

The Image of Spain as Tourist Destination Built Through Fictional Cinema

Rosanna Mestre
Antonia del Rey
Konstantin Stanishovski

ABSTRACT. Fictional cinema is one of the cultural agents that shapes the international image of each country. It colonizes spectators' imagery, and it can influence their choice of tourist destinations. Spanish cinema's international diffusion has allowed the exhibition of movies that spread and renew the image of Spain in different ways. In this respect, we propose a three-fold typology of films focusing our attention on their content and the ways in which they build the image of Spain: Icon Films, Pastiche Films, and Tourist Poster Films. These films may stimulate the increase of a cultural tourism very different from the traditional one that inspired many to come to Spain mainly looking for sunny beaches.

KEYWORDS. Fictional cinema, country image, Spain, stereotypes, country brand, tourist destination

INTRODUCTION

Researchers from the scope of communication sciences have insisted repeatedly on the psychological nature of image and the way movies reflect man's mental commerce with the world (Morin, 1956). Images, though, are not reality but its representation. They have been created according to certain strategic and ideological choices, previously

taken by their author depending on the sense he or she wants to suggest to viewers. Consequently, talking about image means that we are referring to representation strategies that will always appear regardless of the nature of that image.

The special ability of cinema to capture the human subconscious allows it to colonize the spectator's imagination very easily, because its narrations are constructed depending on the

Rosanna Mestre, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Audiovisual Communications in the Department of Theory of Languages and Communication Sciences at the University of Valencia, Spain (Departamento de Teoría de los Lenguajes y Ciencias de la Comunicación, Facultad de Filología, Traducción y Comunicación, Avda. Blasco Ibáñez, 32, 5º, 46010 Valencia, Spain) (E-mail: Rosanna.Mestre@uv.es).

Antonia del Rey, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Audiovisual Communications in the Department of Theory of Languages and Communication Sciences at University of Valencia, Spain (Departamento de Teoría de los Lenguajes y Ciencias de la Comunicación, Facultad de Filología, Traducción y Comunicación, Avda. Blasco Ibáñez, 32, 5º, 46010 Valencia, Spain) (E-mail: Antonia.Delrey@uv.es).

Konstantin Stanishovski is a grant holder FPU in the Department of Theory of Languages and Communication Sciences at University of Valencia, Spain (Departamento de Teoría de los Lenguajes y Ciencias de la Comunicación, Facultad de Filología, Traducción y Comunicación, Avda. Blasco Ibáñez, 32, 5º, 46010 Valencia, Spain) (E-mail: Konstantin.Stanishovski@uv.es).

Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, Vol. 24(2-3) 2008

Available online at <http://jttm.haworthpress.com>

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doi: 10.1080/10548400802092718

verisimilitude or the so-called *reality effect*. In addition, there is an unspoken agreement sustained by movie audiences when watching a film in order to accept the suspension of their incredulity and to assume that the fictional story is a reality (Quintana, 2003). Filmmakers have used these strategies from the beginning relying on two tendencies: one of them looks for reproducing reality with a documentary approach and the other one prefers to recreate it from fiction. With regard to fictional films, they capture audience imagination in an absolutely effective way. This is due to cinema's peculiarities whose specific reception conditions—big screen, darkness, silent room and surrounding music—produce relaxed and absent-minded spectators who *give themselves up* to the movie, ready to live characters' vicissitudes as their own.

Although the effect of film on tourism has been observed since the 1970s and travel industry experts have long acknowledged the existence of film tourism, there is little direct measurement of the impact of movies on tourism (MINTeL, 2003). In fact, there are not enough reliable means for determining the outcome of cinematographic impacts, and as several research works have highlighted, there are yet objective difficulties to the measurement of movie-induced tourism (Busby and Klug, 2001).

If we focus our attention on the movies related to Spain, we observe that from their origins they have contributed to reinforcing and spreading worldwide some identity commonplaces coined mainly in 19th century literature. In order to study them and the image they popularize, our research team has established a movie typology attending to their content and the treatment they have been given.

As a result of this, there could be three kinds of films: Icon Films, Pastiche Films and Tourist Poster Films.

