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“Thinking of Spain in a flat way”: Visiting Spain and Spanish cultural heritage through contemporary Japanese anime

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ABSTRACT

This article contextualizes the representation of Spain and Spanish culture among Japanese cultural producers, particularly through the production of Japanese commercial animation (commonly named anime*). Toward that goal, it provides a historical background of Japan-Spain relations within the context of the tourism industry, as well as some examples of the diverse forms of representation within several creative industries. Subsequently, the article reviews the ways in which popular culture has been contributed to national branding. There is special attention to the Spanish case and the proliferation of such images sometimes resulting in the (mis)representation of Spain’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Internationally-distributed anime productions will be examined as a reflection of Spanish national branding on Japanese audiences and this global industry. Three cases among contemporary anime productions (*Nasu: Andarushia no Natsu, *2003*; So・Ra・No・Wo・To, *2010 and* Crayon Shin Chan, *1992-) have been selected due to the combination of fictional and misrepresented Spanish cultural features in their narratives.*

KEYWORDS

Spain; Japan; Japanese Anime; *Fictionality*; Construction; Misrepresentations; National Branding.

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Introduction: The narrative and its role in national branding

Audiences all over the world may differ in the way they perceive a particular country or cultural tradition. Literature, philosophies and popular cultures converge in the creation of mutual images. Individuals of every country tend to think that their own culture is especially influential or popular. We rejoice when we notice reflections of our narratives, our philosophies or our histories that are represented in other countries’ media productions. When the individuals adopt the role of referee, this pleasure might change to annoyance as they judge the accuracy of the representation of their own cultures. In a pure form of essentialism, international audiences assume that there is only one 'true’ way of representing a culture, one that must be faithful to one’s own ‘native’ perception and entails the essence of that culture. Therefore, we usually find

ourselves annoyed or even outraged when of our native culture is portrayed via stereotypical forms. In Spain, where I was born and raised, we have long found being the object of foreign interest to be appealing, even when that interest is critical:

> *(…) The poet did as she bade him, and left her without a shred of reputation, and she was satisfied by getting fame though it was infamy.*
> (In *Don Quixote*, Vol 1 by Miguel de Cervantes, 1605).

However, at heart, not all countries enjoy the same reputation and some of them hardly evoke positive images among international audiences. On the other hand, some countries continue to have a more relevant presence. Accurate sources of a country's reputation may be unclear, as it might be the result of military, economic or cultural influence over decades. In the recent history of the social sciences, concepts such as 'soft power' (Nye 1990) or 'national branding' (Anholt 2013), have reframed the role of culture and national identity, creating a method of comparing nations through a multifactorial index and international rankings.

The role that cultural industry and their productions play in the construction of these international reputations remains ambiguous. Visual media industries (cinema, comics, video games, etc.) are relevant international industries that many countries often promote due to the associated economic benefits. These cultural industries are considered one of the primary avenues through which national images are consolidated among international audiences and markets.

In this article, I propose some core elements for the depiction and understanding of 'Spain' and 'the Spanish' overseas. My hypothesis is that tourism and international media reception share similar processes in the creation of 'desirable images.' In this sense, tourism marketing and, specifically, cognitive approaches (Kim and Perdue 2011; Jetter and Chen 2011; Frías *et al.* 2012) have already produced a considerable amount of research on the relevance of strategies based on this image construction. Also, media studies have addressed these questions through the conflictive aspect of representation/misrepresentation, an aspect that has been discussed extensively in the case of Spanish culture (see, for example, Mestre *et al.* 2008).

These national images can be also discussed on a self-reflexive level, as societies offer space for several national identities and self-constructions. However, in this paper, I will focus exclusively on the construction and reception of images surrounding Spain from a

foreign perspective. That is to say, to consider cognitive, narrative and marketing perspectives, we must be interested in the way these products can evoke different meanings about Spanish cultural heritage among international audiences. As I explore in this article, in the case of Japanese animation movies, Spanish identity is constructed around particular Spanish regional visual identities, such as the Andalusian.

Other relevant aspects of Japanese media and its representation of Spain address the role of *fictionality* in the construction of these narratives. Fiction cannot be isolated from any kind of representational form, and communicational genres (advertising, news, entertainment, etc.) present significant variability in the way they incorporate narrative features and construct representations of reality and fiction. For example, a commercial adopting a form of storytelling would not be considered a fictional genre because, even when representing a false reality, their communicational purpose is clearly different from other common fictional genres in visual media, such as movies. Some authors have employed the term '*Fictionality*' (Gjerlevsen 2016; Zhao 2011), in order to delimitate this aspect within genres and differentiate these forms from the more comprehensive 'narrative,' which may include non-fictional constructions.

