

# The contemporary tourist gaze through an analysis of the Comunitat Valenciana's "Mediterranean live" communication campaign spot

## *La mirada turística contemporánea a través de un análisis del spot de la campaña de comunicación "Mediterráneo en vivo" de la Comunitat Valenciana*



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### **Abstract:**

This work is a textual and audiovisual analysis of the content in the main spot of the *Agència Valenciana de Turisme*, known as "Mediterranean live", which was launched in the 2016 campaign. Under the slogan "Don't show me any more postcards", and seen through the tourist gaze, the image of a destination where the experiential, the sensory and the subjective predominate is configured. That image is compatible with a trend detected in the field of tourism studies: the interweaving of tourist promotion in broader networks of discourses, practices, and mobilities. The hypothesis, in this case, is that the central message of the campaign presents an important potential for identity in an internal key, owing to the displacement of the idea of authenticity from its more ethnographic sense to its more psychological one.

### **Keywords:**

Tourist promotion; authenticity; dedifferentiation; *Comunitat Valenciana*; tourism studies.

### **Resumen:**

*Este trabajo realiza un análisis de contenido textual y audiovisual del spot principal de la campaña "Mediterráneo en vivo", lanzada en 2016 por la Agència Valenciana de Turisme. Bajo el eslogan "No me enseñes más postales" y mediante la mirada turística, se configura la imagen de un destino donde predominan lo experiencial, lo sensorial y lo subjetivo. Se trata de una imagen compatible con una tendencia detectada desde el ámbito de los estudios turísticos: la imbricación de las prácticas de dicho sector en redes más amplias de discursos, prácticas y movibilidades. Se plantea la hipótesis de que, en este caso, el mensaje central de la campaña presenta un importante potencial identitario en clave interna, gracias al desplazamiento de la idea de autenticidad desde su sentido más etnográfico a su sentido más psicológico.*

### **Palabras clave:**

*Promoción turística; autenticidad; dediferenciación; Comunitat Valenciana; estudios turísticos.*

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism studies is an interdisciplinary field that analyses tourism as a social phenomenon (Holden, 2004, pp. 1-6). Their approach is mainly qualitative and often critical (Ateljevic et al., 2012), following cultural studies standards. Among other issues, this field has evaluated the tourist's motivations, the relationships between visitors and locals -and their consequences- and, especially, the images around the traveler's gaze.

The relevant role of visual aspects in building tourist experiences and destinations has been a recurring topic in tourism studies, often conceptualized as the "tourist gaze" (Urry & Larsen, 2011). The visitor's way of looking reinforces imaginaries that may affect the identity of the destination, though in recent decades the centrality of the image has been questioned in favor of performative and sensitive aspects of travel (Fuentes Vega, 2017, p. 24).

The outsider gazes with a greater disposition to value any object, person or landscape as a sign that evokes a series of discursive records. Then, the tourist place enters a cycle of anticipation, performance, and memory (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 119) that feeds back on itself and that has been studied following Stuart Hall's circuit of culture, including its consequences on gender or ethnicity representations (Morgan and Pritchard, 1998). That is why tourism representations on social communication have always been of great interest to get to know what the tourist's expectations are.

In a classic work published for the first time in the 70s, anthropologist and sociologist Dean MacCannell suggested that the main motivation of the tourist is the search for authenticity (MacCannell, 1999, p. 3). In his opinion, tourists desire to get to know back regions of the place visited, those regions that are not intended to welcome visitors (as opposed to front regions). That fosters the assimilation and banalization of those spaces and may be an incentive to start cultural displays that can be described as staged authenticity.

Later, other authors have considered that staged authenticity presupposes an actual previous authenticity (Cohen, 1988, p. 374), which is problematic since it assumes an essentialist and monolithic view of a certain culture (Lindholm, 2022). Nowadays, the most common thesis regarding this issue is that the notion of cultural authenticity is built through a process of negotiation that includes external agents.

On the other hand, the emphasis on authenticity has left room for the analysis of other tourist motivations, since the idea of travel inherited from romanticism is inconsistent with some practices, spaces and phenomena typically associated with mass tourism. This is even more so since the notion of the post-tourist was first suggested (Feifer, 1985), which is associated with travel's most ludic and recreative part.

