro, 1994: 58)– incorporating them into the Córdoba/Sevilla (Andalusia) axis, and making Ciudad Real the first intermediate city with HSR access in Spain. By 2013, the network had increased from twenty-two to seventy-two direct connections, with Ciudad Real incorporated into two new axes –Ebro Valley (Barcelona) and the Mediterranean (Valencia and Alicante)– while strengthening its relations to Madrid (Table 3).

TABLE 3
DIRECT RAIL ROUTES WITH CIUDAD REAL

	Connected cities with Ciudad Real	Nº of connected cities	daily trains in one direction	Axes
Year 1992	Madrid, Puertollano, Córdoba, Sevilla	4	22	1.- Madrid-Atocha to Sevilla-Santa Justa
Year 2020	1.-Madrid, Puertollano, Córdoba, Sevilla, 2.- Málaga 3.-Zaragoza, Lérida, Barcelona, Tarragona 4.-Cuenca, Valencia, Alicante 5.- Granada	4 1 3 3 1	34	1.- Madrid-Atocha to Sevilla-Santa Justa 2.-Madrid-Atocha to Málaga-María Zambrano 3.- Axes of Noreste -Barcelona-Sants to Málaga-María Zambrano -Barcelona-Sants to Sevilla-Santa Justa 4.- Sevilla-Santa Justa to Valencia-Joaquín Sorolla 5.- Madrid-Atocha to Granada
	TOTAL	35		

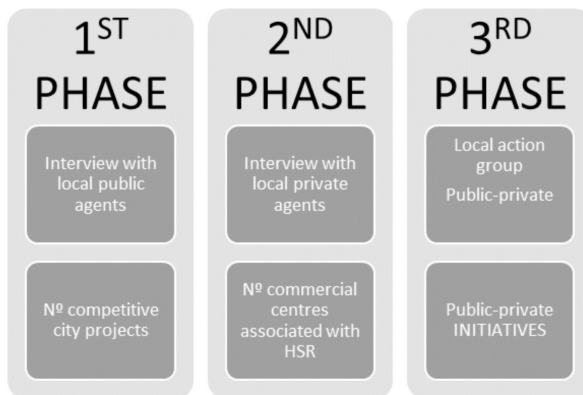
Source: Author's own work base on ADIF. www.adif.es.

The year 1992 also coincidentally saw the University of Castilla-La Mancha consolidated with the construction of a new university campus. As such, 1992 represents a watershed year for the image of Ciudad Real in the region. In the decade that followed, the number of travellers passing through the station steadily increased to over 1.8 million passengers. This volume, fundamentally connected to the area's relation to Madrid, involves the specific weight of Ciudad Real's 75,000 inhabitants, Puertollano's 50,000 inhabitants, and the area's total 150,000 inhabitants overall (Coronado et al., 2012). Recent years, however, have seen upward trends in traveller numbers to other cities, e.g., Toledo, while Ciudad Real's and Puertollano's numbers have been declining since 2007 (Jover Martí & Rodríguez Domenech, 2013).

4.2. Results of Acquisition of infrastructure in Ciudad Real

Following Bazin et al.'s (2011) acquisition of infrastructure framework, we use both quantitative elements obtained from fieldwork and available statistics, including project initiatives proposed by private and public local agents, as well as qualitative data drawn from interviews with major agents in the case city to measure and characterize Ciudad Real's change of image from HSR. Figure 3 summarizes our methodology.

FIGURE 3
**HSR ACQUISITION OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN CIUDAD REAL
(METHODOLOGY)**



Source: Author's own work

4.2.1 Phase I: Acquisition of Infrastructure by Local Public Agents

Acquisition of infrastructure in phase I involves not only the logistics of delivery HSR locally but developing a vision to connect that infrastructure to local interests and perceived image (phase II) and regional coordination of actors in phase II to other areas (phase III). To characterize phase I, we analysed local public agent response through various HSR projects Ciudad Real participated in and also collected interviews with the two local public agents most instrumental in implementing HSR access for Ciudad Real: the City Council's head of urban planning and the head of the city's tourist information office, also run by the City Council.

Strikingly, in the two decades that followed the arrival of HSR at Ciudad Real, zero projects related to it were funded by the city until 2012 (data from the Employment and Economic Development Department provided by a Ciudad Real City Council member). Other local agents similarly reported that no initiatives had been carried out prior to 2005, and even then, the "initiative" consisted only of connecting to the "AVE Cities Network," an online promotional network hosted by RENFE. This access promotes Ciudad Real attractions –while affording local and national actors the opportunity to place advertisements– around gastronomic, environmental, and cultural features of the area –castles, Comedy Theatre in Almagro, the Tablas de Daimiel, etc.– together with business tourist development linked to the University, the Council, and the Hospital. All of this, however, is very general and does little to uniquely highlight Ciudad Real amidst a context of countless other destinations and attractions.

