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“How simple and frugal a thing happiness is”: Exploring simplicity in Greek tourism discourse

Case study: [“Crete, sense the authentic winter!”](#)



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Chapter I

Introduction

1. The Source of Inspiration

What instigated my inspiration for this Master thesis were my own experiences of simplicity during my participation in a cultural tourism project many years ago. In this role, I traveled to islands and small villages throughout Greece and met fishermen, farmers, cooks, musicians, craftsmen and many other people whom I would dare to call “simple”; not due to their profession, but because of their willingness to welcome me open-heartedly in their homes, as if they had known me for years, and to share their life experiences and stories with me. It was exactly this sharing that unfolded their wise simplicity: a sharing that took place with no sophistication, complication or refined words, but rather in a natural, unpretentious and honest way: in clear, straightforward and inspiring words. I admired their simple attitude towards life; their ability to see the light even in the darkest of days. I was touched by their philosophical thinking which did not derive from their familiarization with theories and books, but rather from their life experiences: the daily challenges they faced that, however, made them stronger; the pleasure they found in the company of other people, even in the enjoyment of a glass of wine with friends; the liberation they felt by living close to nature; the beauty they could see in the smallest things around them; from the sound of the sea to the sound of the music played spontaneously by musicians on the cobbled streets of the islands. I am aware that by using this kind of emotional language I may seem to be romanticizing Greek people and contribute to stereotypes about Greek life and culture. But inspiration usually comes from an experience that is emotionally intense, as my experience of simplicity in Greece was. And the only way to fully share my source of inspiration with the readers is to describe it in words exactly as I felt it. Beyond my personal experience, however, in the following chapters the concept of simplicity will be thoroughly and academically approached.

Back to the days of my travels, under the guidance of local people, I dived into musical celebrations, which were beautiful in their simplicity as they took place in simple settings (e.g. the courtyard of a school), and conveyed symbolisms and emotions in a clear and unsophisticated language that spoke straight to my heart and mind. And all the members

of the community were so intensely celebrating together that present moment, finding happiness and liberation even through the sad lyrics of a song. During my visit to these places, I also felt a deep connection with nature. I breathed fresh air, I collected fresh produce from the earth and I cooked it in local homes; with only a few, simple ingredients I made delicious dishes that filled my body and soul. I also heard food stories I would have never expected to hear. When I shared these experiences with my supervisor, Prof. De Pourcq, during our first meeting, he suggested that I work on the idea of simplicity in the tourism promotion of Greece. However, he advised me to do that through a less romanticized and more critical, academic lens. I hope that in the pages that follow I manage to approach this challenging but at the same time interesting topic in an analytical and critical way; through the perspective of a Master student.

2. General description

This research aims to analyze representations of simplicity within the context of Greek tourism and, specifically, the island of Crete. Crete is the largest island in Greece, and the fifth largest in the Mediterranean Sea, consisting of four regions: Chania, Rethymno, Heraklion and Agios Nikolaos (Visitgreece, n.d.). According to the Observatory on Tourism in the European Islands, Crete is the most visited island of Greece, marked by 5,048,131 arrivals in 2019 (Ruggieri and Calò 2022, 6) and being visited for various reasons, including its historical monuments and archaeological sites, its old towns and mountain villages, its gastronomy, its diverse natural landscape, its seaside tourist resorts and beaches, as well as its hospitable people (Visitgreece, n.d.).

However, in an era when numerous destinations, including Crete, (re)present themselves as places with crystal-clear blue waters and warm local people, it is necessary that each find its own niche market and establish an offbeat identity, gaining a competitive advantage in the tourism marketplace (Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott 2001, 336). As sun and sand do not constitute a sufficient unique selling proposition by themselves anymore, to motivate potential tourists to visit a place, marketers should, according to Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott (2001, 336), **create an emotional relationship** between them and the destination. To achieve this goal, they should encourage **travelers' active participation** in various activities as well as their immersion in a destination's **tangible** (e.g. architecture and heritage sites) and **intangible elements**, such as culture, history, religion and people (Yiannakou et al. 2022, 436). Similarly to experiential tourism—a form of tourism strategy that focuses on a destination's material and immaterial

heritage—place branding and marketing also inspire the traveler to delve into the culture, nature, traditions, cuisine and social life of a place, thus, allowing them to **experience a destination emotionally, physically and spiritually** (Yiannakou et al. 2022, 436); as the traveler-protagonist in this thesis’ case study does.

Equivalently to a product or service, a place, such as a country, region, city or neighborhood, can also be perceived as a brand, consisting of functional, emotional, relational and strategic attributes that all together combine to create a unique set of associations with the place in the visitor’s mind (Ashworth and Karavatzis 2010, 4). Gregory Ashworth and Mihalis Karavatzis (2010, 3) adopt a holistic and integrated approach, focusing on **place branding as a refined and targeted tactic that goes beyond mere advertising, constructing new forms of representation of places**—like, for example, the representation of Crete as the land of simplicity and authenticity—**that bring their individual characteristics to light**. With their distinctiveness, these features differentiate a place from its competitors, constituting its own unique selling propositions; its own brand identity.

Brand identity is the total promise that a destination makes to the visitor and, as such, it is the way that a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) wants the place brand to be seen. While brand identity reflects a marketer’s perspective, **brand image** mirrors how diverse target audiences perceive and feel about the brand (Ren and Blichfeldt 2011, 417). And while a large part of research in place branding emphasizes the importance of crafting one clear and focused identity for a destination, a four-month field work in Zakopane, Southern Poland, shows that **various “versions”, various identities of a destination can also positively impact tourists’ purchase intention and behavior** (Ren and Blichfeldt 2011, 417). One of these “versions” of the destination-Crete is the experience of simplicity as it unfolds through the official tourism campaign “[Crete, sense the authentic winter!](#)” To understand how simplicity is explicitly and implicitly represented in this branding campaign, analyzed in the following chapters, it is necessary to bring the various conceptualizations of simplicity to light, simultaneously examining how these stand in relation to the discourse of authenticity.

Simplicity in tourism research is often linked to authenticity, being represented as a secondary value that contributes to the construction of certain cultures or people as authentic. Seen through this lens, simplicity defines those lifestyles and people that live **humbly and carefreely**, being **disconnected from time and modernity** (White 2007,

38, 42), whilst **rejecting western materialism** and **overconsumption** (Maddox 2015, 334). Beyond the discourse of authenticity, simplicity is presented as **an element of slow travel**, where it reflects a deep awareness and **connection with the natural surroundings** (Farkić, Filep, and Taylor 2020, 2067, 2072), deriving from the traveler's ability to slow down and indulge in the present moment. Additionally, in the food tourism literature (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021, 8), simplicity is primarily associated with **ordinary, homely and familiar elements** of the tourist experience (e.g. a simple dish or a cozy physical environment) as well as with those imagined as **“simple” people, who “taste” their food and their life with great pleasure** (Ayers 2018, 35).

These as well as further interpretations of simplicity, elaborated in the second chapter of my thesis, will serve as a source of inspiration and a reference in my research. However, since simplicity in tourism discourse has been either slightly touched upon or viewed mostly in relation to other ideas (such as authenticity and slow travel), I consider that conducting a brief exploratory investigation into the notion of simplicity outside tourism studies will be an asset to my work. Nevertheless, I will not dedicate a separate section in my theoretical chapter to this investigation, as it is not directly related to tourism studies and, consequently, might disorient readers from the main scope of the present Master thesis. Facets of the research into simplicity outside the field of tourism, though, will come to light in the third chapter, where they are expected to constitute important references in the analysis of my case study, enabling me to unfold more qualities and articulations of simplicity, including the idea of harmony and balance (Stuart 1913, 731; Gardner 1917, 421), the plain rustic life of shepherds and farmers (Havens 1953, 28), and the enjoyment of life's small pleasures (Pierce 2000, 13). Such notions will help me further support that simplicity can stand as a quality and a representation on its own in the Greek tourism discourse—where it lies underneath the discourse of authenticity—potentially adding new content and value to future branding strategies in Greece. Therefore, **the main goal of my research is to examine which of the perceptions of simplicity, investigated both outside and within tourism studies, are more relevant to the Cretan tourism context as well as what meaning and form they attain within this specific context.** I believe that the originality of this research lies in the fact that it connects simplicity as an active discourse in various theoretical fields with tourism studies, filling a gap in tourism academic research. Moreover, to my own knowledge, there has not been so far a study that shows how simplicity is conceptualized

or represented in the Greek tourism context. Taking the aforementioned into account, I will attempt to answer the following research question(s):

3. Research Question(s)

Main question:

What is the “simplicity concept” and how is it represented in the Greek tourism discourse and particularly in a digital campaign promoting the island of Crete?

Sub-questions:

- a) How is simplicity defined as a concept in tourism and other fields of study?
- b) What is the correlation between the discourse of simplicity and authenticity in the field of tourism?
- c) Which of the interpretations of simplicity, as explored within and beyond tourism studies, are reflected in the video campaign [“Crete, sense the authentic winter!”](#) and how are they articulated within this context?

4. Methodology

To answer my main question, **I will use a mixed-method approach, combining literature review with critical discourse analysis (CDA)**: a methodological approach which was introduced by Norman Fairclough and is based on the epistemological viewpoint of constructivism. According to the latter, the “knowledge of the world, and our place in it as actors, is socially constructed through language” (Caruana and Crane 2011, 1501). Similarly to a prior research into the exploration of freedom in tourism discourse (Caruana and Crane 2011), I apply critical discourse analysis to explore the meaning of simplicity in a branding campaign promoting the island of Crete, which has been chosen given that, to my awareness, it is one of the few “texts” in which the notion of simplicity is clearly stated. As far as certain images of the campaign are concerned, I will apply the method of **metaphorical interpretation**, which falls into the category of **pictorial semiotics**. The significant role of semiotic analysis for the tourism experience was highlighted many years ago by John Urry in the following words: “Tourism is constructed through signs and involves the collection of signs: when tourists see two people kissing in Paris what they capture in the gaze is ‘timeless romantic Paris’; in this way, tourists can be seen as an army of semioticians” (Munar et al. 2020, 5).

Having conducted a thorough investigation into the concept of simplicity in tourism literature as well as in other fields of study, I will be able to compare some of the previous representations of simplicity, as formulated in academic scholarship (academic discourse), with the marketing representations that tourism stakeholders have created to promote Crete (media discourse). Additionally, **by applying critical discourse analysis, I will attempt to delve into the “heart” of the written and visual language; its explicit and implicit meanings as well as the complex socio-cultural processes in the course of their occurrence** (Fairclough 1995, 186). Fairclough views language as a form of social practice associated with specific cultural and historical contexts (Faro 2017, 10). Through his model of analysis, which is largely inspired by the concepts of **interdisciplinarity** and **interdependency**, he aims to **unfold connections, patterns or contrasts** that might have passed unnoticed by a merely descriptive analysis of discourse (Faro 2017, 11). Critical discourse analysis allows the researcher to examine the **“micro”-elements** of a text, i.e., its vocabulary, semantics, form and organization, but also the **“macro”-elements**: the society and the history in which these texts and discourses are produced and interpreted (Fairclough 1995, 7, 19, 28). Critical awareness and analysis of these elements will also lead to **awareness and critique of ideological representations** that are invested in language; ideologies that contribute to the naturalization and idealization of certain discourses.

The concept of *discourse* has been discussed by the philosopher Michel Foucault, according to whom it constitutes “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment” (quoted in Lefkopoulou 2020, 18). The power of discourse often lies in the statements it makes about what is true or natural, in the discrepancies that exist within it, as well as in what is not said or seen. These elements can only be brought to light through careful and thorough reading of a (verbal or visual) text (Gillian 2001, 158). And while textual analysis mainly deals with the meaning “inside” a text, critical discourse analysis also focuses on those meanings that lie **“outside” and beyond a text**: namely, **its implicit content that hovers between presence and absence and which conveys ideologies, power relations, and socio-cultural processes** (Fairclough 1995, 5). Implicit content is the unstated part of a text. In other words, it is what the writer takes as given, as something that has already been mentioned elsewhere. Moreover, the form in which the text is shaped allows it to be penetrated by (ideological) elements from domains of prior textual practice (Fairclough 1995, 6). In this respect,

critical discourse analysis becomes an indispensable research methodology since it allows the researcher to make the implicit and obscure content visible (Li, Pearce, and Low 2018, 320) and, by doing so, to shed light on the hidden ideological representations (Fairclough 1995, 28).

Ideology is a central concept in critical discourse analysis. As Fairclough argues, ideology should not be seen as a simple “worldview” that differs among people and groups but rather as a means by which **particular constructions of the world and, thus, social relations of power and domination are reproduced** (Fairclough 1995, 17). To unravel these power relations, researchers should conduct their critical discourse analysis on three different levels, all closely intertwined. The **first level** lies in the analysis of the language, the formal properties and details of a text (e.g. syntax, grammar etc.), while **the second** takes into account the discourse practice, i.e., the processes of text production, consumption and distribution (Fairclough 1995, 23). The **third and last level** concerns the analysis of discourse within specific socio-cultural practices and a broader, “global”, social context of production and interpretation (Faro 2017, 12): namely, the history of the present: a capitalist, digitalized and globalized society. Therefore, during a critical discourse analysis, the studied “text” (i.e., the branding campaign [“Crete, sense the authentic winter!”](#)) cannot be isolated from the society and the institutions that produce it (in this case, the local government and the official tourism organizations), neither from the profile and motivations of the types of tourists it aims to attract.

When ideologies are disconnected from the particular social systems and interests which generate them, they tend to become **“naturalized”**, being seen as reflective of the “nature” of things or people rather than the outcome of the interests of specific classes and social groups (Fairclough 1995, 35). Subsequently, these naturalized ideologies become “a common-sense” knowledge which is activated and reproduced in interaction (Fairclough 1995, 35), ultimately offering tourists a specific frame for acting during their journey on a destination, as well as the opportunity **to be somewhere else**, but also **to be someone else** (Hallet and Kaplan-Weinger 2010, 13). This frame (in our case study, the frame of acting authentically and simply) contains “formulations and symbolizations of a particular set of ideological representations”: “particular ways of talking” and “particular ways of seeing” the world (Fairclough 1995, 38), all of which reflect, in our case, the authority and power of the media and tourism organizations in the production of “knowledge” (or more precisely, of ideology) concerning authenticity and simplicity.

While a descriptive work in discourse analysis would seem adequate for my Master thesis—the goal of which is to mainly describe representations of simplicity within “local limits” (Fairclough 1995, 43), i.e., the Cretan socio-cultural context—I rather argue that critical discourse analysis will be a more pertinent and demanding methodology for the needs of my case study. This methodology will provide me with the framework and the tools not only to describe the phenomenon of simplicity, but also to adopt an explanatory perspective on it, taking into account its causes and its effects, as well as the power relations it generates. Additionally, if this phenomenon is viewed in dialogue to “global” discourses of simplicity and “global” tourism institutions and practices, the results are expected to be much more revealing, allowing me to **unfold all the different and invisible facets of the “simplicity discourse” within the Cretan tourism context**. Last but not least, critical discourse analysis will challenge me to approach simplicity through a more critical lens, confronting it not as “taken for granted ‘background knowledge’” (Fairclough 1995, 28), which reflects the whole and true reality of the particular tourism context, but primarily as an ideological representation that serves specific interests and goals.

Chapter II: Exploring the concept of simplicity in tourism theory

Part 1: Between the “simple” and the “authentic”

The first part of the theoretical chapter focuses on the interrelationship between simplicity and authenticity and, particularly, on the similarities and differences in their meanings and articulations. In contrast to authenticity, simplicity has not been extensively theorized and analyzed in tourism literature, where it has been mostly represented as a side feature that contributes to an authentic culture or lifestyle. Hence, the inclusion of case studies from various tourism contexts will allow me to define and compare the two concepts in a systematic and analytical way, while critically reflecting on their interpretations. Specifically, I will use case studies which analyze authenticity and simplicity in relation to people, food, nature and culture as these elements also constitute the content and the context of my own case study. Moreover, incorporating two case studies from the Greek tourism context—including a research on the representations of Greece in photographic postcards along with one on the construction of the identity of Cretans as natural, simple and authentic people—will enable me to further build my analysis and create meaningful connections to my own case study on the island of Crete.

1. Authenticity in tourism studies: core theories

As a theoretical concept, authenticity emerged in the field through **Boorstin’s (1961) interpretation of mass tourism** as a series of pseudo-events consumed by the “mass hordes” of tourists who visit certain destinations looking for an antidote to their inauthentic everyday lives (Rickly and Vidon 2018, 2). Mass tourists bring with them pre-defined expectations that tour operators meet, creating a spectacle of **“staged authenticity”**: cultural products are staged and decorated so as to look authentic (Cohen 1988, 372), setting up a well-designed ritual for tourist consumption.

Through these rituals, tourists feel they enter Goffman’s **“back region”**, where they can experience the genuine life, the culture and the people of a destination. However, in many cases they are actually deceived. What they see is not the real backstage, but merely a staged back region (McCannell 1973, 590, 596) where locals “perform” their role to tourists according to a specific script in order to appear authentic. As a result, while the alienated modern tourists look for the authentic, meaning **the “primitive” and the “natural” element** which is yet untouched by modernity (Cohen 1988, 374), they end up experiencing McCannell’s “staged authenticity”.

Apart from these primary interpretations, many years later Ning Wang provided the academic field with further conceptualizations and theoretical approaches, exploring all the different ways in which authenticity does matter to the tourist and the field of tourism. These perspectives are known as: objectivism, constructivism, postmodernism, and existentialism and they are extensively described in the author's work (1999).

Objective authenticity

Objective authenticity focuses primarily on the **genuineness and originality of objects, artifacts, and structures**. No copy could ever be authentic (Rickly and Vidon 2018, 3). Therefore, authenticity can be measured by an absolute and objective criterion (Wang 1999, 351); for example, the time and the place where an artifact was first discovered by archaeologists. However, “who authenticates and for whom authenticity is employed” constitutes a significant question to be answered by those who use objectivist perspectives (Rickly and Vidon 2018, 3).

Constructive authenticity

From this perspective, **authenticity in relation to toured objects and toured “others” (e.g. local people) is socially constructed and open to pluralistic and often conflicting interpretations**. Such interpretations reflect the stereotypical images and expectations of individuals, as well as their agency to define the concept in their own way, constantly (re)creating and negotiating perceptions of what is “authentic” (Rickly and Vidon 2018, 4).

Postmodern authenticity

Postmodern perspectives deconstruct the concept of authenticity and the boundaries between the sign and the real, the simulated and the original. What is real is often irrelevant and insignificant (Rickly and Vidon 2018, 4–5). In the context of tourism, post-modern studies purport that **visitors may look for the inauthentic and the imaginative because it offers them a much more stimulating and enticing experience than the authentic, the real**. For example, zoos may use “nature” sounds (such as birds or the wind) to augment visitors' fantasy and their engagement in an experience that resembles the real natural environment of the animals, even if it takes place far from that (Rickly and Vidon 2018, 5).