The post-tourist is aware that his experience does not imply knowledge or access to authentic cultural forms, and he presents a great tolerance towards pastiche and kitsch cultural forms. That is why it has been noted that the search for the authentic is not the tourist's main desire anymore, but rather the escape from routine through a gap in space and time, which is used to deny everyday conventions (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 3).

However, it is possible to argue that authenticity is still an important motivation for the tourist, though not anymore as an approach to virgin forms of an alien culture. Lindholm (2008) points out that there are two ways of understanding authenticity: first, a cultural, collective way, related to tradition; and, second, a subjective, individual way, related to the intimate belief in a sublimation

of one's own personality through a certain experience. Both definitions can be related to traveling from a romantic point of view, but the contemporary tourist would have desisted in many cases from his desire of tasting cultural authenticity in his destination. Nevertheless, he would keep his interest in living an authentic experience, that may allow the development of his personality away from the restraints of his routine.

A second disadvantage of MacCannell's initial approach has to do with the growing difficulty of separating tourist spaces and practices from those that are not in a globalized world. According to Sheller and Urry's (2006) thesis, it is increasingly necessary to study tourism in the broader context of mobility studies. Thus, tourism would not be a specific form of leisure, but more a flux of people (Afinoguénova & Martin, 2021; Mestre Pérez, 2021).

This approach is raised from the doubts around the definition of tourism that have appeared with the boom of post-tourism. The irony displayed in post-touristic practices has given rise to new practices, such as the touristization and gentrification of places that used to be seen as ordinary. The borders between the daily and the exotic are blurred when industrial areas, working-class neighborhoods, urban art, flea markets, or cemeteries are valued from a tourist perspective (Condevaux et al., 2016). In the opposite way, traditional tourist behaviors such as certain forms of domestic photography have permeated global culture to the extent that makes it impossible to isolate them or to consider them only in relation to tourism.

Therefore, a process of dedifferentiation between touristic and non-touristic features has risen (Condevaux et al., 2016), which has turned some tourist experiences related to exceptionality and commoditization into common social traits.

Another consolidated response to MacCannell's ideas is the need for studying not only the agency of the tourist, but also that of the local communities, as Lyon and Wells remark (2012, p. 7). On the other side, it has been argued that tourism affects the identity of territories to the extent that there are destinations that are significant cases of "national self-identification as a destination for the Other" (Afinoguénova, 2007, p. 38), as has been proposed for Spain.

It is no wonder, then, that tourist promotion discourses have been used as a means for nation-building (Moreno Garrido, 2021; Villaverde, 2021; Zuelow, 2009), both through the explicit nationalism of myths and through so-called banal nationalism (Billig, 2014). The latter refers to the constant circulation of elements that recall the existence of the nation, which goes unnoticed for the members of a given community due to its routine nature. The existence of that community is taken for granted implicitly, through deictic elements ("here", "us"), and is reinforced through the common use of stereotypes (Billig, 2014, pp. 94-99).

Recently, a fertile line of research has pointed out that nation-building processes have a regional analogue. Regions are not natural unities, that predate modern artificial social constructions. They are built, just like nations, through shared symbols, myths, and rituals, that occasionally may be imposed from the top down. That can mean, depending on political distinctive features of each place, a challenge or a reinforcement for the central State. The latter was often the case in 20th century Spain (Núñez Seixas, 2009; Archilés i Cardona, 2006; Geniola, 2021).

The objective of the present article is to make an approach to the tourist gaze and its notion of authenticity, regarding the present context of institutional tourist promotion discourses. Since the tourist gaze is reinforced, as said, through its reproduction in media circuits, this article aims to answer the following questions: how are dedifferentiation processes captured in current tourist promotion? What are the social, cultural, and political consequences of the incorporation of those logics into the marketing of

tourist destinations? Particularly, which is the relation between post-tourist experiences and identity discourses at local, regional, and national levels?

