

## Heritage & Tourism, the ‘bastion of Catalan identity’



Generalitat de Catalunya  
Agència Catalana de Turisme

A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of the official promotional material of the *Agència Catalana de Turisme*.



PHOTO: DAVID BORRAT. CITY OF GIRONA

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## Abstract

The Catalan regional authority, the *Generalitat*, and the subordinate *Agència Catalana de Turisme* (ACT) are partially the institutional embodiment of Catalanist sentiments shared in Catalan society. Catalanism underlines distinctive values of the historical personality of Catalonia. The present research aims to demonstrate in what ways official promotional material, as issued by the ACT and targeted at international tourists, shapes and reflects Catalan identity. An award-winning promotional video *La ruta de l'atzar* (2018) and the official visitors' website [www.catalunya.com](http://www.catalunya.com) compose the corpus which is subjected to a multimodal discourse analysis. The research is conducted within a theoretical framework that acknowledges the agency of tourists themselves in the process of identity shaping and reflecting. Semiotics is fundamental to the understanding of multimodal discourse whilst the semiotics of tourism and the circle of representation arguably form a framework that attributes the agency to tourists. The present work establishes similarities between the discourse of the ACT and that of a traditionally deemed *Renaixença* Catalanist discourse of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nonetheless, differences are also noted within the corpus. Catalunya.com manifests a more mystical and medievalist discourse that is harmonious to mountainous cultural landscape, elements that correspond to traditional Catalanism. The discourse of *La ruta de l'atzar* reveals a trendy Catalonia that situates itself within a contemporary framework while it maintains ties with traditional Catalanism. Hence, the discourse produced by the ACT represents a Catalanist self-consciousness. This reflects on potential visitors that consume promotional material who in turn shape and reflect Catalan identity.

**Key concepts:** Catalanism. Destination promotion. Multimodal discourse analysis. Semiotics of tourism. Tourism and Identity.

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## Introduction

Annually, just over 18 million tourists arrive at the autonomous community of Catalonia, which contributes a whopping 24% to the Spanish national total of tourist arrivals. On a national level, *Turespaña* is the governmental tourist board responsible for the marketing of Spain as a destination for travel in the world. One of the formulated objectives of *Turespaña* is to geographically diversify tourist activity in order to make the whole of Spain benefit from the industry. However, the Spanish Constitution (1978) allows its constituent regions known as Autonomous Communities far-reaching competencies that include their regional promotion as a tourist destination beyond Spanish national borders. Consequently, the Catalan tourist board *Agència Catalana de Turisme* (ACT) was charged by the autonomous government of Catalonia (*Generalitat de Catalunya*) with the strategically important task to ‘contribute to the prosperity of Catalonia and its tourism sector, being its voice abroad and to focus on attracting and satisfying tourists of greater added value’ (*Misión de la ACT*, 2019). It can be argued that the interests of *Turespaña* to diversify the industry conflict with the interest of the ACT to reinforce an already very booming tourist sector in the region.

While Spain is ranked by many as one of the top tourist destinations of the world, Catalonia, apart from its countless valuable cultural and tourist assets, owes much of its fame to recent developments on secessionist politics that were extensively reported by international news media. Catalonia has a strongly organised and emancipated independence movement that can count on roughly half the Catalan census. Catalan secessionists from all walks of life are represented by political parties that form coalitions to gain a mandate of the majority of the Catalan people in order to democratically separate from Spain. Naturally, this political stance is highly debated and disputed both in Spain, and within Catalonia. Catalan secessionism is more than a mere sentiment felt amongst the Catalans, but in a sense is tangible in the shape of Catalan institutions and parliament. Arguably, the shaping of a Catalan identity as opposed to the Spanish is at the heart of the secessionist movement.

This master thesis links Catalan secessionism and the practice of Catalan identity construction with the booming international tourism industry of the region. This research aims to fill the gap of knowledge between the identity shaping of what is Catalan (and thus not Spanish), and the effort of the *Agència Catalana de Turisme* to promote Catalan identity as an attraction to international tourists and travellers. To help close this gap the following research question is defined:

In what ways does the *Agència Catalana de Turisme* shape and/or reflect Catalan identity through promotional material targeted at the international tourism market?

Moreover, two Sub-questions were formulated to structure the research:

1. What is the relation between identity construction and international tourism?
2. What are the main characteristics that make up the communicated Catalan identity?

The research question queries whether the promotional material shapes Catalan identity, or if the Catalan identity is reflected in the properties of the promotional material. It is fruitful to look at the use of promotional material targeted at international tourism as a structure in the shape of a circle of representation. The research question is geared towards the ability of promotional material to shape Catalan identity without the intention to exclude the idea that identity can be reflected in that same promotional material. This concept of a circle of representation was elaborated by Butler and Hall in 1998. ‘The images held by any individual are influenced by the images circulating in their culture, and place myths are constructed via images of place promotion’ (Butler and Hall, 1998: 121 in Jenkins, 2003: 307). Hypothetically, the Catalan identity is used to position Catalonia uniquely on the global marketplace of tourism, and to shape the Catalan claim in the international sphere that it is different from Spain.

The present research revolves around a corpus analysis that consists of two different forms of media that promote Catalonia as a travel destination. The corpus will be delimited to a tourist website and a promotional video. These two media share commonalities in that they are initiated and commissioned by the *Agència Catalana de Turisme*. The selection of media thus emphasizes the institutional nature of the promotional material, since the competency of the ACT is granted by the *Generalitat de Catalunya*.

*The route of fate* (2018), or *La ruta de l'atzar* is the promotional video that will be analysed. It is a tourist film with a duration of four and a half minutes that promotes Catalonia as a tourist destination and is directed at an international audience. It depicts a street artist who at a train station in Catalonia unwarily loses his diary on the platform before his train departs. Two Catalan ladies take notice of the diary and attempt to track the owner, following a route across Catalonia that was set in the diary. In 2018, the jury of the International Committee of Tourism film Festivals (CIFFT), gave the Catalan submission the “world’s best tourism film” award. The other component of the corpus will be the official website of the Catalan tourist agency [www.catalunya.com](http://www.catalunya.com). It is a meeting point for anything affiliated to the brand of ACT

but is also aimed at tourists that are looking into visiting Catalonia. It is the place to go for promotional packages, publications, and presentations etc. The webpage introduces the tourist to the brand of Catalonia.

In order to analyse the varying array of text, imagery and film the ACT uses to promote Catalonia, it is necessary to make use of a method that facilitates the analysis of various media. That is why there was opted for the Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) that Luc Pauwels uses to analyse official tourism websites. 'A multimodal framework for analyzing websites as cultural expressions' (2012) offers a theoretical and methodological framework that, 'incorporating both visual semiotic and critical discourse analysis, [it] offers researchers a range of texts on which to conduct the study of identity construction' (Hallet & Kaplan-Weinger, 2010: 10). The MDA approaches visual aspects, fonts, colour, film as texts that can give meaning to their readers and shape what their readers attribute to it. Therefore, it is ideally applicable to the website of the Catalan tourist agency. Moreover, it is a suitable basis to analyse the promotional film because it translates cinematographic elements to texts that can be analysed.

The analysis, hypothetically, will unveil what are considered quintessential characteristics of Catalanism that shape and reflect the Catalan identity. Said characteristics will be compared and debated with the characteristics that were borrowed from the research of Vargas (2015) that function as reference. Vargas argues that the Catalan 'tourism offerings identify "medieval splendour" as the chief asset that connects tourists to the core narrative of Catalan identity' (Vargas, 2015: 45). In his analysis, Modernist, gothic, and national symbolic characteristics will be considered as core elements of the Catalan identity narrative.

Identity building through a narrative that differentiates the region from the rest of the country intensifies the tensions that are arguably unprecedented since Spanish democracy was established in 1978. These tensions between Catalonia and Spain reached a climax in 2017 with the celebration of a controversial secessionist referendum the first of October of that year. While the situation in Spain appears particularly grave, there are other cases of strong secessionist sentiments in Europe and beyond (although they have not recently manifested themselves seemingly as strongly as in Catalonia). Similar research about the shaping of identity in the context of the authority and ideological aspect of tourism has been conducted on comparable cases such as Wales and, more recently, Hong Kong. An enlightening research about the tourism promotion activities of the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) demonstrated that through the use of four sequential myths 'Hong Kong exploits its colonial past to create an

identity that enhances its “local Chinese-ness” with a Western flavour [...] to avoid being just another Chinese city’ (Zhang & L’Espoir Decosta & McKercher, 2015:156). In the United Kingdom, scholars studied the marketing campaigns of the Wales Tourist Board and corresponding local authorities that helped to establish that different branding strategies overseas versus domestic ‘prompted a review of its relationship with the dominant culture [the English]’ (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000:177). While it is fruitful to look at comparable cases, scholarly research has been, albeit to a limited extent, conducted on the Catalan case by aforementioned Michael Vargas. He concluded in a striking way that:

‘Catalonia’s most prominent events and most-visited sites engage with tourists as witnesses and potential advocates in the struggle to defend a political, linguistic and cultural inheritance’ (2015:36).

A corpus analysis of different media by the Catalan tourist agency will contribute to a further understanding of the role of tourism promotion in the shaping and reflection of the Catalan identity.

This research will be structured in three chapters. While chapter 1 introduces the theoretical framework, chapter 2 discusses the methodology that is composed of the Multimodal Discourse Analysis. Chapter 3 features two sections, A and B. Section A analyses the promotional website Catalunya.com, while section B the focus is on *The route of fate (2018)*. Section B, moreover, contrasts the findings with section A and the findings of Vargas (2015), who published about the core narrative of Catalan identity. Finally, a conclusion will be drawn.

## Chapter 1. Theoretical framework

Contrary to the legal boundaries in many other high-ranking tourist countries, Catalonia, a region within an overarching State, is entitled to its own destination promotion abroad. The *Generalitat*, the institutional apparatus that politically organises the autonomous region of Catalonia, is ultimately responsible for the promotion of the region. The aforementioned *Agència Catalana de Turisme* (ACT) is executively in charge of the tourism development of the region.

This chapter will give the necessary theoretical framework that provides insights in the interrelation between tourism, tourists and (national) identity, while also providing an understanding of the agency of tourists in the shaping and reflecting of identity. Briefly, it will offer a context of similar case studies that have been conducted in Hong Kong and Scotland.

### 1.1 Tourism and National Identity

If we were to make a mind map about tourism, nationalism would probably not be among the first keywords to occur in a brainstorm. Seemingly, the two -isms share little common ground. On the contrary, oftentimes the two are complementary to each other. In this paragraph, the tangent places between both concepts are elaborated on, since certain types of tourism and national identity cannot be understood as separate concepts, but rather as highly interactive.

In present days, cultural tourism is a booming business. Towards the end of the 20th century cultural tourism had developed to become one of the most desirable development options for countries and regions around the world (Richards, 2009) as demand for this kind of tourism grew. The motives for this increase in popularity are not entirely clear. Dallen J. Timothy argues that it involves a complicated world's urge to go back to its roots at the expense of a superficial tourism experience [sic] such as beach party holiday, in favour of cultural tourism that 'people need to be able to cope with the frenetic life of today' (Timothy, 2011:16). Certainly, an increasing interest in heritage and cultural tourism is perceivable. Cultural heritage tourism is globally regarded as a means to generate revenue and to facilitate regional development through economic benefits. Hence, in most cases on a national strategic level, tourism is promoted as a (potential) source of income.

However, in the present thesis it is argued that apart from economic capital benefits, cultural (heritage) tourism is also eminently an industry that marks political status drawn upon cultural constructs. Arguably, cultural tourism has proven to be a means of nations 'to legitimise themselves as a territorial entity' (Hallet, 2010:8). Moreover, cultural tourism and cultural heritage are conjointly an identity resource to societies (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2004:297). The



interaction between the tourist and places of identity construction such as heritage is cooperative and intertwined. When a tourist visits foundational places of nation states, he, or she ‘performs an affirmation of national identity and citizenship’ (Hallet, 2010:117). It is argued then that cultural heritage sites are able to write a national narrative that can be acknowledged by the tourists that visit these sites. Therefore, heritage sites are not only tangible or intangible monuments that provide income to the administrative treasury. Instead, they can be considered accessible attributes to national governments that create a desired narrative of the nation. Tourists who *consume* heritage, do play an active role in the construction of this narrative, as will be explained in paragraph 1.3. An important notion to consider at this point is that heritage through promotional material that is destined to the international tourism market, shapes the way in which nationals see themselves, since the way in which we see ourselves ‘is substantially determined by the way in which we are seen by others’ (O’Connor, 1993:68, as cited in McLean, 2003). The foreign consumers of cultural heritage then shape and reflect the representation of cultural heritage.

The reciprocal action between tourism, identity and nationalism is demonstrated in the case of Hong Kong. Given the turmoil in that region of recent years, much scholarly attention has been paid to this case. The Special Administrative Region tries to shape its identity amidst the spheres of influence of both the West and China. National heritage, as declared as such by the Hong Kong government, plays a vital role ‘in the construction and maintenance of an identity to define the “self” against the “other”’ (Zhang, Xiao, Morgan & Ly, 2018:117). Scholars attribute power to cultural heritage because of its ability to expose national characteristics and (historical) evidence, as well as to legitimise certain narratives of identity. Cultural objects can be detached from their historical contexts and be used to recompose the past to favour a given discourse (2018). Within Europe there are ample more instances of tension between nationally conscious regions within States. Scotland experienced a renewed popular vindication of national identity, starting from the late 90’s of the 20th century. Cultural heritage, national symbolism (and indirectly its promotion through official channels), offer a relatively stable narrative within pluralist and mixed societies. Cultural heritage offers ‘a collective memory of where we came from and hence who we are today [...]’ (McLean, 2003:154). Mclean and Timothy both argue that nostalgia is a definitive factor in the increase of (cultural) heritage tourism in times of identity crises worldwide triggered by a trend towards globalism. The promotion of heritage tourism arguably determines the way in which it is seen

by others. In the present thesis, these ‘others’ are understood to be the potential tourists that might visit Catalonia from abroad.