Existential authenticity

Contrary to the previous object-oriented perspectives, existential authenticity—drawing primarily upon the philosophical ideas of Martin Heidegger—focuses on **experiential aspects, such as bodily feelings, emotions, sensations and the rejuvenation that an activity offers to tourists, allowing them to engage in a “self-making” process (intrapersonal authenticity)** (Rickly and Vidon 2018, 6). The relationship with the self is often distorted within the alienation of modern life. People forget to be their true selves. Tourism often creates an ideal setting so that **tourists break from their life’s social norms and act spontaneously**, according to their true feelings and their authentic selves. Nevertheless, **they do not merely seek an authentic self but also desire authenticity and sharing with others (interpersonal authenticity)**. Through traveling, tourists often achieve to reinforce their bonds with their family, friends as well as the people they randomly encounter during their journey (Rickly and Vidon 2018, 6).

A new perspective: performative authenticity

Britta Timm Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade (2010, 1) argue that **authenticity is neither a “thing” to be obtained (objective authenticity) nor a “state of mind” (existential authenticity)** but something that people can actually do and a feeling they can experience and perform on a destination. Therefore, they refer to a new type of authenticity, i.e., *performative authenticity*, that highlights the strong emotional interconnectedness of a place and a tourist’s performing body (Knudsen and Waade 2010, 2). Within this context, what tourists actually experience is not real and authentic in itself but it is performed and produced as such. Through **performative elements**, such as visual signs, gaze and imagination, but also **movements, actions and emotions**, tourists do not only perform an activity on a destination, but also **develop an emotional, affective and sensuous connection with it, and through this connection they are able to “authenticate” the specific place** (Knudsen and Waade 2010, 12–14).

Authentically simple. Simply authentic...

2. “Authentic” people

Dean MacCannell highlighted many years ago that modern tourists look for authenticity which is thought to exist in **purser, simpler lifestyles** (Knudsen and Waade 2010, 214). A telling example of this is the way in which Carmen M. White (2007) has described the Fiji culture, a culture imbued by tourism marketeers with richness, simplicity and authenticity. Authenticity in this case study is mainly approached as a human quality of the locals, who are represented as expressing **genuine**, i.e., **natural and real friendliness, unforced gentility** towards tourists and **an innate sense of warmth** that is not staged, but rather reflected in the smiles and souls of the Fiji people (White 2007, 38). Modern alienated tourists, caught up in the hurried pace of their life, are in pursuit of this **intimacy, closeness and natural sociality** with the “embraceable” and “authentic” Fijians (White 2007, 26, 33). This authenticity is further justified by the representation of Fijians as **unspoiled by consumerism** and **“primitive in their simplicity”** (White 2007, 34, 38). Contrary to modern individuals in western societies, Fijians are constructed as simple and gentle people that **live outside of time**, embody **humility**, appreciate the **communal way of life** and are guided by the ethics of **sharing** and **caring** (White 2007, 38, 42). Fijian culture is a culture beautiful in its simplicity that reflects **peace** and **serenity**; a culture in which people are **carefree** and **easygoing** and where **“there’s not a word for stress”** (White 2007, 27, 34, 46). Therefore, simplicity is associated in this work with its own distinctive features, such as primitiveness, humility, serenity, carefreeness, the importance of community life and the act of sharing and caring; values that further enhance the image and stereotype of Fijians as genuinely friendly and, thus, “authentically authentic” people (White 2007, 38).

Apart from the Fiji Islands, the notion of simplicity has been used in academic research to define the culture and people of another popular tourist destination, India. The “authenticity” of Indian people and culture has been analyzed by Callie Batts Maddox in a different sense, though, than in White’s work elaborated above. Maddox (2015) explores the experiences of western yogis who travel to Mysore, India, to study Ashtanga yoga, expecting to engage in more genuine practices compared to the ones taking place in the West. The authenticity of such a yoga experience is justified by its location—India is the motherland of yoga—and its rootedness in **an authentic Indian culture**, characterized by **simplicity** and **spiritual purity**, not to be found in the West (Maddox

2015, 332). The authentic India is represented as **a country of asceticism** while **the authentic Indians** are imagined as people who **live simple, often poor lives and are happy with the few things** they have, in contrast to the materialistic consumption that characterizes western individuals (Maddox 2015, 334). These western perceptions of the authentic Indian culture and people also act as **a discourse of power** that creates a feeling of nostalgia for a romanticized Indian past, ignores India's current conditions of modernity, and ultimately, maintains exoticized Orientalist imaginings of a still spiritual, ascetic and inferior India opposed to a modern, materialistic and superior West (Maddox 2015, 341).

In the aforementioned case studies, Maddox (2015) and White (2007) present simplicity as an important element of authentic cultures, practices and people. However, while in the scholarship on Fiji tourism, simplicity is primarily connected with Fijians' primitiveness, carefreeness and natural gentility, in the Indian context it is closely tied to asceticism and the rejection of materialism. In both research works, though, the concept of simplicity is constructed so as to meet the objectives of those that shape the discourse of authenticity, namely the media, tourism marketeers and tourists.

3. "Authentic" eco-cultural encounters

Tourists are nowadays becoming increasingly interested in experiencing the authentic, i.e., the timeless and unchanged elements in culturally and environmentally remote areas of the world (Tiberghiena, Bremner, and Milnec 2017, 288). Within the context of community-based eco-cultural tours, authentic experiences are translated into opportunities for relationship building between hosts and guests in intimate tourism settings. Particularly, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 25 clients from two eco-tours in South and Central Kazakhstan and with 29 Free Independent Travelers (FITs) brought to light three types of relationships that contribute to the tourists' perceived authenticity of eco-cultural tourism experiences in the country. These relationships are defined as spontaneous, existential and reciprocal (Tiberghiena, Bremner, and Milnec 2017, 287).

Spontaneous relationships

When locals behave to tourists in a natural way, the feeling of authenticity is augmented. Tourists do not value behaviors and cultural performances that are staged and altered to accommodate western tastes. **They instead appreciate occasions in which**

spontaneity flourishes and things occur in a natural way as, for example, when tourists happen to visit a village where traditional celebrations take place. In such kinds of spontaneous encounters, visitors have the opportunity to share experiences with locals and indulge in the present moment (Tiberghiena, Bremner, and Milnec 2017, 293–4).

Existential relationships

An authentic experience allows tourists to develop meaningful connections with a place, their co-travelers and themselves, understanding how they act in unfamiliar environments and **rediscovering a new part of the self**. This self-exploration is achieved when tourists experience local traditions and **delve into the hosts' everyday life and culture**. Tourists in Kazakhstan appear to appreciate **the authenticity that lies in the little moments they share with locals**, such as sleeping outdoors during summer and singing all together songs (Tiberghiena, Bremner, and Milnec 2017, 294–5).

Reciprocal relationships

Relationships in which a true sharing with the locals is developed are also perceived as authentic by the tourists interviewed. The latter wish to hear the feelings and views of the locals while they also want to be heard by them, developing a “one-to-one” relationship: **a connection which is not forced but rather flows naturally**, based on a mutual interest in listening to each other's stories and experiences (Tiberghiena, Bremner, and Milnec 2017, 295–6).

All in all, according to the study in question, when tourists share a common experience with the locals, a sense of intimacy and closeness is fostered. But what is the role of simplicity here? **While the term “simplicity” is not explicitly stated in this article, significant qualities of it are brought to light, disentangling its underlying relation to the concept of authenticity**. Similarly to authenticity, simplicity favors **intimacy, familiarity and sharing**, qualities that, for instance, unfold in the simple lifestyle of the Italian ecovillages, where people create a powerful community by producing and sharing not only fresh food but also their own emotions (Brombin 2015, 18–19). A simple way of living also lies in **the strengthening of human bonds and the enjoyment of life's simple pleasures**, such as spontaneous singing, laughing or walking in the park (Pierce 2000, 13, 16). To some extent, these simple pleasures resemble the little moments tourists share with locals in Kazakhstan, like singing songs with a *dombra* (a traditional guitar). It is this kind of sharing, which occurs spontaneously, mutually and as part of

locals' everyday life and culture, that allows tourists-guests to sense their encounters with the locals-hosts as authentic.

4. “Authentic” food

The tourist quest for authenticity and its interrelation to simplicity is also prevalent in Italy's culinary tourism promotional materials from 1951 to 2018 (Ayers 2018). As Ayers states (2018, 1), **by consuming Italian food, American tourists also consume the “authentic” Italy: a space of leisure, a slow and full of pleasures country, the country of *dolce vita* (sweet life)**, the land of authenticity and simplicity in which life and food are imagined as being unaffected by the patterns of the commercialized, globalized world (Ayers 2018, 1, 3). These clichés, largely reinforced by media representations, affect the tourist gaze and create an image of **“staged authenticity”** revolving around the themes of **family, tradition, pleasure and love**. The authentic Italian food is represented as the homemade cuisine passed down from generation to generation (Ayers 2018, 23) that inspires visitors to enter the “backstage” of food experiences and thus, of Italian culture; a “backstage” (often staged by tour operators) with well-hidden family restaurants that intensify the tourist's feeling of authenticity (Ayers 2018, 26–27). **The motifs of family and tradition are also reflected in the notion of *la Mamma***: the Italian mother or grandmother who initiates visitors to the old, traditional ways of cooking, preparing home-cooked meals for them in the same way she would for her family (Ayers 2018, 18); hence, tourists are granted a glimpse of the “authentic” Italian cuisine, the culture and the sweet life (*dolce vita*), a life that becomes more “authentic” and even “sweeter” when associated with the pleasures of the simple Italian food and the love prevalent in an Italian meal (Ayers 2018, 27, 34). **Through the everyday pleasure of eating, tourists also have the opportunity to bond with “simple” Italian people**, as Liz did in the film *Eat, Pray, Love*, or find true love while harvesting olives, as Pawal and Chiara did in the movie *Under the Tuscan Sun* (Ayers 2018, 33–34). Subsequently, simplicity in this study is mainly associated with **the simple, household-style food in a familial trattoria** (Ayers 2018, 25–26), as well as with **the connection to the “simple” Italians, who are imagined as people who eat well and “taste” everything with a great sense of pleasure** (Ayers 2018, 35). Interestingly, while simplicity is not elaborated in this study as much as authenticity, it seems to augment, nevertheless, the tourist perception of the “authentic” food and the “authentic” cultural experience of Italy, in other words, the experience of *dolce vita*.

5. “Authentic” Greece

To complement the findings elaborated above and conclude this part, I will refer to two case studies that reveal how both simplicity and authenticity have been contextualized in Greek tourism so far, which will serve as a starting point for the analysis of my case study. The first is Christina Bonarou’s semiotic analysis (2021) of the cultural representations of Greece in photographic postcards (2003–2019). This study confirms the saying “A picture is worth a thousand words” by revealing four visual discourses that build the image (or the stereotype) of a historic, authentic and romantic Greece: a) Greece is represented as the birthplace of European civilization; b) Insularity is at the core of the Greek spirit; c) Tradition is an inherent part of the Greek identity; d) Greece is a “sea, sun, sand and sex” destination (Bonarou 2021, 47). Postcards with emphasis on classical antiquity promote the country’s ancient past and historic continuity while photographs of bright skies, blue seas and idyllic sunsets construct a romantic Greekness in contrast to the grey colors of northern Europe (Bonarou 2021, 47–48). Additionally, **images of folk architecture and elderly locals on Greek islands establish the myth of a privileged natural way of living** (Bonarou 2021, 48): a “pre-industrial”, pre-modern way of life which is represented as laid-back, carefree and thus simple; as carefree and simple as the life of Fijians who live in balance with nature (White 2007, 33–34), based on the representations constructed by tourism marketers. Apart from the aforementioned images, the studied postcards also depict Greece as an “erotic heaven”, staging simultaneously, according to Bonarou (2021, 48) a dialogue between two notions: **the “Dionysian” spirit**, on the one hand, **which is associated with passion, instinct and pleasure** and is mainly prominent in postcards that depict the love life in ancient Greece and **the “Apollonian” spirit**, on the other, **which embodies logic, spirituality and a mental approach to the world**, visible in postcards praising harmony and the glory of classic monuments. Through all these visual representations, tourists are invited to admire the remnants of a glorious past, indulge in sensual pleasures of the body and experience **the simplicity and authenticity of Greek islands**, where the traditional, almost “primitive” state of the areas allows visitors to immerse themselves in an alternative way of life (Bonarou 2021, 49) and experience the myth of Greece as an “unchanged paradise on earth” (Bonarou 2021, 44).

6. The “simple” and “authentic” Cretans

The second study about Greece that will serve as a source of inspiration for my own case study is Regina Römhild’s work (2012), analyzed below. From the 1950s onwards, backpackers and hippies were increasingly traveling to the Mediterranean, including the Greek and the Cretan shores, driven by their imagination to explore an authentic tradition and a social and cultural life in harmony with nature (Römhild 2012, 144). In this untouched “paradise”, travelers anticipated to find **the “good life”** they were looking for: **the unaffected, “natural” and, thus, “authentic” lives of local shepherds, farmers, and fishermen** with whom they would share a lifestyle that northern Europeans had lost on their way to modernity. However, much of that sharing was based on western imaginings and stereotypes about the “archaic” customs and the Greek people rather than on a familiarization with locals’ everyday lives (Römhild 2012, 146–147). By spending time in the village of Pousos, on the island of Crete, Römhild aimed at capturing the local everyday life through the lens of a traveling anthropologist. As she remarks (Römhild 2012, 142), Pousos’ expected idyllic tranquility and traditional rural images, such as the old stone houses surrounded by geraniums and the local priest riding on his donkey, are overshadowed by images of mixed couples and transnational relationships. An example of such relationships is that many Greek migrants, who live abroad, return occasionally to Crete to run tourist businesses while new tourists visiting the village on their holidays end up settling there as immigrants or part-time residents (Römhild 2012, 143). These tourists follow these Cretan paths guided by their imagination of **the Mediterranean as a “paradise of pristine simplicity” that would allow them to escape from the everyday modern routine and discipline** (Römhild 2012, 144). One of the pioneers in constructing this romanticized tourist gaze of a “simple” and, thus, “authentic” Crete was Henry Miller, who in 1939 began a tour in the Greek mainland and the island of Crete which he narrated in his journal *The Colossus of Maroussi* (1941).

During his journey to Crete, Miller was thrilled by the “archaic” sense of the Cretan Greekness reflected in **the simplicity and dignity of a local man**, Alexandros: a simplicity that derived from the man’s tendency to **tell of life in the most basic philosophical terms and speak of himself in the third person as children do** (Römhild 2012, 145). According to prior research outside the field of tourism, the ability to experience the world with the freshness and the wonder of a child, evident in

Alexandros' character, lies in the "simplicity of heart" (Havens 1953, 31). Another popular icon that fuels the tourist imagination of Cretans as "natural", "simple" and "authentic" people is the hero of the novel *Zorba the Greek*, written by the Cretan author Nikos Kazantzakis and adapted into a film in 1964. Both in the novel and the film, Zorba is a symbol that transcends European modernity and Greek traditionalism, representing an archaic figure of a timeless Greek way of life (Römhild 2012, 146). **Zorba embodies the "art of life", an art he is willing to share with his reserved friend showing him how to remain natural and authentic following his moods, unimpeded by the constraints of civilized conventions** (Römhild 2012, 145). Additionally, Zorba, as mythicized in modern guidebooks like *Lonely Planet*, personifies the "irrepressible, free and rebellious Cretan spirit" that has been represented as an important part of the Cretan history and character. It is exactly that preconception of the Cretan as a natural, "primitive", nonconformist and free male personality—the idealized Other to western European modernity—that creates the ground on which different nationalities, tourists and migrants, mix and mingle in the small village of Pousos (Römhild 2012, 146, 151–2). These representations, however, do not merely reflect the western tourist gaze. Interestingly, they have also shaped to a great extent the Greek and Cretan self-imagination, additionally serving as the source of inspiration that led to the appearance of tourist businesses in Pousos, the creation of job opportunities for migrants and the sale of land to foreigners (Römhild 2012, 151–152). At the same time, all these routes and stories of locals, migrants and tourists in Pousos contribute to the regeneration of local life, **transforming the village into a place defined not only by static, rural images of simplicity and authenticity, but also by transnational connections and mobility** (Römhild 2012, 151). In this perspective, Pousos is the "product" of the imagination of various places and people, and, thus, what is considered to be Greek culture is produced in Pousos, but in other parts of Greece and the whole world as well (Römhild 2012, 156). Therefore, it is not only Greeks who contribute to this construction, but also all those involved in imagining and communicating the Greek culture (consequently, exercising power and influence through these discourses over others), such as tourists, archaeologists, anthropologists, environmentalists, artists, politicians and researchers (Römhild 2012, 156), inevitably including the author of this Master thesis as well.

Part 2: Traveling simply, slowly and mindfully

The second part of the theoretical chapter starts with Pauline Sheldon's work (2020) that approaches simplicity as one of the paths which allow individuals and travelers to stay true to themselves and achieve mindfulness. According to the researcher, mindful travelers engage in slower and simpler travels that inspire them to closely observe what is happening around them and deeply interact with nature and people (Sheldon 2020, 8). Apart from Sheldon's work, the importance of simplicity is stressed in two further studies included in this part: one refers, among else, to the slow way of living (McGrath and Sharpley 2017) whereas the other focuses on the slow tourism experiences in wild nature (Farkić, Filep, and Taylor 2020). Slow tourism experiences invite travelers to reduce the fastness and busyness of their daily routines and enjoy the simplicity of just being outdoors, reconnecting with nature, themselves and others, a process which ultimately leads to wellbeing and inner transformation. This process is largely facilitated by skilled tour guides, as a series of interviews with them reveals.

1. Simplicity: a path to inner transformation

Various spiritual and philosophical traditions advocate that the ultimate human journey is the inner one, the final destination of which is inner freedom, enlightenment and awakening of the self (Sheldon 2020, 1). Awakening individuals engage in **a self-inquiry process**, achieving a state of **inner peace, tranquility** and **serenity** that allows them to be less distracted by thoughts about the past and the future, and **more focused on the present moment** (Sheldon 2020, 2–3). **One way to achieve inner transformation is to walk the path of simplicity; a path that prompts human beings to pay less attention to material goods, outward demonstrations of success and other people's opinions on how one should live.** According to Sheldon, by simplifying their lifestyles, experiences and behaviors, individuals can cultivate a sense of self-worth and defy cultural norms that do not allow them to be authentic, to be their true selves (Sheldon 2020, 3).

While in life inner transformation is an on-going process, it can also take place during “emotionally intensive, sensorially impressive and cognitively stimulating” travel experiences (Sheldon 2020, 4). Tourism can be “a therapeutic pause in life” or a “source of spiritual meaning and refreshment” (Sheldon 2020, 3). **Often, just a little, unexpected and spontaneous triggering moment can instigate a traveler's self-**

discovery journey and the process of inner transformation (Sheldon 2020, 4); a process that is further facilitated during travel experiences that inspire a soulful human interaction, a deep connection with the natural environment, a positive and active contribution to local societies as well as a process of self-reflection, which allows tourists to find their purpose away from the distractions of daily life (Sheldon 2020, 5–7).