In order to make a first approach to these questions, we will analyze the main spot of the "Mediterranean live" campaign. The campaign was created by the Rosebud advertising agency, commissioned by the Agència Valenciana de Turisme. It was launched in 2016 and continued through to 2018, with the aim of promoting the Comunitat Valenciana as a tourist destination. It is one of the most important tourist destinations in Europe (Marine-Roig et al., 2022), which underlines its need for innovative tourist promotion. So far, the campaign has been characterized as an example of an imaginary of "the slowing down that points to the act of traveling, to been there, to the delay in the encounter with the tourist destination, something postcards will never replace" (De Mingo Rodríguez, 2020, p. 134), as opposed to the usual accelerated routine of contemporary society. On the other hand, it is the first major tourist promotion campaign after more than two decades of Partido Popular governments in the Comunitat, and, as will be argued in Section 3, it coincided in time with a declared rebranding operation, many of whose elements still endure. The slogan "Mediterranean live" itself is still the main slogan of Valencian tourism, despite the commissioning of later campaigns that dig deep into similar values, such as the one launched in 2021 under the claim "Whoever has lived it knows it well".

In this article's perspective, the main spot of the "Mediterranean live" campaign can be related to the process of dedifferentiation between touristic and non-touristic features, which makes it highly valuable as identity discourse at an internal level. The hypothesis is that the main spot of the "Mediterranean live" campaign presents common traits with regional identity discourses.

The reason to choose to focus the scope just on the main spot, despite the fact that "Mediterranean live" is a transmedia campaign, is that it will be contextualized with references and comparisons to other media actions of the Generalitat Valenciana that are not always as ambitious as 360 marketing strategies but that presented, at least, one spot. Moreover, the main video needs to condense the ideas and values that are at the core of the campaign: "the communication axis around which the new campaign orbits is the invitation to discover the authenticity of a land that has in tourism its best ally to show how its locals are: creative, open, welcoming and diverse" (Invat.tur, 2016).

Otherwise, when evaluating the campaign, a study carried out by the Generalitat Valenciana showed that TV was the media through which the campaign had reached a larger audience, compared to others such as radio, print press or the Internet: almost 35 million people as opposed to 16.6, 17.8. and 9.9, respectively (Generalitat Valenciana, 2016d). Taking this into account, it is possible to conclude that spots were the most important part of the campaign set in motion by Rosebud.

Thus, the main spot has been considered the most interesting element for a textual and audiovisual analysis. Given that the questions raised by this research demand qualitative methodologies and deep analysis, it has been considered too ambitious to include other elements -such as the "Mediterranean live" web or social media actions, though this implies achieving limited results.

## 2. Methodology

Content analysis, strategy and targets, psychological impact, or social impact are some of the possible approaches when analyzing advertising (Álvarez Ruiz, 2003). This work analyzes the content and rhetoric of a spot. Audiovisual analysis tools will be used in

their classic sense: a segmentation, stratification, and organization of elements (soundtrack, image, discourse) that finally allows a recompositing of the whole, where the main narrative and thematic landmarks are highlighted (Casetti & di Chio, 1991).

On the other hand, as will be discussed, the main rhetorical of the spot consists of the opposition between the denial of the postcard (through text) and its affirmation (through image); as such, postcards are central to it. The short shots and the relatively scarce importance of camera movements in them are an invitation to analyze them with methods usually applied to photography. Lately, methodological emphasis when studying postcards has been focused on their quality as objects with obverse and reverse (Lois & Troncoso, 2017) that express different forms of mobility (Andriotis & Mavric, 2013). However, there was previously a set of academic literature on the analysis of their visual representations: from their consideration as a hyperreal plot (Vega de la Rosa, 2011, p. 233) to their association with certain nationalist, colonial or ethnic discourses (Lois & Troncoso, 2017, p. 635), or their role in destination branding.

In this case, a classification of the images by themes has been proposed, following an adaptation of the categories suggested by Camprubi et al. (2014) for postcards or tourist promotion images (see Table 1). From this categorization, a content and composition analysis is proposed, regarding the multidimensional potential of every image (which allows one image to be included in more than one category, if it displays two or more important elements), but also the composition and the use of eye-catchers, those elements designed to focus the attention and that take up the main part of the frame (Morgan & Pritchard, 1995).

**Table 1. Content description categories for the tourist image**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Destination icons	Culture, traditions, identity, etc.
Monumental heritage	Historical buildings, monuments, etc.
Nature	Flora and fauna, natural landscapes.
Leisure	Tourist activities.
Services and facilities	Tourist facilities.
Population	People, both local and tourists.
Position	Maps, etc.