McLean emphasizes the pivotal role of myths in Scotland. Common myths have the capacity to shape a nation. Myths act as a language, that can be used to interpret how meaning is conveyed in tourism. In the case of Hong Kong, the promotional material of the official tourism agency relies heavily on myths to ‘convey through tourism’ an identity ‘different and separate from that of China’ (Zhang, et al., 2015:156). Likewise, the Scottish Tourist Board uses these national symbols and myths to attract visitors to their destination –thinkable examples are kilts bagpipes, mountainous castles, and whisky. Scholarly research and multimodal discourse analysis applied to both Scotland and Hong Kong, demonstrate the potential of promotional material to shape and to reflect a national identity. Myths are but an example of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, but it illustrates once again the interactive relation between identity and the promotional material of tourism. Promotional material possesses the same qualities as cultural heritage, since likewise, they are able to *compose* a discourse. Arguably, tourism promotion has a political dimension to it. Tourism both shapes and reflects national identity as it can be ‘used to articulate preferred meanings of “local” place’ (Hollinshead, 2004:26) through narrative. Localness can be understood as extensively as national place, as opposed to the “others.”.

In this section, the abilities of (cultural) heritage as an identity resource to societies were acknowledged. The management of cultural heritage can be deployed by political power structures to give an incentive to national projects, as it is able to legitimise identity and expose desired national characteristics. Hypothetically, (cultural) tourism is a tool that shapes and reflects the narrative of the nation. It is therefore relevant to discover the ways in which national tourism boards might incite to the interrelationship between national identity and tourism.

## 1.2 The Semiotics of Tourism

The semiotics of tourism and semiotics in general are fundamental to understanding the mechanisms behind the transmitters of identity (paragraph 1.3) and the analysis of promotional material. On the one hand, semiotics form the theoretical basis for multimodal discourse analyses. On the other hand, it provides theoretical context that explains the agency of tourists in the construction and reflection of identity.

It is impossible to understand semiotics of tourism if no attention is paid to *language* in the broad sense, since promotional material conveys meaning through language that will be

subjected to analysis in the present thesis. One way linguists understand language is from the structuralist interpretation –conceivably, it was the dominant line of thought in the field of linguistics throughout the 20th century. The structuralist philosophy assumes that ‘phenomena of human life are not intelligible except through their interrelations’ (Blackburn, 2008). Language, as a phenomenon of humanity, should be understood as an element that is part of a broader system of human culture. Structuralists try to identify the constants, regularities, and laws behind this abstract structure. Multimodal and Unified Discourse Analyses depart from semiotics, the idea that concepts consist of a sign system. It is fruitful to get a more in depth understanding of these concepts before continuing to the analysis.

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) was the first linguist along with Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), a peer linguist whom he never met, to lay foundation to semiotics. Semiotologists view language as a system of signs, ergo, language is a semiotic system. Influential scholars in the field, Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, Roland Barthes, Roman Jakobson, Charles Morris and Umberto Eco in the heat of academic debate found unanimously that essentially ‘semiotics account for everything that can be seen or be interpreted as a sign’ (Yakin & Totu, 2014:5). According to Saussure, a sign consists of two components: the signifier and the signified. In spoken language, a signifier would be a system of sounds that makes up a word. However, it can also be an object or an image. The signified is the concept, the outcome, the interpretation, or the conception in a material form of the signifier, (2014:6). Both the signifier and the signified are mutually dependent on each other, and necessarily cannot be separated. The relation between the former and the latter is referred to as the signification system (idem). Mieke Bal (1991) argues that human culture, too, is a system made up of signs that stand for something other than itself. Participants of that culture are in a continuous process to make sense of those signs. This process involves interpretation of the signs that might be as unique as each individual that interprets. Essentially then, semioticians aim to define the ‘factors involved in this permanent process of sign making and interpreting’ (1991:174).

Jonathan Culler (2007) argues in *The Semiotics of Tourism* that tourists form a massive group of capable semioticians. Culler’s argument is fruitful to this thesis and deserves further explanation. Roland Barthes (1915-1980), an accredited semiotician and considered one of the founders of semiotics, proposed the *alibi* as the antonym of the sign. For example, wearing a fur coat, albeit in function of interpretation, could be a sign of wealth. Its alibi is that the fur coat merely protects from the cold (Culler, 2007:2). According to Culler, tourists do not seem

to be interested in these *alibis* - 'All over the world the unsung armies of semioticians, the tourists, are fanning out in search of signs of Frenchness, typical Italian behaviour, [...] tourists persist in regarding these objects and practices as cultural signs' (Culler, 2007:2). Hence, tourists are merely interested in everything as a sign of itself. Therefore, tourists are the agents of semiotics: 'all over the world they are engaged in reading cities, landscapes and cultures as sign systems' (2007:3).

In the present day nonetheless, *agents of semiotics* are no longer limited by travel to physical locations. Modern-day advances, most importantly the internet, have made it possible to discover and explore a locality before one physically travels to it (Hallet, 2010:8). However, the internet is but a medium that is universally increasingly accessible. In the case of the present thesis, the internet plays a mediational role between the tourist and the Catalan tourism agency. The latter uses the platform to spread text, film, audio, image, and even virtual reality - in other words, multimodal texts. Like written texts, multimodal texts are semiotic systems. The multimodal discourse analysis should offer a more nuanced reading of these multimodal texts. In the context of the shaping and reflection of Catalan identity through promotional material of the official *Generalitat* channels and the role of language and other semiotic signs in 'constructing and displaying a self' (2010:6&7), an analysis of national identity construction must incorporate a multimodal analysis of the ways in which national identities are mediated.

### 1.3 Tourists as Transmitters of Identity

As has been argued, as tourists consume cultural heritage and/or its promotional material, they have an agency in the construction and reflection of the narrative of the nation. Hence hypothetically, by means of the institutional media that is embodied by the Catalan tourism board, the Catalan language and culture is actively exported to the international community. Tourists that visit Catalonia or that consume promotional material, become active or passive transmitters of identity politics.

The definition of tourists has always been subject of scholarly debate. Tourism researchers often resort to travel motivations, to distinguish tourists from other categories of visitors. Michael Vargas (2015) advocates for a fundamentally different approach to tourists, as opposed to understanding tourists merely as passive travellers with a given motive for their travel. If we are to understand the agency of tourists in identity shaping and reflecting, tourists should arguably be understood as 'transmitters (of identity) once they return home,' '[...] spreading information about the constructed historical memories and identity politics they encountered on their travels' (Vargas, 2015:38). The argument is made that tourists can well be

understood as transmitters of identity. The mechanism behind this conceptualisation of tourists is reproductive in nature. In the context of the present thesis, tourists are considered the carriers of the circle of representation. One of the most important forms through which identity can be transmitted, apart from conversation and exchanging experiences etc., is through photography. Thanks to popularly accessible excellent cameras mounted in our pockets, twenty-first century tourists produce an unprecedented quantity of photographs to such an extent that suggests that travel is a medium in order to search for something photogenic (Urry, 1990a:139, cited in Jenkins, 2003:311). However, Trevor Barnes and James Duncan (1992) argue that the search of tourists for the ‘photogenic’ is more often than not based on ‘previous representations of the destination in question’ (Barnes & Duncan, 1992:5). The search for a photogenic image that is based on previous representations is the metaphorical fuel to the circle of representation (Jenkins, 2003). Tourism agencies such as the ACT (*Agència Catalana de Turisme*) among mass media project images of the travel destination. Potential tourists that view these images are attracted to the destination, motivated by promotional material. The tourist on location sees the projected images in real life and records it as a souvenir with his or her camera. A new, yet similar projection of the same image can now be influencing ‘the perceived images held by other individuals’ (Jenkins, 2003:308). This creates a circle that is ‘accelerated’ by destination promoters who fuel it with iconic imagery, starting a new rotation in the circle (Diagram 1).

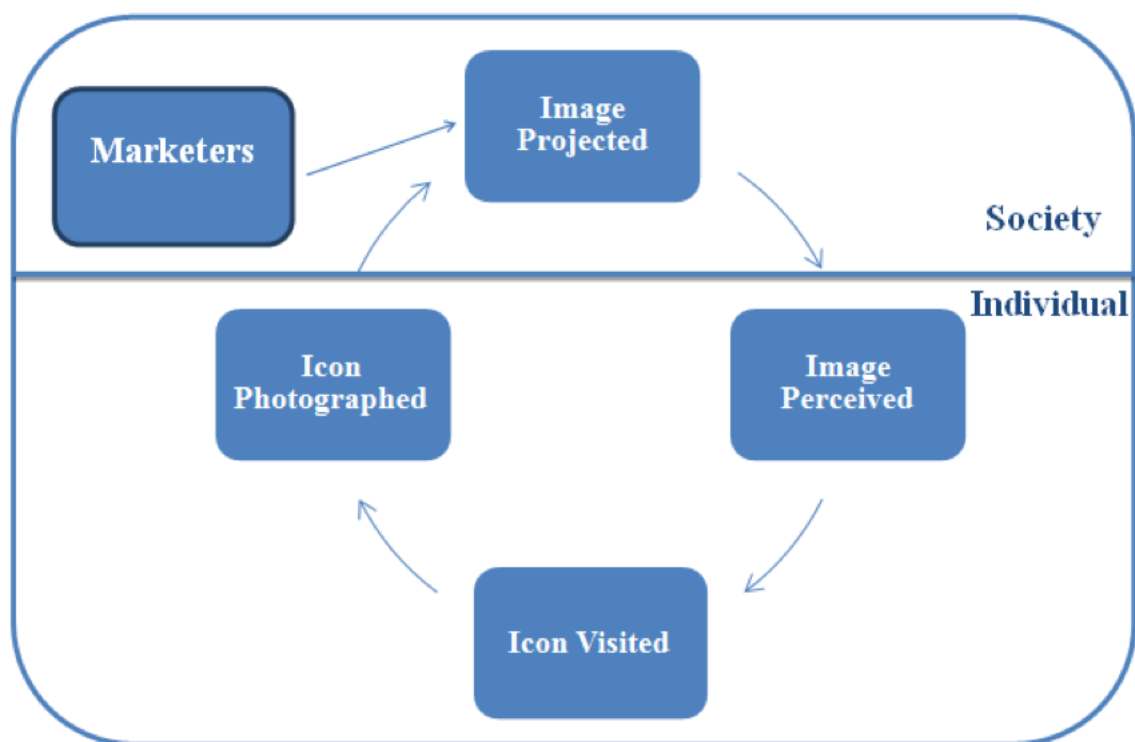


Diagram 1. The circle of representation (Orabi, 2018:95).

The focus of the current thesis is not so much on the tourists as a factor, but rather the role of promotional material by the Catalan tourism agency. Arguably, the role of promotional media of the ACT is that of increasing an audience for Catalonia as a tourist destination through spreading its material, be it a website or a promotional video. Therefore, Jenkins (2003) argues that the circle of representation could also be conceptualised as an outward spiral of representation, provided that an increasing effort is made by tourism agencies to fuel the circle with promotional material. If the hypothesis holds true that the ACT in some way or another shapes or reflects the Catalan identity through promotional material, the destination promotion is capable of changing the representation of Catalonia.

The point of view of the tourist is nevertheless not totally neutral or unconditioned - tourists in the main, see travel destination through a thick filter that Urry (2011) refers to as the *tourist gaze*. It is argued that looking is a learned ability, shaped by cultural constructs that are impacted by e.g., promotional material. Arguably, the way in which targeted tourists view the promotional material and tourist sights 'is conditioned by personal experiences and memories [...] and by circulating images and texts of this and other places' (Urry, 2011:1). The tourist is thus bound to be gazing at these sights and unconsciously conditioned by the promotional material beforehand.

The representation and shaping of Catalan identity, as is hypothetically the case through promotional material that targets international potential tourists, not only tends to fuel, and 'expand' outwardly a circle of representation but it also conditions the way in which the potential tourists gaze at Catalonia. Moreover, not only promotional material is capable of conditioning, but this paragraph also argued that tourists themselves are transmitters of identity. Transmitters that, much like photographs, can reflect, shape and or reinforce Catalan identity. The transmitters are arguably cultural lenses 'that enable tourists to see physical forms and material spaces before their eyes as "interesting, good, or beautiful"' (Urry, 2011:2). The qualifications that Urry provides in the former quote are but examples, the cultural lenses could potentially also present Catalonia as 'different,' 'typically Catalan,' 'otherness' or Catalanism.

The approach of tourists as transmitters is arguably confirmed by the Catalan effort to achieve international attention and recognition of the Catalan identity. A clear manifestation of 'export' of Catalan identity to the outside world is the establishment of several unofficial Catalan embassies in, arguably, the cultural capitals of Europe: Berlin, London, and Paris, as well as Brussels and even New York, perchance not without coincidence, host of the United

Nations Headquarters. An initiative funded by the Catalan government the *Generalitat*, the same entity that is responsible for the promotion of Catalonia as tourist destination (2015:45).

The promotional material of the tourism board can be considered, metaphorically, as a multimodal embassy wherever this material is consumed. This paragraph offered a theoretical framework that justifies that tourists can be approached, understood, or conceptualised as transmitters of (Catalan) identity.

#### 1.4 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that cultural tourism, and moreover, heritage tourism is often deployed and adopted by political powers, whether it be national governments or regional authorities that seek to attribute to those territories and their inhabitants certain characteristics. If identity and politics go hand in hand, it is cultural heritage that is easily manageable as a resource to legitimise and narrate a national, or regional identity.