Inner transformation can occur during mindful travels that are considered to be slower, simpler and more authentic (Sheldon 2020, 8), thriving mainly in rural areas where communities adopt simpler lifestyles. Slow-paced travels inspire “self-realization through doing and being slow, enabling closer observation of the experience in the destination” (Sheldon 2020, 8). **When moving slowly, travelers are more open to what is happening around them and more willing to embrace the flow of things** (Sheldon 2020, 8). Flow can arise and lead to inner transformation when the mind is suspended and the heart and soul are open to the world of experience (Sheldon 2020, 9). Travelers who appreciate the flow of life and embrace spontaneity do not have high expectations of a destination and react to attractions, people and events according to the feelings of the moment (Sheldon 2020, 9).

According to Sheldon (2020, 8), awakened people are in pursuit of simplicity both in their lives and their travels. **They live lightly, rejecting glamor, luxury and overconsumption. They are predominantly environmentally aware individuals** who try to reduce their environmental impact and carbon footprint on the destinations. What is more, **they do not adhere to tight and complex logistics and itineraries during their journeys**. “Not being fixed and dogmatic with plans has its own magic, its own energy. When we allow things to emerge, miracles happen” (Sheldon 2020, 9). By slowing down, being absorbed in the reality as it flows and embracing simplicity, travelers can experience moments of inner transformation which may positively change their lives back home. At the same time, these transformational moments can create more responsible travelers that, together with tourism stakeholders, can build a more sustainable future for tourism; a future that can inspire the renewal and restoration of our destinations and ourselves (Sheldon 2020, 10).

The interrelatedness of “slowness”, simplicity and inner transformation that Sheldon’s work (2020) illustrates is also prevalent in Peter McGrath and Richard Sharpley’s study (2017). The authors state that, while western societies promote busyness and fastness as a successful life pattern, **slowness, in the sense of adopting a slower pace of life**, has

started to become an increasingly attractive concept; a sort of solution to the various destructive effects a fast-paced lifestyle can have on health, diet habits, human relationships and the environment (McGrath and Sharpley 2017, 49–50). Slow living is considered to be the mindful and meaningful living that leads to fulfillment. Similarly to voluntary simplicity and downshifting, slow living values a **“less-is-more” approach** and stresses the importance of maintaining a **quality of life**, a more balanced way of living and a more holistic sense of wellbeing (McGrath and Sharpley 2017, 50).

2. Slow adventure experiences: the simplicity of just being outdoors

The pursuit of a better life quality and wellbeing, related to the concepts of “slowing down” and “voluntary simplicity” lies also at the heart of what has been termed as “slow tourism”. Slow tourism encourages tourists to **“slow down, immerse themselves in the local culture and avoid the fast pace of rushing from one guidebook ‘must-see’ to the next”** (McGrath and Sharpley 2017, 52). Particularly, guided slow adventure experiences in the wilderness enable tourists to spend more time in the natural surroundings and **experience the simplicity of just being outdoors in responsible and ethical ways**, ultimately reconnecting with nature, themselves and their fellow travelers (Farkić, Filep, and Taylor 2020, 2067, 2074).

This immersion in the natural environment as well as the deep human connection is enhanced by skilled tour guides who, according to their own narrations, acknowledge their crucial role in the shaping of the tourists’ positive outdoor experiences and psychological wellbeing (Farkić, Filep, and Taylor 2020, 2065). Tour guides create pleasant and friendly atmospheres that allow tourists to open up, let their feelings go and experience transformative moments (even moments of laughter and crying). In these intimate settings, tourists feel comfortable and relaxed enough to **build a sense of community and togetherness**, sharing personal stories and experiences with their fellow travelers and their guides-“mentors” (Farkić, Filep, and Taylor 2020, 2074). This sense of **intimacy, the act of sharing in small social circles and the empowering role of community** are also qualities that are strongly interrelated with the concept of simplicity, according to prior research outside tourism studies (see Alice Brombin 2015).

Part 3: Simplicity: The extraordinariness of the ordinary

The third and last part of this chapter consists of one case study by Sandhiya Goolaup and Robin Nunkoo (2021), which I employ as it offers a clear and complete definition of simplicity in contrast to the majority of the previous case studies, which only partially touch upon the theme of simplicity. Contrary to prior research which connected extraordinary experiences with non-ordinary, extravagant features and thrilling activities (e.g., river rafting), this work proves that the ordinary, familiar and homely elements, defined here as “simplicity” (e.g., a simple, ordinary dish) can also offer tourists a genuine and extraordinary food experience (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021, 3, 8).

Goolaup and Nunkoo (2021) fill a gap in tourism literature by proving that a tourist’s extraordinary experience does not exclusively lie either in anti-structural/non-ordinary elements, such as the bonding with other human beings or in structural/ordinary ones, such as the need to feel during the journey like being at home. An extraordinary experience, as in-depth interviews with food tourists reveal, is rather **the harmonious co-existence of both non-ordinary and ordinary elements**, which the authors label as **“synstructure”** (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021, 1). The tourist narrations bring to light the idea of simplicity, which is defined here as those ordinary, profane and thus structural elements of the food experience that can contribute, at least in the specific context, to the tourists’ extraordinary food experience: a positively intense, intrinsically enjoyable and transformative experience (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021, 3).

1. The simple environment

According to the interviewees, simplicity is attributed to **a small, basic and cozy experiencescape**, i.e., **an ordinary physical environment with simple décor and layout, which creates a homely atmosphere**, making the tourists feel like “being in someone’s living room”, “being to a local kitchen, out of the tourism things” (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021, 7). Klara’s narration reflects the aforementioned qualities of simplicity: “The whole environment was extraordinary because **she took us from this hotel into a real world**, into the traditional way of doing Balinese cuisine... The cooking class for me was something that was local and a very native experience. The kitchen was in the backyard, and I was having the feeling that I was out of the tourism things” (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021, 7).

2. The simple dish

On the other hand, simplicity is also associated with **simple dishes that are made with only a few, simple ingredients and are based on easy cooking processes**. Just a grilled, seasonal and fresh fish served without any kind of side dish or garnishing, only accompanied by wine, offered tourists an amazing, extraordinary experience. **A simple dish, made out of nothing, can create such a great taste**, allowing foodies to savor each and every ingredient. As Kim highlights: “The dish was kind of magic, it was full of flavor but yet so simple” (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021, 7).

Apart from the plain and ordinary elements, non-ordinary aspects, such as the sharing and enhancement of food-related knowledge among the participants, also played a role in the tourists’ extraordinary food experiences (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021, 7). Additionally, this study indicates that extraordinary experiences are not always “beyond the everyday life” and not necessarily “more intense, framed and stylized than the ordinary experience” (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021, 10). Instead, they can also flourish **within the realm of the everyday life of the locals** and although they might be characterized by **less intensity** or take place in **more ordinary settings**, they can be equally empowering and surprising as experiences thriving in non-ordinary settings and occasions.

Part 4: Concluding thoughts

Before proceeding to the analysis of my case study, I will briefly summarize in what follows the main ideas discussed in the theoretical chapter, which I will try to explore in my case study. As has become evident in the first part of this chapter (see pages 11–20), **simplicity in tourism studies is closely related to authenticity**, often being represented as one of the elements that create or augment tourists’ feeling of authenticity. Overall, authenticity is believed to characterize those **“primitive”, pure and simple lifestyles** (Cohen 1988, 374; Knudsen and Waade 2010, 214) that remain **untouched by western materialism and modernity** while still **thriving close to nature**. People that follow this lifestyle are imagined to be more **carefree** and **natural**, acting **freely** and **spontaneously** (i.e., simply—Librová 2008, 1115), according to their true, authentic selves. By sharing experiences and connecting with these “simple” and “authentic” people, western **tourists wish to learn their secret of the simple, in the sense of the good and happy, life** (Librová 2008, 1112), **simultaneously discovering their own**

“simple”, “authentic” and “happy” self, away from the estrangement and the constraints of modern societies (Römhild 2012, 145). These are the core ideas in which simplicity and authenticity converge in tourism literature and which are also expected to be pertinent to my own case study: a) the idea of **naturalness**, both as **experiencing a “primitive”, pre-modern way of life close to nature** and as **connecting with one’s own true nature** (Weiwen 2017, 351) and b) the value of **sharing** and **bonding** with the “simple”, “natural” and “authentic” locals. I assume that the act of sharing will constitute a particularly significant element underlying the simplicity (and authenticity) discourse in the Cretan tourism context, simultaneously confirming the popular stereotype of the “naturally friendly” and “embraceable” Cretans (similarly to the “naturally friendly” Fijians—White 2007, 38).

Despite the strong interconnectedness of simplicity and authenticity outlined above, my research outside the tourism studies has brought to light more qualities of simplicity, further investigated in my case study. These qualities, such as the **harmony, balance** and **symmetry** that characterize a simple artwork (Gardner 1917, 419, 421), may allow me to approach simplicity as a distinctive entity in tourism studies and not only as a secondary part of the discourse on authenticity. But is simplicity in the Cretan tourism context truly approached through suchlike **noble and sophisticated qualities** as the idea of moderation and balance? Or is it rather represented as a more **enthusiastic, emotional and spontaneous quality** (Havens 1953, 26) that mirrors the “simple” manners of rural life and the “simple” Cretan people, those people who look at the world with unsophisticated eyes (Havens 1953, 27, 30) and know how to enjoy life like another kind of contemporary Zorba?

Moreover, since simplicity is closely tied to the idea of “slowing down” and is, subsequently, considered to constitute an indispensable element of the slow way of living and of slow travel (see pages 21–23), I will also explore whether and how the latter is expressed in my case study. **Slow travel inspires individuals to disconnect from the speedy and busy pace of modern everyday life and relish the uniqueness of the present moment**, taking time to observe and savor the simplest, smallest and humblest things of their journey—closing the mind a little bit, listening to a bird’s song, sitting on the sand, looking at the sky (Farkić, Filep, and Taylor 2020, 2071–72)—ultimately, reconnecting with nature, themselves and their co-travelers. As my case study is, at first sight, comprised of images of slow, lonely walking in the Cretan nature, I suppose that

elements of slow travel will come to light, being, interestingly, complemented by some of my findings about the notion of simplicity outside the tourism field. Among others, these include **Henry David Thoreau’s call to simplify**, in other words **his call to slow down, reduce the busyness and business of our lives** (as happens during slow travels), **and start indulging in the “busyness of leisure” as well as in a simple, deep and slow way of thinking** (Treanor 2007, 68, 69, 81), eventually finding our own truth and achieving a greater quality of life (Treanor 2007, 69, 71), similar to the one slow living and slow traveling favors. Drawing on these ideas, it appears intriguing to explore whether simplicity in my case study is actually practiced both **in moments of slow travel and slow, solitary thinking** in the Cretan nature as well as **in moments of intimacy and sharing** with the “simple” and “authentic” Cretans.

Last but not least, inspired by Goolaup and Nunkoo’s research (2021, see above, pp. 24–25) which highlights the value of **the simple—in the sense of the ordinary and familiar—elements** in food tourists’ experiences, **I will also attempt to sketch the presence of simple elements in my case study**, not only within the food tourism context but also in other settings and contexts on the island of Crete. Finally, I will examine how the different discourses of simplicity within and beyond the tourism field are interrelated, constructing all together the representation(s) of simplicity in the studied campaign, which I analyze in the following chapter.

Chapter III

Case study: “Crete, sense the authentic winter!”

«Ταξίδι σ' έναν τόπο ευλογημένο» / “Journey into a blessed land”

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=yS65CmuKwXc&feature=share>

Video credentials:

Production: Indigoview-Creative Media Productions

Director: George Pada

Artistic curator: Theo Papadoulakis

Scriptwriter: Yiannis Melitopoulos

Production director: Dimitris Xenakis

1. Description of the research material

The case study of this thesis is an official tourism campaign named “[Crete, sense the authentic winter!](#)”, which was co-produced by the Region of Crete and the Indigoview-Creative Media Productions and was uploaded on YouTube in August 2019, in the pre-covid period. This digital campaign could be considered as precursor of a video series branded as “[Crete, Sense the Authentic](#)”¹, launched in May 2020, during the pandemic era. The latter aimed to promote all-year round authentic experiences in Crete, introducing travelers to diverse aspects of life on the island: from its gastronomy and culture to its adventurous experiences.

One of these authentic experiences that travelers can enjoy is Cretan nature and culture during the winter season. Thus, the campaign “[Crete, sense the authentic winter](#)” was created to primarily promote Crete as a winter tourism destination, addressing diverse groups of travelers—namely, older ones in this specific case, as the profile of the video’s main hero reveals. This may be partly justified by the fact that elderly people have more free time and sufficient economic means to visit Crete in winter while other target audiences, such as families and couples, may not be able to do so due to work obligations and a busier daily routine. By examining the video’s narrative, I expect to bring to light the elements that make winter in Crete authentic, as the title of the campaign indicates. I

¹ This series of promotional videos was also produced by the Region of Crete and the Indigoview and directed by Theo Papadoulakis. The latter was the artistic curator of the studied campaign “Crete, sense the authentic winter.”

support that one of these aspects is the idea of simplicity, which is both explicitly and implicitly referred to in the video campaign. To bring representations of simplicity to the surface, I will deep dive into the video's verbal and visual language as well as into the socio-cultural processes, practices and institutions that lie behind its production. By implementing the method of critical discourse analysis, I will be able to formulate a holistic and critical stance towards the concept of simplicity within the tourism context of the island of Crete.

2. Analysis

From the first seconds of the video, a form of personal narration unfolds. **“I wander upon the footsteps of my mentor (pause)... on the stone, on the snow, on the sand, on the sea.”** The assertive use of **the pronoun “I”** reveals the target audience of this campaign: the traveler that differs from mass tourists, who uncritically and passively consume destination after destination. Contrary to the passive and “inauthentic” mass tourist engaging in superficial sightseeing and pleasure-seeking, travelers are constructed both in academic and media discourse as active and independent individuals in pursuit of authentic experiences when traveling. They are considered to be people who respect local cultures and customs, enjoy the present moment, and follow their wanderlust in any direction their heart takes them (Tom Sintobin 2021; class lecture). At this point, I need to clarify that the words “tourists” and “travelers” are mostly used interchangeably throughout my Master thesis, unless it is clearly stated, as, for example, in this chapter. Through the analysis of my case study, the protagonist of the video will be assigned the term “traveler”, permeated with the aforementioned connotations.

In the specific campaign, the traveler as a human subject and a social identity is constructed and presented by official tourism authorities as an elderly male figure who is assumed to have traveled widely and engaged in various experiences that have made him philosophize both upon the act of traveling and living. The use of a more sophisticated and elaborated language matches the profile of a refined middle-class person, bearer of a high level of education and, most probably, a relatively good income. His tone of voice (attuning to the music score) resonates **calmness**, a feeling of **inner peace** and a sense of **contemplation**. It could be argued that the creators of the campaign use the pronoun “I” purposefully to allow the audience to immerse themselves in the power of the narrative and, thus, develop a strong emotional connection to the destination even prior to their visit.

The traveler is invited to follow the footsteps of his mentor (or/and guide?), either by literally walking through the places where he/she lived and got inspired or, metaphorically “walking” the path of the mentor’s ideas, thought and philosophy. The protagonist’s first “footsteps” are marked by images of more recognizable, touristic and cosmopolitan places in Crete, such as the foggy port of Chania, with which the target audience(s) can easily identify since Chania, at least during the summer season, is one of the most touristic places on the island, largely promoted by international media. Interestingly, though, almost right away the set of images shifts from more well-known to less famous and quieter places and activities: images of **snow-white mountain scenes**, the traveler-protagonist **walking on the shore** and someone **biking** on a bridge that crosses the sea. Conducting a deeper level of analysis—in Erwin Panofsky’s terms, “intrinsic” level of interpretation (Gillian 2001, 144)—these images could not only be seen as mere landscapes and activities in winterly Crete but they could also signify a **sense of exploration** of the Cretan land, a sense of **wander**.

Theme 1: Wander

Sub-theme 1a: Traveling slowly

The independent (in the sense that he travels solo), contemplative and, in terms of age, mature traveler wanders in the heart of the Cretan nature. Not accidentally, the introductory sentence of this video campaign contains the word “wander”. According to the Cambridge Dictionary Online (accessed 2022), the verb “**wander**” means “to walk around slowly, in a relaxed way or without any clear purpose or direction”. This sense of slow moving and relaxation is also reflected in the tone of voice and the pace of the narrator-traveler. Additionally, the meaning of the word “wander” brings to light motifs and ideas that are associated with slow living and slow travel. **Slow travel prompts travelers to leave behind their to-do-lists and fast-moving life, slow down, take time to observe the beauty of nature and enjoy the simplicity of just being outdoors** (Farkić, Filep, and Taylor 2020, 2067): in our case, in the natural surroundings of Crete, “on the stone, on the snow, on the sand, on the sea.” Slow-paced travels are those trips that enable “self-realization through doing and being slow, enabling **closer observation** of the experience in the destination” (Sheldon 2020, 8). Such kind of travels are considered to be **simpler, more authentic and more mindful** (Sheldon 2020, 8), as they allow tourists to connect meaningfully with nature, fellow travelers and, ultimately, themselves. According to the title of the video, this slow wandering in the Cretan

landscape takes place during winter. Winter is a quieter tourist season for Crete and for the Greek islands in general. The large number of mass tourists in pursuit of “sea, sun, sand and sex” diminishes and local life returns to its normal, daily rhythms. Within such a context, slow travel can flourish better and other segments of potential visitors, such as older ones, can find the inspiration, calmness and simplicity they are looking for, ideally under the guidance of an illuminated “mentor”.

Sub-theme 1b: Getting inspired by a mentor

A mentor is a “person who gives a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period of time, especially at work or school” (Cambridge Dictionary Online). According to Erik Cohen (1958, 8), however, the concept of mentors in literature is “complex in origin, heterogeneous in nature, and difficult to trace historically.” In his work, he states that the mentor has been mostly associated with the idea of a **spiritual advisor** (Cohen 1958, 8). The latter’s role has been mainly prominent in religious settings, where “a specialist serves as a ‘guru’ to the novice, adept, or seeker, guiding him towards **insight, enlightenment** or any other **exalted spiritual state**” (Cohen 1985, 8). Many of these “religious journeys”, both real and allegorical, such as the one of Virgil and Beatrice in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, may be dictated by ideal leaders-mentors who show seekers the way, both literally-geographically and metaphorically-spiritually. Moving on in time, this was somewhat the role of personal tutors during the famous Grand Tour in the 17th and 18th century. Those tutors, imagined as “grave, respectable men of mature age” (such as the mature traveler-protagonist of the video and the mature mentor, whose profile will be later revealed) led the young Englishmen to a cultural pilgrimage in European cities of learning and classic antiquity (Cohen 1985, 8). Nowadays, the modern tourist guide may embody elements of both a *pathfinder* (the one who literally guides a tourist, for instance, through a mountain and points out objects of interest) and a *mentor* (the one who “guides” a tourist spiritually) (Cohen 1985, 7, 9).