In general, local agents interviewed reported a lack of activity around any further development of the HSR infrastructure post-arrival. To whatever degree there had been that kind of longer-term vision that Bazin, Beckerich, and Delaplace (2011) characterize as necessary during phase I of any acquisition of infrastructure, it seems to have fallen by the wayside. Acknowledging that the effects of HSR access are economically and socially difficult to assess (Blanquart & Koning, 2017), even as there is growing support against the sort of assumed "build it and they will come" mind-set of "automatic" gains around HSR infrastructures (Albalate, Campos, & Jiménez, 2017), in Ciudad Real, the outcome of the situation resembles consequences of that mind-set, by design or not. To conclude this does not take into account any number of socioeconomic factors that may have engendered the situation,

e.g., whether or not there were sufficient resources at the time to devote to furthering the infrastructure, what politics were involved in the decision-making, and so on. In retrospect, it is always easier to say what might have been done; nonetheless, to the extent that Ciudad Real did not devote more resources to a longer-term vision for its HSR infrastructure, this has similarly afforded it only accidental gains in perceived image that such efforts might otherwise have deliberately accrued.

4.2.2. Phase II: Acquisition of Infrastructure by Local Private Agents

Phase II of an acquisition of HSR infrastructure particularly involves the ways that local actors, especially commercial enterprises, buy-in to the provisions of that infrastructure and change behaviour in light of the perceived image of the area. This would not only include seeing opportunities in that HSR infrastructure –e.g., the rationality and attraction of advertising in stations or providing services around stations– but also differences in thinking about those opportunities perhaps most of all the increased glamour, innovation, modernity, or progressiveness of HSR as a symbol of speed (Jian & Zhang, 2012).

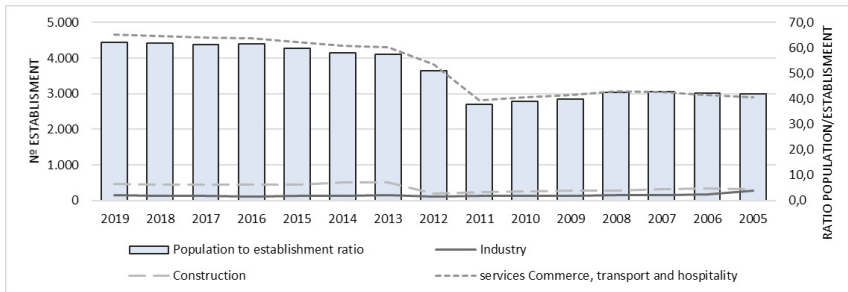
To analyse this requires quantifying the commercial milieu of Ciudad Real in its historical fluctuations post-arrival of HSR and inflecting those findings through qualitative factors drawn, in this case, from interviews with the President of the provincial Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In general, however, to discuss the evolution of the number, specialization, and spatial distribution of commercial activity in Ciudad Real requires keeping the pre-crisis period of 1992–2006 in mind. During that period, the number of commercial establishments in Ciudad Real increased 76.6% from 1,141 to 2,962, or from 19.7 to 42.2 shops per 1000 inhabitants. And nowadays (2019), the number of commercial establishments is over 4.657. Given that the increase of shops per 1000 inhabitants is only 62.3% percent, we see that population growth exceeds commercial growth (Figure 4).

Analysing the spatial distribution of the commercial sector, we can detect the influence of the HSR infrastructure as a location agent. Nevertheless, by 2019 -seventeen years after the arrival of HSR- a new increase in shopping centres has occurred around station.

As with local agents during phase I, the President of the Chamber of Commerce describes any commercial policy vis-à-vis HSR as non-existent.

The data above support this given the near total absence of HSR-related enterprises, that only the Don Quixote leisure complex arguably leverages the accessibility of it by HSR as an attraction, and that McDonalds is not a local agent. The President ascribed this to the image of Ciudad Real as a dormitory city for Madrid, as an image that did not attract private commercial agents, but asserted also that, in the balance, the HSR presence is neutral at worst, not negative, and remains a resource yet to be developed. He admits similarly that no explicit link between Ciudad Real's trade dynamics and HSR exists.

FIGURE 4
EVOLUTION OF STABLISHMENTS IN CIUDAD REAL (2006-2019)



Source: Own data from INE.