However, it is not exclusively an authority that constructs and reflects a narrative of the nation - it was demonstrated that reflection and shaping of such a narrative is in part realised through the agency of tourists. Tourists can be considered the agents of semiotics, as they tend to read (e.g. cultural heritage) cultural practices and behaviour as cultural signs that belong to Catalanism. The promotional material is a mediator between both the tourists and the (tourist) authorities. In turn, those tourists, once they return home, become transmitters of identity. This transmission is further reinforced as the tourists trigger a circle of representation that is fuelled by promotional campaigns. As a result of these mechanisms Catalonia is perceived through a cultural lens that shapes and reflects Catalan identity.

## Chapter 2. Methodology

The goal of the present thesis is to read the ‘language’ that is communicated through website and film that is produced by the official tourism agency. The multimodal discourse analysis will be the framework that allows for a multimodal reading of the corpus. In the first paragraph the selection of the corpus will be briefly motivated; secondly, the theory of the multimodal discourse analysis will be explored.

### 2.1 Corpus & Justification

The present thesis focusses on one of the characteristics of cultural heritage and its promotional material - to shape and reflect the narrative of the nation through tourists as transmitters of identity. Consequently, the overarching requirement of the otherwise versatile corpus is the official and institutional characteristic of the promotional material. The prerequisite that underlies this selection is that the promotional material is to be published by the Catalan Tourism Board (Cat: *Agència Catalana de Turisme*). The official origin of the material is considered important because it allows for discussion about the possible link between tourism and identity politics in Catalonia.

The corpus consists of two elements:

1. [www.catalunya.com](http://www.catalunya.com). [Website]
2. *The route of fate* (2018), (Cat: La ruta de l'atzar) [Video]

The two elements are commissioned by the ACT as well. The promotional material of the Catalan Tourism Board is a heterogeneous collection of different media types. The present thesis intends to do this varied collection justice by adopting most prevalent examples of promotional material, based on their reception by critiques and audiences.

*The route of Fate* has been well received and hailed by prestigious critiques. The promotional video that is selected immediately became an obvious choice because it was recognised by the Committee of Tourism Film Festivals (CIFFT) as the world's best tourism film in 2018. This positive criticism of the promotional video in the international sphere justifies its inclusion in the corpus.

The website [www.catalunya.com](http://www.catalunya.com) is the official webpage of the tourism board and is one of the first websites that potential visitors come across once they search for tourism and Catalonia. Therefore, it arguably has the biggest reach and an extensive audience.

If the reading of the multimodal text is to be interpreted and indicated, a methodology



should provide the interpretative tools. Luc Pauwels, a Belgian scholar, and visual sociologist is best known for his work on visual research methods. His work ‘A multimodal framework for analyzing websites as cultural expressions’ (2012), provides the necessary parameters and tools to do the reading and interpretation of both the promotional video and website.

## 2.2 Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Due to the role of language and, by extension, other semiotic modes in constructing and displaying a self, an analysis of national identity construction must incorporate a multimodal analysis of the ways in which national identities are mediated through text both linguistic and visual (Scollon, 2001, as cited in Hallet, 2010:6). Luc Pauwels’ framework (2012) will be used in Chapter 3 to analyse the website Catalunya.com in section A, and the promotional video in section B.

Multimodal discourse analysis is occupied with the analysis of communicative utterances through language. Section 1.2 provided the theory on how *language* is approached in the present thesis. Language in the broader sense is a multimodal affair that appeals to a multitude of human senses, such as hearing, touching, tasting and the utterance of a voice (as well as written texts). Multimodality could therefore be connected to psychological and sensory channels (Pauwels, 2012:250), as they are media (modes) that can convey meaning. The deployment of the multimodal framework for the present thesis is limited to website and film, hence the modalities are limited to visual and auditory. In multimodal discourse it is fundamental to approach these two terms in the broadest sense. Textual parts are a visual medium, textual elements are shaped by e.g., typography, layout, and design. Likewise, auditory elements consist of music, noise, or spoken text.

Multimodal discourse analysis not only considers each modality separately, but also stresses the importance of the interaction between those modes. Pauwels claims that his proposed framework is ‘relevant for researching cultural differences between countries’ (2012:248). While analysis of differences between countries is facilitated by the multimodal discourse analysis, the present thesis limits itself to the contribution of the Catalan tourism board to establish in what ways the Catalan identity is shaped and reflected.

The methodological framework contains six phases. The first phase entails the preservation and first reaction of the visitors to the website. Due to distinct goals and practical limitations of the present research, the first phase is deemed superfluous and thus will not be included in the analysis.

The second phase is the inventory of salient features and topics. This phase is geared

towards the analysis of a large quantity of websites. Nonetheless it is fruitful to conduct this phase despite the fact that only the official website of the tourism board is considered. Salient, absent features and topics will be categorised as the absence or omission of certain features ‘maybe as culturally significant as the present ones’ (2012:253).

The third phase has the most weight to it and is considered the most encompassing phase. It distinguishes both intra-modal analysis that interpretes separate modalities, and cross-modal analysis that focusses on the interplay between those modalities. The third phase is divided in subphases. It accounts for typographic signifiers, visual representational types and signifiers, sonic types and signifiers, and finally layout and design signifiers.

While the third phase questions what is being said through signifiers, the fourth phase analyses what is said through what point of view, to whom, and to what purpose. It helps perhaps to understand the political dimension of tourism websites as it questions ‘whose goals are served, whose values are propagated and who is to benefit from expressing them’ (2012:257). The fifth phase analyses the structural and navigational options of the website - there could be a significant difference between a free roam website and a required more structured navigation via menu’s and internal links. It also accounts for the analysis of external hyperlinks that might demonstrate affiliations and preferences. The sixth phase is a contextual analysis. This phase will be omitted as the present thesis already offers the necessary context.

Pauwels follows a strict hierarchy of phases, as was described previously. This phased approach is conceivably necessary to process a large quantity of data. It allows the researcher to quantify data or make a clear and insightful overview of the data. In the present thesis it was opted to break with the hierarchal structure that was proposed by Pauwels. The corpus analysis will contain the four stages, namely the second, third, fourth and fifth phase. The order in which each element is conducted is, nevertheless, not in function of the proposed order. This change could be justified for two main reasons: firstly, contrary to methodological framework that was designed to facilitate a large quantity of data, the current research is limited to two corpus elements; and secondly, this analysis will not be exclusive to websites, but to a combination of both website and film. This mix of data hinders a strictly hierarchal approach to the corpus. One could hardly talk of the main page of a video, or of camera angles on a website.

Except for the second phase that makes an inventory of salient features and topics, this section provides the salient elements that determine what elements will be analysed in depth in their respective sections. Consequently, the remainder of phases as described by Pauwels will

be tied to separate ‘salient’ elements (rather than to the same elements over a wide scale of corpus data).

## Chapter 3. Analysis

The corpus analysis will be conducted in this chapter. The two different elements will be categorised in sections A and B. Section A analyses the web content catalunya.com, section B the 2018 promotional video *La ruta de l'Atzar*. Sections A and B will be analysed in depth using the multimodal discourse Analysis (MDA) as provided by Luc Pauwels (2012).

### 3.1 Section A. Catalunya.com. A *national* tourism promotional website

#### 3.1.1 Salient Features and Topics

In the first phase of the multimodal discourse analysis, attention is paid to the salient features and attributes of catalunya.com. Furthermore, an inventory of such features allows for the conduct of a negative analysis. This approach focusses on aspects, elements, content, and categories that might be ‘meaningfully absent’ on the website. While this phase of the analysis is useful to quantify a larger range of websites, in the present research the focus is on the official promotional campaign of the Catalan tourism board, hence it is strictly limited to one webpage. However, this phase provides an opportunity to make comparisons between the different elements of the corpus.

Catalunya.com is available in a variety of languages. By default, it opens in Catalan, however it offers the possibility to switch to Spanish, English, French, German, and Russian. English is the predominant global lingua franca, the latter three language options open the doors to important targeted populations by the ACT whom do not have sufficient English proficiency. The wide range of languages available to the audience is symptomatic and a necessary consequence of the ambitions of the Catalan tourism board to increasingly attract international visitors. The most up to date policy note, the Strategic Tourism Plan for Catalonia 2018-2025, considers the tourism sector as the voice abroad of Catalonia. In the strategy, one objective that was formulated is of a quantitative nature. In 2016, 36 million tourists in total visited Catalonia, 18 million of which were qualified as international tourists, the remainder attributed to Spanish domestic tourism. The ACT has the ambition to attract up to 24 million international tourists as of 2025, an increase of 17% relative to 2016 according to a growth prognosis conducted by the ACT. One of the variables that are taken into account to estimate the growth of international tourists is the ‘impact of marketing and brand building’ (ACT, 2018: 8). This variable, among income growth per capita of tourists, investment growth, and the extension of the average stay, should theoretically produce an annual growth rate of 4,4%. What can be deduced from the prognosis is that firstly, the number of international visitors that come to Catalonia is going to

increase by a considerable rate; but more importantly that marketing and promotion efforts are going to be contributing to that forecasted expansion. The interaction between promotional material and its consumer ‘has come to play a mediational role in the construction of tourist identities’ (Hallet, 2010:8) which is in accordance with the claims of the ACT that tourism is the voice abroad of Catalonia.

Catalunya.com is an important factor in the presentation of the region to the world. The website is laid out as such that the main page is more extensive than the screen of the navigator. In order to navigate the main page, one must scroll downwards through the complete content of the main page. Consequently, the header of the page is augmented to a maximum full-screen size that centres all the attention of the visitor to it. Thus, the centrepiece on the main page is the header that also hosts a search tool.

This header evokes to use all the human senses to motivate the reasons why one should discover Catalonia. It appeals to experience, with the credo of the banner stating reasons to visit Catalonia: ‘the sounds, the sights, the smells, the feel, the tastes, and the emotions’ of the region. On the right side of the banner one will note the welcoming words ‘Catalonia is your home’ where ‘is,’ the present tense, is underlined. Tourism website content play a pivotal role in the construction of a ‘self’ or identity of a destination such as Catalonia. It is critical that the ‘self’ image of the destination is adopted and embraced by the potential tourist. If not, the potential tourist is not ‘constructed as a tourist and the attraction is not constructed for that traveller as a destination’ (Hallet, 2010:120). Catalonia is framed as a home, rather than a tourist destination. If the potential tourist is to embrace that ‘self’ image of Catalunya.com, he or she must acquire favourable frames that come to positively affect his or her view of the world (Hallet, 2010).

Another prominent element of the main page that corresponds to experiencing Catalonia is the official ‘Experience Store’ of Catalonia. It is a booking-window that helps you find and make a reservation for *la teva Expèriencia*, (your experience). Thus, a lot of attention and physical space is dedicated to what arguably should be understood as an encouragement to experience Catalonia. Scroll down the banner and the visitor encounters clickable tiles that show pictures that are related to themes that each of them represents. Since cultural heritage tourism is of interest to this research, the most notable themes are: ‘Catalonia, a country with many national parks’ ‘Why Catalonia?’ ‘Catalan Cities and Villages with Character’ ‘The icons of Catalonia’ and ‘Charming Towns.’ The last prominent category of content are the storylines that are starred by famous Catalans and international entrepreneurs that are deemed relevant to the Catalan tourist sector. A practical tool is the possibility to chat and to interact through a

window with the live Catalan ‘informants’ behind the website. The chat window suggests questions such as ‘need some tips?’

If the website is to be analysed negatively in terms of notable features, attributes, topics etc., in function of the first phase of the multimodal discourse analysis, a meaningfully absent topic is an explicitly written auditive or visual reference to the question of Catalan independentism. This might predictably be the case as, arguably, political manifestations are not necessarily of concern for a tourism website. However, the redeeming quality of the multimodal discourse analysis is its capability to read signifiers rather than explicit texts and political stances. Hence, it is possible to read the construction and reflection of Catalan identity through the content of the website. The manifestation of a different Catalan identity as opposed to other identities could in turn be interpreted as a political stance. This once again underscores the relevance of the multimodal discourse analysis.

The function of the first phase in synthesis is to make a relevant inventory of ‘significant categories by theoretical insights and/or hypothesis’ (Pauwels, 2012:253). Elements that stand out are the emphasis on (bodily) experience and Catalonia as a home. Moreover, a selection was made of topics that are steered by theoretical insights of Chapter 1. Summarised, these categories can be understood as the most prevalent. Topics that are excluded for analysis are those that do not have obvious ties with heritage, such as family and water sports. (figure 1). Therefore, topics that are considered for analysis of the main page of Catalunya.com are ‘Catalonia, a country with many national parks’ ‘Why Catalonia?’ ‘Catalan Cities and Villages with Character’ ‘The icons of Catalonia’ and ‘Charming Towns’ (figure 1). Each of these topics will form subsections.