FILM TYPOLOGY

We consider Icon Films the ones that develop a global image of a country or

region, either by showing its most representative cultural features or by renewing the pre-existent traditional or topical glance. In the same way, Pastiche Films are those movies that use cultural identity rites with negligence or falsely in a way that distorts referential reality, even though it reinforces stereotypes. Finally, Tourist Poster Films interlace their plots with the monumental beauties and landscapes of a certain place combined with the experiences and situations of daily life that tourists usually meet throughout their trips: hotels, restaurants, airports, museums, markets, etc.

Although there are pure examples for each category, the features of all three kinds usually appear mixed up and you can find pastiche characteristics in an Icon Film, or some Icon components in a Tourist Poster Film. However, all three models are an instrument to acknowledge the way Spain and its culture have been shown to the world through cinema, shaping an image that more or less fits reality, but attractive and picturesque enough to become a tourist subject matter, and as a result, a tourist destination that year after year receives millions of visitors coming from all corners in the world.

Icon Films

From our point of view, Icon Films could be considered as an *avant la lettre* example of the brand image of the country to which they make reference, because they act as a showcase from which that country's identity essence is exhibited to the world through the more representative symbols and cultural characteristics. These films arise from the deep knowledge of the country and their people that the filmmaker has, and consequently, independently of its genre, style, and subject, they act like a crucible from which, in great or small doses, the identity essence of each national territory arises. Watching these films, the citizens of the country perceive a reality that is close to them and in which they can get to recognize themselves. In so doing, viewers identify

without difficulty all those signs scattered across the film that they consider their own and an integral part of their culture. On the other hand, foreign spectators have in Icon Films the most suitable guide to get closer to countries and cultures that they do not know at all or in part. Through images, plots, and characters, spectators accede to a world that discovers itself in front of them in all its exoticism and wealth. In this sense, Icon Films are a weapon to explore, spread, and maintain the cultural diversity of the entire planet whose wealth they contribute to conserving. Because of that, Icon Films are suitable to quality tourists, that is to say, those of a cultural upper level for whom the trip is an opportunity to learn.

The abundance of produced Icon Films in the different countries in the world offers innumerable examples on the matter. To mention some of them, and without separating us from names that are already classic, there is no doubt that, for any western lover of the cinema, the knowledge of the filmography of Yasujiro Ozu, with *Tokyo Story* (*Tokyo Monogatari*, 1953) as his representative film, provides an opened door to Japanese society and culture in its stage of transformation of the traditional forms of life that evolved into present-day Japan. In the same way, one of the routes of access to understanding the cues that prevail in the Hindu culture comes through the cinema of Satjayit Ray, with *The Apu Trilogy* (1958) as his most well-known work. In fact, he showed with enormous mastery the evolution lived by Hindu society. And of course, it is not possible to deny that with respect to China this function is carried out, among others, by two film directors whose films have had and still have wide dissemination in the West. We are referring to the very well-known Zhang Yimou, whose filmic mastery is demonstrated by such different films as *Red Sorghum* (*Hong gao liang*, 1987) and *The Road Home* (*Wo de fu qin mu qin*, 1999). On the other hand, the admired and increasingly minority Wong Kar Wai has become a cult filmmaker in whose lyric modernity the present man recognizes himself. Both film

directors, with so different thematics and styles, have the same capacity to reflect the identity characteristics that reveal the unstoppable dynamism of rural and urban contemporary China to Western eyes.

All the above mentioned filmmakers, through their particular poetics, have contributed to drawing the image of their own countries with more or less heavy outlines, but always sufficiently representative as to provoke interest and desire in the imagination of viewers and potential tourists to visit them and to actually live what they imagined and dreamed through those films.

With regards to Spain, during decades its international image has been drawn up by foreign directors whose films, in many cases, have to do more with Pastiche Films than with the Icon Film concept itself, as we have already defined. They have repeated over and over again the cultural reasons fixed by writings made by numerous European and American travellers who have visited Spain since the 16th century. Essentially they were the 19th century writers, such as Washington Irving and Prosper Mérimée who formed an idea of Spain that, without adjusting totally to reality, became an identifying referent of the Hispanic.

Such motifs, transformed from the origins of cinema into cinematographic stereotypes about Spain, have lasted in international productions for decades. Among them, bullfighting subjects stand out as do flamenco songs and dances, religious rituals, and leisure habits like popular fairs and celebrations. All have been seen with Andalusia used as its reference. Constantly repeated, they formed an image of a country that has nothing to do with real Spain. This one, like most countries, was transforming itself slowly, in the middle of its many contradictions and obstacles imposed by the circumstances of its history.