**Source: Camprubi et al., 2014 (adaptation)**

Nevertheless, for decades now many authors prefer to avoid isolating the meanings of images, from audiovisual to postcards, within semiotics (Lois & Troncoso, 2017). It is argued that it is better to include them in a certain context of production, distribution, exhibition, and reception. This is particularly so when referring to promotional images, since advertising is always conceived as an exercise in pragmatics. In this case, the campaign is contextualized within the Generalitat Valenciana's communication strategies, leaving to future studies its psychological or social impacts.

That is why the political and media contextualization of the spot has been considered necessary, and it illustrates other possible aims of "Mediterranean live" that could accompany that of attracting visitors. In order to do that, the main media actions of the Generalitat Valenciana during 2016 have been researched, starting with the search for press releases concerning promotional presentations in the President and Presidencia tabs from the Generalitat Valenciana's online web archive. These two departments encompass news about tourist image, but also about corporate image in a broader sense, both of the Comunitat (region) and the Generalitat (government).

### 3. Results

As presented above, "Mediterranean live" was a campaign launched in July 2016 in order to promote the *Comunitat Valenciana* as a tourist destination. The Rosebud advertising agency was the winner of the call for tender presented by *Agència Valenciana de Turisme*, and created a generic spot of almost one minute, with shorter versions of 30 and 20 seconds intended for different diffusion formats, mainly Internet and TV. The spot was put out in Spanish, Valencian, English, French and German; also, different thematic versions were launched.

They consisted of brief combinations of the main spot discourse, accompanied by images related exclusively with one of the main tourist brands of the *Comunitat* (the province of Valencia, the city of Valencia, the *Costa Blanca*, the city of Alicante, the province of Castellón) or related to a specific type of tourism (urban, gastro, cultural, sport or rural tourism) or a specific target audience (such as the LGBT community). These pieces highlighted the diversity of the range of tourist activities offered by the *Comunitat*, but with consistency and continuity with the main spot. Rosebud also created commercials for radio, press and a website, *mediterraneoenvivo.com* (Agencia Rosebud, 2021; Invat.tur, 2016; Visit Comunitat Valenciana, 2016).

As recognized by its own creators (Agencia Rosebud, 2021), the campaign was framed within the context of a series of actions aimed at improving the image of the autonomous community. The effort in that sense came as the new government of the *Generalitat Valenciana* (a coalition of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* and *Compromís*) sought to distance itself from the corruption trials that certain figures from the former administration (the *Partido Popular* government) were immersed in. As well as this, there was a desire to move away from the feeling of excess associated with some events and infrastructure projects that had been undertaken in the years before the change of administration and the trials.

A search through the archives of the Presidencia and the President tabs at the *Generalitat Valenciana* website was carried out, as it is these departments that encompass, among other tasks, all generic and touristic institutional communication campaigns. As a result, 1879 press releases have been examined (933 from Presidencia and 964 from President), including two major communication actions that are important to understand the context of *Generalitat's* rebranding.

Firstly, we are referring to a spot for internal consumption, launched through the Internet weeks before the presentations of the tourist campaign "Mediterranean live" and entitled "*Orgull de ser valencians*" (*Generalitat Valenciana*, 2016a). The spot was one minute long and entirely spoken in Valencian, over Carles Dénia's interpretation of the "*Malaguenya de barxeta*", and it contrasted a recent past characterized by a grey cinematography ("*Durant anys, alguns van creure que havíem de fer coses molt grans per*

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1 "Pride in being Valencian".

*demostrar que som grans. Tot ben gran, i buit, i cap a fora<sup>2</sup>)* with a brilliant present where pride “*naix directament de la nostra terra, naix de la llum intensa i transparent, de l’olor de pólvora i de flor de taronger, de la música de banda i del gust de rascar el socarrat... perquè sabem que després de la tempesta no ve la calma, ve la festa<sup>3</sup>”*.

The images of this second part alternate close-ups of a diversity of extras walking around or participating in traditional festivals or in different trades particularly associated with the *Comunitat* (from agriculture in vegetable gardens to the shoemaking industry), with wide shots of the landscape and with extreme close-up shots of different elements with a symbolic meaning: the wrinkled bark of an olive tree or the bandaged hand of a “*Valencian pilota*” player.

According to *Generalitat*, the video, produced by *Vimema Films* and *Colectivo 17*, was purposed to improve the image of the region. However, the main target of the message were Valencians themselves, so this is a rebranding process at an internal level: “we need to love and present ourselves”, stated Ximo Puig, president of the *Generalitat*, during the presentation of the video (*Generalitat Valenciana*, 2016b).