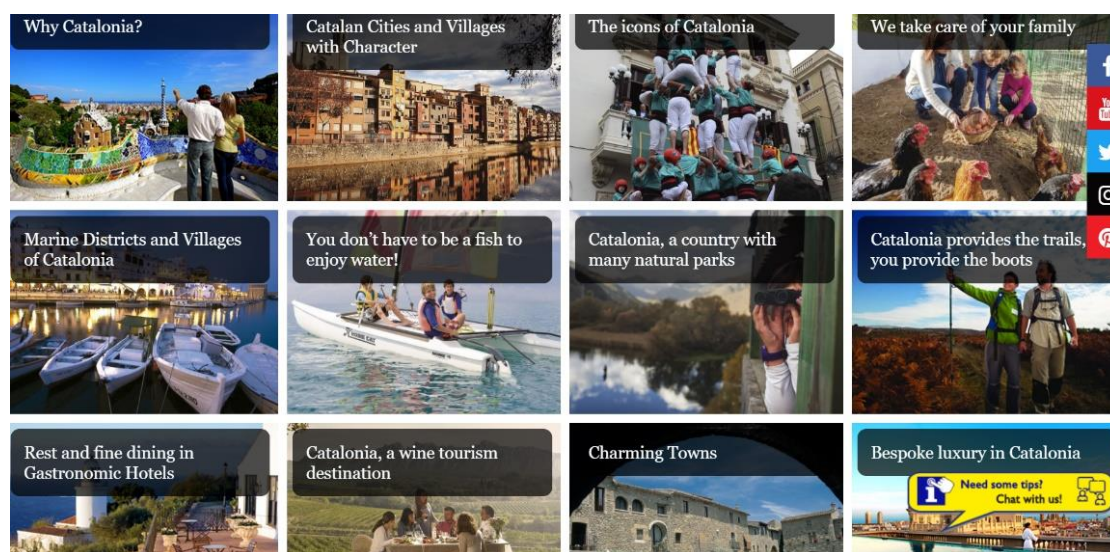


Figure 1. 12 Tiles. Mainpage catalunya.com

### 3.1.2 In-depth Analysis of Signifiers

The desired outcome of this phase is to identify culturally specific meanings that reside in the explicit and implicit content of written utterances, as well as visual representational types and signifiers and finally layout and design signifiers (Pauwels, 2012:253). Its content will be analysed ‘in terms of topics and issues that are being dealt with’ (idem). Hence, the analysis will consist of elements that are found to be salient in the previous section, based on the interactive relationship that connects heritage, (national) identity and tourism.

#### 3.1.2.1 Icons that Cross Borders

Charles Sanders Peirce (1885), a pioneer of semiotics, defines an -icon- as ‘a sign or representation which stands for its object by virtue of a resemblance or analogy to it’ (Peirce, 1885:181, cited in Shapiro, 2008:817). Catalunya.com claims in an explicit manner that the featured content of the page is of iconic value to Catalan identity. This understanding of icons helps to interpret the first paragraph of the webpage: ‘Through the icons you construct a portrait of the personality of the Catalonians, and the customs and history of Catalonia, and fall in love with this land at the same time.’ This quote implies the existence of a self-conscious Catalan that is iconic to Catalonia, with his or her own different personality. Essentially, Catalunya.com invites its visitors to practice semiotics, since the targeted visitor is to identify the signifiers that are characteristic to Catalanism, or ‘icons,’ in order to portray Catalonia. Jonathan Culler (2007) argued that tourists are ‘an army of semioticians.’ Catalanism as a term usually refers to ‘a person’s proud identification with Catalan difference’ (Vargas, 2015:37), therefore not necessarily to independentism. Moreover, Catalunya.com makes an explicit petition to discover the personality of Catalans, history, and its customs. Consequently, the ‘icons of Catalonia’ page is characterised by the emphasis on human appearance since the imagery show an overrepresentation of persons in relation to architecture and landscape, that dominate the other paragraphs (3.1.2.2, 3.1.2.3, 3.1.2.4). The header of the page shows a close up, from a high angle downwards, onto *castellers*. *Castellers* are the human component of the *Castell* (castle), a tower made of humans that hold on to each others’ legs, that can reach up to ten floors tall. Figure 2 shows how the *castellers* at the foundation of the tower have to stand in a compact position in order to compensate for the gravitational force that draws the tower downwards and to the side. The image depicts a group of people that function as a foundation, allowing the tower to remain in place. The closeup to the foundational *castellers* could be interpreted as individual stones that can build towers. The human castles are one of an increasing number of Catalan cultural practices that were originally ‘meant’, intended and/or targeted at the Catalans

themselves. Overtime these practices (other thinkable examples are the Catalan gastronomy and literature) have the ‘positive spill over effect of bringing Catalan tradition into contact with the



Figure 2 .Page header, *castellers* compacted to support the *castell*

external audiences’ (Vargas, 2015:43). Vargas argues that the *castells* are to tourists an inspiring performance of Catalan difference (2015:44). To the Catalans it is considered a reminder of their medieval past. Catalunya.com capitalises on these trends given the prominent position and attention paid to the *castells*. The caption reads ‘Catalonia has icons that cross borders and make up the symbols of an identity that has been built over millennia.’ In the following paragraphs, a greater number of the *symbols of identity* are going to be explored and indicated in the context of visual, textual, and typographical signifiers.

Catalunya.com has a format that is standard for the main page as well as for each subpage. At the top one will find a panoramic header that features a high-resolution image that embeds a search bar. Once scrolling downwards, a short text (often one sentence), in a large font can be interpreted as a subtitle for the page. This is followed by a text in a smaller font size. Below that, one can find tiles of different photographs with links that lead to further detailed information about the respective image. It is a basic but functional format. What is striking is the limited use of colour in the interface -the sheets of the text are in a shade of white,



Figure 3. Loading screen.

the text in a darker shade of grey. The clean and tranquil look that the shades of white and grey provoke, is interrupted by the loading page that appears subsequently as one reloads or opens a page on Catalunya.com. It is a filler that is necessary to allow the content of the page to load beforehand. While incidentally it is not on-screen continuously, it does appear on



regular occasions. The yellow background and the four red figures in the middle (Figure 3), are a representation of the Catalan national flag, known as the *Senyera*. The four red shapes symbolise the four municipal councils –Barcelona, Girona, Lleida and Tarragona– that constitute with *Generalitat* the cultural council of the region (Mestre, 2007). This logo demonstrates the involvement of Catalan regional authorities in the promotion of the region on Catalunya.com.

The *Senyera*, the Catalan national flag, is profoundly rooted in the collective Catalan memory. The symbolism of the colours dates to the late ninth century, when Christian factions defended the –now Catalan– territories against Moorish invaders (Vargas, 2015). It is said by many Catalans to be the origin of the first Catalan independence. The red horizontal bars on a golden shield represent the bloodshed of Catalan warriors, that was rewarded with a sovereign territory (symbolised by the golden shield) by the Frankish emperor. Nowadays, the red and gold banner is displayed throughout Catalonia ranging from souvenir items to fashion and beyond ‘standing as a sure sign to tourists that they have come to a place whose people do not bow to the authority of Madrid’ (Vargas, 2015:41). The use of the Catalan banner, then, is carefully used to emphasise the presence of an alternative flag to that of Spain. While the red and gold is strikingly bright and almost obtrusive, it only occurs on a few occasions. Catalunya.com managed to refrain from waving flags and is otherwise subtle in its use of colours.

### 3.1.2.2 Catalonia, Cultural Landscapes and Identity

In this paragraph, a light is shone on landscape and its cultural properties. As demonstrated in figure 4, and judged from numerous pages of Catalunya.com, nature (and experiencing landscapes) play an important role in the promotion of Catalonia as a tourist destination. Catalonia, with 18 natural parks, is the autonomous region with the most natural parks as compared to other Spanish autonomous regions. The zoning of natural parks is a competency of autonomous communities (Spanish legislation 4/89, 5/2007), in function of ecological and natural standards and characteristics. What arguably can be deduced from this data is that the geography of the region is deemed worthy for preservation by those standards, and moreover, that the Catalan authorities attribute great importance to nature and

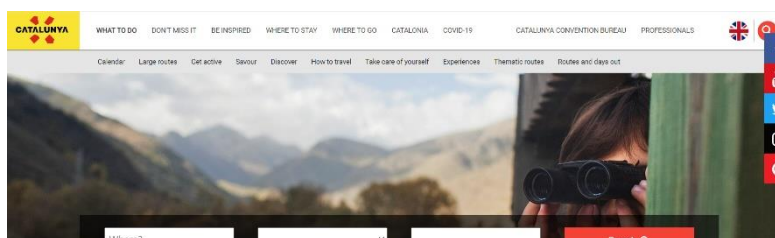


Figure 4 Visually experience a mountainous landscape

landscape. It is all the more important to consider that contemporary landscapes, certainly in Mediterranean Europe, are ‘largely a cultural landscape, a social product, the cultural projection of a society on a specific space’ (Nogué, et al., 2004:116).

In the negative analysis of section 3.1.1, the proposition was made that the webpage abstains from making explicit political statements regarding the ongoing Catalan independentism. While this holds true for the overwhelming part, strikingly, Catalonia in the context of its natural parks is referred to as a country. Namely: Catalonia, ‘*a country* with many natural parks.’ If one clicks on said link, one is directed to a page that is titled ‘Nature and adventure, a duo to everyone’s liking.’ The Pyrenees take a central stage in this page. An image of a mountain range that an individual female seems to inspect with her binoculars, heads the page (Figure 4). The binoculars denote a panorama with wide and distant views. Binoculars also underline the ocular aspect of the experience, which emphasize the natural beauty that one has to observe.

The emphasis of Catalunya.com on nature and adventure can arguably be understood in the context of a Catalan identity. In 1926, Catalan landscape architect Maria Rubió i Tudurí predicted a scenario where a day would come that ‘foreigners visiting our country will be horrified to encounter an inextricable tangle of factories roads [...] houses, electricity lines’ (Nogué, et al., 2004:130), yet the tourism website depicts the vast Catalan wilderness that remains preserved with care. Catalunya.com arguably reverts to classic ties between the Catalans and the Pyrenees that were established by the first significant expression of Catalan nationalism that is accredited to the *Renaixença* (movement). It emerged during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and marked the first instance in late modern history of Catalan nationalism. *Renaixença* translates to Renaissance, it does not call for the rebirth of the Classics but for the recuperation of Catalan national culture, and ultimately the independence of Catalonia. The *Renaixença* was emphatically an intellectual movement that aimed to maintain, strengthen, and forward the relevance of Catalan language and history in the Catalan territories (Agirreazkuenaga Zigorraga & Alonso Olea, 2014).

Catalan Renaissance intellectuals viewed landscape as important contributors to Catalan nationalist ideology (Nogué, et al., 2004). Prominent and classic Catalan historian Jaume Vicens Vives (1960) argued that the Catalan mentality was forged in the mountains. The Pyrenees also provided a refuge from the invading Moore armies and its valleys gave birth to many *charming towns* that to this day form an important part of the Catalan brand identity of Catalunya.com, that will be focussed on in 3.1.2.4. Vicens Vives argued that clearly ‘historical

facts show that the great energies of this country were born and developed over time in the mountains' (Vicens Vives, 1954:29, cited in Nogué, 2004:127). Backed by Vicens Vives historical analysis, it is argued that the *Renaixença* ideologists viewed mountains as a key figure among Catalan nationalist symbols, as part of 'the essential landscape' (Marfany, 1993). It is

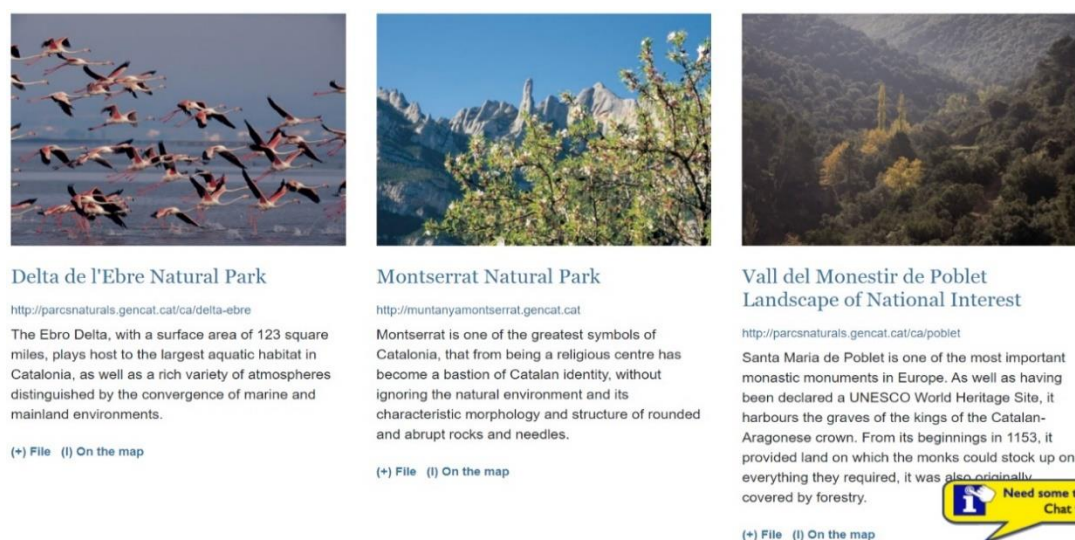


Figure 5. Mountains as 'essential' landscape

not to say that content creators of Catalunya.com are *Renaixença* ideologists, however, it is argued that the fascination for the mountainous landscape is deeply rooted in Catalan history.

The nature and adventure page overwhelmingly highlights mountainous landscapes as natural parks since ten out of eighteen promoted natural parks show images of mountain landscapes. The remaining eight images depict seaside, forest and flat landscapes. Figure 5 demonstrates that Catalunya.com promotes mountains not merely as landscape, but as cultural landscape. Montserrat Natural Park and the Vall del Monestir de Poblet signify more than

<i>Figure 5.1</i>	
Montserrat natural park	Vall del Monestir de Poblet Landscape of National Interest
Montserrat is one of the greatest <b>symbols</b> of Catalonia, that from being a religious centre has become a <b>bastion of Catalan identity</b> , without ignoring the natural environment and its <b>characteristic morphology</b> and structure of rounded and abrupt rocks and needles.	Santa Maria de Poblet is one of the most important monastic monuments in Europe. As well as having been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it harbours the graves of <b>the kings of the Catalan-Aragonese crown</b> . From its beginnings in 1153, it provided land on which the monks could <b>stock up on everything they required</b> , it was also originally covered by forestry.

natural landscapes, they are links between heritage, nature, and identity. Figure 5.1 manifests

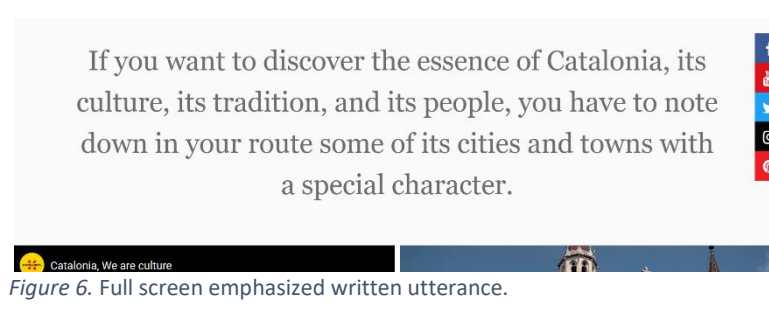
the promotional descriptions of the natural park and the Landscape of National Interest. While Montserrat is a monastery that is found to be a great ‘symbol of Catalonia’ and a ‘bastion of Catalan identity,’ it is not a landscape. However, the natural landscape is not to be ignored, since likewise, the geographical morphology is characteristic to the bastion of Catalan identity. This example shows how (mountainous) landscape, cultural landscape and identity interact through destination promotion.