As I will show for both the media and tourism industries, Spain is, for Japanese audiences and markets, a desirable destination where *fictionality* plays an essential role in the representation of spaces and cultural artefacts. This *fictionality* includes also the depiction of some intangible elements of Spanish culture such as rites and traditions. Media and tourism (promotional) images produced for Japanese audiences construct a similar image of Spain and the Spanish. In order to support this idea, I will review previous research in the tourism sphere, attending to the special case of Japanese inbound tourism to Spain and representations of the Spanish through international visual media for entertainment. As anime is the Japanese visual industry with the largest presence in international markets, I will explore some examples of these processes through the study of three contemporary Japanese anime productions.

Representations of Spain and the Spanish in the Japanese visual media industries

Constructions of Spain and the Spanish through media and tourism images

In the past, there have been several attempts to measure the influence of a country. These methods are usually of some complexity and based on multiple factors and interactions. For example, the *Anholt-GfK Nation Brand Index* (GFK, 2017) incorporates six dimensions in its survey: governance, exports, tourism, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, and people. While influence is something other than the projected image of a country in terms of relevance and valence (positive, negative or neutral), I assume that reputation is an essential component. Other components may not be directly related to reputation (i.e. two countries can be important exporters of a commodity without being equally reputed as producers). In this sense, both its tourism industry's success and its cultural exports may be a direct reflection of the appeal and the reputation of a country, to some extent. Other studies on Spain's image in Japan have considered human (Japanese people living in or visiting Spain), economic (imports, exports) and cultural factors (Spanish arts and language) (Noya 2004, 42).

Reports from Spanish tourism agencies and Japanese institutions present some differences. Regarding Spanish institutions (Instituto de Turismo de España 2016 & 2013), Japan was the most important market for the Asian continent in 2012, in terms of expenditure and number of visitors. Japanese daily expenditure was greater than any other international visitor (317 euros per day), although this started a negative trend (Instituto de Turismo de España 2013, 147). While numbers have been increasing moderately since 2009, Spain seemed to reach its maximum popularity at the end of the decade, when 1.2 million Japanese visitors travelled to Spain (JTB Tourism Research 2017). While Spain may not be the favourite destination in Europe for the Japanese, it still has relevant numbers. Regarding data from the Japan National Tourism Organization from 2010, there was a huge increase of Japanese visitors in 2010 (up to 44%). It was, despite significant annual variations, the third-most visited country in Europe during the period between 2010-2014, following Germany and France (Japan National Tourism Organization 2017).

Spanish agencies describe the Japanese visitor as a 'cosmopolitan tourist' (Instituto de Turismo de España 2016, 25). The category is defined by several interests, including 'cultural tourism, gastronomy and shopping.' This description seems to fit with

previous evidence on the motivations of Japanese travellers, who seek out historic buildings, nice weather, high hygiene standards, availability of pre-trip information, personal safety, diversity of shopping areas, good public transportation and inexpensive restaurants, among other factors (You *et al.* 2000). A study from ElCano Institute (Noya 2004, 276) summarized the attraction of Spain as its monumental buildings (74%), culture and traditions (74%), and good cuisine (70%).

Moreover, it is necessary to state that Japanese tourism not only covers aspects of tangible heritage but also intangible cultural heritage, to use the UNESCO classification. Therefore, I refer here to both cultural artefacts and their use, the rituals, which are usually linked to the existence of communities that practice those skills. While they can be constructed through representations and mediatized, they are supposed to be reproduced through imitation and not free interpretation. Understanding this intangible cultural heritage provides an avenue for other cultural knowledge and memorable encounters, a part of the touristic experience that is common all over the world, not unique to Japanese tourists. However, some scholars nevertheless project a spiritual meaning onto the Japanese tourist's experience and identify Japanese curiosity as an international singularity: 'flamenco acts as an art derivative of Zen and provides a deep experience that becomes part of personal identity' (Vidal González 2008, 808).

As mentioned, tourism is an industry with strong implications in the arts and culture sector, which is considered another main area related to the construction of national branding (Ahn and Wu 2015, 162). Thus, narratives of tourism can share traits with other narratives about a nation, such as the characteristics exported through other cultural industries. As an example, Rodao (2001) has pointed out the work of Osamu Takeda, who resides in Spain and is the author of *Los 100 pueblos más bellos de España* (lit. *The most 100 beautiful villages in Spain*), a travel guide published in Japan in 1999. Takeda is a journalist and entrepreneur who contributes to publications released by the Japanese and Spanish Commercial Chamber. He is also the author of other books about Spanish history, language and culture.[1] In summary, he is a relevant figure who has contributed significantly to the promotion of Spain and particularly Andalusia. Conflating Spanish and Andalusian cultural iconography is a constant in the creation of