Moreover, the upsurge of commercial activity related to HSR in Ciudad Real since 2008 has not proceeded with the benefit of an explicit policy, even as the airport and business park now afford hundreds of local jobs. Insofar as phase II infrastructure acquisition involves a change of perceived image by local actors, HSR affords the airport and business park increased access to local resources by tourists, travellers, and locals alike, but without any “exciting” change of perceived image. Like the accidental, non-deliberate, gains associated with phase I infrastructure, it remains unclear to what extent, since 2008, HSR has helped to change its image from a dormitory city of Madrid into an attraction in its own right.

4.2.3. Phase III: Acquisition of Infrastructure by Concerted Regional Public/Private Agency

Phase III of the acquisition of infrastructure generally involves a coordinating and networking of formal local agency and interested private/commercial entities to explicitly shape perceived image on a regional, national, or even global level. Given the accidental or non-explicit efforts of the previous two phases to link to HSR, one would expect little to no such coordination for phase III and only secondary emphasis on HSR for any regional, national, or global effort by Ciudad Real. For data, one must draw on public or private ventures designated as Singular Regional Interest (SRI) projects. Notably, such projects have been quite unsuccessful.

For example, the Avanzado Industrial Estate, inaugurated in 1992 behind the HSR station, is a public initiative intended to host a large number of private companies but which in 2012 still has a large number of empty plots. From its inception, enterprise occupancy has depended more on the site's dual carriageway access rather than its proximity to HSR (interview with the Head of Licensing Services of the Ciudad Real City Council).

In the private sector, Ciudad Real's two major SRI projects in the period studied include the *El Reino de Don Quijote de La Mancha* leisure complex ("Don Quixote's Kingdom") and the *Ciudad Real Central Airport*.

4.2.3.1. *Don Quixote "leisure complex". El Reino de Don Quijote de La Mancha*

Promoted by Valcansado S.A. (GEDECO Group) and declared an SRI by the Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha in 1999, the Don Quixote "leisure city" or "mega resort" was to combine an overlapping offer of residence and services, with the figure of Don Quixote as a symbol. On paper and in terms of its statutory provisions, it portended one of greatest urban transformations proposed over and above ordinary and traditional planning in Ciudad Real in recent years (Cañizares & Rodríguez Domenech, 2014), totalling 1,200 Ha and more than 2,000 new project houses. At present, it has only a small golf camp of nine holes.

Arguably largely a victim of the on-going economic crisis, nonetheless nothing in the vision of Don Quixote's Kingdom leveraged HSR as anything more than potentially bringing in more tourists. That is, while there may have

been a presumption that the existence of HSR guaranteed an adequate point of increased access to the project, had it ever been completed, even the absence of documentation to support this underscores how the acquisition of infrastructure must always involve more than providing physical structures and logistics alone (Bazin, Beckerich, Delaplace, et al., 2011). More a pronouncement against Ciudad Real itself than HSR per se, the quixotic failure of this project potentially changes the image of the city in the wrong direction.

4.2.3.2. Ciudad Real Central Airport

Opening in December 2008 as a joint venture by two operator companies, Air Berlin and Air Nostrum at a cost estimated as high as 1.1 billion, the Ciudad Real Central Airport had had its last carrier withdraw by the end of 2011, then closed in 2012 and entered into bankruptcy proceedings, and was since purchased for 28 million by a UK group. As the first private international airport in Spain, it also would have been the first Spanish airport connected to the AVE network. Conceived as a dry port and support terminal for Barajas, whose connection and entailment with the HSR network was present from the start, the airport design included a passenger walkway connecting with the HSR network. However, by 2008, its opening had already been delayed for more than ten years by problems with environmental impacts and its management, which had begun as a private initiative, ultimately ended as a public investment, with one of the largest shareholders being Caja Castilla-la Mancha (Rodríguez Domenech, 2012). It has been reported that the venture was intended to fail from the beginning, as the original owners would simply benefit from the construction of the airport (Harter, 26 July 2012); a possibility that echoes the need, emphasized above, to not lose sight of the disconnect of interests between the provider and manager of any local infrastructure.