The inviting description of the landscape of national interest, the Valley of the Monastery of Poblet, shows a similar interaction. It is a landscape where the medieval kings of the Catalan-Aragonese crown and the monks lived an abundant life from the land. The Kingdom of Aragon reminds of a power that predates Spanish hegemony over the Iberian Peninsula. It can be argued that the Spanish Monarchy was born as a product of the marriage in 1469 between Fernando II of Aragon and Isabel I of Castilla. The union of Iberian monarchies came at the expense of autonomy of regional powers such as the Kingdom of Aragon, to which Catalonia belonged (Muñoz, 1989:670). The territories under former Aragon rule are still referred to as *Els Països Catalans*, the Catalan Countries. Figure 5.1 teaches the visitor of the webpage about what is symbolic to Catalan identity. It reminds the viewer of the Aragonese power that competed with the considered proto-Spanish kingdom of Castille, before the two Iberian kingdoms merged through marriage.

### 3.1.2.3 The ‘essence of Catalonia.’ Cities with Special Character

Catalunya.com attributes a considerable amount of space, text, and imaging to ‘Catalan cities and villages with character’ as said in the words of the website. Both charming and character suggest a relation between the former and latter qualifications and what is arguably characteristic to Catalan identity.

A conducted negative scan over the concerned subpages pinpoints a meaningfully and remarkably absent Catalan city. There is no mention of Barcelona on these pages, and sparsely mentioned over the whole website. Arguably there could be a number of reasons for that, after all, Barcelona is a renowned tourist attraction worldwide that disposes over a vast network of destination promotion by itself. By all means, it leaves the content creators of Catalunya.com the opportunity to promote the communities that are not part of the omnipresent attraction of the



Barcelona metropolis.

In this paragraph, typographic signifiers will contribute to the analysis. Typographic signifiers carry potential culturally specific meanings that could ‘reside in the visual properties of the written text’ (Pauwels, 2012:254).

The subpages share a common theme in terms of their content, but also in terms of the use of fonts. Georgia is the prevalent font that is used for titles and captions. Georgia is commonly used in online newspapers, including the Guardian and New York Times, as its design prioritised on-screen readability rather than on printed paper. Designer communities describe the font as having a typographic personality that is friendly and intimate. It is suitable for formal texts, yet not to such extent that it looks old school or too formal. It is characterised as ‘a bit more regal, but not stiff’ (designroast.org, 2020). However, the most significant meaning distinguishing parameter on these pages is the font size of the headers. As opposed to the subtitles of the pages that have font size 10,5 in bold typography in order to distinguish subtitles from text, the headers fill the page with a font size 34. Unless the user scrolls down, the paragraph that consists of 34 words, is full screen filling. This puts an emphasis of great weight to what is said in it, almost in a shouting fashion (Figure 6). The header reads: ‘if you want to discover the essence of Catalonia, its culture, its tradition, and its people, you have to note down in your route some of its cities and towns with a special character.’ Figure 6 demonstrates that the common perception of Catalonia, which on many occasions is understood as a land surrounding Barcelona and as a region of Spain (Kingsley, 2017), does not cover the essence of Catalonia. Cities that are promoted, as mentioned Barcelona conspicuous by its absence, are Girona, Tarragona, Villafranca del Penedès, Reus, Tortosa and Vic. Corresponding images to these cities on the page that link to their respective dedicated pages have an

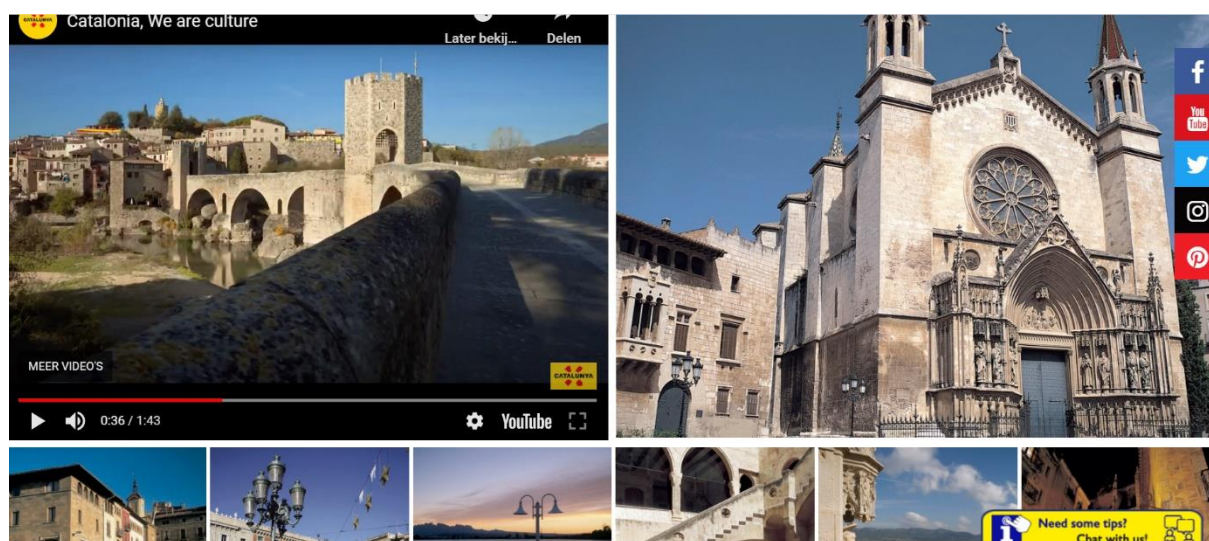


Figure 7. Architectural tendency towards Gothic



overarching Gothic theme (Figure 7).

Except for Plaça Prim in Reus and the Parc de l'Agulla in Manresa (bottom line, second and third from the left) the images selected represent architecture from the 12th-14th centuries. This period marks the rise and gradual disappearance of Gothic aesthetics. The diffusion of Gothic architecture to the Iberian Peninsula was a gradual process, indeed great examples of Gothic structures are found throughout Spain, such as the cathedral of Burgos. However, a considerable concentration of Gothic architecture was built in Catalonia. This diffusion can arguably be explained by the vicinity of Catalonia to the French Provence and the Languedoc, where French Gothicism is derived from (i Altet, 2011). The shared cultural affinity with Gothicism arguably connects Catalonia with a wider pan-Western European medieval aesthetic. It can be argued that Gothic architecture is a collective symbol of medievalism, it is safe to say that to this day, it remains as such. It justified 'continuity of an idealised past' (Gant, 2014:19), an idealised past that, once again, predates the hegemony of Spanish rule.

### 3.1.2.4 Charming Towns

A user of the main page, a potential visitor of Catalonia, will more than likely be drawn to the *charming towns* of Catalonia. The potential tourist, in his or her role as an agent of semiotics (Culler, 2007), is looking for signs of Catalanism or indeed Spanishness, in case the potential visitor might be unaware of the relative 'competition' between the two. Once the visitor hovers the cursor over the link to the *Charming towns*, he or she is assured that:

As soon as you arrive, you will realise they are different from the rest. The charming villages of Catalonia will enthrall you as soon as you arrive because of their aesthetic appeal. You will fall in love with their beauty when you get lost in their streets (Catalunya.com, consulted 9-12-2020). (Figure 8.1)

Immediately, the narrative of the website appeals to the realisation that the charming towns of Catalonia are different from the rest. Possibly, the charming towns are found to distinguish themselves from other Catalan villages that might not be charming. However, as a product of analysis of this page of the website, it can be argued that, instead, 'the charming Catalan towns' are different from towns that are not deemed charming. If one is to understand what makes



Figure 8. Header image with search-bar. The essence of a charming town (Rupit i Pruit)

Catalan charming towns different (figure 8.1), one has to consider what the specified aesthetic appeal (Figure 8) consists of. The

towns that are promoted and thus deemed charming have an overarching self-proclaimed trait, they withstood contemporary urbanism. The towns preserve a homogeneous and harmonic architecture. '[...] as it preserves the original **essence** with decorative elements and typically regionally and local designs' (Catalunya.com).

The typically regional and local designs of charming towns (as opposed to for example nationally Spanish) are the essence that is to be preserved. The essence of an object 'is given partly by its necessary characteristics, or 'properties' (Oderberg, 2011:87). The town Rupit i Pruit gives an impression of what should be interpreted as a charming town. Departing from the size of the image, and the prominent placement of it on the header of the page, the header is arguably the centrepiece of this webpage. Simultaneously, the image supposedly represents what should be considered fundamentally regional and/or local, thus Catalan. The image affirms what was opted in the previous paragraphs 3.1.2.2 and 3.1.2.3. On the one hand, the cobbled houses and streets are characteristic to the thirteenth century architecture and represent an almost mythicized medieval era that marked the regional strength of the Crown of Aragon. On the other hand, we see an architecture that is harmonious to its surrounding landscape. NB, the horizon of the landscape on occasion coincides with the horizon of the village's rooftops (figure 8) -the steep rocky landscape that is visible on the image is the Collsacabra mountainous region. The tall vertical rock formations have the same aspect as the rocks that comprise the morphology that characterises the landscape surrounding Montserrat Monastery (figure 5.1). The charming towns page features fifteen images of apparently charming towns. Indeed, most of them, nine images, show a mountainous landscape around it. Considering the meaning that the present analysis attributes to landscape and Catalan identity (paragraph 3.1.2.2), it is striking how the essential towns of Catalonia sell their charm by emphasising the assurance of architectural tradition and the preservation of the natural environment that surrounds them.

It is fruitful to investigate the images of this page via the visual representational types and signifiers' approach. This sub analysis will look into what is depicted on the pre-photographic level. This allows for the study of style specific characteristics. Figure 9 is a photograph of the Romanesque church of Sant Martí de Mura. The image is justifiably selected for analysis based on its material characteristics. It is smaller in size than the header, but comparatively larger than the remaining images. It is also positioned in the upper left corner, thus logically the first image one would look at, following the same method as how one would usually read a book (Strategy-plus, 2020). The image suggests a high degree of depth as the point of view from above is directed towards a lower level of terrain where the church is situated

in a green valley. It is considered another instance of harmony between landscape and architecture that was commented on extensively already. The photograph is characterised by an overwhelming binary colour scheme. The background is filled by green vegetation, while the foreground is dominated by the brown of the cobbles, roof tiles and stone walls. Furthermore, both the green and the brown show an increased input of a warm tone, plausibly by an applied filter postproduction. Nonetheless, the colour pattern shows a warmer spectrum. Warm tones are known to be more emotionally charged and they tend to jump to the viewers' attention (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2002:357). The binary colour scheme is interrupted by the white and grey cloths of what looks to be a romantic couple taking a selfie (Figure 9, mid-right side). One has to take into account that the actual image size is larger on the webpage, which makes the subjects much easier to spot. With certainty it can be established that the couple consists of a male and a female, however it is not feasible to assess the age of the subjects. Moreover, they are the only people visible in the area, suggesting a desolate and romanticised representation. The two are seemingly not posing for the photographer and thus display a natural behaviour. One could make the assumption that they are tourists, as taking selfies at monumental sites is closely associated to the tourist gaze. Urry and Larsen (2011) firstly explored the idea of the tourist gaze as early as 1990. Much like Culler's agents of semiotics (2007), the tourist that



Figure 9. Sant Martí de Mura. A charming village.



gazes, filters reality according to ‘a universal process of simplification and standardisation, to orient him/herself in the world’ (Katan, 2012). Consequently, the representation of Sant Martí de Mura on this photograph (figure 9) tends towards stereotyping ‘usually helped by well-marketed promotional campaigns’ (idem). From the perspective of the authors of the image on Catalunya.com, the subjects on the picture will, arguably, ideally set in motion a circle in which an image is reinforced. The concept, the circle of representation, was conceptualised by Butler and Hall in 1998 and later elaborated in the context of travel brochures by Olivia Jenkins (2003). In the specific case of the Catalan charming town that is promoted, the image of the town that is being photographed by the subjects in it, is projected to the visitors of the promotional website Catalunya.com. These promotional images are supposed to be viewed by as many potential tourists as possible, who consequently are inspired to visit the destination. These photographs, presumably indeed the selfie taken in the promoted image as well, will be displayed to friends and relatives as proof of the visit. This form of projection of the destination ‘begins the cycle again by influencing the perceived images held by other individuals’ (Jenkins, 2003:308). Figure 9, then, suggests the spectator to participate in the circle of representation. Interestingly, another rupture with the binary colour pattern is the red and yellow of the *Senyera* on top of the bell tower. The *Senyera* is the politically neutral and official flag of Catalonia as opposed to e.g., the *Estellada*. The *Estellada* (the starred flag) is an alternatively yet similarly designed flag, coloured in blue or red, that is associated with the Catalan republican movement or the workers unions in the 1910’s respectively (Vargas, 2015). The *Senyera* in its ‘neutral’ colours, however, is still considered a manifestation of Catalan otherness (Tkac, 2014). The use of a warm colour scheme, the emphasis on depth and steep terrain, the green mountainous landscape, the solitude of the subjects relative to their surroundings, and the Romanesque architecture arguably create a stereotypically Catalan *charming* town, that in turn is reinforced by the tourists that take pictures from it.