[1] *Don kihōte no kuni kara — todokō nishi 20 yū yonen no nihonjin ga mita Supein* (1991), lit. *From the Don Quixote of the country - 20-odd years of Japanese memories from Spain* and *Supeinjin to nihonjin, or Spanish and Japanese* (1993).

local and transnational images of Spain since the eighteenth century. This has its origin in the Peninsular War (1808-1814) and the subsequent restoration of the Bourbons. With the French occupation and the imposition of French high culture, Spaniards reacted by embracing vernacular culture, specifically the indigenous Andalusian culture, also known as '*majismo*' (Josephs 1983). This romanticist trend is linked with other traditions such as the '*toreo*' (bullfighting) and 'flamenco' dance also popular in that area. It is no coincidence that since then, foreign literature started to equate '*majismo*' and its iconography with the whole of Spanish identity. In particular, *maja* dress, the typical female costume, was popularized through stage productions, ballet performances and Bizet's opera *Carmen*, which helped to strengthen this association (Worth and Sibley 1994, 51).

Visual media industries are key components in the construction of identities mainly because of their global reach and economic importance. Although the Spanish film industry has a limited economic impact, it still has some international prestige. Spanish directors (Almodóvar, Medem, Amenábar, etc.) are highly appreciated overseas and have assured Spanish presence at international festivals and other commercial circuits. Filmmaker can embrace nation's societal values but also react to particular aspects of his/her society. An example of this could be Pedro Almodóvar, who has created most of his imaginary through the deconstruction of Spanish iconicity (passionate lovers, catholic nuns, *el matador*...).

Some studies have argued that films can work as an unofficial form of touristic promotion. In this regard, three types of films have been distinguished: *iconic films*, *pastiches* and *tourist poster films* (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 185). These are films in which the discursive object is Spain, independent of the nationality of the producers or filmmakers. These categories also include some works that depend on the support of Spanish institutions and/or regions. In this classification, both iconic films and pastiches work as representations of the cultural values of Spain that we might call 'intangible heritage'. They seem to differ, however, in the coherence and quality of this representation. Iconic films are supposed to "arise from the deep knowledge of the country and their people that the filmmaker has" (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 186). In contrast, pastiche films mix cultural artefacts and spaces without an established sociological or historical context. It has been argued that *Mission Impossible II* (2000) is a good example of `pastiche´ film (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 189). In fact, the movie alters the

meaning and iconography of several Spanish traditions (including Holy Week in Sevilla and Fallas of Valencia), and it mixes artefacts and spaces from different parts of the country (north, east and south) as though the narration had taken place in a single region. Finally, poster films include in their narratives' landscapes and scenarios from an identifiable region, and scholars argue that in comparison to iconic films and pastiches, these may work better as a form of "publicity" (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 191).

The problem with this classification is it confuses the definition of iconic films as an essentialist representation of Spain with the strength or popularity of this representation of the Spanish culture overseas. For example, most of the representations of Spain should be classified in this system under the pastiche label, a condition that inherently relates to their non-Spanish origins. The main exception seems to be Almodóvar's films which can be classified as iconic films (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 188). However, while Almodóvar's films create a strong and consistent image of Spanish culture (bullfighters, passionate lovers), that image might be considered by many Spaniards (including myself) an inaccurate representation of Spanish culture and society that is ideologically biased and more a parody than an ethnographic portrait.

This classification based on the real Spain versus the misrepresented Spain is unclear, and in fact, the authors acknowledge that all the films might mix elements of the three categories (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 186); so, purely iconic films might not actually exist for Spain. The definition of fictionality that underpins this classification is also unclear. It is assumed (Mestre *et al.* 2008, 186) that cinema establishes new realities when in fact, as I argued before, *fictionality* is an agreement between the audience and the creator. If movies can be considered a form of persuasion (assuming that kind of pure communication exists), their effectiveness is not due to their level of verisimilitude, but rather to their emotional properties. More specifically, the audience's emotional involvement with the film drives their tourism experience (Kim 2012, 387).

Once again, Spain has a clear and distinguished national brand, as tourism is the main industry in the country, generating 10.2 percent of its GDP in 2016 (World Travel & Tourism Council 2017). There is a large amount of scholarship production about this topic and consequently, Spanish scholars have already focused on the most specific features of Japanese tourism in Spain.