Secondly, a similar appeal to pride and unity is present in the spot of the “*Tots a una veu<sup>4</sup>*” campaign (*Generalitat Valenciana*, 2016c), by the Trumbo advertising agency, presented in September of the same year facing the regional day, 9<sup>th</sup> October, and in whose images the verb “feel” (“*el dia en que tots sentim la nostra terra amb la mateixa intensitat<sup>5</sup>*”) is related to images that appeal to textures and touch (of wrinkled skin, of soil...).

The main spot of “*Mediterranean live*” eludes the reference to the recent past, which was strongly controversial and had consequences on the reception of other campaigns, but includes many of the same strategies started up in “*Orgull de ser valencians*”, despite its main addressees now not being Valencians themselves, but potential visitors from the rest of Spain and abroad. The importance of the senses, the reference to “us” and the focus on the authenticity of daily things are some of the main thematic lines in both cases. The longest version of the spot (56 seconds), available on the official tourist Youtube channel of the *Comunitat Valenciana*, has been taken as the reference for our analysis (Visit *Comunitat Valenciana*, 2016). That one is also the most widely-aired version in terms of the number of views (close to 600.000 some six years after its launch), despite the fact that other web sites include another version of 51 seconds with slight changes (*Agencia Rosebud*, 2021).

A female voice over (the same in the Spanish and Valencian versions) reads the following text in the spot and finishes announcing the destination and main slogan (“*Comunitat Valenciana. The Mediterranean live*”). The text is characterized by the use of a sentence that works as a refrain (“don’t show me any more postcards”), anaphora (“if they don’t”), two-membered constructions with parallelisms (“if they aren’t in them, if you aren’t in them”) and the double denial, that intensifies a defiant effect also related to the use of imperative verbs and the second person singular:

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- 2 “For years, some thought we had to do very big things to prove we were great. Everything very big, and empty, and for the outsiders”
  - 3 “...is born straight from our land. It is born from our intense and transparent light. From the smell of gunpowder and the scent of orange blossom. From brass band music and the taste for scraping the *socarrat*... Because we know there is no calm after the storm. There is fiesta”
  - 4 “Everyone together in one voice”
  - 5 “the day we all feel our land with the same intensity”

Don't show me any more postcards,  
if they don't smell, if they don't taste.  
If they don't do justice to the life waiting for you here.  
Don't show me any more postcards,  
if they aren't in them, if you aren't in them.  
If they don't contain all the truth.  
Don't show me any more postcards  
if there's no room for our light, if there's no room for our sea.  
If there's no room for our live,  
Don't show me any more postcards (Visit *Comunitat Valenciana*, 2016).

The soundtrack, by *Carnivalia* group from Alicante, consists of a percussion piece with drumsticks and bass drums that evokes the importance in the *Comunitat* of musical groups, and, at the same time, recalls the traditional sound of firecrackers. This music sets the tone for one of the spot's most important features: fast and fragmented editing, based on a series of cuts that break the spatial and temporal continuity on the juxtaposition of different places. In these cuts, there is a game of synchrony and asynchrony to the beat both of drumsticks and of bass drums; towards the end, the latter instrument sets the rhythm of a crescendo where we see seven shots in less than three seconds.

At an image level, shots are between one and two seconds long, with the exception of the last two, which are longer and used to superimpose the tourist and institutional logos of the *Comunitat Valenciana*. In total, there are 47 shots, mainly composed as fixed, non-stable shots, that is, the only movement in them is the one that makes them unstable since they were taken with a handheld camera. In some cases, that instability is emphasized since the images are taken from a boat (see shot 30, for instance).

Only ten shots clearly include camera movements. Only two of them were taken with special equipment: the travelling on shot 37 and the drone used to get the extreme wide shot of the Arenal Sound festival on shot 38.

Another two shots use a slight zoom out: shots 32 and 33, which are precursors to the spot's climax. This optical procedure is used the same way in both images with the objective of making them rhyme visually: the first, of cuttlefishes drying in the sun on a clothesline, the second of a square decorated for a local festival. The parallelism between the strings of the clothesline and those that hold the pennants with the Valencian flag is consolidated with the repetition of the rhythmic phrase from the soundtrack.