The reason why foreign cinema was the almost exclusive creator of the outer image of Spain should be looked for in the fact that, until the last decades, the works of the Spanish film directors, with the exception of Luis Buñuel, almost never crossed national

borders, because of the international isolation due to the dictatorial regime of general Franco, together with the censorship imposed by him and the weak Spanish cinematographic industry. Because of these circumstances, filmmakers as remarkable in Spanish cinema as Luis García Berlanga, Carlos Saura, or Víctor Erice among others, are unknown to the international public. In fact, their films, such as *Welcome Mr. Marshall!* (*¡Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall!*, 1953), *The Hunt* (*La caza*, 1965) and *The South* (*El sur*, 1983), to mention only some examples, are only accessible to specialists or film fans. Nevertheless, they represent authentic icons of Spanish culture and identity, reflected by them through the variety of subjects, genres and aesthetics that they cultivate.

Very different is the case of Spanish film makers of the last decades whose productions spread more and more outside our borders through exhibition circuits and cinematographic festivals. But if we have to look for the most international Spanish film director, we must speak about Pedro Almodóvar, who has become one of the cultural icons of Spanish modernity. With a cinematographic career started in the Eighties, in the context of the so called "Madrilenian *movida*", Almodóvar sharply changed the thematic and ideological principles that governed the Spanish cinema. His initial voluntarily marginal filmography was rejected at first by the great public, incapable of perceiving the creative and innovative wealth that sustained it. The passage of time, nevertheless, ended up leading to the maturity of the film director as well as of his viewers. Awards from European film contests helped launch Almodóvar's work to the outside world, and in the year 2000 he received the Oscar for Best Foreign Film for *All About My Mother* (*Todo sobre mi madre*), bringing his artistry to the attention of film-viewers everywhere. Later would come the Oscar for Best Script for *Talk to Her* (*Hable con ella*, 2002), and the award for Best Actress for *Return* (*Volver*, 2006) in the latest festival of Cannes.

This situation culminated with the Oscar to the best granted foreign film to *All About My Mother* (*Todo sobre mi madre*) in 2000, that finished sending his films to the worldwide orbit. Later it would come the Oscar to the best script for *Talk to Her* (*Hable con Ella*, 2002). And this year the award to the best interpretation to *Return* (*Volver*, 2006) in the last festival of Cannes.

The cues that explain the interest provoked by the work of Almodóvar have to do with the particular approach from which he treats his subjects and the personal aesthetics that shape them. Usually his plots are woven around marginal feminine characters who coexist with more or less peculiar types whose little conventional behaviors reflect the lifestyle of the present world in its increasing diversity. When creating the protagonists of his stories, Almodóvar gives them normality, portraying them as natural as common people. And thus, he extends and renews the image of Spain, discovering to the world a modern, plural and transforming society.

On the other hand, in Almodóvar films the signs of Spanish identity are always made visible. That is to say, the stereotypes that define what the world understands by genuine Spanish are omnipresent in his films, although in such an unusual and renewed form that they are surprising. As a matter of fact, the greatest Hispanic stereotype of the *torero* or bullfighter-like symbol of masculine bravery facing the mortal risk of the encounter with the bull, is subverted by the film director in his movie *Talk to Her* where that role corresponds to a woman bullfighter who faces the bull because of love.

Moreover, Almodóvar takes care extraordinary care of his films' production design, whose chromatic wealth and composition reaches elaboration and originality levels that connect the filmmaker with the rich tradition of Spanish plastic artists. Also, the producer chooses locations carefully, placed frequently in Madrid—*Labyrinth of Passions* (*Laberinto de pasiones*, 1987) and *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (*Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios*,

1988)—and in other cities of Spain like Valencia—*Bad Education* (*La Mala Educación*, 2004) and Cádiz—*The Law of Desire* (*La Ley del Deseo*, 1987), etc. Thus, with the impact of his films Almodóvar succeeds in attracting spectators to visit the places in which the movies have been shot. In this respect, it has been verified that, after the exhibition all over the world of the Oscar awarded *All About My Mother*, an important increase of tourists was registered in Barcelona, who went to visit the modernist building sceneries where the film took place. For the same reason, his last film, *Return*, shot in Ciudad Real, in the region of La Mancha, is awaking the interest of visitors towards a Spanish landscape that is not really one of the popular Spanish tourist destinations.