As a regionally significant project, the Ciudad Real Central Airport represents on paper the kind of image change that phase III acquisition of infrastructure can bring about. Successfully completed, the project would have positioned Ciudad Real as a place with the first privately owned international Spanish airport, one connected to the most significant part of Spain's AVE network; if successful, "Unemployment in this town of 60,000 would have disappeared, and Ciudad Real would be on the map" (Gutman, 3 May 2012). As a projection, what economic benefits would have factually accrued in terms of business or leisure tourism would have remained still

difficult to assess (Blanquart & Koning, 2017), but Ciudad Real would not now have the dubious association, once again, with Don Quixote as a figure of ambitious but delusional folly (Gutman, 3 May 2012). Linked to the hoped-for success of Don Quixote's Kingdom, instead statements like "Today the white elephant [of Ciudad Real Central Airport] ... is an object of national ridicule, a metaphor for Spain's crazy construction bubble and an example of the kind of spending that has made Spain as well as Greece and Italy poster children for Europe's economic malaise" (Gutman, 3 May 2012) shape the perceived image of the city.

In these two private efforts, the role of HSR seems to be an assumed "automatic" capacity that does not take the actualities or complexities of what it affords, much less its infrastructural advantages, into account. If the relationship of HSR to Don Quixote's Kingdom is not specified or clear, in the case of the Ciudad Real Central Airport, it seems to have functioned as an argument (in favour of the project) rather than an affordance that could (or could not) support it. If the original investors had no actual intention for Ciudad Real Central Airport to succeed, then a "pitch" that positioned it as the first private international airport to be connected to the AVE may have represented more an appeal to the city's vanity than a viable project proposal.

4.2.3.3. *Other Efforts*

Public local agents in Ciudad Real have also created *Local Action for Ciudad Real*, with an aim to revitalize the city using HSR as a reference for participating in European projects such as Enter.Hub under the European Urbact policy, which helps to promote good practices and sustainable solutions to problems in EU cities. As a moving forward towards a sustainable, innovative, and cosmopolitan orientation with regard to the future, HSR in its symbolic sense manifestly aligns with such a vision but also, in its connectivity, supports mobility, openness, diversity, and flexibility that are key to shifting demographics and socioeconomics in the twenty-first century. Although a quarter of a century after the arrival of HSR, this kind of initiative has the vision, and also hopefully the kind of commercial and grassroots appeal to elicit phase II buy-in from local actors, as they work towards shifting the perceived image of Ciudad Real from either a sleeping city or a hopeless dreamer.

4.3. Results from SWOT analysis of Ciudad Real's brand image as a city's first-generation HSR

Ciudad Real, as an intermedium size city's first-generation HSR and how was its evolution through a SWOT analysis and evaluating the different phases through which this process of incorporation takes place. We can identify the different strategies that have been produced and the changes and urban adjustments that, as a consequence, have ended up defining a better positioning of the city before its incorporation. The first image of the City that was created was that of a dormitory city and over the years, this approach changed to consider a networked city, with the benefits that it assumed. This is demonstrated both in the perception of citizens and in private and public investment (Table 4).

For a first-generation HSR cities like Ciudad Real, its decision to serve as a dormitory city for the nearest large metropolis (Madrid) meant taking up a perceived image as favouring suburban rather than commercial development. A venture like *Ciudad Real Central Airport*, for all of its potential attraction on paper, is little different, making Ciudad Real a place where you go to leave. In principle, *Don Quixote's Kingdom* –on a model of Disneyland– offered a more appealing attraction but, notwithstanding its crippling by the current economic crisis, seems merely to have assumed that if they built it, HSR could supply the requisite resources if they came. In this respect, one might recall how at Disneyland sometimes waiting in line could be as much of an experience as the attraction itself –a powerful insight for those who envision HSR in only pragmatic transportational terms.

Commitment to a strategic city project must count on both its vision and its own endogenous resources (phase I of acquiring an infrastructure). Doing so not only affords a city a competitive and differentiated character as a perceived image but also likely allows different local agents to feel represented in those projects (phase II of acquiring an infrastructure). HSR, properly imagined and supported, supplies an ideal instrument for supporting dialogue and design around a city future reputation on the broader stage of the world (phase III).