Therefore, the use of the word “mentor” in the video implies that there is a person who is going to **“guide” (geographically or/and spiritually)** the traveler during his journey into the Cretan land. He or she (the viewers are not still aware of the mentor’s identity) will be the source of inspiration for the traveler’s itinerary: an itinerary that, whilst mirroring a sense of freedom primarily linked to images of nature, is nevertheless restricted to certain criteria. The traveler is encouraged to **follow certain routes and get involved in specific activities** inspired by his mentor’s “footsteps”. In this sense, the

still invisible mentor (a local, a tour guide?) becomes a powerful personality as he/she offers the traveler not only a kind of “toolkit” but, first and foremost, the inspiration to “sense the authentic winter” in Crete. Thus, the mentor exercises **a sort of power** over the traveler by “educating” or inspiring him to see things from his/her own perspective.

As prior research shows, during slow travel experiences—such as the ones taking place in the wilderness—tour guides present themselves as another kind of “mentors”, who contribute to the travelers’ self-transformation and emotional wellbeing by encouraging them to spend more time in nature and share intimate moments with their fellow travelers, ultimately helping them understand what makes them feel fulfilled (Farkić, Filep, and Taylor 2020, 2073). Moreover, previous scholarship (see Treanor 2007 and Römhild 2012) has shown that very often, people who have practiced simplicity in their lives—from intellectuals and philosophers, like Thoreau, to workmen, such as farmers and shepherds—can also inspire other people to follow this path. Hence, it could be inferred that, in academic research, **simplicity has been largely associated with the idea of a mentor**, as my own case study showcases as well.

In the video analyzed, the traveler is invited to follow the **“hidden trail”** of his mentor’s inspiration in Crete. This hidden trail can imply either **an off-the-beaten-path itinerary in the Cretan nature or a deep dive into the essence of the mentor’s thought:** his/her own philosophy, his/her own view of the world. With the phrase **“I follow the hidden trail of his inspiration”**, the traveler expresses his willingness to explore the Cretan land through the eyes of his mentor, thus affirming the latter’s crucial role in the sense of simplicity (and authenticity) in Crete. This is the specific moment when the riddle of the mentor’s identity starts to be gradually revealed. The uncovering begins with the use of the deictic word “his” which shows that the mentor is a man. Combining this information with the image of a male bust in a museum and the quote that follows in Greek «Δεν ελπίζω τίποτα, δεν φοβάμαι τίποτα, είμαι ελεύθερος» (translated in English as: “I hope for nothing. I fear nothing. I am free”), viewers understand that the mentor is a male figure, well-renowned on the island of Crete. For the large majority of Greeks, who are familiar with the aforementioned Greek quote, the answer is more than obvious: the mentor is the famous Cretan novelist, Nikos Kazantzakis, writer of the novel *Zorba the Greek*. However, a foreign viewer-traveler that cannot understand the Greek language (in the video, the aforementioned quote is not translated in English) and does not share this cultural knowledge may need some further information to guess the mentor’s identity.

On a different note, the fact that the mentor is a man may partly justify the choice of the gender of the traveler-protagonist, a choice that indirectly excludes specific groups of tourists, e.g., women and younger travelers, who might also like to experience “authentic” winter in Crete.

“I hope for nothing. I fear nothing. I am free”

Theme 2: Freedom

The quote «Δεν ελπίζω τίποτα, δεν φοβάμαι τίποτα, είμαι ελεύθερος» translated above—originally engraved on Kazantzakis’ tombstone—appears in this video only in Greek. Interestingly, this quote is implicitly connected, in my view, with the concept of simplicity when the latter is seen through the teachings of the ancient Chinese philosopher and founder of Taoism, Laozi (Lao-Tze). For the Laozi philosophy, **“returning to simplicity and authenticity”** means **“returning to naturalness”**; to that state in which human beings **live in harmony with nature** (the environment) and **their own human nature**, being unimpeded by imagined needs and desires (Weiwen 2017, 351) dictated by their selfish ego. When people “have a self”, they can often set obstacles to their own naturalness and freedom because they constantly have something to expect like, for example, fame or financial gains. However, if human beings **have nothing to wait for, have no self** and **allow their real nature to thrive**, then they can achieve the naturalness and freedom they deserve (Weiwen 2017, 353). This philosophy somewhat mirrors the quote by Nikos Kazantzakis mentioned above: “I hope for nothing. I fear nothing. I am free”. As the Laozi support, **simplicity is a way to achieve that freedom, that naturalness which lies in the harmonious development and coexistence of human beings and nature** (Weiwen 2017, 357), which has been so eloquently praised by Zorba’s friend in Kazantzakis’ novel (transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 144): “I looked at Zorba in the light of the moon and admired the jauntiness and simplicity with which he adapted himself to the world around him, the way his body and soul formed one harmonious whole, and all things – women, bread, water, meat, sleep – blended happily with his flesh and became Zorba. I had never seen such a friendly accord between a man and the universe.”

The previous connection with the Laozi philosophy may seem indirect and irrelevant at first sight, but it can actually serve as an example of **“intertextuality”**. The latter, drawing on theories from literary criticism and constituting an important theoretical tool

of discourse analysis, shows how one “text”, spoken or written, refers to or points to another “text” and what others have said or written in relation to that topic (Gee 2014, 156). In my analysis, the notion of intertextuality helps bring implicit qualities of simplicity to light, proving that convergences (or divergences) might exist regarding the same concept among different cultures and philosophical traditions. That is the reason why some discourse analyses are so interesting. They bring together, in convincing ways, material that had previously been viewed as quite unrelated (Gillian 2001, 143), namely in this case the Laozi philosophy and Nikos Kazantzakis’ thought, which runs through the campaign’s storytelling. Other examples of intertextuality will also come to light as the analysis of my case study further unfolds.

Theme 3: Each and every thing matters

**“Every corner a memory,
Every route a challenge,
Every person an invitation”**

If these phrases (“Every... invitation”) are considered to formulate a *stanza* (a group of idea units about a specific theme—Gee 2014, 80) with the previous one (“I follow the hidden trail of his inspiration”), then I could infer that **“every corner, every route, every person”**, as stated in the video, may have inspired Nikos Kazantzakis. It might have been one of his “hidden trails”. The emphasis on the determiner “every” shows that the traveler, similarly to his mentor, can find value in **each and every element of Crete: from the smallest and simplest**, such as a corner in a small alley, to the most extraordinary ones, such as an adventurous route in the winter in Crete. Following certain video images, such a route may be an activity, like skiing on the snowy mountains of the island. And, while at a first reading, skiing is considered to be just another winter activity in which the traveler can engage in Crete, by doing a closer reading, I can imply that **skiing** may symbolize a challenging situation (“every route a challenge”) which requires **great mental and physical effort** to be executed successfully and therefore, it tests a person’s ability (according to the meaning of “challenge” in the Cambridge Dictionary Online). Similarly to such challenging activities, **simplicity** (as many other things in life) **also requires great mental effort to be practiced**. According to Thoreau, to simplify, one should go closer to austerity than to excess, whilst also accepting the fact that simplicity is a painful and challenging path at the beginning. However, once experienced, simplicity can bring pleasure and happiness to the individual (Treanor 2007,

82). Apart from map locations, such as corners and routes in nature, people also play a major role in the traveler's journey across the Cretan land. Every person (signified by the distant image of a skier on the snowy Cretan mountains) is an "invitation"; an opportunity and an encouragement for the traveler to **be open to new human connections, to new human relationships.**

Similarly to the traveler-protagonist, Zorba, the protagonist of Kazantzakis' famous novel, admires and acknowledges **the value of each and every thing**: from a woman and a tree in blossom to a glass of cold water. He "sees everything every day as if for the first time"; a perspective which makes him able to savor "the bliss of the moment" (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 13, 56) and appreciate the gift of life. This conscious appreciation also constitutes the value of simplicity, according to the study "Pierce Simplicity" by Linda Breen Pierce (2000, 16): to **fully live in the present moment and cherish the gift of being alive.** The experiences and human stories Pierce shares in her work (2000, 13, 16, 17) with the readers teach us that to be aware and appreciative of the gift of life means to be able to **indulge in small, "innocent luxuries"**, from laughing, singing and dancing spontaneously to spending time with family and friends ("laughing never stops on this earth"—Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 160); to **develop an intimate community life**, strengthen human bonds, share moments with other people and care for them ("Beautiful nymph of the waves, we are shipwrecked and the sea has cast up us in your realm. Do us the honour, my siren, of sharing our meal!"—Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 40); to **express even negative feelings**, such as anger or pain, **ultimately transforming them into positive ones; to embrace the ordinariness of human nature** and not a perfect image ("every man has his folly, but the greatest folly of all, in my view, is not to have one"—Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 160); to **maintain a joyful and vibrant attitude towards life** despite difficulties and challenges ("I had rarely felt so full of joy in my life. It was no ordinary joy, it was a sublime, absurd and unjustifiable gladness"—Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 314). These meanings of simplicity were brought to light by Pierce through her three-year research project: the study "Pierce Simplicity," incorporated into her book *Choosing simplicity: Real people finding peace and fulfillment in a complex world* (2000). This project was based on 211 survey responses from people across the globe, while in-depth interviews were also conducted by Pierce to further delve into the respondents' experiences of simplicity. While this study has not been conducted by a

scholar, its findings have proved to be an invaluable source of information and inspiration for my case study.

Theme 4: Quiet contemplation

Until now, the journey of the traveler-hero is a lonely one and it unfolds in the heart of the Cretan nature. At this point in the video, a quick and playful change takes place between the image of snowy mountains and a sunbathed scenery, surrounded by trees, underneath which the traveler stands with his eyes closed (see fig. 1). This photographic effect creates a sense of immersion into the local scenery and the traveler's soul. His closed eyes and his calm face reflect **a sense of contemplation**, a moment of **silence** and **tranquility** (Treib 2007, 224, 231). The traveler **“watches in quietude”** and **“observes in depth”**, which, according to the Laozi philosophy, is the way to conquer simplicity and authenticity. Only in this situation can the mind be enlightened so that it naturally reflects things (Weiwen 2017, 351). Similarly to the traveler who keeps his eyes shut, we also tend to close our eyes whenever we try to think deeply, to focus on our thoughts and emotions, to listen to our inner voice or to simply relax and forget our worries for a moment. Closed eyes can be, thus, linked to **an inward, philosophical thinking**, which denies the extraneous, the superficial and the unnecessary whilst focusing on the essential, on the simple; in other words, on **the deep and slow thinking** praised by Thoreau in his writings (Treanor 2007, 69, 70, 81). This image also prepares the ground for what will follow: **the explicit reference to the concept of simplicity**.



Figure 1: The traveler stands with his eyes closed underneath a tree, engaging in deep and slow thinking in the Cretan nature. Snapshot (sec. 00:23–00:25) from the studied video campaign (Region of Crete and Indigoview 2019)²

Theme 5: “How simple and frugal a thing happiness is...”

Sub-theme 5a: Going back to the source: the nature

The quote “How simple and frugal a thing happiness is” is visually articulated through the image of the traveler **walking on the mountains of Crete**. According to the principles of discourse analysis, this image would be characterized as “informationally salient” since it introduces the viewer to relatively new and unpredictable information (Gee 2014, 30) which contains the core idea—the theme of the video storytelling. Literally speaking, it could be argued that this image promotes hiking as a winter activity for travelers in Crete (primary reading). However, if this image is examined in relation to the verbal narrative, **I can deduce that the act of walking on the Cretan mountains is represented as a simple and frugal thing that can make the traveler happy** (secondary reading). In the history of tourism, mountains have been mainly associated with the notion of the “sublime”: a sense of fear and wonder towards the grandeur of nature (Jan Hein Furnée 2021; class lecture). Here as well, the mountains of Crete seem to augment the feeling of sublimity and the traveler’s sense of exploration; his sense of **freedom**, which is also signified by **the act of walking**. When people walk, they feel alive; their body and their spirit are in a constant move, wondering about the meaning of their being and their action in the world (Munar et al. 2020, 12). Nature can offer an

² The visual storytelling of the studied video campaign (from the images to the visual effects employed) follows the scriptwriting crafted by Yiannis Melitopoulos and comes to life through the direction of George Pada and the artistic curation of Theo Papadoulakis.

uplifting sensation, a feeling of freedom and happiness not only through its sublimity but also through its simplicity, as it will later be shown.

Whoever has read *Zorba the Greek* will be able to recognize the quote “How simple and frugal a thing happiness is” used in the video and attribute it to the Cretan novelist, Nikos Kazantzakis. Therefore, at this point, the revelation of the mentor, the writer Nikos Kazantzakis, takes place indirectly through the quote above, which invites the traveler to adopt the novelist’s perspective on happiness. By quoting Kazantzakis, I assume that tourism stakeholders aim to primarily address those segments of travelers who are keen on Greek culture and are educated enough to unravel the hidden meanings of the video storytelling as well as the connection with the Cretan writer. Here, **for the first (and last) time, the word simplicity is explicitly stated, being mainly associated with images of Cretan nature.** According to the romanticized perspective of the novel *Zorba the Greek*, the Cretan countryside is **simple**: it is “free from superfluous ornament, it is powerful and restrained”; “it expresses all that is necessary with the greatest economy”; “it has no flippancy nor artifice about it”; “it says what it has to say with a manly austerity” (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 34).

Remarkably, had I not conducted research into the notion of simplicity outside the tourism field, I would not have been able to delve into its multiple conceptualizations, all of which are characterized by a common element. Being seen either as an individual journey of quiet contemplation (Weiwen 2017), as a rewarding communal living defined by self-sufficiency (Brombin 2015) or as the enjoyment of simple pleasures despite life difficulties (Pierce 2000), **simplicity is constructed as a value, as a path that can fill a person’s life with meaning and purpose** (Treanor 2007, 73), **inspiring them to pay attention to the smallest things around them** (e.g. even a bird’s song) (Farkić, Filep, and Taylor 2020, 2071–72) **and, ultimately, find the inner peace and wellbeing they are looking for** (Sheldon 2020, 2–3); the well-desired happiness or in Aristotelian terms, *eudaimonia*: a state of human flourishing (Treanor 2007, 83, 84) which is the idealized goal of most human beings.

According to prior scholarship (Römhild 2012), western travelers view Greece and, specifically Crete, as **a land of “pristine simplicity” and authenticity**, in which they believe that they will experience a simple, i.e., **a pre-modern, close-to-nature, carefree and easy lifestyle**; in other words, an authentic lifestyle. In this land, tourists expect to **connect with simple workmen and peasants**, far from the race of bookworms (as

quoted in the novel *Zorba the Greek*), who know how to **speak of life in basic, philosophical terms** (Römhild 2012, 145). All these values are embodied in the mythical figure of Zorba: a free, rebellious and authentic spirit, who, in contrast to his dull, intellectual friend (the narrator of the novel), knows how to **enjoy life unhindered by the restrictions and norms of civilized societies** (Römhild 2012, 145); he knows how to live simply, guided by his instinct and his true, authentic nature; he is dominated by a sense of good humor; he delights in food and drinks; he indulges in his passion, *santuri* and dances to find joy when he feels blue. And he does that impulsively and freely, only when driven by a strong desire to do so. This natural behavior, i.e., this sense of **spontaneity** and **freedom** associated both with the idea of simplicity (Librová 2008, 1115) and authenticity (Tiberghiena, Bremner, and Milnec 2017, 293–4), is often reflected in the traditional music and festive dancing celebrations taking place throughout Greece.

Contrary to the noble, elegant and idealized simplicity of ancient Greeks which favored balance, symmetry, rhythm, and regularity (Gardner 1917) and was glorified by German neoclassicists, I support that the living culture of contemporary Greece mostly reflects another aspect associated with ancient Greek culture, the so-called “Dionysian” spirit: a spirit that embraces passion, instinct and the pleasures of the body (Bonarou 2021, 48), such as wine, food and love, all of which were part of ancient Greek symposiums. This spirit comes alive to some extent through the traditional Cretan music and dancing gatherings. The latter are marked by the consumption of food and wine, the praise of love and passion through the lyrics of the songs and the intense celebration of the present moment through the act of non-stop dancing. Using the terms of Raymond Havens (1953, 26), I would argue that these festivities primarily express a more **enthusiastic, emotional and spontaneous simplicity**; a simplicity that is inspired by the **“humblest incidents of daily life”**—from the smile of a man’s beloved woman to the pain of separation—and brings to life the **“essential passions of heart”** (Havens 1953, 27), such as love, in their purest form; in **unsophisticated and uncomplicated words** expressed through the verses of Cretan songs. Likewise, in Kazantzakis’ novel, Zorba uses simple and clear words to describe life. This is what Jared R. Curhan would call **“wisdom in simplicity”**; a wisdom that the narrator of the novel *Zorba the Greek* also discerns in Zorba’s “living heart”, exalted in excerpts like: “The meaning of the words, art, love, beauty, purity, passion, all this was made clear to me by the simplest of human words uttered by this workman” (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 14).

Sub-theme 5b: Indulging in the “experience of living”³

The video campaign invites the traveler to visit Crete in order to experience simplicity and authenticity through the lens of the mentor figure; to **connect with local nature**, that according to the campaign’s verbal and visual storytelling, seems to keep the secret of simple and, thus, of good and happy life (Librová 2008, 1112) as well as to **connect with local people** (as it will be later indicated in the video), who can teach him how to **live well** and **fully**: how to enjoy drinking and eating; how to celebrate life to the fullest; how to find happiness in the humblest and smallest things: in the smell of wild herbs; in the reality in which one lives and not in a virtual-reality world (Treib 2007, 234); **in the earthly human things** (from the taste of fresh fruit to drinking and chatting with Cretan people). The latter is greatly illustrated in another quote from Nikos Kazantzakis (transl. Peter Bien 1965, 182): “Once more I realized to what an extent earthly happiness is made to the measure of man. It is not a rare bird which we must pursue at one moment in the heaven, at the next in our minds. Happiness is a domestic bird found in our own courtyards.”