Gómez Aragón (2013) studied the phenomenon of international long-distance tourism, with special mention of the Japanese case. The findings of her work emphasize the global

relevance of tourism not only as an industry but also as a necessity, which is rooted in the creation and re-creation of cultural identities. Thus, the consumption of a foreign culture is always producing other forms of culture, in unique and unrepeatable experiences, as tourism is a performance. However, these travel experiences are usually developed in a controlled environment. As described by this scholar (Gomez-Aragon 2013), as well as other Spanish institutions (Noya 2004), the majority of Japanese tourists visiting Spain hire Japanese travel agencies. Their trips consist of short visits to urban areas where they do a small number of overnight stays in high-quality accommodations. Through these practices, Japanese tourists attempt to minimize the associated cultural impact of travelling, constructing what has been described as a 'cultural bubble' (Gómez Aragón 2008, 14). The motives and conditions of the Japanese tourism industry can be also explored through local theme parks and their narratives. These spaces successfully combine the concept of a 'national cultural image' and recreational bubbles to offer a unique space experience that aims to simulate touristic travel. *Gaikoku mura* or foreign villages are quite common in Japan. Around the country, local tourists can visit domestic versions of Germany (*Gliiks Königreich*), *The Canadian World*, Denmark (*Marine Park Xixe*), *Tazawako Swiss Village*, Russia (*Rosilla Mura* or 'Russian village') and the Netherlands (*Iluis ten Bosch One*), among others. While having some features in common with other theme parks such as those found in the U.S., some scholars differentiate these from postmodern interpretations of Disneyland theme parks and connect them with pre-existing Japanese traditions such as botanical gardens and international exposition fairs (Hendry 2000).

The *Supein Mura* (lit. *Spanish Village in Shima*), was opened in 1993 in the city of Shima (Mie prefecture). This resort, with hotels and geothermal baths, contains numerous references to major Spanish cities and monuments such as the Alhambra from Granada or the Plaza Mayor in Madrid. Gómez-Aragón (2011, 167) has pointed out how the visual identity and artefacts of the park can be assimilated into Spain´s national image as constructed by the Japanese, with references to national colours, typical musical genres and even terms associated with the Spanish brand. Other elements of this park aim directly at the existence of fictional narratives. A literary figure such as *El Quixote* here acquires, not surprisingly, the form of a mascot, an ambassador of the park. Finally, the conclusion of Gomez-Aragon is that these

distortions and adaptations of the image of the Spanish are common to the narrative offered in tourist texts, such as brochures promoting Spain as a destination.

Like the earlier examples, the *Supein Mura* case shows how the motivations of tourists can be reflected in tangible and intangible aspects of their cultural consumption. The park not only offers a synthetic image of Spain's cultural artefacts but also tries to offer to the visitor the experience of a real visit to Spain. In this, gastronomy plays an essential role, because 'tasting new flavours' is usually one of the main pleasures searched by those aforementioned 'cosmopolitan' tourists.

Certainly, this space offers a simplified and distorted view of the cultural reality of Spain. It would be impossible not to do so, since creating a condensed experience necessarily involves skewed portrayal. Yet in this cross-cultural adaptation, it is the visitor who has the responsibility of 'contextualizing' this information. Representations of Spain in *Supein Mura* work in consonance with other representations of Spain in Japanese society, whether they are related to Spanish literature, traditions or spaces. All together, these representations conform to the image of Spain held by Japanese tourists. A visit is an act of reading that does not depend entirely on the text.

Another main highlight in the case of *Supein Mura* is what Gomez-Aragon (2011) calls 'bubbles,' which can be understood as a form of 'domestication.' The concept of domestication is derived from translation studies and designates strategies adopted to reduce the 'strangeness' of the original text (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997, 44). The use of the domestication is quite appropriate in the case of *Supein Mura*. In this case, it is not merely terms but rather cultural forms that must be reproduced in a way that is understandable to the target local audience. The most unsafe or uncomfortable elements are adapted to Japanese taste, without sacrificing the exotic appeal of the foreign culture. That is the case for gastronomy in the park. The use of spices, the size of the portions, and the lack of Spanish native ingredients illustrate the way that dishes are often domesticated for local taste. In *Supein Mura*, musical performances are also a product of this process. Despite being inspired by Spanish dances (in this case, possibly *jota* and *flamenco*), they acquire here the form of group dances while also incorporating theatrical speeches and remixes of J-pop music.

Dimensions of Japanese perceptions of Spain

Having considered the conditions and the agents involved in the construction of national images through both the tourism and the media industries, I will establish some dimensions of the national image of Spain abroad. I'm working here under the assumption that cultural industries share common representational tools with Media Industry. Therefore, in the study of a specific cultural product, such as anime, we may be able to find a strong interest in cultural and urban elements. These should not be understood as merely iconographic approaches but also as performances and experiences. That is, we should be able to find examples of representations, even if they are biased, simplified or caricatured, of other forms of tangible and intangible heritage. Participation in rituals is a symbolic form of complex nature, and therefore a tendency to de-contextualize can also be expected. Examples of this are portrayals of the worlds of bullfighting and flamenco. I expect to find examples of these traditions due to their international appeal. Other examples may also appear, although they might not be as idiosyncratic to Spanish heritage, that are part of a shared heritage (i.e. religious rituals such as Catholic weddings can be found in the representations of other countries with Catholic backgrounds).