In order to conclude, let us think that these enumerated characteristics demonstrate that, with regards to Spain, thanks to greater international spreading of Spanish cinema, the stereotyped image built during decades by foreign productions is being replaced by another one better fitted to the reality of the country.

Pastiche Films

Formally we could postulate that every fictional film is a kind of pastiche in some way, because of common mixing by fictional cinema of very heterogeneous elements such as locations, decorations, people, music, etc. within the same movie or even the same scene. Furthermore, it is so because some of these elements are real and others are artificially built purposely by the film maker. Nevertheless, the fictional film, whose goal is not necessarily to represent objective reality, has more or fewer references to some objective reality, which is related not only to the film characters, locations, and other represented elements, but also to the spectator's knowledge and imagination about it.

Thus, the approach to the concept of pastiche is done not from the position of inaccurate or paradoxical representation of objective reality by one or another

fictional film. As we suggested at the beginning, this is not the goal of fictional cinema. However, the concept of Pastiche Film could be applied keeping in mind the active role of the spectator's perception of the cinematographic reality and the projection by the spectator of this reality to his or her knowledge of the real world, precisely on the level of this spectator's projection. It is important to highlight that the spectator's projection works on the different levels of human psyche and obviously it depends on each individual.

The fictional film *Mission: Impossible II* directed by John Woo and produced by Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner in 2000 could be taken as a good example of Pastiche Film in our conceptualization. This movie has a sequence, which starts with a typical establishing shot titled Seville, Spain. Curiously this shot is computer made by Matte World Digital Company, that is to say, it is not real Spanish Seville. Without any doubt, it perfectly establishes the geographical space of narration. The shot is followed by the well-known Spanish cliché of flamenco women dancers inside a luxury Spanish mansion. Furthermore, after the scene of the car-chase we have another scene that could be positively classified as pastiche. Apparently it represents the Holy Week procession of Seville, the capital of the Andalusian Autonomous Community in the South of Spain. Nevertheless, the women of the procession wear traditional dresses of two other typical Spanish festivities. These are the Fallas of Valencia and the Bonfires of San Juan of Alicante, both cities situated in the east of Spain, in the Valencian Autonomous Community. At the same time, some men of the procession wear traditional clothes (red scarf and white shirt) of the San Fermín *fiestas* of Pamplona, the bull race festivity in the Community of Navarra, in the North of Spain.

In the real Seville's Holy Week processions, the believers carry the holy sculptures on their shoulders across the streets, but these are never burned. In fact, the figures are burned in the festivity of Fallas in

Valencia and also in the Bonfires of San Juan in Alicante. In any case, at both of these festivities the enormous figures of wood, foam plastic, glass fiber and papier-maché represent politicians, famous people, actors and actresses, common people, animals, etc., with allegoric, ironical and/or critical meaning, but they never represent saints with holy or sacred meaning.

So, the words pronounced by Anthony Hopkins about the strange festivity shown in the previously referred scene, "they burn their saints into the fire", could not be applied objectively either to the Fallas or to the Holy Week processions of Seville. In the same way, the flag which appears behind the women in the procession does not belong to any of the above-mentioned Spanish Autonomous Communities, but to another one, the Aragon Community.

So, all the facts showed in the scene are absolutely unlikely not only from the geographical point of view (four different festivities at four different places of Spain separated by hundreds of miles) but also from the point of view of their simultaneity in time, since the mentioned festivities take place at March, April, June and July.

Although this situation represented in the movie *Mission Impossible II* is unlikely, however, this works in the movie. Actually it operates perfectly inside the plot. This is to say, viewers may feel interested in all the Spanish traditional festivities suggested in the movie, if these are shown in an attractive way. It is a starting point to get spectators' attention, to arouse their curiosity for one country's culture, in order to increase their general interest for that country's peculiarities in a general way. Furthermore, the spectator may not have paid any attention to the major inaccuracies of the scene. So, the question is: what could be the effect of Pastiche Films or pastiche scenes of fictional movies on tourist destinations directly or indirectly represented by them?