TABLE 4
SWOT FOR HIGH HIGH-SPEED RAIL TO CHANGES OF CIUDAD REAL'S BRAND IMAGE

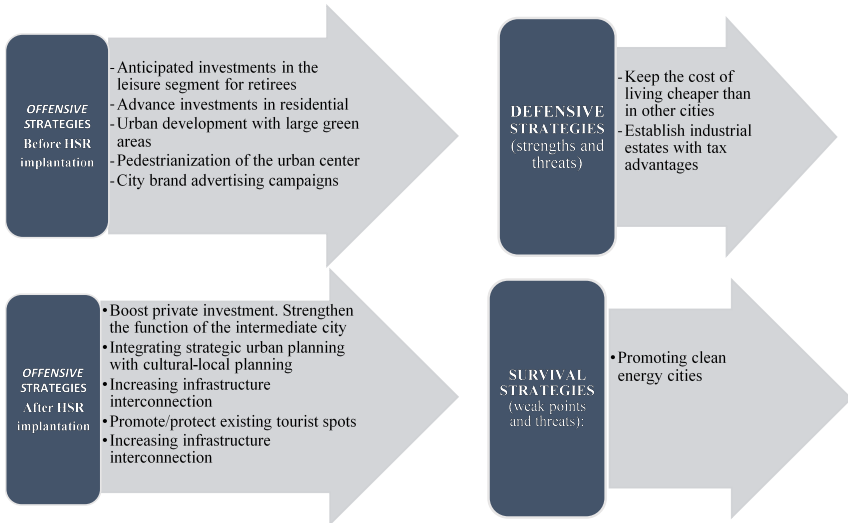
STRENGTHS		WEAKNESSES	
Dormitory city	Network city	Dormitory city	Network city
S1. Good global image of HSR service	S1. Good global image of HSR service	W1. High infrastructure costs	W1. High infrastructure costs
S2. Short station time (to city centre)	S2. Short station time (to city centre)	W2. Little strategic urban planning over the impact infrastructure	W2. Coverage of the HSR network
S3. High Frequency	S3. High Frequency	W3. Poor coordination between heart quarters of the cities	W3. Inter-conexion with other ways of transport
S4. Greater mobility	S4. Greater mobility		
	S5. Increased exchange of specialized professionals		
	S6. Provide large variety of connections with cities' HSR		
OPPORTUNITIES		THREATS	
Dormitory city	Network city	Dormitory city	Network city
O1. Job opportunities with HSR net cities	O1. Job opportunities with HSR net cities	T1. Increase the population	T1. Keep the population
O2. Suburban area from Madrid	O2. National socio-economic and educational Opportunities in Ciudad Real (Tourism, commercial, innovation...)	T2. Increase the business (stay at night)	T2. Increase the network Uncertainty involved with HSR projects (whether they will be built and when)
O3. National socio-economic and educational Opportunities in big city (Tourism, commercial, innovation...)	O3 International socio-economic and educational Opportunities	T3. Empty city at night	T3. Connections outside Europe
			T4. Capital and Cost Risk for cities

Source: Own elaboration

5. STRATEGIC LINES PROPOSALS FOR CITY BRAND WITH HSR

Findings from this study illuminate that the dormitory city was a bad strategic because was a bit sceptical about the city brand and doubtful to the changes that this infrastructure could bring. Ten years later there were a new strategic which provide insights for policymaking in newly emerging intermediate HSR cities's brand image relationship with the idea of networking cities (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5
STRATEGIES LINES PROPOSALS FOR CITY BRAND WITH HSR



Source: Author's own work

We aim four *offensive strategies* lines for beef up HSR cities's brand image:

1. **Boost private investment. Strengthen the function of the intermediate city.** Intermediate cities are the link between two worlds: rural and urban. Normally, they are the commercial and cultural epicenters of wide territories and where the inhabitants of rural areas have their main references. These types of cities are the best tool to fight against the depopulation of the rural world, since they facilitate services, commerce, economic development and "short distance" capacities (schools, hospitals, cultural and leisure offerings, public administrations, etc.).
2. **Integrating strategic urban planning with cultural-local planning.** Regarding the cultural tourism for increasing the attractiveness of tourist destinations, tourists are becoming more demanding in a globalized world with a growing competition and therefore, the management of any destination should strive to meet the multiple motivations and interests of tourist.

3. **Increasing infrastructure interconnection.** One way to avoid the problems derived from the dispersion, among which the isolation stands out, is to increase the infrastructures that increase the effect of the High Speed, not only to the city, but to its immediate surroundings (bus network, rental car, network interconnected tourist).
4. **Promote and protect existing tourist spots.** Promote the indigenous and for which the city is internationally known: Don Quixote de la Mancha. As a tourist and business resource. Do not lose the hallmark and organize economic development in what makes us different.

6. CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, and after the analysis and exposition of the errors and successful strategies in the case of Ciudad real as a pioneering city in the search for the transformation of the city to the city of connected media, we propose the circumstances that are realized for the implementation of AVF in intermediate cities.

Those cities that want an economic-social impact after the incorporation of AVF should start from an initial analysis that includes:

- a) Incorporate economic tools (SWOT) into urban decision-making
- b) Planning of the possible scenarios and their impact to determine their viability in each of the scenarios
- c) Establish chronology in the AVF implementation and the necessary services
- d) Application of consumer theories as a determining factor in decision making
- e) Apply municipal Marketing and city brand positioning techniques

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