**Table 2. Camera movements on the main spot of the campaign “Mediterranean live”**

Stabled fixed shots	2
Non-stabled fixed shots	35
Handheld camera	6
Camera movements with special equipment	2
Optical movements	2

**Source: compiled by author**

This scarcity of clear camera movements is partly related to the short length of the shots and justifies the approach to these images as conflicting postcards. The 47 shots show mainly landscapes, images of tourist and of traditional features.

Contrasting with the voice-over text, the shots where nature predominates are quite representative of the usual composition in postcards, except for the already stated nuance of the handheld camera: panoramic views, sometimes from above, images of beaches where two thirds of the frame are occupied by the sea, extreme wide shots that show a village set in its surrounding, etc. On the contrary, most shots showing people enjoying their spare time use common strategies of domestic photography: looking at the camera, smiling, and some other standards that have become particularly popular in recent years on social media, such as pictures of individuals with their back to the camera, looking towards the landscape beyond and directing the viewer’s gaze there too (shots 14 or 40). In some cases, such as shot 13, of young people sunbathing, there are barely any elements that identify these characters as foreign visitors: they could just be locals enjoying a dip in the sea.

Shots showing traditional aspects tend to be related to everyday things, and to present a strong taste for synesthesia: a close-up of tomatoes in a market (shot 10), the grill and implements needed to cook a paella (shot 34), the filtered sunlight through the branches of trees (shot 29), the close-up of a band member with percussion instruments in action (shot 35), etc.

Of those shots linked to traditional aspects, not all show people, and only two do so in close-up or medium distance shots (shots 18 and 19, of a farmer and a craftswoman). This relative absence of a traditional landscape portrayed from the outside invites the spot’s recipient to feel like a participant and not merely an spectator of the most everyday aspects of local leisure in the *Comunitat Valenciana*, which is a common trait in traditional tourist images where the typicality of the locals is commodified from the visitor’s point of view.

This experiential and sensual approach can also be noted in the almost complete absence of monumental references in this main spot, though these are actually present in other versions of the “Mediterranean live” spots that are focused on urban or cultural tourism.

**Table 3. Shot classification according to a multidimensional approach (the same shot may appear in more than one category)**

Category	Number of shots (multidimensional approach)
Destination icons	16
Monumental heritage	1
Nature	21
Leisure	13
Services and facilities	3
Population	16
Position	0

Source: compiled by author

**Table 4. Classification of shots based on the eye-catchers employed in the image**

Category	Number of shots (eye-catcher)
Destination icons	14
Monumental heritage	0
Nature	19
Leisure	5
Services and facilities	0
Population	8
Position	0

Source: compiled by author

#### 4. Discussion of research results

To summarise the above descriptive segmentation, it is possible to suggest that the spot implements a double strategy of tourist dedifferentiation. On the one hand, the appeal to everyday experience is, as has been seen, the main category in the count of shots and their length: an experience the visitor will not see from the outside, but will become part of. Authenticity will not be related to the typical and picturesque, but to certain performative and sensitive fetishes that need not to be unique or exclusive in themselves.

However, the totality that emerges from the sum of these experiences is presented as unique, a whole that is impossible to reproduce or understand through media such as the postcard. It is fascinating as it may only be intuited through its fragmented images by means of the frenetic editing, just like Wasabaugh notes is often the case for audiovisual representations of flamenco (Wasabaugh, 2005). This mechanism reproduces the tourist practice itself, which “is structured through the accumulation of previously systematized experiences” (Vega de la Rosa, 2011, pp. 190-191).

Although it could be argued that close-up shots that appeal to the touch, taste, hearing or smell are examples of how in the contemporary tourist experience the sensual gains ground over the visual, these point-of-view shots through which tourists are invited to immerse themselves in their destination can refer both to the direct sensory experience and to the representation of these experiences in social networks. In fact, the term “sensorial image” to describe the features of photography on social media (Bañuelos, 2013, p. 16).

The second strategy refers not to the dedifferentiation between visitors and locals, but to the dedifferentiation between tourist and non-tourist spaces. The many images showing details of everyday life in the *Comunitat* are interspersed with panoramic views that, from a compositional point of view, comply perfectly with the premises of most classic postcards: sunny, crowded beaches in which a calm, blue sea takes center stage (shots 24 or 31), traditional houses such as the huts of the *Albufera* (shot 2), nature, general views of towns such as *Peñíscola* (shot 7). The places that would definitely fit MacCannell’s definition of front regions of tourism (those planned to welcome visitors, such as the beaches of *Benidorm*, shot 24) are portrayed, despite their tourist essence, as being just as authentic as those catalogued as back regions (those not planned for tourists, which makes them particularly attractive from the point of view of authenticity, such as shot 8, that shows the work in a *Vinaroz* market where crates of fresh seafood are stocked and sold).