We think the Fictional Pastiche Films build their particular vision of a country or region, its culture and its people. Although, on the one hand pastiche works inside the

plot of the film, on the other hand it connects to the objective reality through the spectator's knowledge and imagination about the represented tourist destination. That is to say, pastiche enhances the previous stereotyped image of the country, region, culture, or people that is in the mind of film spectators, who are at the same time potential tourists.

The problem is increased by the lack of qualitative and even quantitative studies about the impacts of fictional cinema in general on decisions to travel to the represented destinations. However some researchers indicate that about 80% of decisions to travel to UK are related to some locations which had been previously seen by tourists in movies; for Paris this percentage is about 60% (Tamargo, 2006).

Although we do not have accurate data about how the analyzed sequence of *Mission Impossible II* had influenced the decision of the viewers of the movie to travel to Seville, the personal experience of one member of our research team, who has worked as an official tourist guide in the Valencian Autonomous Community for 10 years, could be taken in mind. In this respect, we have evidence that some tourists who came to the Fallas Valencian festivity did not make their decision to travel to Valencia on the basis of *Mission Impossible II*. Nevertheless, those who saw the movie (usually people between 20–40 years old) remembered the sequence of Spain and were very interested in finding out more about several Spanish festivities represented in it, expressing an evident desire to visit them in the future.

Another very clear example in the same sense is related to another movie *El Cid*, directed by Anthony Mann in 1961, where the Castle of Peñíscola, a small Valencian village on the Mediterranean Sea located about 100 km north of Valencia, is presented as if it were the city of Valencia. In this case, some tourists who came to Valencia asked the guide about the possibility of visiting the castle which they had seen many years ago in the movie and were very surprised when they were informed about the real location of the

castle, expressing clear desire to visit Peñíscola sooner or later.

Obviously, these examples should not be taken as an exhaustive research about the effects of Pastiche Films, but they give us some positive indications about how only one sequence or one film may move people to change their holiday plans to visit places that they have previously seen in fictional movies.

Tourist Poster Films

We name Tourist Poster Films movies pervaded with a certain publicity charge about the city, the zone, or the country where the plot is located. This publicity component, in the etymological sense of the word—this is, to make public, to present—may be shown in many ways. It may help to tell a romantic love story in the frame of a tourist destination, as happens in *Roman Holiday* (1953), by William Wyler. Landscape may be used as a literal and metaphoric space to locate an epic reflection about travelling and soul searching, as shaped by Bernardo Bertolucci in *The Sheltering Sky* (1990). But Tourist Poster Films may also respond to openly admitted commercial, tourist or corporate communication interests as *Gisaku* (2005), by Baltasar Pedrosa, does. Travelling acts recurrently as the main argumentative line in all these movies and spectators can find the common elements of a tourist trip such as accommodations, restaurants, airport facilities, local architecture and museums, festivals, cuisine, shopping, and so on. In many of these films, one can find a foreign traveller or tourist who discovers a new culture, city, or country when he or she arrives at his or her goal destination, sometimes helped by a local character who plays the role of a traveller's guide. These characters work like a sort of spectator's virtual representation, discovering the new geographic and cultural experience. *Gisaku*, the movie we are now going to focus on, responds to this narrative paradigm too.

Gisaku is a unique production in the Tourist Poster Film category. It is a Spanish cartoon feature production made

expressly to introduce Spain in the Japanese Expo Aichi 2005. The movie won the public competition held by the Spanish Society for International Exhibitions, SSIE (Sociedad Española para Exposiciones Internacionales), to produce a film that linked Japanese and Spanish cultures. *Gisaku* has the privilege and the challenge to be the first fictional film conceived to promote the image of Spain outside of our borders with both public and private financing. The movie, directed by Pedrosa, also has the merit of being the first *anime* production in Spain and Europe.

It tells the story of a young Samurai, Yohei, who was a member of the Japanese mission sent to the kingdom of Spain by Sendai-han in the 17th century. Falling under a magic spell, he sleeps for centuries and awakes in modern Spain, where his weapons and skills appear to be useless. Having the mission to save the world from Gorkan, a terrible demon who has settled in Spain, the brave samurai shares exciting adventures with four other characters (Riki, Moira, Linceto and Gisaku) who help him in the final fight against Gorkan. On his way around the Spanish geography, the Samurai has the opportunity to discover an attractive country balanced with historical cities and natural landscapes, ecological high technologies and sustainable cultures, shared common values and rich gastronomical traditions. Everything is fine in Spain, except for Gorkan.