### 3.1.3 Conclusion

In this section it was argued that Catalunya.com actively invites its guests to participate in identifying the icons, the essence, and symbols to make acquaintance with Catalonia, thus becoming agents of semiotics. These qualifications were reflected in the titles of each page. These titles were attributed a priority, given the prominent font sizes. The symbols, icons and essential characteristics of Catalonia emphasise the difference and the unique place it claims to occupy. Catalunya.com forwards its landscape as an excellent representative for its uniqueness. Historically, it was argued that the mountainous Pyrenees landscape has always found a

prominent place in the traditional Catalanist national discourse. From visual representational signifiers, it was established how architecture plays a pivotal role as icons to Catalanism. Charming towns share common characteristics such as their resistance to urbanism and harmony with the (cultural) landscape. Catalan cities represent what is supposedly ‘essentially’ Catalan. Cities that were qualified as such were represented as architecturally Gothic. It was argued that both the Gothic motive, and the medieval charming towns in relation to cultural landscape, are reminders of a Catalonia that was once a sovereign territory under a separate crown than that of Castille, thus, modern day Spain.

### 3.2 Section B. *La ruta de l'atzar* Film, Promotion and Identity

*La ruta de l'atzar* forms the second component of the corpus that is analysed in no particular order. It is a promotional video that was well received by critiques and praised by its audience. Promotional videos have a farther reach as compared to e.g., websites, since videos reach the audience faster through their extensive exploitation as content on the social media (Fong, et al., 2018). While a website is capable of informing the visitor more effectively, promotional videos have more emotional content and 'have more potential to be manipulative and exploitative because they can more easily reflect reality and the unimaginable – beyond reality' (Yaakop, 2014:202). The singular properties of this medium call for a careful reading of multimodal signs that convey meaning. In this analysis the visual content will be examined through the lens of *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (1996) of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, meanwhile for the verbal modes the framework provided by Pauwels will be followed. The analysis will be started with a global overview of salient features as a means of a brief description of the data.

#### 3.2.1 Salient Features and Topics

*La ruta de l'atzar* (2018) translates from Catalan to English as the Route of Fate. In synthesis, it tells the story of a street musician who loses his travel diary at the station as he gets on a regional train. Two girls, who had seen the musician perform the other day, pick up the diary in an attempt to return it to the owner. Unfortunately, the train departs before they manage to hand it back. The two girls follow the pages of the diary in an attempt to identify the traces that the musician had left behind on his journey through Catalonia. By chance, or by a leap of faith, the girls find the musician elsewhere, as he happens to be performing on the street again. The girls hand the diary back over to him. The video follows the path of this travel account (diary).

The objective of the promotional video according to the video description, is to highlight the tourism sector and prioritises to continue working for sustainable, competitive and quality tourism' (ACT, 2018). The promotional video has a length of four minutes and twenty-five seconds (4:25). Iedema (2001) argues that a video can be cut up into six levels: 1) the video in total, 2) generic stage, 3) sequence, 4) scenes, 5) shot, 6) frame. In order to establish the salient features and topics the video will be divided into sequences.

The sequences:

- 1) (0:00-0:38) [Catalonia and its modernist wonders] The travel diary plays no part. Street artist performs at the *Sant Pau* hospital in Barcelona. Two girls equipped with camera and backpack take a selfie at the *Sagrada Familia*.

- 2) (0:39-1:15) The travel diary drops out of the pocket of the street performer. The girls browse through the pages and identify the reporting of a tour through Catalonia. The girls follow the tour and try to reproduce the pictures that were taken by the street artist.
- 3) (1:16-1:35). [Catalonia as a hiking track]: This chapter leads them to the monastery of Montserrat and associated panoramic view, they hike.
- 4) (1:36-1:50). [Catalonia is a coastal region]: A museum visit is combined with a bath at the *Costa Daurada*.
- 5) (1:51-2:18). [Catalonia is an archaeological site]: Tarragona is the centre of the remains of the antiquities.
- 6) (2:19-2:26) [Catalonia is rural and a gastronomical highlight]: In a rural area in the dark. The girls are in a garden and have a toast with a number of friends.
- 7) (2:27-3:00) [Catalonia its medieval splendour]: They take a stroll through the Gothic quarter of Lleida.
- 8) (3:01-3:19) [Catalonia and the Pyrenees]: The girls take a train that meanders through the mountains. They stop at the Vall de Boi.
- 9) (3:20-3:37) [Catalonia has attractive beaches and provides for water sports]: The girls practice rowing at Port Lligat.
- 10) (3:38-4:25) [Catalonia is your home]: The diary is returned to its owner in Girona. Catalonia welcomes you.

It can be remarked that contrary to the disposal of topics of Catalunya.com, Barcelona plays a more prominent role. In the first sequence it is represented as a cradle of Modernism and a stage for artists. Furthermore, while Catalunya.com put emphasis on the mountainous cultural landscape, the promotional video seems to divide the attention more equally between beach and waterside recreation, and mountains. The disquisition of the sequences has given an overview of the salient topics. Each sequence is characterised in function of what Catalonia is represented as. NB, the topic is put between square brackets in the sequence list.

### 3.2.2 In-depth Analysis of Signifiers

In paragraph 3.1.1 it was noted that the Catalan tourist agency ACT aims to stimulate a substantial growth in volume of international tourists by 2025. Hence, promotion abroad is deemed an important contributor to that growth. Consequently, *La ruta de l'atzar* (2018) is arguably to a minor degree targeted at the domestic market. A Comparable case study to a tourist promotional website of Wales (Pritchard, 2001), argues that its strategy of the promotion of the Welsh brand is motivated by the idea that tourists from abroad, from outside the United Kingdom, are more interested in experiencing Welsh culture, than domestic tourists are (2001:174). Wales and Catalonia are to an extent comparable cases as both cases seek to manifest their regional identity within a national superstructure, as this thesis argues. In the same manner, it can be argued that the ACT intends to cater for an audience that is (to be) more interested in Catalan culture, than domestic tourists are.

### 3.2.2.1 Modernist Wonders

In this paragraph, the analysis will start from what Iedema (2001) refers to as the smallest unit of motion picture, the frame. The frame as starting point, allows for multimodal discourse analysis to focus on visual representational types and signifiers, as well as signifiers and codes of the static image.



Figure 10. Frame 1. Sequence (1). 0:31. Hospital de Sant Pau.

Figure 10 shows the two female accomplices in the first sequence before they find the travel diary. The subjects leave the Hospital Sant Pau, where they had been taking photographs. This sight is nowadays a Modernist enclosure and composes an excellent example of late

nineteenth Modernist architecture. The façade can be seen in the background while, the subjects, the represented participants walk towards the viewer, the interactive participant. Around the neck of the girl in the foreground on the left side, hangs a photo camera with flash device. Objects that appear in the foreground of the composition tend to be attributed a high degree of prominence. Saliency can be a way in which ‘representational and interactive meanings relate to each other in the composition’ (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006:177), figure 10 expresses saliency through placement of fore –and backgrounding. The placement of the girl with the camera on the left means photography is presented as something as what is familiar and agreed upon by the viewer, the interactive participant, as it is arguably considered the topic of the composition (2006:181). Photography have proven to be able to construct what is worth sightseeing and what memories should be brought back (Urry, 2011:178).

The low angle camera shot that figure 10 shows, exposes a power relation between the represented and interactive participants. It depicts that the objects have an authority over the viewer (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006:140). In other words, the objects appear imposing. However, the camera angle and the composition are not the only factors that indicate saliency and authority. Arguably, the two girls are not the protagonist represented participants in the frame, but the Hospital Sant Pau is. In figure 10, the foreground is darker than the background. The use of light as a means to make contrasts, highlights the Sant Pau hospital as the focus of the composition, the represented participants, arguably, occupy the topic. This way, the hospital acquires an overexposed and ethereal look (2006:72).

These various visual signifiers attribute a balance between the female characters in the

foreground and the Modernist architecture that is gazed upon. The topic, the photographers in the background, and the focus, the illuminated hospital are complementary. Nonetheless, arguably the girls bid their gaze to Modernist wonders upon the viewer, the interactive participant, given the effect of the low angle.

Modernism is a cultural and artistic movement that dominated industrialised Europe from the late XIX century to the early XX century. However, one could argue that Catalan Modernism developed differently from its (mostly) northern equivalents (i Agüí, 2011). In the Catalan region, the modernist era flourished at a time when secessionist sentiments (notice *Renaixença*) were most vivid. As products of a booming industrialisation, the Catalan bourgeoisie was eager to expand their wealth and influence. Likewise, they nourished aversion towards an ever more indecisive and lagging Spanish State. Consequently, Catalan industrialists funded modernist artists to further their agenda. Therefore, as opposed to other countries' modernist art 'in Catalonia works in the Modern Style included many symbolic elements reflecting the Catalan nationalism of their creators' (i Agüí, 2011:506). The geographic and the social geographic origin of Catalan Modernism meant that this style is most notable in the (metropolitan) area of Barcelona. Furthermore, the Catalan Modernism was an artistic current appropriate to the aspirations and self-image of a country that 'wished to express both its unique personality and its integral modernity,' which sets the region apart from the rest of Spain (Mackay, 1985:42). Figure 10, then, is part of a filmic sequence that legitimises typically nineteenth century Catalan artistic expressions in Barcelona, that still has close ties with identity construct, as worthy to gaze upon.

### 3.2.2.2 The Representation of the Costa Daurada



Figure 11. Sequence (4). (1:36-1:50). Costa Daurada. Six images taken from six representative shots that make up the sequence.

The next sequence to be analysed is the fourth sequence that shifts the attention from Modernism and the hiking trail around Montserrat to the Costa Daurada. A coastal strip of beach that reaches from the province of Tarragona down to the southern extreme of the Catalan region. Its beaches draw millions of tourists every year. This paragraph seeks to analyse this sequence from the point of view of a cross-modal interplay. It focusses on linguistic, visual, auditory spatial and time-based elements (Pauwels, 2012) in an intra-model structure.

Based on figure 10, a frame was analysed which is the most reduced unit of a motion picture, the frame. However, the new meaning (focus) of film is construed by dynamically salient informational variants or transformations, while the given (topic) is constituted by informational invariants (Fong, et al., 2018). Thus, it is arguably problematic to only analyse individual frames of a film since ‘each shot is an inseparable unit of the scene to generate new information to construe visual meanings as a whole’ (2018:128). Hence, to accomplish a more complete reading of signs, this paragraph will analyse the visual interactive meaning between the frames, in the framework of representation and interaction (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). The paragraph focusses on aspects of attitude, social distance, and contact.

The top left image of figure 11 is a image of a projector on a screen in the *Museo Pau Casals* in the northern-most town of the Costa Daurada, El Vendrell. The represented object is Catalonia’s most famous musician and considered the best cellist of all time (Abarzuza, 2017)

Pau Casals (1876-1973). He was a politically engaged composer as well as a musician, who famously stated that he was a Catalanist who had never been a separatist (2017). In 1971, Casals was awarded the UN Medal of Peace on account of his dedication to beauty of the arts and peace. In Catalan circles particularly, as well as beyond Catalonia, he is known as the man who in the chamber of the UN in New York outspoke: ‘I am a Catalan. Catalonia, today a province of Spain. [...] Catalonia has been the greatest nation in the world’ (Amiguet, 2016). The moment he appears in the video as we see the represented participant play, the soundtrack is accompanied by a cello party. At this moment, the music appears to be intradiegetic as the sound corresponds to the playing of Casals. However, the soundtrack is extradiegetic, meaning the ‘characters’ cannot hear the soundtrack (Verstraten, 2008:155) the cello is however ‘assimilated’ in the soundtrack. This invisible boundary between both sound effects erases a sense of past tense and brings the historical figure of Casals to life. The girl playing the cello in the top right image (figure 11) is another extension of that sensation, since she plays the cello in the eponymous museum. The projection of Casals appears in both top left and mid left images. In both cases the camera captures from a low angle, attributing an authority to Casals (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006:140). In mid left, the two girls are in the foreground from a bust height. The distance between the represented –and the interactive participants is close, but from a lower angle. In the background of the top right, the interactive participant catches a first glimpse of the Mediterranean Sea. The video then proceeds to show the interior of the Casals museum.

The sequence connects cultural heritage tourism with beach leisure. Filmic elements such as the use of the Mediterranean Sea in the background of a girl playing the cello top right of figure 11, create a sensation of continuum between cultural heritage in the museum and the beach leisure that is followed up in the bottom left/right images of figure 11. The bottom left image features written textual elements. The verse written in the top left of that image, resembles the handwriting in a travel diary that is nonetheless, more than likely, too small and cryptic to read in the short timespan that it appears - it is however obviously written in English. To the right it reads *Costa Daurada* in the Catalan spelling that is used in the present thesis. This sign is decorated by a sun and seawater drawing-artistic element. The Catalan spelling is salient because it is an irregularity relatively to the other written texts in the video. In the images at the bottom (figure 11), the distance between the represented and the interactive participants is increased in comparison with the previous images. The distance between the objects and the viewer is not defined, but both the participants tend to lose connection between each other as



the distance is farther (Hall, 1964:72). Kress & Van Leeuwen describe it as if though a painter can look at a model as if he or she were a tree in a landscape (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006:125). Hence, it could be argued that the represented objects blend in with the surrounding seascape and the beach, uniting the image of the Costa Daurada and the cultural tourists.