Secondly, representations of iconic Spanish landscapes, including both rural and urban settings may be found on anime text representing Spanish culture. According to previous research on the representation of the most iconic Spanish landscapes including rural and urban locations, the most appealing locations for media products are typically those associated with Toledo, Madrid, Barcelona and the south of Spain (Andalucía), as they are the main regions of interest for Japanese tourism (Noya 2004, 43). Depending on the combination of tangible and intangible elements, these media products may fall within the category of poster films or iconic films (Mestre et al 2008). Also, as may be expected, some of them will present a de-contextualized space and/or misrepresentation of cultural artefacts. These products may fit into the category of pastiche films.

Finally, in terms of *fictionality*, images related to other fictional discourses can be expected. Traditional and conventional anime genres can also affect the way in which content is constructed. If speeches around tourism are a part of the whole genre family (Calvi 2010), we may have to confront some examples of genre hybridization together with other, more discrete genre forms of anime.

Case Studies

So far, I have shown a number of examples in relation to images of Spain as a tourist destination in different international media forms, including film, theme parks and travel literature. Examining all of them with the necessary rigour is beyond the scope of this text. Moreover, I do not want to focus on the issue of effectiveness in creating these images, because my goal is to study their narratives, regardless of the usefulness of that form (official or otherwise) for the purpose of tourism marketing. However, of all industries and professional sectors related to Japanese popular culture, anime is one that deserves a deeper exploration.

Japanese animation may offer the most possibilities regarding a national image's reflection in Japanese popular media narratives. Anime is a relevant multinational industry that offers through narrative a unique combination of cross-cultural and cross-media elements (Hernández-Pérez 2017). Most of anime TV productions are adaptations from manga (Japanese comic) which offer a huge thematic diversity that it offers, despite being strongly determined by its subgenre (i.e. *shonen*[2]*, shojo*[3]*,* etc.). This is a feature inherited in the case of Japanese anime adaptations of manga, the most common form of anime for TV. These anime productions usually explore different settings for their stories as a way to create appealing stories with a certain exoticism. Spain is just one of the landscapes and narratives that have been explored through Japanese popular culture[4]. Some of these adaptations adopt the form of historical tales with backgrounds based in Spanish history. *Taiyo no ko Esteban* (1982) or *The Mysterious Cities of Gold*, produced by NHK (Japan), Antenne 2 (France-Luxembourg) and Studio Pierrot, introduces the Spanish boy Esteban and his adventures with other *conquistadores*, set during Francisco Pizarro's expedition in 1532. *Ritoru Eru Shido no bouken* (1983), translated as a *The Little Cid*, is a free interpretation of the childhood of the famous historical Spanish character. This production was the result of an agreement between Nippon Animation and the Spanish BRB International, which included other titles for their co-production and European distribution (Santiago

[2] (Lit. "boys") Manga magazines addressed to male teenager audiences, between 14 and 18 years-old but actually consumed by all kinds of audiences.

[3] (Lit. "young woman") Manga magazines addressed to female teenager audiences, between 14 and 18 years-old.

[4] This may not be a relevant number, if we compare it with the amount of productions portraying elements from German or English culture and literature. See Deninson (2010) for a commentary on the relevance of Victorian English heritage to Japanese popular culture.

Iglesias and Hernández-Pérez, WORKING PAPER). Although the style of the animation and the design of personages corresponds with the framework of the industry of that time, *The Little Cid* story was written by the Spanish company. In a private interview, Claudio Biern, creator justified its apocryphal character: ¨There is no information at all about El Cid´s childhood so we could really do whatever we wanted¨. However, according to the author, the series was documented rigorously in terms of locations, buildings and custom design.

While the aforementioned case might warrant closer study, in this study I have opted for the analysis of more recent case studies. The reason for this is these three selected cases were produced after the Spanish touristic boom in the 1990s. In this sense, they also offer potential commentary through their narratives, in relation to the topics studied in this paper, including the mixture of national branding, *fictionality* and how stereotypical representations work in the construction of Spanish identity overseas.

Crayon Shin-chan (1992-)

Of all the Spanish cities, it is certainly Barcelona that has managed to export its image in a more recognizable way in cultural productions around the world. As a backdrop, Barcelona has shone through the years, mainly in the video game world with productions such as *Tony Hawk Pro Skater* (2000), *Tekken Tag Tournament* 2 (2001) and *The Wheelman* (2009), among others. Japanese anime has also contributed to the exportation of an image of Barcelona that is usually rendered around Gaudi's architecture, mainly the Sagrada Familia and Parque Güell. The franchise and particularly the anime *Trinity Blood* (2005) depicts a post-apocalyptic Barcelona. Recently in manga, Hanazawa's *I am a hero* (2009-2017), a post-apocalyptic story about zombies published by Shogakugan, portrays the city in two of its chapters (217, 218).