When Filmax Productions won the government competition the company committed itself to improve the image of Spain in Japan with a modern portrait. The creative team of the movie based its work on an opinion study among the Japanese population made by Elcano Royal Institute (Real Instituto Elcano), Cervantes Institute (Instituto Cervantes) and the above mentioned SSIE. The study (SEEI, 2005) showed that the Japanese people did not have a negative image of Spain and Spaniards, but they pictured mainly a very traditional country with low economic development. Positive features were the confidence

Spanish people inspire, the prestige and attractiveness of Spanish culture and language, as well as the familiarity of some main brands like Lladró or Loewe, in the economic field. On the negative side, there was an image of a traditional country with a low scientific and technological development and security problems; in addition, Spaniards were seen as people with a low educational level.

Given the results derived from the opinion research, the SSIE (SEEI, 2005, p.29) worked on some priority goals collected in a handbook that *Gisaku's* script should follow. These goals were:

- Showing 2005 Spain as one of the leading countries in the European context
- Exhibiting Spain as a country supporting science, technology, environment and the use of renewable energies
- Reinforcing the prestige and image of Spain in Japan by showing it as a country with modern facilities, great cultural richness, many tourist choices and rich Mediterranean-based gastronomy
- Developing mutual knowledge with regard to Japanese and Spanish lifestyles, cultures and traditions
- Presenting Spanish language both as a cultural heritage and an economical resource
- Portraying a country that is friendly, open to the world and feels a sense of solidarity with the rest of the world
- Showing off the innovation and quality of Spanish architecture and design
- Supporting innovation, imagination, surprise, tradition and modernity
- Embracing quality and excellence in products and facilities
- Transmitting realistic, authentic, non-exaggerated messages

In our view, the purpose of these goals was not to spread a realistic image of Spain, with lights and shadows. It was to promote a perfect image of our country, trying to

further the most favourable aspects, neutralize the negative perceptions and propagate the positive but unknown (or less known) aspects of contemporary Spain, as corporate campaigns do. Instead of a factual image of Spain, the handbook promoted a slanted image created just to emphasize the most positive aspects into an actuality which is necessarily complex, polyhedral and often contradictory, as every country is. Promotional content must be present in promotional movies, but we must not forget that they are first of all fictional movies. The strength of its impact on the audience is just based on the confidence this both illusory and realistic world projects on the screen. The more the film avoids an advertising format, the easier it gets a favorable predisposition in its audience, profiting by the lower commercial aims attributed to fictional discourses. As a matter of fact, after establishing the promotional items any Tourist Poster Film should have, the eventual negative effects on the audience of too obvious promotional contents are probably one of the key points that must be taken into account when designing a country (city or zone) brand campaign using fictional movies.

The movie showed a modern image that avoided classical stereotypes in order to sell an updated version of our country where tradition mixes with technology, cities mix with country, and economic and sustainable development are compatible. It followed the recommendations proposed by Javier Noya (2003) when describing the general lines that Spanish government and corporations should follow for branding our country, after analyzing the distribution of labours performed previously. Pedrosa's movie took on this modernizing policy since it embraced more popular (*anime* animation film) than high culture, more multiculturalism (heterogeneous characters) than tradition (absence of traditional Spanish stereotypes), and more future projection (high technology development) than shining past (absence of strong historical references).

Finding a balance between the institutional contents and the entertainment features was one of the challenges the creative team of the movie had to face. They were given general guidance in the handbook, a list of cities and country places, as well as some cultural, economic, scientific and technological data that should appear in the movie. Most of them are successfully naturalized in *Gisaku* thanks to the use of several narrative strategies, like the local character, Riki, who explains some general issues or the most contemporary devices to the 17th century samurai. Another creative solution is the presence of a pedantic and loquacious character, Moira, who makes use of any chance she gets to demonstrate how smart she is... and how much information she knows about everything. A third choice we would like to highlight was the mixture of historical and fictional connections between Japanese and Spanish cultures.