Paragraph 3.2.1 briefly argued, based on an inventory of the sequences, that the promotional video emphasises more extensively the coastal features of Catalonia, as opposed to a focus on the landscapes of the interior that Catalunya.com seems to propagate. The emphasis on the promotion of Catalonia's coastal assets in the promotional video, such as famously the Costa Brava and the Costa Daurada, could potentially be explained from an economic point of view. Vargas (2015) argues that beach tourism to this date remains the motor of Catalonia's tourism economy. In other words, a great portion of travellers and visitors of Catalonia (still) more frequently visit seaside resorts and Barcelona as the most important tourist hubs. Other sites, other than the traditional sea, sand, and sun destinations, arguably tend to offer a rich diversity of available offerings. Vargas argues that the most substantial of those diverse offerings, are infused with an essential Catalanism (2015:45).

Contrary to Vargas' claims, the sequence (4) shows that traditional seaside tourism, associated with the Costa Daurada, can be capitalised upon to 'infuse' Catalanism. The arguably potentially problematic aspect of sea, sun, and sand that they carry fewer traditionally Catalanist identity signifiers, does not hold true in *La ruta de l'atzar*. In this promotional video a clear connection is made between coast and Catalan identity. The portray of Casals and its prominent place in the promotional video could be interpreted as a demonstration of that Catalanism. The contrast between Vargas' hypothesis and the anecdotal evidence in the promotional video could be understood as a demonstration of the consideration that promotional material could possibly be seen as continuations of ideological discourses (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2002 cited in Roig, 2011:121). The Catalan official promotional video, consequently, has converted the stigma of beach tourism into a brand that enriches the –sun, sea, and sand– holiday destination with aspects from essential Catalan cultural aspects such as the Casals museum. The prominent reference to the legacy of Pau Casals potentially functions as a politically sensible, yet slightly provocative Catalanist statement.

### 3.2.2.3 The Point of View. Voice & Audience

In this paragraph the point of view (POV), or voice, of the promotional video is analysed. A whole analysis of the POV allows for a more complete understanding of the implied audiences and the purpose of the video. Rather than to research what culturally significant meaning is

uttered, this paragraph inquires ‘who is really saying ‘what’ to ‘whom’ with what purpose?’ (Pauwels, 2012:257). To understand these concepts, it is important that a distinction is made between the ‘real’ and ‘implied’ voice, or author, versus the ‘real’ and ‘implied’ audience. The *Agència Catalana de Turisme* is the real voice, although the authors are not physically present and therefore must ‘address their audience in the guise of represented participants’ (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006:115). The real audience is an anonymous group that watches the video online. However, this paragraph does not deal as much with ‘real’ as it does with the ‘implied.’ The ‘implied author’ has an implicit set of norms that has no voice and therefore ‘no direct means of communicating, but instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn’ (Chatman, 1978:148, cited in Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006:115). The (filmic) text of the implied author requires an implied audience. The ‘implied audience’ is a model reader that meets the prerequisites of the implied author. The implied audience is selected by the text based on ‘the choice of a specific linguistic code, a certain cinematic style’ The implied author presupposes ‘a specific encyclopaedic competence on the part of the reader’ (Eco, 1979:7, cited in 2006:115). The nature and variety of the Points of View may add a sub-textual meaning to the content of the promotional video (Pauwels, 2012:257).

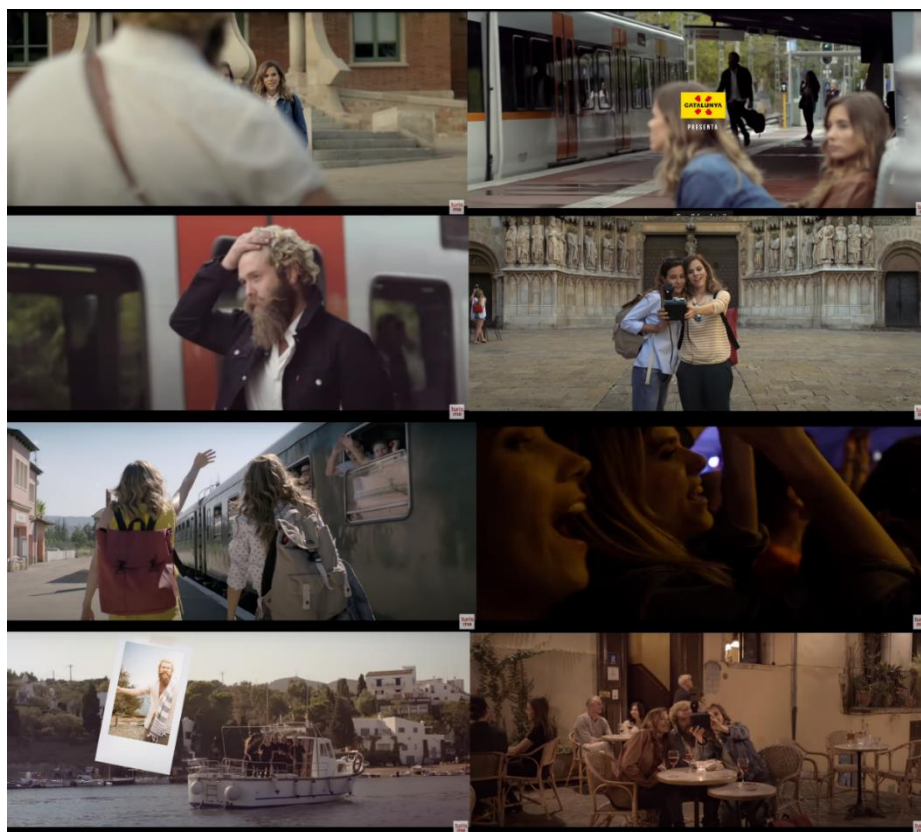


Figure 12. Point of view from the represented participants. The carried signifiers permit to make implications of the audience

The represented participants that are followed through the video are a male street musician and two women that are in the beginning years of their early adulthood, the Millennial generation. The age of the protagonists leaves a meaningful indication of what should be understood as the implied audience. The musician, as well as the girls seem older than students and younger than most settled people with a young family. The participants arguably represent a group of people that has a bigger budget to spend on leisure and tourism relative to younger demographic groups that have limited income, e.g. students. The budget that Millennials spend is the fastest growing (31%) of all generations according to a study conducted in 2016. It is argued that the Millennials are the generation that prioritises travel the most over other aspects in life (Christoff, 2017). There is a significantly meaningful absence of middle and late adulthood represented participants, as well as younger children and elderly participants. Arguably significant, since the salient represented participants seemingly can be categorised as younger and older Millennials. Figure 12 is an accurate demonstration of the represented participants in the promotional video.

Notably, the two protagonists represented are women. As the protagonists encounter the travel diary on the station where the musician had dropped it out of his pocket, the women undertake an adventure through Catalonia that leads them across the region. Nonetheless, the adventurous travel has traditionally been characterised in masculine terms (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000). While femininity in tourism promotion towards the end of the twentieth century revolved around dependency and notions of domesticity (2000:116). From a gender perspective, *la ruta de l'atzar* ruptures with this traditional narrative and promotes a more emancipated representation. The traditionally masculine adventurous trait has been attributed to the female represented participants. In a study to how gender representations might relate to the notion of Scottishness, an analysis of the travel brochures of the Scottish Tourist Board (STB) revealed that the Scottish hosts of tourists are predominantly men. The guests are almost never women, neither individuals, nor couples. Moreover, the representation of same sex pairs was almost non-existent. On the contrary, only heterosexual couples were represented 'with obvious signs that their relationship has been formalised according to the rules that are in force in contemporary society' (Arranz, 2004:19). There is no suggestion that the two girls in *La ruta de l'atzar* are intimate, their behaviour can best be described as friendly. The ACT promotional effort has successfully broken the hetero-patriarchal tradition in tourism promotion that has long been insensitive to social sciences (Pritchard & Morgan, 2000).

Another aspect of the video which expresses a specific point of view is in the persona

of the male street performer. The purpose of this paragraph is to uncover dominant points of view that Luc Pauwels refers to as master narratives. A salient aspect of *La ruta de l'atzar* is the continuous suggestion of hipster culture, or the image of a trendy travel destination that is once again shaped and reflected by the young represented participants. The hipster image is suggested by the appearance of the protagonist male character, as well as a number of different elements of the mise-en-scène. Mise-en-scène is the first level of narration and concerns any cinematic mean that is theoretically relevant to a single shot but is rarely limited to a single shot in practice. The question of who or what is shown concerns the mise-en-scène (Verstraten, 2006:59).

Figure 12, second row, left image shows the street musician who performs initially in Barcelona and finally in Girona. Prominent features of his appearance are his full beard and the handlebar moustache. A fashionable statement that arguably strengthens ties with key characteristics of hipster subculture. Hipster culture became defined by 'a shared personal aesthetic of of ironically-presented low culture symbols and appropriated countercultural fashions' (Henke, 2013:117). Kelsey Henke argues that the hipster, as a sub-cultural group, is often represented in a framework of a greater behavioural trend that is strongly associated with discovering, filtering, and assessing 'obscure' or undiscovered cultural elements (2013:118). Not only the appearance of the street performer is characteristic to the hipster mise-en-scène. The polaroid printed photo paper in figure 12, bottom-left is the product of a low-fi camera polaroid. Moreover, the two women in figure 12, second row, right take a selfie in front of the Tarragona gothic Santa Tecla Cathedral with a polaroid camera pointed towards them. The same representation can be found towards the end of the video, figure 12 bottom-right shows the women taking a selfie with the street performer, using the same fashionable polaroid camera. The hipster's motives, the use of low-fi cameras and the remarkable facial hair are explicitly listed by Kelsey Henke as marginalised material items and fashionable characteristics that now have come 'to be characteristic symbols of the hipster identity' (2013:123). In spite of this, hipsters hardly ever relinquish their ties to a culturally and economically dominant status, and they oftentimes enjoyed higher education. Potentially, these symbols of hipster identity could be refuted as overgeneralisations. It is therefore important to interpret these 'hipster' symbols that are represented in the promotional video of Catalonia, as associations and a certain identification with a trendy fashionable identity. A fashionable identity that is more symptomatic to a younger implied audience.

The signs manifest in the mise-en-scène seem to forward some characteristic that are associated with hipster culture, and might also correspond to the implied audience of the video. The element of discovery, as a characteristic of the implied potential visitors of Catalonia, suggest that there is plenty –yet to be discovered– in Catalonia, beyond the arguably most popular destinations such as Barcelona and the *costa*. The break from traditional gender roles that prevailed in travel destination promotion for a relatively long period with respect to other social tendencies, is also a significant characteristic of the POV of Catalonia's promotional video.

### 3.2.3 Negative Analysis of a Salient Topic



Figure 13. Sequence (5). 2:16-2:19. Enogastronomy.

In this paragraph a negative analysis of a considerate absence of a salient topic will be conducted. This paragraph seeks to contrast the promotional video with literature that argues that gastronomy is amply considered as an important marker of Catalan identity. Identity markers can be understood as characteristics that an individual might choose to present to others as a means to support his or her national or regional identity claim (Kiely, et al., 2001). Simultaneously, ‘identity

markers are also the characteristics that people look to in others when they seek to attribute national identity to them’ (idem, 2001:36). However, in *La ruta de l’atzar* little time and space is dedicated to the promotion and exposure of Catalan cuisine. Figure 13 captures all the attention to gastronomy that the video contains. The top image shows the two girls, accompanied by potentially a guide or vintner, in a vineyard at the foot of the *Roques de Benet*. Figure 11 (top) suggests an element of enogastronomy. Nonetheless, the rock formation in the background is arguably more salient, which could mostly be accredited to the fact that the *Roques* are in a sharp colour contrast with the blue sky, which reinforce its salience (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006:202). On the contrary, the vines are camouflaged into the forestry landscape in the background. In this thesis, the seeming importance of landscape as a marker of identity was already extensively discussed. Even so, it is worth mentioning that the *Roques de Benet*, in *Els Ports* Natural Park at the southern extreme of the region, is listed in the ‘top

100 most emblematic summits of Catalonia' (Institut Cartogràfic i Geològic de Catalunya, 2020). The existence of such a list alone, reinforces the notion that landscape is a definitive identity marker. The bottom row of figure 12 depicts a friendly gathering in a garden in the nearby county of *Terra Alta*, where the rock formation is located. The companionship makes a toast with a glass of wine. Within a total of three seconds and two shots, the Catalan gastronomy is represented in the official promotional video.

The absence of promotion of Catalan cuisine is meaningful because scholars consider the gastronomy one of the most powerful identity markers of Catalanism. Vargas describes how local government and private tourism agencies outpour publications of books on national cuisine translated to English, French, and German (2015:43). The publication of these books can be attributed, to a large extent, to how extensively the Catalan narrative for outsiders revolves around gastronomy, through the lens of touristic discourse (Mercer, 2020). Leigh Mercer argues that Catalonia's unique identity and history 'continues to be enacted through the history of its gastronomy' (2020:676). It has been argued that the globally acclaimed contemporary Catalan cuisine is a manifestation of continuity between the present and the medieval Catalan gastronomy. Gastronomy books, therefore, highlight 'an effort to promote a travel industry that proposes a specific cultural identity' (2020:680) that is often resorted to as a marker of Catalan identity. Still, the audience of such books, as well as touristic visitors of gastronomy food festivals perceive the presented menus as traditionally Catalan cuisine that 'highlights elements of its identity, memory, landscape, history and culture' (Meneguel, et al., 2019:124).

The apparent omission of gastronomy in the 2018 promotional video of the ACT nuances the much-made argument that the cuisine is a critical identity marker. However, other elements that Vargas describes as alternative heritage that does not include Barcelona and the Catalan coast, are infused with essential Catalanism. It is therefore a remarkable result to see little representation of gastronomy in *La ruta de l'atzar*.