However, in the case of the *Crayon Shin-chan* anime, the representation of Barcelona goes beyond the creation of poster films or the (mis-) representation of spaces. In these cartoons, the authors create a portrait (whether it is accurate or not) of both customs and people.

Shin-chan was created in 1992 by Usui Yoshito and began to be published in *Manga Weekly Action* (Futabasha Publishers). The story constructs an acid portrait of Japanese society through the Noharas, a local family residing in Kasukabe, Saitama prefecture. Stories are structured around the eldest of their children, Shinnosuke (Shin Chan), a

naughty five-year-old who is somewhat rude but always much too honest. The story can be, in this sense, a reflection of the social norms and how these regulations usually enter in conflict with our natural instincts. The franchise continues to generate stories even after the author's death in 2009, through the work of his team of assistants at Futabasha and other anime producers.

The franchise is one of the great successes of Japanese anime in the Spanish market over the last years. Its story is not so different from another TV anime. It followed the classic Japanese model of a transmedia franchise, and both manga and anime were exported to the West. However, in few other countries as geographically distant from Japan has *Shin-chan* achieved the success and social impact that it has had in Spain.

In Spain, fifteen *Shin-chan* feature films have been released, four of them cinematically. This is quite relevant as, in Spain, only franchises that target younger audiences, like *Pokémon* or *Doraemon*, have managed to dominate the domestic and film markets (Santiago Iglesias and Hernández-Pérez, WORKING PAPER). TV anime has been broadcast since 2000, having passed through different regional and national TV stations. The Catalan market has been particularly important since the release of the anime. The publication of the manga was relaunched with the success of the anime and had editions released in Catalan and Spanish. In 2000, the anime distributor Luk International opted for the cinematographic release of the first feature film of the franchise in 2000 (*Crayon Shin-chan: Pursuit of the Balls of Darkness*, 1997). In an unusual decision, this included also a version dubbed in Catalan for regional cinemas, which reveals the engagement of these audiences with the series.

On 29th May 2004, *Shin-chan* visited Barcelona on Japanese TV. It was episode 501 of the series, and was titled "*Ōra, Supein ryokō dazo*" or "Hola! Hey, I'm travelling to Spain". The plot, according to comments posted on amateur forums, can be considered a combination of other manga stories including his trip to the island of Owai and South Korea. In fact, this process of recycling by combining several narrative elements for the creation of new plots is not uncommon in manga-to-anime adaptations (Hernandez-Perez 2017). The resulting story presents Shin-chan and his family on a visit to the city as a prize for a drawing organized by an anti-odour foot insole brand. At first, they are received by Carmen, a Spanish guide and later joined by Ushito Yoshii, an anagram of manga author Usui Yoshito who also works for the publishing company Futabasha and a secondary character in the series. Yoshii, Shin-chan and Shin-chan's father compete

for the attention of Carmen while they visit Barcelona. During a day trip, Shin-chan gets lost and is hosted by a local family, until eventually he is found by the group.

This was not the last time the character visits Barcelona. On 11th November 2013, TV Asahi released the episode "*Supein de otakara getto dazo*" or "Hey, we found a Spanish treasure". Unlike the first visit, in this case the story was the adaptation of a manga issue, published in 2008. The plot brings the family back to the capital, after winning (again) a contest. This time, instead of Carmen the family is received by Marc Bernabé[5], who speaks with a Japanese regional accent from Kansai, where he spent some years working. The episode then continues with the search for Gaudi's treasure in Parc Güell, although unfortunately, this happens to be just an advertising campaign. Bernabé, who had a good relationship with Usui, explains the story of his cameo on his own blog (Bernabé 2008 & 2013).

The first discussed episode t has more interest for our study, at least in terms of a "poster film". A number of clearly recognizable tourist areas of the city are presented as part of the group's day trip, including the Columbus statue, Las Ramblas, the Sagrada Familia and Parc Güell. This a contextualized representation since they are real spaces and (despite the limitations of the anime style) quite realistic. It is not surprising that the Sagrada Familia and Parc Güell work as focal points of this representation of Barcelona. The so-called "*Barcelona posa't guapa*" (lit. "Barcelona, get pretty") urban restoration campaigns carried out between 1986 and 1999 were aimed at preserving and strengthening the modernist image of the city, which became the main theme for tourism discourse (Smith 2005). This representation also combines fictional spaces such as the hotel or the restaurant ("La Catalunya").