Sub-theme 5c: Sticking to that “here and now”

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that in its complete form the quote “How simple and frugal a thing happiness is...” in the original English translation of the novel *Zorba the Greek* continues as follows: ... “a glass of wine, a roast chestnut, a wretched little brazier, the sound of the sea. Nothing else. And all that is required to feel that here and now is happiness is a simple, frugal heart” (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 87). In this sense, **happiness lies in the smallest things of everyday life, of the real world**, such as a glass of wine and the sound of the sea: the latter is a recurrent image in this and many other video campaigns of Greece. Kazantzakis found inspiration in these small, simple things visibly reflected in the Cretan land. As his hero-narrator states in the novel: “My joys here are great, because they are very simple and spring from the everlasting elements: the pure air, the sun, the sea and the wheaten loaf” (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 98). Paying attention to the small things around us, such as the sound of the sea, and trying to be more present in the “here and now” is masterfully phrased by Zorba in the novel: “What’s happening today, this minute, that’s what I care

³ Inspired by the brand slogan of the company *Sophia’s Best: The Experience of Living*. Accessed November 15, 2022. <https://www.sophiasbest.com/>

about. I say: What are you doing at this moment, Zorba? I'm kissing a woman. Well, kiss her well, Zorba! And forget all the rest while you're doing it; there's nothing else on earth, only you and her! Get on with it!" (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 294). While Crete and Greece was Kazantzakis' inspiration, this philosophy of life could be practiced everywhere in the world, under one certain condition, set by the author: "All that is required to feel that here and now is happiness is a simple, frugal heart". Having a **simple, frugal heart**—in other words, looking at the world through **the unsophisticated eyes of childhood**, through the **wonder** and the **freshness** of a child (Havens 1953, 30–31)—is presented in this video campaign as the way to feel that happiness is here and now. That is, according to Anne Radcliffe (Havens 1953, 31), the "**simplicity of heart**" through which one can grasp the grandeur of nature.

Looking deeper and more critically into the video's verbal and visual narrative, one can understand that it is not devoid of ideological representations and power relations, like the ones Fairclough sketched in his work *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language* (1995). Kazantzakis' quotations and work is contextualized in this case study in a way that serves the campaign's objectives: to convince the target audience(s) that in the land, the culture and amidst the people of Crete they will find the simplicity, authenticity and happiness they are looking for; a happiness that they have most probably lost in their complicated and stressful everyday lives. What is more, this destination has been imbued by tourism marketers with sacred features, as the Greek title implies, («Ταξίδι σ' έναν τόπο ευλογημένο»/"Journey into a blessed land"), rendering it another kind of "pilgrimage" where travelers—"pilgrims" will reach their "promised land" and connect with something superior: with God or, in other words, with Mother Earth ("Blessed is the man who can recognize God in all his disguises. At one moment he is a glass of fresh water, the next your son bouncing on your knees or an enchanting woman, or perhaps merely a morning walk."—Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 226). These spiritual and divine characteristics that are used to define the Cretan land augment the potential traveler's feeling of authenticity; **an authenticity that also lies in the simplest and most frugal elements of the place**: in "a flower in the fields with a large drop of honey in its centre" (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 226). On top of that, these elements constitute a kind of "marketplace mythologies" (Thompson 2004) that allow tourism marketers to position themselves and sell their stories, but also to create stereotypes that circulate around the globe, idealizing the Greek tourism industry and, specifically, the island of Crete.

I also argue that the reference to Nikos Kazantzakis is a deliberate choice made by the national and local tourism authorities justified by the fact that he is the most prominent Cretan modern writer as well as one of the most important personas of Greece's modern literary heritage. His name and work are, to some extent, used in this video campaign as one of the unique selling propositions of Crete, since he was born and grew up on the island, while large parts of his novels echo the island's nature, culture and the people. Kazantzakis' book *Zorba the Greek*, inspired from his own experiences in the Peloponnese in the 1920s and adapted into a movie starring Antony Quinn as Zorba in 1964, helped shape specific images (or more precisely, clichés) about the Cretan and the Greek land, the culture and the people, like the *syrtaki* dance, which became famous throughout the world thanks to the film. Through this video campaign, tourism marketers also aim at shaping a specific representation of the Cretan land as **the “gatekeeper” of simplicity and thus of happiness**. This feeling is further reinforced by the reference to Kazantzakis' name and work, which crafts images of a simple and happy life while it is also used as an indicator of **power** and **status** assigned to both tourism stakeholders and the local community, who are expected to feel proud to be living on the same land where such a personality was born and have the chance to share this heritage with tourists. Using such strategies, tourism marketers wish to romanticize the Cretan land and lifestyle, making it more attractive and sellable to tourists. And while they try to differentiate Crete from other tourist destinations by highlighting concepts like simplicity—that were not largely promoted in the campaigns of the past years—they, nevertheless, end up constructing simplicity as a quality that is more “natural” within the Cretan tourism context; a kind of knowledge that is derived from the unique qualities of the Cretan land and its people. Therefore, to use Fairclough's terminology (1995, 35), simplicity becomes a “naturalized” discourse and an ideologically invested knowledge, contributing (even unconsciously) to the establishment of unequal power relations which lie in an implicit dichotomy between the “happy”, “free” and “authentic” Greeks and the “dull”, “unhappy” and “constrained” western travelers.

To further grasp the elements and the effects of the quote “How simple and frugal a thing happiness is” in my case study, I have to examine, apart from the original text, how this sentence functions in the context of the specific video campaign. The image of the traveler walking on the Cretan mountains serves as a sort of introductory frame to Kazantzakis' quote. Subsequently, a series of images comes together to contextualize this phrase and attribute new meaning to it, adapted to meet the stakeholders' interests and

the travelers' expectations of "authentic winter" in Crete. Part of this authenticity, as noted above, is the idea of simplicity as closely tied to **elements of nature: the clouds, the sun and the wild landscape**. The visual effect employed in the seconds 00:28–00:30 of the video (see fig. 2) constitutes another kind of **poetic and symbolic visual language**, which adds to the emotional dimension of the verbal storytelling. The fast-forward movement of the clouds above the vast Cretan landscape ("**The clouds had scattered**") create a sublime and overwhelming feeling; the sunny landscape ("**the sun was shining**") marked by tall trees through which one can look up to the sky offers a sense of upheaval and **a connection with the grandeur of nature**, the source of life; finally, the sudden passage to a snapshot of a snowy but still sunny landscape with a little house standing on it (the plainness of the house could also act as a symbol of simplicity), makes the viewer-prospective traveler get a glimpse of what Crete looks like during the winter season. While the sea and the sun constitute stereotypical images of Greece, forming part of each and every campaign (including this one), different images, such as clouds and mountains, are used to illustrate that there is something more to Greece than sun and sea, simultaneously introducing travelers to winterly Crete by presenting a few of **the "simple gifts" of Cretan nature** that are to grant them unforgettable moments of bliss.



Figure 2: The clouds appear above the vast Cretan landscape in a fast-forward movement, visible in sec. 00:28–00:30 of the video campaign (Region of Crete and Indigoview 2019).

Theme 6: Inner peace

“And wild Crete was smiling peacefully”: This sentence, in continuation of the previous ones (“The clouds had scattered, the sun was shining”), is visually accompanied by a multitude of alternating images. The first focuses on the traveler looking around and observing whilst being in nature; the second is the snapshot of a church dome with snowy mountains in the background; the third, a plain starting to emerge on screen the moment the phrase “Open your heart” is heard, connecting this to the next part of the video. Noteworthy, the “wild Crete” that the narrator describes in words is not visually depicted as such. The image of an open plain evokes a sense of sweetness while the church dome, a characteristic and stereotypical image of Greek islands, echoes the simplicity of Byzantine architecture. As a result, the adjective “wild” here does not necessarily describe something rough, but something rather raw and unsophisticated; **as raw, unsophisticated and simple as nature is** according to the idealized lens of various scholars (see the work of Havens 1953) and writers, including Kazantzakis. On a first level of analysis, these images illustrate elements of the Cretan nature, also sketched in the novel: **the clouds, the sun and the mountains** which are presented as simple, frugal but able, nevertheless, to show the way to happiness. On a secondary level of analysis, these images could also be seen as representative of the **diversity** characterizing the winter landscape of Crete, consisting of mountains, plains and sun-lit locations. However, by conducting a third level of analysis (intrinsic level) based on the previously mentioned quote “How simple and frugal a thing happiness is”, I can also imply that these images are reflections of **the simplicity that can be found around us in the natural world**, as well as a source of inspiration or simply a setting in which a journey of self-exploration, contemplation and **“inner simplicity”** takes place. This argument could be partly justified by the use of the words “was smiling peacefully” in the sentence “and the wild Crete was smiling peacefully”. The wild Crete will inspire **a journey of inner peace and connection with one’s own self**. What is more, the personification “the wild Crete was smiling”—the fact that nature acquires human characteristics, such as a smile—strengthens the connection between the Cretan land and the traveler. This emotional connection is further reinforced by the fact that the traveler-protagonist performs specific activities on the island of Crete (e.g. he walks on the Cretan mountains) and it is through these actions and movements that he is able to “authenticate” the destination, a process that has been described as **“performative authenticity”** (Knudsen and Waade 2010, 1). From this perspective, authenticity is neither merely

expressed through specific qualities in a specific place nor is it just a “state of mind”. Authenticity is rather experienced through the traveler’s body and through performative elements, such as visual signs (e.g. the eagle’s open wings), gaze (e.g. the traveler’s contemplative gaze) and imagination (e.g. the inspiration from the “mentor”). Therefore, it is a feeling that tourists can achieve in relation to a destination (Knudsen and Waade 2010, 5, 12), as in the case of our traveler-hero on the island of Crete.

As far as the previous sentence is concerned (“and wild Crete was smiling peacefully”), the verb **“was smiling”** conveys a **feeling of optimism**, a feeling of happiness, whilst the adverb **“peacefully”** is an indicator of **calmness**, of **mindfulness**. This brings to mind what has been written about mindful travels. Mindful travels are considered to be slower, simpler and more authentic than others as they allow travelers to connect with nature and themselves (Farkić, Filep, and Taylor 2020, 2071–72). But is nature by itself an element adequate enough to ensure a traveler’s happiness? Based on the aforementioned analysis, it can be deduced that it is not just the simple elements and the special qualities of the Cretan nature on their own that can lead to happiness. It is primarily the traveler’s eagerness to **observe, appreciate and indulge in these natural elements** and, through these, **dive into his own inner nature** that can pave the path to his happiness.

Theme 7: Open heart

To appreciate simplicity and thus conquer happiness, **the traveler is invited to “open his heart”**, like the open plain landscape that gradually unfolds, **and “follow the land’s calling”**. The word “heart” could be an indirect and implicit reference to what Kazantzakis stated as a necessary quality which allows a human being to feel that happiness lies in the most simple and frugal things of the “here and now”. This quality is a **“simple, frugal heart”: a heart that is plain (like the plain, but captivating landscape), liberated from imagined needs and desires** (Brombin 2015, 17), and **happy with the little**. A heart that is filled with **the wonder and the freshness of childhood**, as praised in Wordsworth’s poetry (Havens 1953, 30–31). This is also the heart of Zorba which—despite flirting with all kinds of limits like passionately indulging in dancing, singing and love—resembles that of a child; a child that sees everything for the first time, wondering why and wherefore. For Zorba, even the smallest thing is a miracle, a mystery, an astonishment, a revelation; the trees, the sea, the stones, the birds (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 165–6). Considering the phrase **“Open your**

heart”, which is part of the video storytelling, it could be argued that such a “simple heart”, as the one that Kazantzakis praises, is simultaneously an open heart. **This openness may refer to the traveler’s desire to accept the new, to explore, to embrace the flow of life and the world of experience** (Sheldon 2020, 8–9). However, within the Greek culture, openness—which has been part of Greece’s past tourism campaigns (González-Vaquerizo 2017, 271)—is also linked to the Greeks’ open character; their spontaneity, freedom, their joyful attitude towards life (an attitude also commended by Johann Joachim Winckelmann—Havens 1953, 24) and their inclination to welcome other people and connect with them; an unpretentious intimacy that tourism marketers construct as natural; as a kind of quality that comes from the heart, similarly to Fijian’s natural friendliness, and their warm and embraceable character; features that contribute to their construction as “authentically authentic” people (White 2007, 34, 38). As a Cretan restaurateur claims in another digital campaign, part of the “[Crete, Sense the Authentic](#)” video series: “you treat other people like they are your family, without expecting something from them; with a smile and a good heart, it’s from the soul, you can’t explain it really” (Region of Crete and Indigoview, 2020-2023).

The traveler is, thus, invited to open his own heart (like Greeks’ own “open” and “simple” heart) and follow this land’s calling, as Kazantzakis did. This openness of heart is represented visually by the image of a plain, followed by the opening of the traveler’s arms whilst gazing into the landscape’s depth, as well as by the eagle’s open wings (a latent reference to Zorba’s primitive eagle-like look—Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 315). This visual symbolism implies that **the traveler is open to the world of experience** (Sheldon 2020, 9), as it unfolds on his journey into the Cretan land. His open arms signify **a sense of freedom and a desire to deeply connect with nature** (“the land’s calling”); listen to its rhythms, feel the fresh air, unite with it and through it, with himself (“As I watched the seagulls I thought: That’s the road to take; find the absolute rhythm and follow it with absolute trust.”—Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 251). The traveler’s open arms are artfully connected with the eagle’s open wings (see fig. 3 and 4). Similarly to a powerful eagle that opens his wings (his arms) and flies away freely, the powerful traveler “flies” away, escaping to the Cretan land and initiating a journey of exploration with a sense of power, freedom and independency. This openness (“Open your heart”) is represented through the selected imagery as an inherent, natural value and wisdom of the Cretan land which the traveler is invited to discover. Therefore, it becomes a “taken-for-granted” knowledge (Fairclough 1995, 28)

which creates a feeling of pride to locals and tourism stakeholders, whilst also offering the traveler a sense of empowerment, deriving from his connection with the local land. The tone of music, which suddenly changes, becoming louder, augments this feeling of empowerment, creates a passage to the next parts of the storytelling and allows the viewer to become fully involved in it.



Figure 3: The traveler's open arms...



Figure 4: ...are symbolically connected with the eagle's open wings. Both start a journey of exploration with a sense of freedom. Snapshots: sec. 00:38–00:40 (Region of Crete and Indigoview 2019).

Theme 8: Looking into the details of (human) nature

The land's calling is the land's language, as it is revealed through the following sentences of the video: **"I wish we knew the language of the stones..., the flowers, the rain. They may be shouting at us and we do not hear them."** This sentence directly refers to the original text (*Zorba the Greek*) in which Zorba shares this thought with his boss and friend: "If only we knew, boss, what the stones and rain and flowers say. Maybe they call – call us – and we don't hear them. When will people's ears open, boss? When shall we have our eyes open to see? When shall we open our arms to embrace everything – stones, rain, flowers, and men? What d' you think about that, boss? And what do your books have to say about it?" (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 102). To grasp the simplicity of nature, one should learn its language which lies in its diversity, a diversity that characterizes the Cretan landscape. To learn its language, **one should have his/her senses, mind and heart open to the world** (both natural and human), as Zorba simply and cleverly states in the previous lines. As the images of this part reveal, Cretan nature can be **rough** and **dry** as its gorges and stones; **sweet** and **calm** as a vast field of purple flowers; **turbulent** and **torrential** as the rainwater that hits the port of Chania. Noticeably, in every image of nature there is also **a human element**, either directly depicted or indirectly connoted. The stones can be seen to imply human creativity; the ones in the relevant image (seconds 00:43–00:44) most probably come from a historical site that the traveler explores (the image does not clearly indicate which the site is, but it is most likely the Venetian Shipyards in Heraklion). In the field of flowers, a woman engages in meditation, while in the image of the rainy landscape the human element is implicitly "present" through the houses and the port of Chania, both man-made creations. This integration of human "presence" into nature may also symbolize the interrelationship between the two: **by following the land's calling, the land's language, the traveler might be able to better listen to his own inner language, his soul's deep calling and feel his simplest emotions, his elementary feelings and the "essential passions of his heart"** (Havens 1953, 27); his own dry, harsh and raw side (as hard and raw the stones are, but durable enough to stand the test of time); his own sweet and calm nature (as sweet and beautiful the flowers are, as calm the woman that meditates is); his own stormy and wild features that seem negative at first sight, but might ultimately prove truly fruitful and rewarding for his personal development (as turbulent but refreshing the rain ultimately is). "How well the earth is matched to the human heart!" (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 127).

The analysis employed here goes beyond mere discourse analysis, entailing elements of semiotic analysis, which does not only focus on the form and the first reading of the visual image (signifier), but it also delves into its cultural symbolism and its underlying meaning (signified). In this perspective, **all these natural elements**—from the stones to the flowers and the rain—**could signify the inner workings of human nature**: a human being may experience sudden changes and life difficulties (as the rain) but at the same time be as strong and durable as a stone and know how to move on (like the sun after the storm). These natural elements or these elements of human nature **“may be shouting at us... and we do not hear them”**; they may be really close to us, but we do not pay attention to them since they seem simple, ordinary, insignificant in our everyday busy lives. But, according to the video storytelling, these are some of the elements in which the traveler can catch glimpses of happiness. A new set of images starts here: the traveler is suddenly at the courtyard of a church, a symbol of simple architecture, surrounded by a snowy landscape. The image of the traveler-protagonist being in solitude at a church may symbolically express his need to **find inner peace**; to connect with God and through this spiritual connection to unite with nature, the Mother Earth and himself; eventually, to be able to hear the earth’s language, its “deep calling”, as well as his own “deep calling”. **By probing into nature’s language, by listening, observing and connecting with it, we could also listen to and connect with our own emotions and thoughts, with the inner us.** In the final analysis, could the brand name “sense the authentic winter” in Crete be translated as “sense the authentic you” in Crete? The image changes suddenly depicting small details of a sailing boat (e.g. the mast with houses and a port in the background). The sea comes again at the forefront, implying that calmness has come after the rain (reference to the image of rainwater analyzed above, p. 48).

Theme 9: Agency

Until now, simplicity and happiness have been represented as “taken-for-granted” values that already exist out there, in the Cretan natural world. However, this part of the video stresses that happiness is a state achieved through human action and effort. **“You create your own happiness.”** The “you” in this case may be human beings in general or, specifically, the traveler, who is the viewer and the target audience of this campaign. The deictic word “you” implies that there is also an “I”, in this case, the voice of the video producers, i.e., the official tourism stakeholders, who aim to construct what happiness is and how one could find it, offering it as a kind of advice to potential travelers. A *zoom-in*

on a hand that rows introduces the viewer to the next part of the storyline which focuses on the theme of agency and free acting (see fig. 5). Then, a *zoom-out* and an oblique camera shot showing the hero-traveler canoeing accompanies the verbal text (see fig. 6). This image of the traveler in the middle of the sea surrounded by mountains is indicative of the diversity of the Cretan and Greek landscape; a diversity which is based on the alternation between mountainous and sea sceneries. As far as the images are concerned, on a primary level of analysis, canoeing is promoted as one of the winter activities available in Crete, while the sea is once again at the forefront as one of the main branding images of Greece, even if hypothetically all these activities take place within the context of wintery Crete. However, on a deeper level of analysis, the act of canoeing in itself may imply a kind of move, of action, of responsibility. As the traveler should take action to perform canoeing, he should also take action to conquer his own happiness. This brings to mind another quote by Kazantzakis, which proves pertinent to the interests of this case study: “You have the brush, you have your colors, you paint the paradise, then in you go”⁴. Thus, **happiness lies in the realm of human agency and is implicitly visualized as a lonely journey** (through the image of the traveler canoeing alone, with the emphasis being on the words “your own”); **lonely just like the journey towards simplicity is**: an individual pursuit, to remember Thoreau, as well as a path that may be daunting in the beginning, but pleasurable and rewarding in the end (Treanor 2007, 82).