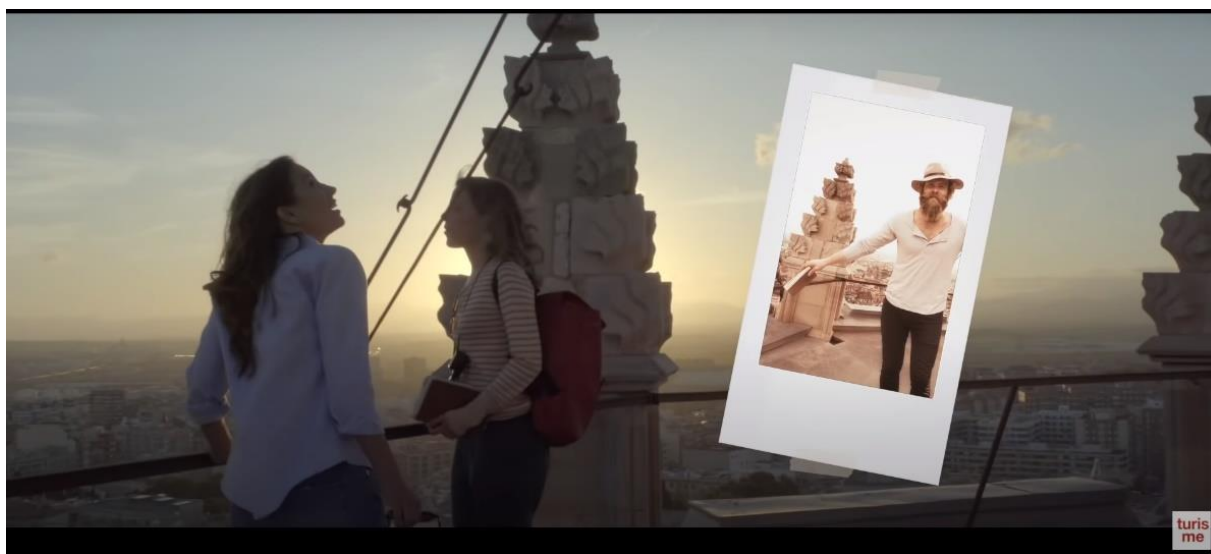
### 3.3 Conclusion & Comparison

As was established when an inventory of salient topics of the video was made based on themes of each sequence, a number of similarities between both media are striking. In the extensive multimodal discourse analysis of this chapter, an elaboration of the major distinctions between the media was realised.

A striking similarity was the corresponding emphasis on the Montserrat mountain range and arguably its centrepiece, the monastery of Santa Maria of Montserrat. According to

Catalunya.com it is one of the greatest symbols of Catalonia. In the promotional video it is where the two girls start their journey through Catalonia after the rendezvous with the street performer in Barcelona. Michael Vargas argues that it is this religious medieval site eminently, that links Catalanism and tourism, ‘where the pulse of Catalan nationalism is most strongly felt’ (2015:47). Both promotional media that were analysed suggest an approximation towards, and identification with, an arguably essentially Catalanist heritage site.

Another outcome of the multimodal discourse analysis is a second striking resemblance between the website and video. Catalonia as a tourist destination is promoted as a keeper of medieval splendour. The degree in which this aspect is emphasised may differ. Catalunya.com presents the region more extensively as a territory composed of charming towns, situated in an essentially Catalan landscape that was commented on in section A. A notable difference between the representation of medieval splendour in both media, is that the medieval charming towns of Catalunya.com resisted urbanism (in the words of that website), while the medieval splendour represented in *La ruta de l'atzar* tends to go more accompanied with urbanisation - as demonstrated in figure 14.



*Figuur 14.* Sequence (5). (2:09). Tarragona. Urbanised panorama from the Gothic Cathedral of Santa Tecla.

Thus, in the promotional video the medievalism seems more assimilated in the contemporary urbanism.

The difference in the way medieval splendour is represented in both promotional products can arguably be considered symptomatic to the way in which the urban environment is exhibited. A notable difference between the media is how the metropolis of Barcelona is



involved in the promotion of Catalonia. It is important to consider that Catalunya.com makes no mention or depiction of Barcelona. On the contrary, the first sequence in the promotional video is set in Barcelona. In the more elaborate analysis, it was argued how Modernism was highlighted as an important aspect of the overall appearance of Barcelona. Notably the *Hospital de Sant Pau* and the Cathedral *Sagrada Familia* both contribute to that representation. Not just their appearance, but also the use of cinematographic techniques to give salience to that representation, were offered as factors that call attention to Modernist art.

The representation of seaside tourism in the promotional video was also notably different in comparison to the website. Figure 11 shows how cultural heritage tourism and the seaside resort tourism as separate categories of tourism, are shaped and reflected into a hybrid version of those two. Barcelona and the sun, sea and sand tourism have commonality in that they are already very much part of an existing representation of Catalonia. The metropolis of Barcelona is the third most popular holiday destination of Europe after London and Paris and is a global tourism powerhouse (Vargas, 2015). While Catalunya.com makes an escape from this usual framework by turning to more provincial heritage that is arguably infused with Catalanism, the promotional video bends that existing representation to a hybrid. The representation of Casals in the context of seaside tourism, is a striking example of this. Moreover, the hipster culture, that is mostly contributing to the point of view and the implied audience of the promotional video, is critically linked to Western urban culture. It is to be considered a subcultural group that finds its origins in city centres during the late 90's early 2000's (Henke, 2013). This image of urbanised culture contrasts with the dominating representation of Catalan mountainous wildlife and charming rural areas that is shaped and reflected through discourse of Catalunya.com.



## Conclusion

The present thesis aimed to analyse a two-component corpus of official promotional material that was commissioned, produced, and published by the *Agència Catalana de Turisme*. By considering theories about the relation between identity construction and cultural heritage tourism, as well as deducing key aspects that make up the communicated Catalan identity through promotion, the research allowed for exploration of the ways in which this tourism board shapes and reflects Catalan identity.

It is certainly true that both Catalunya.com and the promotional video are clear examples of official promotional platforms that capitalise on the increasing global interest in heritage tourism. Simultaneously, the evinced emphatic promotion of this kind of tourism by the ACT, arguably further accelerates, and/or reinforces this process. The accredited *La ruta de l'atzar* narrates overwhelmingly a heritage tourism discourse. Likewise, Catalunya.com, as a general visitor's website, leans towards promoting Catalan heritage as their best product, given the suggestive salient topics that are represented. It has been argued that precisely these tendencies towards given topics, can be understood as a desired narrative of the nation (Hallet, 2010). This narrative is used by governments, in the present case a regional government, to communicate preferred meanings of "local" place (Hollinshead, 2004:26). In this manner, Catalonia is presented to the market as a fundamentally different destination that is unique to the region.

However, the shaping and creating of Catalan identity through promotional material is a two-fold mechanism. Firstly, a given range of signifiers, such as those that were recognised in the present thesis, were found to be constructing and reinforcing a narrative that the Catalan tourism board communicates to profile a Catalanist identity. Secondly, the semiotics of tourism argue that tourists influence in what ways the Catalan identity markers are represented. While the present thesis pointed out the Catalanist characteristics that were communicated through signifiers, it is fundamental to consider that the semiotics of tourism also indicate an agency of the tourists themselves. Given that the argument was made that tourists persist in regarding those signifiers as typically Catalan (Culler, 2007). It was argued that the tourists, in turn, transmit that identity once they return home.

*Catalunya.com* communicated an invitation to experience Catalonia through the wide range of human senses. A tile-display of the table of contents on the main page of the website (figure 1) was found to be indicative in terms of through what topics and themes it should be

experienced. These aspects have had a guiding function in the process of delimiting the discourse of the websites. *Catalunya.com* manifests a remarkable uneven distribution of space and web content dedicated to the people of Catalonia, versus the architecture and (cultural) landscape. The prominent discourse on Catalonia as a nation that owes its mentality to the historical ties with the mountains, is not only reflected in *Catalunya.com*, but was also found to be corresponding with the traditional discourse of the nineteenth century Catalanist movement, the *Renaixença*. Qualifications comparable and equal to ‘symbols of Catalonia’ and ‘bastion of Catalan identity’ are commonly linked to mountainous terrain.

Significantly, Barcelona is hardly represented and therefore of limited influence on the multimodal text of *Catalunya.com*. The assertion is made that one must pay a visit to cities with character if one wants to discover the *essence of Catalonia*. In the present thesis it was demonstrated what characteristics are frequently attributed to the promoted (provincial) cities that form an alternative to the metropolis of Barcelona. Multimodal discourse analysis pointed to a relative salience of Gothic architecture as characteristic to the *essentially* Catalan. It has been argued that the apparent prevalence of identification with Gothicism on *Catalunya.com*, puts the region within a pan-Western European aesthetic framework. Its representation suits within an overarching one that upholds a mystical medieval past. These findings appear in accordance with, and in addition to Michael Vargas’ argument that provincial heritage sites and cities are notably the ones that are more infused with multimodal text that indicate Catalanism (2015:45).

*La ruta de l’atzar* shares striking differences with *Catalunya.com*. It was found that the promotional video offers a more diverse representation in comparison with the website. As opposed to a mystical millennial, old, splendid, and traditionally Catalanist discourse, the representation of the region in *La ruta de l’atzar* is that of a more contemporary and trendier Catalonia. The employment of both *mise-en-scène* and cinematographic filmic techniques, provokes a gaze upon the Modernist wonders that are primarily characteristic to Barcelona. The promotional video, therefore, does not seem to be sensitive to the established discourse of *Catalunya.com* that seems to omit Barcelona. Another substantial distinction is the innovative way in which seaside and beach tourism are seemingly reframed into a potentially cultural heritage tourist activity. A continuity between the legacy of world-renowned cellist Pau Casals, who was outspokenly Catalanist at the 1971 UN council, and the Mediterranean coastline, changes the existing representation of the highly popular *costa* region to a hybrid of cultural heritage and seaside resorts. An emphatic distinction between the website and the video is the

aspect of the point of view. Catalonia openly promotes women as represented participants to travel across the country. Hence, women in the Catalan destination promotion are represented as highly emancipated participants. The mise-en-scène of the female protagonists and the male antagonist suggest that the implied audience of the campaign video is supposedly young, resourceful, and trendy.

The multimodal approach not only revealed what identity markers were prevalent on the website, it also showed how the images evoke the potential visitor to participate in the circle of representation since photography plays a meta-reflexive role. Images are used as the main component to promote and visualise the destination, moreover, photographs of photographers are recurring. The represented participants are frequently seen gazing through lenses of some sort, such as camera's and binoculars. Predicates like *essence*, *charm*, *character*, *uniqueness*, *symbols*, *identity* are most frequently used to characterise cities, villages, and landscape. These characteristics of Catalonia, moreover, can be viewed in a broader traditional Catalanist discourse. Not only the represented participants are seen to gaze at the sites that are depicted in the promotional products. The interactive participants, the consumers of promotional material, become conditioned by the circulating images that are produced (Urry, 2011) on official channels such as Catalunya.com and *La ruta de l'atzar*. The theoretical insight into the role of gazing, contributes to the understanding of the role of promotional material in shaping and reflecting identity.

The theoretical framework of the present thesis attributed the consumers of promotional products the ability to read text, since they are considered agents of semiotics and an important chain in the circle of representation. The present thesis, therefore, offered insights regarding identity markers, implied authors –and audiences. However, it did not account for the 'real audience' (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Additional inquiry to the interpretation of the real audience is acknowledgeably necessary to get a more complete understanding of the interaction between promotional material and the consumers, since there could be discrepancies between the reading of signifiers depending on implied, and indeed real audiences. A discrepancy between the proved implied audience and the real audience, could result in an ineffective promotional campaign. That is to say, the potential tourist is to embrace the 'self' image that is communicated in order to be successful promotion effort (Hallet, 2010). Additionally to the present research, a survey among visitors of Catalonia is recommended, moreover, it would be fruitful to look at visitors of the entirety of Catalan territory. The survey should question the

awareness of Catalanism among tourists as well as the attributed identity markers to it by tourists.

In continuation of this research, it would be relevant to expand on these findings by opting for a multimodal discourse analysis of a wider range of promotional products, such as the virtual reality game that was launched as an innovative promotional tool, *Legends of Catalonia* (2018). Virtual reality (VR) games have not yet been analysed in function of tourism destination promotion, and form a great potential instrument, as emerging VR technology is rapidly expanding in popularity and relevance. Different products can have different implications on the point of view, the implied audience and Catalan identity markers. While this research opted for a qualitative approach, a quantification of the data is considered of potentially added value. While this research focussed on the institutional origin of the promotional products, the *Generalitat* of Catalonia, it would also be relevant to incorporate material from the private Catalan tourist sector to establish how the results relate to one and another. Such incorporation moreover allows for a quantitative analysis, as material is abundant.

The present thesis established that the discourse that is produced by the ACT conveys a considerable degree of arguably Catalan identity markers. The pinpointed identity markers in this research were fruitfully identified on the basis of research about traditional *Renaixença* discourse, scholarly literature and multimodal discourse analysis. Based on the present research, it can be argued that present day discourse in name of the ACT is intertwined with more classic Catalanist values. Complementarily, a contemporary and trendy Catalonia is promoted and consequently, shapes and reflects a continuity of a Catalan identity that dates back to the first modern forms of Catalanism. The discourse of the ACT, then, can arguably be considered an embodiment of Catalan self-awareness that is widespread in Catalan society. While Catalan secessionism clearly manifests itself in the autonomous regional parliament and institutions, it can be maintained that the discourse of the tourist board is not necessarily an extension of this secessionism. Arguably, the official ACT discourse is an important chain in the mechanisms at stake which the present thesis highlighted, that *export* Catalan identity through its prospering tourism sector. Furthermore, the young and vibrant identity markers intertwined with more traditional Catalanism, generate a distinctively Catalanist discourse that can be reconciled with the political reality that coexists and interacts with Catalanist self consciousness.

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