More relevant is the representation of other intangible aspects of Spanish cultural heritage, such as the performing arts and its gastronomy. In the restaurant scene, the characters dance flamenco with Spanish guitar music. Shin-chan joins the dance carrying a rose in his mouth, although it is Carmen the Spanish woman who leads while his mother exclaims "Oh, 'real flamenco'". At the end of the day, the experiences portrayed by the Nohara family are similar to those of the average tourist. Like any other tourist, Hiroshi, Shin-Chan's father, comments on how good the cured ham and wine are. The representation of Spain is not so much a realistic depiction as a constructed space for

[5] Marc Bernabé (Barcelona, 1976-) is a Japanese-Spanish and Japanese-Catalan translator and one of the main figures in Manga distribution and popularization in Spain.

tourism. This text is addressed to an audience that seeks coherence with the predefined image of a particular national brand. There are some examples of this: in the hotel room of the artist Usuto Yoshii we can see an alarm clock next to a bullfighter and a bull; and the Spanish families seem to eat paella on a daily basis. The response of the Japanese family is kind and full of curiosity. In the episode, the Nohara family speaks some words in Spanish, like "*buenas noches*" or "*adiós*", and even in Catalan. In this other official language, which is also spoken in Barcelona, Shin-chan says "*culet culet*" (lit. "little ass"), an adaptation of his catch-phrase, and qualifies the paella as モルボ (*morubo*), the Japanese adaptation of "*molt bo*" (lit. "very good"). Finally, aspects related to the psychology and personality of the Spanish people are reflected in the episode. Particularly the character of Carmen, who is clearly friendly and proactive in social dealings, which closely aligns with the description other studies have done on Japanese perceptions of Spanish people (Noya 2004).

Nasu: Andarushia no Natsu (2003)

Among the examples studied, this might be the case that best represents the fusion of fictional narrative with the stereotypical representation of the Spanish national image by a Japanese media product. *Nasu: Andarushia no Natsu* (2003) is an anime adapted from one of the arcs of Kuroda Iō's manga *Nasu* (2000). Kuroda's work is a choral story in which a number of characters are linked by a common component: the eggplant (which is also the original title of this work in Japanese). Cultivation and elaboration of eggplant recipes allow a symbolic reading through different, apparently unconnected stories. Eggplant is a humble vegetable, usually presented as a side dish. It is described by one character as a thankless fruit and the result of much effort and dedication. More precisely, the stories collected in this short work offer a contrast between characters, with some choosing to sacrifice while others choose more short-term happiness and an easier life. The work was collected in only three volumes (twenty-four chapters). This is not extraordinary in comparison to other *seinen*[6] compilations, which are typically shorter than *shōnen* series; but in this case, the series was cut due to lack of success and was cancelled before the release of the film. While it may be a risk to draw conclusions, it can be argued that the majority of its stories have the same fatalistic tone, usually in

[6] (lit. "youth") Manga magazines addressed to male adult audiences, older than 18 years-old.

the form of unconsummated love relationships, with few exceptions of more self-conclusive slice of life comedies.

One of these stories tells us about the sacrifice of Pepe Benengeli, a young Spanish man who make sacrifices in his personal life for a long career in cycling. The story takes place in one of the stages of the '*Vuelta a España*'[7] that is taking place near his town, during the same day as the wedding of his former girlfriend Carmen to Pepe's older brother. The link here with the symbolic narrative engine of the series is the pickled eggplant recipe, so typical of the area of Almagro, Castilla-la Mancha, and also in southern Spain. Kuroda employs pages of volume two of his work to explain the recipes, and acknowledges that all his knowledge of Spain comes from Japanese books.

On the other hand, the anime offers more possibilities for exploration in relation to this research. *Nasu: Andarushia no Natsu* (2003) was produced by Madhouse and directed by Kōsaka Kitarō. The film, which is medium-length with only 47 minutes of run-time became the first anime to be officially selected for the Cannes film festival in the history of the festival[8] (Mes and Kōsaka 2003). An amateur cyclist, Kōsaka knew how to fill the composition with large groups of characters (the so-called '*Pelotón*') as it is usually shown in TV cycling spectacles. He also succeeds in time management, conveying the duration of cycling stages (usually hours) by combining it with the use of the flashback.

The portrayal of Spain and the Spanish, especially the landscapes, acquires a realistic tone in this anime. In this sense, the film is successful as a poster film due to the realism of accurate Andalusian scenery. Kōsaka's realistic depiction, which resembles TV sporting event broadcasting, covers the landscapes located between Malaga and Córdoba. The director acknowledges how this attempt at realism was constrained by the requirements of the fictional genre,

> I decided to make the image of the area slightly more spacious in the film because it would allow the viewer to focus on the action without being distracted by the landscape too much. I wanted to remain true to reality of course, but above all, I wanted to focus on the characters, so this is the only sacrifice we made with regards to capturing reality. (Mes and Kōsaka 2003)

[7] An annual cycling race consisting of several stages. It is arguably the most important event in the world of cycling after the *Tour de France* and *Il Giro d'Italia.*

[8] Kōsaka is a recognized figure in the anime industry, who has been linked to many important projects in the past, including some Miyazaki Hayao films (i.e. *Princess Mononoke* and *Spirited Away*), as an animation director.