Figure 5 & 6: Zoom-in and zoom-out on the hero-traveler while canoeing on the Cretan blue waters. The act of canoeing may symbolize the traveler’s (and every individual’s) ability and willingness to “act” in order to create their own happiness. Snapshots: sec. 00:53–00:55 (Region of Crete and Indigoview 2019).

⁴ Several websites attribute this quote to the Cretan novelist Nikos Kazantzakis without, however, associating it with a specific novel. Retrieved for the interests of the present Master thesis on November 18, 2022 from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/188266-you-have-your-brush-you-have-your-colors-you-paint>

It is worth noting at this point that while the traveler-protagonist appears to be the narrator that unravels the secret of happiness in Crete—which lies in simplicity—the true and invisible narrators are actually the national and local tourism authorities. Investigating the video campaign through their lens allows me to understand that the power of the simplicity and happiness discourse lies primarily in their hands, reflecting their own ideology, and not the traveler’s perspective. Tourism narrators do not only share with their target audience(s) that happiness is a matter of human agency, but they also offer them a sort of “guidelines” on where and how to find it. These “guidelines” make Greek tourism marketeers even more powerful, affirming their role as “gatekeepers of happiness”. So, where and how can happiness be found in Crete? **“You create your own happiness in every look, every breath, every step”; in the simplest and smallest action you take, such as breathing.** There isn’t a single thing that should be underestimated on the journey towards happiness. Each and every element—every moment, every image, every stimulus—matters and can be a step closer to one’s attainment of simplicity and, thus, happiness. Paying attention to every element also highlights the significance of **paying attention to that “here and now”** that Kazantzakis described; the importance of **appreciating the present moment**, being present in what life has to offer, **being open to the flow of life** and the world of experience; aspects that also characterize simple, slow and authentic traveling (Sheldon 2020, 8–9).

Happiness is created in “every breath”: the simplest but most crucial step to life. Breathing is being alive. And, appreciating the fact that you are alive and able to “paint the paradise” as Kazantzakis said, can be, at least in an idealized world, the greatest expression of simplicity and the single necessary prerequisite for happiness. All the others are **a matter of looking, of perspective, of attitude**: the way you choose to see the world defines your own happiness (“in every look”). They are also **a matter of taking steps** (“in every step”): of the actions and the decisions you take in order to go where you want to go and achieve your life purpose. These “principles” of happiness could be universal as well, but they take a local character if they are seen through the respective imagery of the video. The traveler can create his own happiness on Crete in **“every look”** (as he looks up to the sky floating on the crystal-clear blue water); in **“every breath”** (as the fresh air he would breathe if he gazed at a blue lagoon among the mountains); in **“every step”** (as decisive his step is when he walks among the Cretan fields and vineyards). In other words, **he creates his own happiness simply by**

connecting with and indulging in Cretan nature as well as by taking part in local activities. The image of the traveler walking in the fields could also signify his involvement in activities of niche tourism, such as wine tastings and cooking workshops as well as his familiarization with local harvesting techniques; experiences that go beyond the “sea, sun and sand” model, attempting to diversify the Cretan tourism product during the winter season.

Theme 10: Sharing

The phrase “every step” works as a transition to the next part of the video storytelling. The noun “step” is signified by the image of the traveler moving from the green fields to the sea and, specifically, to the boats of local fishermen (*kaikia*). While moving to the boats, the traveler appears very confident, as if he knows where he is going: he has a direction, a purpose. The next photographic frame focuses on the traditional fishermen’s boats (primary level of analysis), which are an important element of local culture and life, whilst bringing again the motif of sea to life. Additionally, they constitute a direct reference to the niche of fishing tourism (secondary level of analysis); a set of activities in which the traveler could participate during his winter wanderings in Crete. However, on a third (intrinsic) level of analysis, this image would also signify **the act of sharing between the local fisherman and the traveler**; a sharing which is visually manifested through the activity of untangling the fishing nets—a knowledge that the fisherman happily shares (as his smile indicates in fig. 7) with the traveler-protagonist. Working together on this specific activity, on this common goal, allows the two men to come closer to each other and experience **the power of intimacy and sharing**; aspects that are closely tied to the concept of simplicity within specific contexts, such as the communities of Italian ecovillages (Brombin 2015), as well as with the idea of authenticity in the context of eco-cultural tours in Kazakhstan (Tiberghiena, Bremner, and Milnec 2017). This is where the two notions of “authenticity” and “simplicity” converge with each other: in the idea of intimacy, closeness and togetherness.



Figure 7: The local fisherman happily shares the secrets of his “art” with the traveler-hero. Snapshot: min. 1:02–1:03 (Region of Crete and Indigoview 2019).

The aforementioned images also reflect a simple lifestyle connected with workmen, such as fishermen, that could be imagined as more “simple” and thus “authentic” people, given that they live close to nature, learn from it and are represented as more willing to share with tourists the secret of a simple and happy life lost by the latter on their way to modernity (Römhild 2012, 146–147). Encountering such people of “simplicity and dignity”, as the ones that Henry Miller met during his visit to the island in 1939 (Römhild 2012, 144), further reinforces the stereotype of Crete as a land of “pristine simplicity” and authenticity: a stereotype which implicitly underlies this video campaign as well.

Under certain circumstances, the act of sharing, such as the one unfolding between the traveler-hero and the fisherman, can take place (in various tourism contexts and countries) in a simple, natural, free and spontaneous way (Librová 2008, 1115); like Zorba who impulsively invites Dame Hortense to share the meal with him and his friend (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 40); like Tasos, a local fisherman on another Greek island, Astypalaia, who shares stories and moments of relaxation with other fishermen whilst being in the middle of the sea. I first met Tasos during a trip to Astypalaia as part of my participation in a travel project in Greece. Without knowing each other, he shared with me stories of his life and his profession that brought to light his simplicity: his ability to speak of life in its most basic, philosophical terms (Römhild 2012, 145); in clear, straightforward and inspiring words. I still remember his simple words that reflect the importance of sharing: “Once the work is done, all the fishermen

get together. We swim, we drink and eat as a company; we laugh and forget our worries for a while.”⁵ **Sharing intimate moments** and **placing value on the role of the community** (in that case, the small community of fishermen on Astypalaia) are also important values, manifested in various aspects of Greek life and culture. Inspired by the corresponding term in Alice Brombin’s work (2015), I personally consider *this* to be the true **“luxurious simplicity”** of Greece that deserves to be promoted for tourism purposes. The reason I have included the above personal memoir at this point of my thesis is not to romanticize Greek people but simply to offer a further example of “intertextuality” since my goal is to critically sketch the act of sharing, as visualized in this video campaign, showing that it constitutes an important part of both the “simplicity discourse” and of the pursuit of happiness.

Theme 11: Activating senses and emotions

“Sound, smell, touch, taste, sight: all in the servitude of the soul... senses overwhelmed”. The passing to this new idea unit, in which the act of sharing continues to take place, is also signified by images that reflect **an intense cultural vibe** and **activities of experiential tourism**. By actively participating in experiential activities, the traveler does not passively consume the destination of Crete, but he actually experiences it, connecting himself emotionally to it and **stimulating all of his five senses** to appreciate and delight in its aesthetics as well as in every single element of it: its culture, traditions, social life, gastronomy (Yiannakou et al. 2022, 437). Here, the traveler listens to the “sound” of the fresh juice coming from the fruit he picks up from nature. He indulges in the “smell” of ingredients before being cooked; he smiles at the “touch” of a goat’s head; he savors the “taste” of local wines in a cellar; he relishes the “sight” of bread being baked in a traditional oven. On a first level of interpretation, these images depict experiential activities, such as wine tasting and cooking workshops, in which the traveler can engage while in Crete in wintertime. On a secondary level of analysis, though, these images mirror **the traveler’s connection with the local nature** (the juice coming out from the fresh fruit) **and all its beings** (the touch of the goat’s head), as well as with the local culture and the local people through the participation in food and wine tourism activities under the guidance of an expert. It is noteworthy that this connection is not merely physical (the smell of the fresh fruit) but also emotional (reflected on the happy face of the traveler when he touches the goat, as well as on the happy face of the

⁵ During one of my travels on Astypalaia island in March 2016, Tasos V. (for privacy reasons his surname is not fully stated) shared these words with me in a face-to-face conversation.

chef with whom the traveler shares the food experience). By actually feeding himself on Cretan food, the traveler also “feeds” his soul, confirming what has been stated in the novel: “That night, for the first time, I felt clearly that the soul is flesh as well, perhaps more volatile, more diaphanous, perhaps freer, but flesh all the same. And the flesh is soul, somewhat turgid perhaps, somewhat exhausted by its long journeys, and bowed under the burden it has inherited” (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 256). The emotional dimension of the experience is also expressed through the phrase “all in the servitude of the soul”, marked by the image of a small group of people participating in a food workshop, as well as by the zoom-in on a specific dish with the final touch of olive oil: a product associated with the Cretan and, generally, the Greek land. The next image, accompanied by the phrase “senses overwhelmed”, focuses on the faces of workshop’s participants, including the traveler-protagonist, while tasting the dishes they prepared. Their facial expressions, combined with the word “overwhelmed”, signify that they derive great delight from their food, similarly to the Italians who are also represented as simple people that savor their food (and their life) with great pleasure (Ayers 2018, 35).

To “overwhelm” is to cause someone to feel sudden and **strong emotions**, which in this case derive from the taste of local food. Therefore, a purely physical activity, such as tasting, can cause intense feelings and enhance the emotional connection between the traveler and the destination, augmenting at the same time the feeling of performative authenticity mentioned previously (see pages 44–45) (“I calmly chewed my food in the sun and felt a deep physical happiness as if I was floating on the cool, green waters of the sea.”—Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 257). This emotional dimension has also been associated with the idea of simplicity in the Italian ecovillages (Brombin 2015), where a small community of people (like the ones of the workshop) prepare and share their meals with fresh produce coming directly from the source: the earth. **By sharing food they also share emotions and experiences, activating their senses and developing feelings of closeness.** According to Brombin (2015, 17), paying attention to one’s own senses and bodily experiences—as the traveler-hero of this video does while exploring, cooking and eating the fruits of nature—means embracing an ethic of simplicity. The latter, identified within the context of the Italian ecovillages as “luxurious simplicity”, does not only lie in the idea of frugality and self-sufficiency, but also in the active engagement with the senses, the sharing of emotions and the creation of a reciprocal communal living; a good living (*buen vivir*) based on an attitude of care towards the land, the self and the others (Brombin 2015, 3, 7, 17).

Taking these ideas one step further, within the Greek and Cretan culture, food does not only denote a physical need or a good taste, but also an act of **“emotional proximity”** (Brombin 2015, 17): the opportunity for people to meet up, converse, share happy and sad moments and entertain themselves. Not randomly, almost all Cretan (and Greek) music and dancing celebrations are accompanied by the consumption of food. By sharing food, Greeks also share moments of intimacy and joy, moments of simplicity and authenticity with their fellow humans. Seen through this lens, the act of sharing may be perceived by readers as a **“naturalized”, “common-sense” knowledge** (Fairclough 1995, 35), as it can create the impression that, in this specific land, one can experience intense emotions derived even from the simple pleasure of food, which cannot be felt anywhere else in the same way. However, such a generalized assumption should be taken with caution, be noticed and **“de-naturalized”** as part of the process of critical discourse analysis; otherwise, it entails the danger of disseminating fixed stereotypes and idealized images that do not reflect the reality of Crete (and Greece) as a whole, but rather a small part of it.

Back to the video, multiple images following the food workshop appear on screen in adjunction to a louder and fast music rhythm which allows the viewer-future traveler to be fully absorbed and overwhelmed (following the wording of the previous lines) by the intensity of the cultural experiences introduced in this part of the storytelling. At this point, the verbal narration stops for a while. Only sound and visual elements are present, and these are the narrative tools, the “texts” that will convey certain symbolisms in the next seconds of the video. **A lively, carnivalesque atmosphere and an extravaganza of local cultural festivities** are projected (see fig. 8). These images contradict, at first sight, the idea of simplicity, which was visually represented in the first part of the video campaign through natural elements, the act of wandering and moments of solitary contemplation in Crete’s natural surroundings—all of them images which primarily communicate a sense of balance and inner peace.

This feeling is somewhat absent from the Cretan (and in general, Greek) music and dancing celebrations, which often express human sentiments and events of daily life in all their emotional fullness. Such expression of intense emotions entails the danger of exceeding moderation and balance. And while Brian Treanor (2007, 80), following Thoreau’s and Aristotle’s thought, does see simplicity as an ideal means between two extremes (in this case, bare existence and conspicuous consumption), I claim that

simplicity as the natural, free, spontaneous (Librová 2008, 1115) and joyful thinking and acting (Havens 1953, 24) can also transcend, under certain circumstances, moderation, embracing exaggeration and passionate expression (or, in other words, the “Dionysian” spirit—see above, p. 39); as Zorba fervently expressed himself in the novel. This would also be a way to relish the present moment, to feel alive; thus, to practice simplicity. Nevertheless, in the specific video campaign, these images seem to serve another purpose: to entice the potential traveler to participate in cultural activities that take place in the winter Crete, allowing him/her to **experience the diversity of local culture and connect with local people**. These images mirror the uniqueness and vividness of local customs and traditions and enhance the sense of cultural authenticity, despite the fact that the festivities may be staged authentic for tourism purposes. Simultaneously, they create a more entertaining vibe, which aims to **“sell” the Cretan freedom and joyful attitude towards life**; in other words, the kind of attitude that may attract western tourists and which is constructed as another facet of the happiness the island can offer. **Happiness can be indeed found in the simplicity of nature highlighted in the first part of the video, but also in the traveler’s ability to celebrate life to the fullest.** Exactly what Zorba did in the novel in the company of his friend and co-traveler.



Figure 8: Intense cultural festivities fill the streets of Crete, contradicting at first sight the feeling of simplicity and calmness that runs through the first part of the video. Snapshot: min. 1:15–1:18 (Region of Crete and Indigoview 2019).

Being in the company of others means sharing moments with them. The act of sharing, a quality of the “simplicity discourse”, is not verbally stated. It is visually articulated, however, through the images below: a) the traveler drinks *raki* with other men; a

stereotypical and well-sold image of Crete which can still convince the viewer-potential traveler that they will experience the authentic Cretan culture. *Raki* is part of Cretan culture not only as a local drink, but also as **a symbol of sharing and friendship**. From funerals to marriages, Cretans drink *raki* to show their strong connection and companionship. Within the context of tourism, *raki*, which on many occasions is offered for free, **symbolizes hospitality**. It is an act of offering to strangers, who by drinking *raki* unite with the local culture and the local people, being regarded as friends. This act of **human sharing** is also signified through the following image in which a local, traditionally-dressed man—the same person the traveler drank *raki* with previously—offers the traveler some local cheese. Within the Cretan and Greek culture in general, **eating and drinking is the occasion when people connect with each other and share stories and experiences**. By emphasizing elements of the food experiencescape—a term used by Goolaup and Nunkoo (2021, 7) to describe the physical environment in which an experience unfolds—Crete during winter is not only promoted as a culinary tourism destination where the traveler can cook, eat, drink and engage in agricultural activities, such as olive harvesting. At the same time, it is imagined as a place where **a true and deep kind of bond occurs**; a sharing that is constructed as unsophisticated and natural. In other words, a sharing that reflects simplicity while also augmenting the traveler’s feeling of authenticity.

Theme 12: A carefree natural living

From the cultural elements and the power of sharing, **the images turn once again to elements of nature**, with the human presence being often there: images vary among sheep that run, vines that appear as if touching the sky (with the traveler in the back opening his arms, represented as a tiny creature in front of the grandeur of nature), both dry and fertile landscapes, archaeological spaces such as fortresses, plain and mountain landscapes, a group of people hiking on the mountains, the traveler-protagonist sitting on the shore and carefreely casting stones in the sea and, finally, a flock of seagulls flying above the light-blue sea water. While all these images reflect the “simple” Cretan nature, two of these will be elaborated here since they are more closely linked to the idea of simplicity. The sheep that run freely communicate **a sense of carefreeness** which, in previous scholarship, has been connected with a simple, pre-modern and natural way of living on Greek islands (Bonarou 2021) and elsewhere (e.g. in Fiji islands—White, 2007) as well as with “simple” shepherds and farmers (Havens 1953, 28). The traveler is thus

invited to experience this **“simple” and rustic way of life** in the holiday environment of Crete. This environment is represented in specific parts of the video as **simple, ordinary** and **profane** (e.g. the place where the cheese is sold), contrary to other expensive, extravagant and complex experiences (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021, 7).

What is more, the smiley face of the traveler on the shore (again the sea is in the foreground) connotes **a person who finds pleasure in the simplest and humblest things**: in the act of casting stones in the sea (as the figure 9 indicates); in the enjoyment of a small walk around the block; in the chat with one’s own partner; in those dreamy few minutes staring out of the window and not thinking about anything (Pierce 2000, 16). As it is stated in the novel: “The copious and carefully prepared repast, the burning brazier, the painted and pennanted body, the orange-blossom scent – with what rapidity and simplicity all these very human little corporeal pleasures are transformed into a great spiritual joy!” (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 127). These **simple, humble and most ordinary moments of the everyday human experience**, such as the orange-blossom scent or a walk in nature, can, according to Pierce’s study (2000, 20), offer joy to the people and help them ameliorate their quality of life. These ordinary moments, which, however, may seem extraordinary for a traveler that does not live in Crete, are promoted through the aforementioned images, inviting the traveler to **act in a carefree and natural way**, inspired by the Cretan land and the Cretan life; as carefree, happy and natural the hero-narrator in the novel seems to be when sitting under an almond tree, “thinking of nothing”. As he states: “This was eternity and I was sitting beneath a tree in Paradise” (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 135).

This set of images is completed with one of the traveler standing somewhere high in the city of Agios Nikolaos in Crete and reading a book (primary level of analysis). On a secondary level of analysis, reading books signifies an activity of literary tourism, while on an intrinsic level of analysis, it highlights the mentor’s presence through his absence (the book that the traveler reads is most probably a book by Kazantzakis) as well as the traveler’s spiritual connection with him and, through him, with the destination. The core idea **“How simple and frugal a thing happiness is”** is present again despite its absence. Its implicit “presence” is re-activated in the verbal storytelling that follows in the next seconds of the video and is being analyzed below.



Figure 9: The traveler-hero carefreely casting stones in the sea. Snapshot: min. 1:32–1:33 (Region of Crete and Indigoview 2019).

Theme 13: Uniting with nature and one’s own self

“I passed by the fields, walked by the shore...

I got briefly acquainted with the water, the earth, the wind.”