Nevertheless, writing the script for a Tourist Poster Film was not an easy job. The SSIE representatives and the creators of *Gisaku* had cordial but long discussions about the institutional contents the movie might assume. Fifteen pages in the script were excluded in the animation process and there are still eight minutes that should have been eliminated, in the director's opinion (Mestre, 2006b), as for example the detailed gastronomic information. The scriptwriter Ángel E. Pariente has also an autocritic position about this concern. Asked about how he understood his work with prescribed data, he declared that he enjoyed the experience, but also his belief that exposing institutional information in a too obvious way may turn out to be a contradiction, because appealing so openly to cultural values pushes people away more than it attracts. For him, the best way to *sell a country* is not by designing productions openly made to foment a *better* view of the site but with daily work, with movies made to show the country with other eyes, to create a new mythical audiovisual territory, as he would say. In his opinion, the less *Gisaku* sells Spain, the more it really sells it (Mestre, 2006a, p. 2).

With regard to the reception of the movie by the Japanese audience, we must specify that *Gisaku* has not been distributed in the Japanese market because of the difficulties for foreign animation movies to reach this market. The movie was exhibited in the Spanish Pavilion of Aichi and in the island of Sendai. In this last city audiences gave a very good welcome to *Gisaku*, according to the focus group asked by the Section of International Relations and Promotion of the City of Sendai (SIRPCS). Both children and adults found the movie interesting, creative, entertaining, and/or spectacular, and they were surprised at the high quality of Spanish animation movies. One issue highlighted by several spectators as a successful finding was the mixture of historical and fictional connections between Japanese and Spanish culture. It was easy for the Sendai audience to recognize in the fictional samurai the spirit of the actual samurais, like Hasekura Tsunenaga, a very respected personage in Sendai historical legacy. Conforming to the referred public-opinion poll (SIRPCS, 2005), some people had difficulties understanding the plot (mainly spectators under 9 years or over 70), but most of them had a very positive appraisal and were amazed by the high level of Spanish animation productions. One part of the audience was thankful for the opportunity to discover Spanish culture through the movie, and another one appreciated the occasion to *revisit* an already known country. And some of them expressed their interest for learning more about Spanish culture and their intention to visit, or visit again, Spain. Certainly, a wider exhibition of *Gisaku* in Japan would have produced a higher impact on this country's audiences and, as a result, would have given more detailed, and maybe demanding, spectators' perceptions.

CONCLUSIONS

As we tried to demonstrate in the previous lines, fictional cinema is a great creator of

cultural images that travel all around the world and have a significant impact on audiences. The three typologies we have established for Spanish movies work on the spectator's imagination in different ways. Icon Films, from their fiction plots, give identity signals that do not distort or lie about the reality they try to reflect, but they reach a degree of sufficient likeliness to become evidence of a society or country. They may also induce behaviors of the so-called cultural tourism, corresponding to high level tourists, not only educational, but also economical. On the other hand, Pastiche Films build their particular vision of a place or culture through a lack of verisimilitude, which enhances the previous cliché image of the country, culture and people that existed in the mind of viewers. Less informed or demanding audiences may be engaged by these movies and induced to find out more about the country and its tourist appeals. Finally, with regard to Tourist Poster Films, it can be said that country brand experiments may work, as *Gisaku* did. The desire for travelling to Spain expressed by one part of the focus group who watched the movie confirms this assertion. Institutional contents were well enough fused with the dramatic story line to make spectators feel motivated to know more about Spain. This strategy is the first step for a country to be seen as a tourist destination by potential travellers

and all three kinds of films achieve it through their own means.

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JOURNAL OF
TRAVEL & TOURISM
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Abstracted/indexed in: Academic Search Premier, Hospitality & Tourism Complete (EBSCO), Institute for Tourism, Google Scholar, TOC Premier, Tourism Insight, and Tourism Research Links. For more information please visit www.HaworthPress.com

Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing[®] (Print ISSN: 1054-8408) is published eight times a year by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 325 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106.

US Postmaster: Please send address changes to *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*[®], Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 325 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106.

Annual Subscription, Volume 24, 2008

Print ISSN – 1054-8408, Online ISSN – 1540-7306

Institutional subscribers: \$880.00 (US), \$1,260.00 (Canada), \$1,340.00 (ROW)

Personal subscribers: \$168.00 (US), \$246.00 (Canada), \$258.00 (ROW)

Institutional and individual subscriptions include access to the online version of the journal.

Production and Advertising Office: 325 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106. Tel - 215-625-8900, Fax - 215-625-8563. Production Editor: Michele Kennitzer

Subscription offices

USA/North America: Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 325 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106.
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