The dedifferentiation of characters and tourist spaces allows for an almost perfect interweaving between touristic and identity characteristics. In this mix, the idea of authenticity continues to hold a privileged position (“if they don’t contain all the truth”), and is constructed in opposition to the original conception of the post-tourist as a recreational visitor addicted to pastiche (“don’t show me any more postcards”).

#### 5. Conclusions

It would be possible to read the communication actions launched by the *Generalitat* in 2016 as a place branding strategy (or, more specifically, as a place rebranding strategy). According to Anholt, a country, city or region’s reputation is managed more than built and, to be effective, the brand image has to have a strong basis in other public policies that support it (Anholt, 2008). Despite these nuances, his proposal recognizes that places do have brand images, that can be modeled.

Even so, it would also be interesting to understand initiatives like the "*Orgull de ser valencians*" spot as a discourse that takes part in what Billig (2014) called banal nationalism (in this case, regionalism). According to the British author, the main tools of these discourses are deictic elements that take for granted a delimited community (in the case of the spot, the marked use of first-person plural) and some playful incorporation of stereotypes (in "*Orgull de ser valencians*", the final mention to party would work as such, despite the declared intention of the spot is facing negative stereotypes).

Continuities between discourse and images from "*Orgull de ser valencians*" and those from the main spot of "Mediterranean live", aimed mainly at potential tourists from the rest of Spain and abroad, show how tourist discourses circulate in complex media environments, where tourist promotion is not perfectly demarcated and national and regional identities are simultaneously projected inwards and outwards from the communities themselves.

This intertwining of tourist and identity discourse features is not new. It is possible to draw up in this sense a long genealogical record that explains for example why one of the first locations to become a nature reserve in Spain -and to be promoted as such- was Covadonga, the scene of a key battle for Spanish nationalist mythology (Moreno Garrido, 2021). In contemporary discourses, the building of identities is not mainly around flags and myths, but around daily practices and spaces. By showing them as a paradigm of authenticity, the predominance of banal nationalism or regionalism over the explicit one is recognized, which almost questions the "invisibility" of the former that was underlined by Billig.

This prominence of everyday traits is highly correlated with the idea of tourist dedifferentiation, in which the ordinary and the extraordinary, the tourist-oriented aspects and local-oriented aspects are completely merged. "Mediterranean live" is an example of how contemporary tourist discourses continue to appeal to the idea of authenticity. The difference with the classical, almost ethnographic idea of the tourist as an explorer of a fascinating otherness, is that the portrait of this new, dedifferentiated authenticity embraces locals and outsiders to the same extent (Don't show me any more postcards... if they aren't in them, if you aren't in them). Thus, contemporary mythification of authenticity and, by extension, of identity, presents the self, its subjectivity and its experience (just like the tourist's) as the only possible route to construct a discourse on the journey and, also, the only possible base for a community project, for the construction of an "us".

Given the growing importance of traveler-generated content (TGC), online word-of-mouth and other non-induced, unofficial sources of promotion, it would be necessary, in a second approach, to analyze the circulation and reception of this discourse both among both Valencians and potential tourists, following for example the methodology proposed by Marine Roig et al. (2022, p. 223) and thus taking into account desire, cognitive and conative elements (users responses in attitudes and behavior).

It is also worth analyzing the influence of this TGC on the promotional aesthetics adopted by the institutions themselves, since recent research suggests tourists have more agency in their practices and representations than has long been believed (Paul i Agustí, 2019). In any case, current research on how destination images are created need to take into account that these images, in addition to being created by a wide variety of agents and practices, not only have a tourist potential, but also important connections with social, political and cultural discourses of other natures.

Beyond these possible analyses of the influence and reception of the discourse of "Mediterranean live", it is considered relevant to hypothesize that the main spot of this campaign connects with regional identity discourses and does so through an understanding

of the tourist gaze in which the traveler aims to contemplate or consume what he visits from the inside, contrary to the external position usually attributed to the visitor's point of view.

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