“How simple and frugal a thing happiness is”... Based on the images, happiness is simply to **wander in the fields** and **stare at the flowers**, feeling a sense of inner peace reflected in the traveler’s serene face. It is to **walk along the shore** which is, however, illustrated through the image of a surfer playing with the waves—which move like dancers in a choreography—and engaging in an adventurous venture which somewhat contradicts simplicity. It is to **familiarize oneself with the water**, and especially the sea, which is the main element of Crete, and is visualized here as containing a piece of land, like a small island, in the middle of it. It is to **unite with the earth**, exploring its mountains and every corner of it. The image of the cars on the streets, surrounded by small mountains and the sea indicates a sense of exploration, a journey that now starts, while the word “earth” also signifies a strong connection with the land and a strong appreciation of all earthly things. Happiness is also to **feel the wind**. Intriguingly, the wind here is visualized both as the gentle movement of the sails on a sailing boat, which symbolizes a sense of exploration of the Cretan land, as well as through the image of the traveler-hero standing on the shore, opening his arms and breathing fresh air. The opening of arms here acts in dialogue with the corresponding image in the first part of the video (see page 46) and expresses a sense of freedom, an openness to the world of

experience, to life, to others, and to the unknown, which the traveler is invited to explore, in the sense of not only the unknown Cretan land but also his unknown self, his own true nature. Thus, the journey to the Cretan land could be regarded both as **a journey of place exploration and of self-exploration**. Connecting with one's true self in Crete—by walking the path of simplicity—allows the traveler to achieve a state of existential authenticity as well (see page 13). Ultimately, the brand name “sense the authentic winter” could also be translated as “sense the authentic you” in Crete.

Happiness, therefore, lies in all the previous simple elements of Cretan nature—from the water to the wind—all of which are part of the traveler's wanderings on the island. Happiness is to simply **pass by fields** full of flowers and **smell aromatic herbs (“I gathered aromatic wild herbs”)**, filling one's palms with savory, sage and pennyroyal. This image brings to light one more nature-based activity among the numerous that the traveler can undertake in wintery Crete. Furthermore, this as well as all the previous written and visual texts have been inspired by the novel *Zorba the Greek*, in which the hero-narrator went past the gardens, followed the edge of the sea, hurriedly made his acquaintance with the water, earth and air of the spot, picked wild plants, and the palms of his hands became redolent with savory, sage and mint (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 34). While the phrase “and my palms were fragrant with savory, sage and pennyroyal” is heard, the traveler is represented laying back and reading Kazantzakis' work *The Last Temptation*, with a smiling face which reveals that he most probably finds meaning and inspiration among the lines. This is also the point that the direct revelation of the mentor takes place. Viewers are presented for the first time with his full name: Nikos Kazantzakis.

Having read the novel *Zorba the Greek*, I would infer that the traveler (both the traveler-protagonist of the video and the potential traveler-target audience whom this campaign addresses) would represent the novel's narrator: an intellectual, a bookworm who comes to Crete to live close to simple local men (his “mentors”) and find his true self in this land. Ultimately, through his experience in Crete, the traveler would be transformed into another kind of Zorba (the moustache of the traveler-protagonist could be considered an indirect reference to the physical appearance of Zorba in the respective novel); a man who “has thoroughly explored the earth and the human soul”; who feels the “long-wished-for joy”; who managed to enlarge and calm his friends' soul (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 55, 57, 315). The latter states in the novel: “I walked along the

water's edge playing a game with the waves. They ran up to try and wet me and I ran away. I was happy and said to myself: "This is true happiness: to have no ambition and to work like a horse as if you had every ambition. To live far from men, not to need them and yet to love them. To take part in the Christmas festivities and, after eating and drinking well, to escape on your own far from all the snares, to have the stars above, the land to your left and the sea to your right: and to realise of a sudden, that, in your heart, life has accomplished its final miracle: it has become a fairy-tale" (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 129).

This theme unit comes to an end with the sentence **"and my palms were fragrant with savory, sage and pennyroyal"** and two images: one of the traveler standing in the middle of a stone square among tall blooming trees and another of him cutting fruit from a tree. Both images reflect a simple physical environment: on the one hand, **the simplicity of rural Crete with its picturesque squares and villages** and, on the other hand, **the simplicity and "generosity of nature"** (Librová 2008, 1117), whose fresh fruits the traveler has the privilege to enjoy. At this point, the music becomes louder and faster, accompanied by a very quick alternation of images, with strong cultural symbolisms: a) hands that touch the stone, symbolizing **the powerful connection**, both physical and emotional, **with the local land**, b) hands that rise up to the sky, signifying a desire to touch the infinite, to grasp the grandeur of nature, the secret miracle of life (as Zorba in the novel who "looked at the sky with open mouth in a sort of ecstasy, as though he were seeing it for the first time."—Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 289) and, finally, c) the image of an eagle with open wings, which is in dialectical relationship with the image of the eagle in the first part of the video (see page 46). The repetition of this image highlights that the traveler needs to open his wings (his arms, his heart) and fly away (travel, escape, wander) free, independent and powerful, like another kind of eagle. To put it differently, **this image is an open invitation to the traveler to unite with nature and himself**, having as a source of inspiration the calm and diverse winter nature of Crete. At this point, the tone of music reaches its peak, functioning as a transition to the last scene of the video campaign.

Theme 14: Natural hospitality

The last scene finds the traveler reading on a shore while the sun is setting. The image starts with a zoom-in on the upper part of his body and his face as he is staring at the sun (sunset is the central theme here); seconds later, a distant shot takes place focusing on the

traveler sitting on a chair near the sea and reading his book (the act of reading becomes central once again). Sunset sceneries are a stereotypical image associated with the Greek islands, primarily used to romanticize and idealize the Greek landscape. However, within this context, such images may also take another meaning. Given that the sunset marks the end of the day, in our case it might mark the end of the traveler's journey, who is now mature and inspired enough to reflect on what he has seen, read and encountered during his wanderings on the Cretan land. In this last scene, the mentor, Nikos Kazantzakis, is present once again—this time through the following quote attributed to him: **“In Crete, the stranger is still the unknown God. All doors and hearts open before him.”**⁶ Apart from its various symbolisms, this quote changes the balance of power relations constructed in the video so far. On the one hand, each and every door and heart, with no exception, lies open to the stranger, in this case, the traveler. This statement indicates that Cretans hold **the innate “charisma” of openness to new people and of hospitality**; a value that has continued from the ancient years till our days, as the word “still” implies. Cretans literally open their doors and, metaphorically, their hearts welcoming the traveler and wishing to develop a true connection with him; a feature that makes them appear even more authentic, while at the same time confirming the stereotype of the “simple” local people who keep the secret of good life, being willing to share it with tourists (Römhild 2012, 146–147).

The fact that locals are latently represented as **“gatekeepers” of simplicity and happiness** makes them powerful. On the other hand, the deictic word “all” can also work negatively in this context, as it might disempower local communities, diminishing their role merely to the ones that are always there to meet tourist expectations and treat them like “unknown Gods” (an implicit reference to the Cretan-born Zeus Xenios, the protector of strangers and God of hospitality in ancient Greece). Strikingly, a change in the stress pattern marked by an intonation focus on the word “God” (Gee 2014, 33) indicates the emphasis on and the importance given to this word, as well as the ones that precede and succeed it. Even if locals do not know tourists in person, they, nevertheless, acknowledge their value and that is why they are willing to respect and serve them like gods. But does this value lie in non-material criteria, such as the keenness to offer tourists a genuine experience or is it mainly driven by economic motives? While

⁶ It seems that this quote was slightly paraphrased for the needs of the video campaign. In most websites it appears as below: “In Crete, the stranger is still the unknown god. Before him, all doors and all hearts are opened”. More particularly, according to an article by Diana Farr Louis published on March 3, 2021 on [Greece Is](#), the quote comes from the book *Report to Greco* by Nikos Kazantzakis.

Kazantzakis did write the quote in question from a different perspective, tourism marketers might use it as an affirmation of the tourist “status”: of their importance in financial terms according to the rules of a globalized, capitalist society and a global tourism industry. The fact that tourists generate profits for the free private tourism market, which is considered to be the “heavy industry” of Greece, explains why marketers should make strangers (in this case, tourists) feel like “unknown Gods”. However, by defining them as such, tourism stakeholders transform tourists into equal players—even, at times, superior ones—in the discourse of simplicity and authenticity in this campaign. Remarkably, the tourist identity remains male (“him”) which, combined with all the male figures in the video campaign (with two exceptions), makes me draw the conclusion that simplicity and authenticity is represented as attributes of a man’s world for specific reasons; to trace and scientifically define these reasons, further interviews with the video creators should have been conducted, which is something that falls beyond the scope of the present Master thesis.

Last but not least, an image of a landscape, consisting of gorges, snowy and green mountains, appears in the video the exact moment the sentence “all doors and hearts open before him” is uttered by the traveler-narrator. This image concludes the storytelling, bringing once again nature at the forefront. **Nature “opens her door and heart” to the traveler and she reveals her secret; the secret of a simple and happy life.** If the traveler has eyes, ears and heart wide open (“Open your heart”), he will be able to embrace what nature generously grants him as well as be open to the new people he meets during his journey; “simple” and thus, “authentic” Cretan people that will let him enter their homes and their hearts, willingly sharing with him stories, moments and experiences.

Finally, the brand name “Crete, the island inside you” which appears in the last frame of the video, combined with the campaign’s main title, “Winter in Crete, sense the authentic”, signifies that the Cretan authenticity lies in the authenticity of the land but also in the authenticity of the self (“inside you”). This is the official tourism discourse produced by the Region of Crete (www.incrediblecrete.gr), which is in dialogue with the storytelling of a past promotional video series, “[Crete, the island inside you](#)” by the same local authorities (2014-2015). In this video series, **different segments of tourists daydream of Crete**, filling their minds and souls with experiences they once had on the island, from sharing *raki* with the locals to indulging in the sound of Cretan music.

During these and other moments, tourists are represented to **behave simply**, i.e., **naturally, freely and spontaneously** (Librová 2008, 1115), **beyond the formalities and constraints of western societies** (Römhild 2012, 145). In this way, **they achieve a state of existential authenticity, rediscovering their true selves, while also developing strong bonds with the locals**, as the traveler-protagonist does in my case study. This freedom of expression in Crete creates an underlying contrast between the “authentic” tourist self while they act and interact on the natural, cultural and human landscape of the island and the “inauthentic” western self who, when back in their countries, recall with nostalgia their holidays in Crete. In the former case, the “authentic” self is visualized by the image of a female tourist shouting “bravo” listening to a Cretan musician, without being criticized for her reaction, whereas the “inauthentic” self in the latter case is signified by the spectators’ weird gaze when the same woman shouts “bravo” during an opera performance in her country. Tourists’ “simple” and “authentic” self may also be set free due to their connection with the “simple” and “authentic” Cretans, whose **hospitality** constitutes the overarching value of the most recent campaign series “[Crete, Sense the Authentic](#)” (Region of Crete and Indigoview, 2020-2023), launched a few months after my case study. In these videos, the “hospitable” locals are constructed as willing to share their culture with the tourists, making them feel like being **part of a family** and treating them more as **friends** than clients.

Most of these representations are also in dialectical relationship with the simplicity and authenticity discourse in my own case study: “[Crete, sense the authentic winter!](#)” This discourse creates the feeling that in Crete, travelers will emotionally develop a connection to the island in a way they will remember, filling their hearts with elements of Crete (from its nature to its people), which will make them see the world and themselves from a new perspective; a perspective that embraces simplicity, that is more authentic and able to lead to happy moments in the “here and now”, at least within the Cretan tourism context. “I was happy, I knew that. While experiencing happiness, we have difficulty in being conscious of it. Only when the happiness is past and we look back on it do we suddenly realize – sometimes with astonishment – how happy we had been. But on this Cretan coast I was experiencing happiness and knew I was happy” (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 71).

3. Does simplicity sell?

In the course of three years, this YouTube campaign has received 8.162 views, 124 likes, and 0 comments. Interestingly, [the Greek version](#) of it gained 411% more views compared to the English one (33.573), 388 likes, but still 0 comments. The low user engagement in both versions might reveal weaknesses in the campaign's marketing language, including: the slightly sophisticated and poetic storytelling, inspired by Kazantzakis' work with which many travelers (both foreign and Greek) may not be familiar. On top of that, even the most "intellectual" and well-informed travelers may be lured by simpler, clearer and more straightforwardly formulated words. For instance, the sentence "In Crete, the stranger is still the unknown God. All doors and hearts open before him" reflects the—constructed as such—natural hospitality of Cretans through a masterfully stated quotation, which, however, may sound elaborated and too complicated for a digital campaign. This sense of complication may be also reinforced by the fast pace in which certain images follow one another, momentarily overshadowing the campaign's main message of quietude and simplicity, creating rather a feeling of impatience to engage in a multitude of experiences in winterly Crete. And while this wide selection of experiences may be alluring, it might simultaneously feel overwhelming and disorienting, as it might prevent the video viewers from focusing on specific elements of the prospective travel experience that will introduce them to the "simple" and "authentic" Crete.

Moreover, the campaign's low viewer engagement may be due to an inadequate digital marketing strategy that, had it been developed more efficiently, it would allow marketers to achieve the desired online engagement. However, since the target audiences are primarily travelers more advanced in age, as in this case, digital channels, such as YouTube, may not be regarded as the most effective tool to achieve the goal, given that a large part of elderly people are more often reached through traditional communication channels. To confirm all the aforementioned, though, I should conduct interviews with the tourism marketers in charge. However, this Master thesis does not aim to analyze the campaign's marketing success but rather the way this campaign builds on the discourse of simplicity and its relationship to authenticity. Taking into account the critical discourse analysis conducted in this chapter, combined with my theoretical research, a few overarching ideas of simplicity come to light that allow me to draw some broader conclusions which are stated in detail below.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

This research has tried to explore **representations of simplicity in the Greek tourism discourse and particularly in a digital campaign promoting the island of Crete.** After detailed research in past promotional videos for Greece, I chose to focus on the branding campaign [“Crete, sense the authentic winter!”](#), launched in August 2019. This campaign clearly refers to the notion of simplicity through the quote **“How simple and frugal a thing happiness is”** while presenting various themes of tourism in Greece, many of which are (explicitly or implicitly) related to simplicity. Hence, I used this video as the only case study of my research, thoroughly and critically connecting my analysis with the different theoretical reflections disclosed in the second chapter of my Master thesis.

Before delving into the campaign’s discourse of simplicity, **I first investigated the interpretations of this concept in the field of tourism** so as to have a point of reference for my analysis. Interestingly, I found out that simplicity has not been extensively analyzed in tourism literature, in which it is mainly restricted to discussions around **authenticity, slow travel and food tourism experiences.** Therefore, **I decided to shift perspective and start my research from the aforementioned keywords-concepts,** in order to be able to find references of simplicity even through the investigation of other ideas. However, as I believe that these ideas limit to some extent the full potential of simplicity in tourism discourse, I embarked on **a brief exploratory research into the notion of simplicity in other areas of study**—from arts and literature to philosophical works. In this way, I aimed to bring to light more qualities of simplicity that might also prove relevant to the representations of the concept in the tourism promotion of Crete, or other Greek or non-Greek regions for that matter—a hypothesis which has been confirmed through the analysis of my case study. As a result, **my Master thesis has adopted an intertextual and interdisciplinary perspective, which shows the interconnectedness of the multiple discourses of simplicity beyond a specific text, text type and discipline** (Fairclough 1995, 36); ultimately contributing to the exploration of a more concrete and holistic interpretation(s) or, more precisely, representation(s) of simplicity in tourism discourse, at least within the Greek and the Cretan tourism context.

1. A dialogue between simplicity and authenticity

1a) “Cretan Primitiveness”

In most of the articles I studied, **simplicity is represented as a quality that is either part of the definition of authenticity or is used to augment the feeling of authenticity.** Western tourists look for the authentic in “**primitive**” and “**natural**” **ways of life** (Cohen 1988, 374) or, as Knudsen and Waade state (2010, 214) referring to McCannell’s work, in pure and simple lifestyles away from their inauthentic modern lives. This sense of **primitiveness** as the search of a **pre-modern** and **unaffected way of life**, that usually **thrives close to nature** and is thus believed to be **simple** and **unspoiled**, has been constructed in academic literature as one of the main elements that contribute to the characterization of certain lifestyles and people as “authentic” or “inauthentic”. For example, the exoticized representation of Fijians as people unspoiled by modernity and “primitive in their simplicity” (White 2007, 34), who embody humility, peacefulness, carefreeness and live outside of time (White 2007, 38, 42) is partly reflected in the Cretan way of life. During the 1980s, life in Crete was imagined by western travelers as natural and untouched by modernity while Cretans were constructed as “simple” people, that is shepherds, farmers and fishermen who lived in harmony with nature, which taught them the secret of a simple and thus of a good and happy life (Librová 2008, 1112). **This natural (i.e., close to nature) way of living is also visualized in the campaign through the traveler-hero’s connection with the Cretan nature as well as with the “simple” Cretan people who live close to nature:** the fisherman who shares the secrets of his “art” with the traveler-protagonist or the cheese producer who, dressed in the traditional Cretan clothes, becomes symbol of **a lifestyle, disconnected from modern western patterns; of a “primitive”, natural and simple way of life** which is simultaneously imagined as **a carefree and authentic way of life**—as carefree and authentic as the “simple” Fijians (White 2007, 27) or as the traveler-hero of the video when casting stones in the sea.

This “**pristine simplicity**” and **authenticity** (to use the terms by Römhild 2012, 144) has also been connected with **the free and non-conformist spirit of Cretans** (and of the “mythical” figure of Zorba in Kazantzakis’ novel) who have been represented in literature as people who follow their moods, being “**untouched**” by the **norms** and **constraints** of the western, civilized societies. By **rejecting cultural norms and other people’s opinions on how one should live** (two of the features of simplicity according

to Sheldon's study 2020, 3), Cretans cultivate **a genuine human character** that allows them to **act simply**, i.e., **naturally, freely and spontaneously** (Librová 2008, 1115) hence, **authentically** (remaining natural and true to oneself and choosing one's own path and identity is one of the meanings of authenticity according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication*, published online in 2020). An example of the expressions of this simplicity and authenticity would be to play the *santuri* (a traditional musical instrument) according to the feelings of the moment (an image from the novel *Zorba the Greek*) or to engage in spontaneous singing and dancing (according to Pierce's study of simplicity). Therefore, **the idea of naturalness**, as living in harmony both with nature—often a pre-modern way of life—and with one's own true nature (Weiwen 2017, 351), is the point where simplicity and authenticity meet each other, at least in the context of tourism, contrary to my initial hypothesis, which had been formulated prior to my theoretical research, that naturalness would be one of the unique selling propositions of the simplicity discourse. In the studied campaign, **this natural way of living** takes place through the connection with the Cretan nature, the traveler's inner nature as well as through **the act of sharing** with the Cretan people, which is visualized as flowing in a natural, that is in a simple and spontaneous way (even if it is staged for the purposes of the video).

1b) The act of sharing and bonding

Additionally, this sharing, as visualized in the video campaign, takes place in intimate tourism settings, i.e., in close encounters between the Cretans and the traveler-hero (for instance, during a food workshop or when Cretans share *raki* with the traveler). This **phenomenically natural, honest and intimate sharing** similarly reflects the **spontaneous** and **reciprocal relationships** that tourists developed with locals during their participation in eco-cultural experiences in Kazakhstan. It is precisely these kinds of relationships which enhanced their feeling they lived an authentic eco-cultural experience within the specific context (Tiberghiena, Bremner, and Milnec 2017, 290). This **sharing**, also linked in academic literature to **the simplicity of Fijians**, is one of the features that simultaneously augments their representation as **“authentically authentic”** people, in other words, **warm, smiley, naturally friendly and embraceable locals** (White 2007, 34, 38); locals who do not actually differ from **the romanticized image of Cretans as smiling and naturally hospitable people** who “open their doors and hearts” to the strangers, making them feel like being part of “the Cretan family”.

This **openness of Cretans**, which is part of the campaign's visual (e.g. the image of sharing *rakiz*) and verbal storytelling ("In Crete the stranger is still the unknown God. All doors and hearts open before him", see pages 63–64), is noticeably reflected in **the figure of the Italian Mamma**: the mother or grandmother who **"opens her door and heart"** and cooks for tourists as she would cook for her family. By introducing tourists to the homemade, traditional and "authentic" Italian cuisine (Ayers 2018, 18), Mamma inspires them to also dive into the "simple" and "authentic" Italy: the country of *dolce vita* (sweet life), which is imagined as being **untouched by the commercialized, globalized world** and where life is believed to flow **slowly, leisurely and pleurably** (Ayers 2018, 3). One of these delights in which the tourist is invited to indulge is **the simple pleasure of food** through which he/she has the opportunity to **connect with "simple" Italian people** (Ayers 2018, 34–35), from the Mamma to a romantic partner; like the traveler-hero of the campaign who, through the act of cooking, connects with the Cretan chef that leads a food workshop. Being aware of the Greek socio-cultural context, Greek food (including the Cretan cuisine) is one of these occasions on which **people do not only share a meal (which usually lasts for many hours), but also their thoughts, feelings and experiences, coming closer to each other and creating bonds**; similarly to the Italian ecovillages (but also to other contexts, cultures and countries) in which people do not only share their own fresh food daily, but additionally their thoughts and emotions, developing **a feeling of care for each other and a sense of togetherness**; ultimately, shaping **a rewarding communal living** defined, in this context, as **"luxurious simplicity"** (Brombin 2015, 7, 16-17). Had I not conducted research outside the tourism field, I would not have been able to sketch such interesting, in my view, connections among different contexts and cultures. Nor would I have thought of **the important role of sharing and bonding in the Cretan culture and the tourism discourse**, within and beyond my case study, which I would dare to call "the luxurious simplicity" of Crete and in general, of Greece; a simplicity that would deserve to be promoted for tourism purposes through varied storytelling methods, as it would offer travelers an enriching and "authentic" experience of Crete.

1c) The “Dionysian” spirit of Cretans / The spontaneity of simplicity

The “authentic” experience of Crete lies, as the campaign’s visual storytelling illustrates, in the act of sharing, but also in the way that the sharing takes place in the island’s different tourism contexts. Following the video images of cultural festivities expressed with intensity as well as the storytelling of a previous vlog (“[Wanderlust Greece | Crete - Broadcasting Live from Anogeia](#)”), co-created in 2018 by the Greek influencer George Lentzas and the *Marketing Greece*⁷, the “authentic” Cretan celebrations (especially the traditional ones which are not visualized in this video campaign) **usually take place in the company of other people; with a sense of exaggeration and passionate expression** that somewhat brings the “Dionysian” spirit associated with ancient Greek culture to life: a spirit that embraces **the passion, the instinct and the pleasures of the body**, having in prior research been linked to postcards that represent the love life in ancient Greece (Bonarou 2021, 48). This spirit may come to life during the Cretan—and other Greek and non-Greek—music and dancing festivities through expressions, such as loud singing, clapping, intense dancing movements, as well as overconsumption of wine and food. Upon first reading, **this over-doing and over-expression of things contradicts the “less is more” approach** (see the online *Oxford Essential Quotations* 2018) **and the feeling of moderation, balance or even frugality that characterize simplicity** (“how simple and frugal a thing...”). The latter has been interpreted in Thoreau’s work as the ideal means between the conspicuous consumption and the bare existence (Treanor 2007, 80), while in Maddox’s research (2015, 334) it has been defined as the embracement of asceticism, the rejection of materialism and the idea of being happy with only a few things.

However, an argument against that would be that simplicity is not only measured through objective criteria, such as consumption patterns, but also through more **symbolic qualities**—as the theoretical chapter and the analysis of my case study have shown—like a person’s ability to **feel that zest for life** (as Zorba did in the novel), to **enjoy life’s small, “innocent luxuries”** (Pierce 2000, 13), from a walk in nature to the

⁷ *Marketing Greece* was established as a non-profit initiative in 2013 by the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE) and the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels. Its goal is to promote experiences and various aspects of the country’s tourism product on an international level by implementing strategies, such as the *Wanderlust Greece* digital campaign. The latter, launched in 2018, took the form of a digital travel show aiming at promoting everyday experiences in various Greek destinations through a series of episodes presented by Greek digital influencers and broadcasted live through Facebook. https://www.marketinggreece.com/en/case_studies/wanderlust-greece-2

act of spontaneous singing, as the one unfolding in Cretan music feasts taking place in rural areas of Crete “out of nowhere” (to use Lentzas’ words in the aforementioned vlog), reflecting **the feeling of the moment**. These (often spontaneous) festivities allow participants (both locals and tourists) to **let their feelings go, strengthen their human bonds and connect with each other in the experience of the moment** (as a female tourist does whilst clapping and shouting together with others at the sound of Cretan music—see page 65); finally, learn how to **be more present in the present moment**; in the **freedom and fullness** of every day (Brombin 2015, 5); in that **“here and now”** in which, according to Kazantzakis, lies the simplicity of happiness (“How simple and frugal a thing happiness is”). The aforementioned values could also constitute elements of the simplicity and authenticity discourse, which would sell **an idealized representation of Cretans as free people who express a joyful attitude towards life**; an attitude that Winckelmann attributed to the Greeks (Havens 1953, 24) and Pierce experienced during her stay in a small **rural village** in Senegal, West Africa, in which people were seen as being simple, in the sense that they had the ability to **fill their lives with joy and fun** despite difficulties (Pierce 2000, 17).

2. The simplicity of slow travel

2a) The “Apollonian” spirit of Cretans / The spirituality of simplicity

Feeling that happiness is a simple thing lying in the “here and now” is not only achieved through moments of **joyful sharing and bonding**, but also through **moments of solitary exploration and quiet contemplation in the Cretan nature**, as the campaign’s storytelling reveals. By **slowly wandering** and **paying attention to the simplest**, i.e., **the humblest and most ordinary elements of Cretan nature**, from the taste of the fresh fruits to the colors of the flowers, the traveler can **feel the power of the present moment** and **deeply connect with the natural surroundings** and through these with himself, achieving **a sense of inner peace and freedom**. In order to feel that freedom, which derives from **the simplicity of just being outdoors** (Farkić, Filep, and Taylor 2020, 2067), the traveler-protagonist engages, as various video images illustrate, in the act of **slow travel: walking and thinking slowly and deeply in the Cretan nature**; “watching in quietude” and “observing in depth” (or embracing simplicity and authenticity according to the Laozi philosophy—Weiwen 2017, 351); being open to the flow of his journey (like the eagle’s open wings) and the world of experience (Sheldon 2020, 8–9), as it unfolds during his venture in the Cretan land.

Similarly to the images of walking on the Camøno pilgrim route on the island of Møn in Denmark (Munar et al. 2020, 13), **the image of the traveler walking on the Cretan mountains** could be also considered as another example of **aestheticized contemporary spirituality**; a spirituality that is not related to a certain religious heritage, but rather derives from the peaceful natural environment that inspires the traveler-“pilgrim” to think and **pay attention to the mystery that lies in the simplest things**, like a stone on the Cretan mountains. When the traveler **contemplates the greatness of the universe**, a sense of wonder and **humbleness** emerges (Munar et al. 2020, 13); a sense of **simplicity** and **naturalness**; a feeling of **going back to the source of life, the nature**, as well as to the traveler-hero’s “roots”, his own **human nature** (Weiwen 2017, 343). This **“spirituality of simplicity”**, as I would call it here, reflects to some extent **the “Apollonian” spirit**, the counter-notion of the “Dionysian”, which embraces **logic, harmony** and **a mental approach of the world** (Bonarou 2021, 48), similar to the one unwinding through the movements (e.g. standing underneath a tree with his eyes closed) and the words of the traveler-protagonist in the video campaign (“You create your own happiness in every breath, every look, every step”). To achieve **that simple way of thought**, i.e., **the essential, deep and slow thinking** that Thoreau praised (Treanor 2007, 81), **travelers should leave behind the fastness and the “busyness of business”** that defines their contemporary daily lives, **indulging instead in the “busyness of leisure”** (Treanor 2007, 68); in the simplicity, authenticity and mindfulness of slow travel (Sheldon 2020, 8), as reflected in and inspired by the Cretan nature.

Simple, but extraordinary

Apart from the symbolic qualities of simplicity, such as the act of sharing and the inward, philosophical thinking, some **physical qualities** of it may also prove important for the traveler’s “authentic” winter experience in Crete. As a very recent research into food tourists’ experiences shows (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021 7, 8), **a simple experiencescape, i.e., a small, ordinary and homely physical environment** (e.g. a local’s home) or **a simple, ordinary dish, made with only a few ingredients and without any garnishing** (e.g. a fresh fish accompanied solely by wine) can offer food tourists **an authentic and extraordinary experience**. In my case study, the physical space in which the food workshop and the wine tasting take place as well as the dish that tourists prepare give a more elaborated and sophisticated sense, while the image of a

skier and a surfer promote adventurous and thrilling activities, which come in contrast with the feeling of simplicity. However, the majority of the settings (not directly related, though, to the food tourism context), from the **olive groves** and the **vines** to the **fishing boats** and the place where the **local cheese** is sold, even if they could not exactly be characterized as small, ordinary and cozy, they are represented as **free from luxury** and **extravagant ostentation**; in other words, as **simple** (Havens 1953, 8; Stuart 1913, 725).

What is more, other visual elements, such as the **plain landscapes**, the image of a **church** and a **small house** standing on a slope, create a sense of simplicity even if they are not the settings in which a specific experience or activity unfolds. Whereas the extraordinariness of the ordinariness, i.e. of simplicity, could only be measured through interviews with travelers in Crete and not through a mere critical discourse analysis of the studied campaign, diverse aspects of the Cretan nature, the physical settings and the activities (e.g. the act of smelling wild, aromatic herbs) that formulate the winter experience in Crete reflect a sense of simplicity and might further augment the traveler's feeling of authenticity and extraordinariness. Despite that, what I mainly take from this article and would like to share with my readers is the idea of **“creating something magic out of nothing”**, as reflected in the following statement: “The food was so good. It was like you could taste all the ingredients and it was just a couple of them and **you make such good food out of nothing**. The dish was kind of magic, it was full of flavor but yet so simple” (Goolaup and Nunkoo 2021, 7). While the video images do not exactly visualize this idea, it is, however, an important element of simplicity which can be found in various cultural and tourism contexts of Crete. For instance, Cretans and tourists can start a friendship by **sharing a small glass of raki**; they can cook a delicious meal, known as *ntakos*, **made with only dry bread, feta cheese, tomato and olive oil**. Moreover, Cretans can create on the spot **simple, spontaneous and small poems** (*mantinades*) **with only a few words** which, even if they are not understood by tourists who do not speak Greek, they may, however, impress with their inventiveness and touch someone's heart: “Your eyes are the sea, your face is the sun. One smile of yours and spring will come!” (Explorecrete, n.d.)

Two “paths” of simplicity, both leading to existential authenticity

Bringing together the previous meanings and articulations of simplicity as studied in the specific campaign, taking also into consideration the Cretan socio-cultural context, I conclude that the traveler (both the hero and the target audience) can achieve **a state of inner freedom and happiness, connecting with their true selves** (existential authenticity) by walking two different paths of simplicity: a) **the path of slow wandering, philosophical thinking and quiet contemplation in the Cretan nature.** Nature acts both as the setting and the “mentor”, i.e., the “spiritual guide”—along with the Cretan novelist Nikos Kazantzakis—to the traveler’s **self-exploration journey**; a journey which is based on a mental approach of the world, embracing thus **the “Apollonian” spirit**, reflected, among others, in the quote: “How simple and frugal a thing happiness is...” Nevertheless, happiness can also be reached through another path: b) a path that embraces **the “Dionysian” spirit**, expressed through **the loud and passionate celebration of life in the company of others**, as well as **the activation of senses and emotions** during cultural festivities (“senses overwhelmed”), such as the ones visualized in this and other branding campaigns for Crete.

To use Havens terms (1953, 26), I would say that this campaign initiates **an implicit dialogue** between two values: **the noble, intellectual and sophisticated simplicity** of neoclassicists and **a more enthusiastic, emotional and spontaneous simplicity**, praised in Wordsworth’s poems. The first could be partly associated with **a sense of harmony, spirituality and greatness reflected in Cretan nature**, while the second is inspired by the **“humblest incidents of daily life”** (e.g. observing an eagle flying away, as the traveler-hero does in the video campaign), as well as by those (idealized as) **“simple” and “humble” heroes** that seem to follow **a plain, natural way of life, without showing any sign of refinement and luxury** (Havens 1953, 28).

Either constructed as **the path of lonely exploration and contemplation in the Cretan nature** or as **the natural, i.e., the spontaneous, free and outside norms self-expression, sharing and bonding** with the “simple” and “authentic” Cretans, both paths show that simplicity takes place in the **“here and now”**; in the **present moment; in life as it flows**; in the **little pleasures** of the human experience, of our **daily reality**; in a walk in the nearby park in a city or **a walk on the mountains of Crete**; in the sharing of a meal with friends after work or **the sharing of a glass of *raki* with the Cretan people**; in a **triggering and spontaneous moment** (Sheldon 2020, 4), such as a

bird's song in a city's neighborhood or an inspiring melody echoed in the small streets of Crete. **By appreciating the small, earthly things of traveling**—from the smell of a flower to a small, spontaneous chat with a Cretan person—**travelers may discover the inspiration and happiness that lies in the simplest and most frugal things**, according to the video's storytelling; **ultimately achieving a state of existential authenticity, rediscovering their true selves** (intrapersonal authenticity), **whilst developing genuine relationships with others** (interpersonal authenticity); both during their journey into the Cretan land and, why not, in their “daily journey” back home.

De-naturalizing the natural

This journey of self-exploration and connection with others in the Cretan land is not free from ideological meanings. The campaign's “simple heroes” with whom the traveler-protagonist shares experiences are the visible (e.g. the fisherman and the cheese producer) and the invisible Cretan people (e.g. the shepherds who are “present” despite their absence through the image of sheep that freely run in nature) who keep **the secret of a simple, natural and carefree life** (and thus of an authentic and happy life) as well as **the secret of openness to strangers**, whom Cretans embrace with an **open, simple heart**. Ultimately, these images constructed by tourism marketers shape **the imagination of a “powerful” land with “powerful” people** who are represented as **gatekeepers of “a pristine simplicity” and authenticity** (Römhild 2012, 144). These ideologically invested representations may also reproduce **unequal power relations** lying, on the one hand, in the gender of the traveler-hero and most of the protagonists, which represents simplicity as a male knowledge and privilege. On the other hand, these relations reside in the creation of **a latent antithesis between the “simple”, “authentic” and “happy” Cretans and the “complicated”, “inauthentic” and “unhappy” western travelers**, who by exploring the Cretan land will also explore their own simple, carefree and true self. Such discourses may contribute to the dissemination of clichés about the Cretan nature, the culture and the Cretan people that circulate around the globe, entering the minds of western travelers through the specific campaign, simultaneously proving that **critical discourse analysis is one of the most effective methods to bring these naturalized ideologies to light, finally denaturalizing them and contributing to a more critical perspective towards the idea of simplicity (and authenticity) in Greek tourism discourse.**

Before concluding my Master thesis, I would like to briefly reflect on my final findings in relation to my initial hypotheses and expectations. While I was at first expecting that simplicity could stand as a representation on its own in tourism discourse, both my theoretical research and the analysis of my case study proved that several meanings and articulations of simplicity, such as **the spontaneous and natural sharing between locals and tourists or a pure, pre-modern and unaffected way of life close to nature, are closely intertwined with authenticity both in academic and in media tourism discourse**. However, by examining the role of simplicity in slow travel and in food tourism experiences, simultaneously exploring its various interpretations outside the tourism studies, fascinating discoveries came to light. Particularly, **I unfolded qualities of simplicity that are not limited to the voluntary adoption of a plain lifestyle close to nature which is based on self-sufficiency, the rejection of materialism and modern western patterns**. On the contrary, I managed to (even implicitly) associate simplicity in the Cretan tourism context with ideas such as: the relishing of the present moment; the act of deep and slow thinking; the enjoyment of life's small pleasures; the absence of luxury and superfluous ornament in a physical environment; a joyful and vibrant attitude towards life and many more.

All in all, through my academic investigation on representations of simplicity within the Cretan tourism context and discourse, I was positively surprised by the wealth and the depth a researcher can go to during a critical discourse analysis of only one piece of material. Finally, I hope that I effectively and critically combined my research into the tourism literature with the interpretations of simplicity outside tourism studies, formulating important argumentations and conclusions on the topic. These findings may have positive practical implications for the development of future branding campaigns for Crete and for Greece in general that would focus more explicitly on the representation of simplicity without approaching it only as a minor part of the authenticity discourse. Since this research in-depth investigates only one case study and drives inspiration from existing academic discourses of simplicity, I would encourage tourism and culture researchers to dive into additional material, whilst also conducting interviews with inhabitants, tourism professionals and tourists in Crete (or in other areas of Greece, as well) that would confirm, enrich or challenge the existing work. Further academic research would generate more original insights that would allow academics and professionals to build not only representations, but also a kind of definition(s) of simplicity for the Cretan (and the Greek) tourism context, and perhaps, to incorporate

features of the “Cretan simplicity” in the travel experiences’ design. I hope that this research stirs up further discussion around an underestimated, to my own knowledge, concept in tourism literature and practice, ultimately inspiring each and every one of us to (re)discover the wisdom of simplicity, which lies in slowing down, starting to look at the small, seemingly insignificant elements of our “outer” and “inner” world that may prove invaluable in our life journey, as well as celebrating the gift of life, which, at the end of the day, is what truly and simply matters; to be alive and able to feel “how simple and frugal a thing is happiness: a glass of wine, a roast chestnut, a wretched little brazier, the sound of the sea. Nothing else. And all that is required to feel that here and now is happiness is a simple, frugal heart” (Kazantzakis, transl. Carl Wildman 1952, 87).

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**All the images embedded in the text of the present Master thesis (including the central image of the cover page) come from the studied video campaign “Crete, sense the authentic winter!” referenced above.*