The use of colour played a significant role in achieving these levels of credibility. It is, for example, a core element in the creation of fake brands, so common of this sport.[9] Anime's visual style also contributes, through its bright and vivid palette, to recreating the warm weather common in the south of Spain.

While the representation of space is quite realistic, it is less clear that the portrayal of the characters can succeed in maintaining that level of verisimilitude. Here Kōsaka's adaptation is faithful to the manga. The choice of Spain as the setting, however, is an arbitrary fact that turns out to be the biggest advantage (and probably the greatest justification) for the subsequent anime adaptation, as it represents a desirable tourist destination. Pepe's story is one of sacrifice, with a strong inclination to nostalgia and character-driven drama, which is not unusual in the context of the manga industry. We must remember that *Nasu* is after all a *seinen,* or a manga for adults, and this sports story is just one of the many ways in which the author paints a bigger canvas.

However, there is no doubt that Spain and the Spanish are also the discursive objects. The story connects Pepe's goals to his past and in that sense, also to locations and people from his hometown. In this way, the script chooses a typical south Spanish location ('Bar Hernandez') to bring the family and friends together.

In opposition to the recreation of Spanish locations, which is quite accurate in the film, the representation of intangible heritage presents a succession of clichés of southern Spain. These ascribe a more international and recognizable form, but at the same time, they offer an inaccurate portrait. For example, it is relatively uncommon (while not rate) to eat paella in the south of Spain, which is actually an East/Mediterranean meal. Other depictions are just comic relief but may conceal the domestication of Spanish cultural signs. For example, Spanish people do not drink wine directly from the bottle. This can be an example of domestication as in the restaurants and pubs of some Asian countries (Japan, South Korea), beer can be served and drunk from large bottles. The bride and groom dancing flamenco at their wedding is also quite revealing, as it connects with the iconicity of flamenco as a main component of the image of the Spanish overseas. Other postcards are more related to the depiction of the cycling world and particularly '*La Vuelta*', offering common recycled images from these

[9] Multiples references are made by the author of the manga, explaining which real cycling teams inspired the story. He also dedicated a couple of pages to the Spanish figure of Oscar Sevilla (1979), who worked for the Kelme-Costa Blanca team (Kelcio in the manga) in *Nasu*, volume two.

events (i.e. excited onlookers, The Devil[10] of the Tour de France) in a montage with other Andalusian postcards (i.e. a *cortijo* or typical southern Spanish house, the shepherd and his sheep, etc.).

These examples are not intended to be evidence of accuracy or inaccuracy. Here, defining the Spanish culture is not the issue, but rather how genre conventions (such as those of sports TV or *seinen* anime) and *fictionality* drive the creation of images of Spain and the Spanish. In that sense, the story aspires to be an iconic film by trying to capture an image from 'Andalusia', and it uses depictions of intangible heritage such as gastronomy or music by presenting them as typical, or at least portrays them more frequently than they actually are used. This sense of 'real Andalusia' is also explicitly stated in the dialogue. As real natives, characters talk with a sense of belonging and are even protective in relation to their culture ('Look at me, this is the right way of eating pickled eggplants' or 'If you are a true Andalusian cat you should dance like this'). With this, they show a weird nationalism that might be more a reflection of what Japanese people think 'proud' citizens would say than of authentic Spanish/Andalusian feelings.

In conclusion, a 'Spanish national image' results from *Andalusia no Natsu*, and this image is built through other texts. In this case, there is the clear influence of other narratives (the tourist speech) over a fictional form (anime). Its deep visual research shaped also the form of touristic film posters. The iconic film label fails due to its inherent subjectivity and its attempt to encapsulate an essentialist form of (Spanish) culture. The film cannot be considered a 'pastiche' due to the high level of its production and art direction which construct a coherent Spanish space. However, this film might be considered an indication of the high number of *clichés* surrounding southern Spanish culture. In that sense, in relation to representation of intangible heritage there's a kind of anthropological pastiche).

So · Ra · No · Wo · To (*Sora no woto* 2010)

So · Ra · No · Wo · To (lit. *Sound of the Sky*) was an anime created by A-1 Pictures and Aniplex that premiered in 2010. The plot revolves around Sorami Kanata, who wants to become a cornet player and enlists in the army with this goal. The story takes place

[10] Dieter "Didi" Senft is a German fan known for his performances dressed as a red devil during competitions.

in the imaginary city of Seize, where she meets Kazumiya Rio, her instructor, and the rest of the squad members.

The uniqueness of this case is in the way the creators combine a fantastic story-world with a particular location, inspired by a realistic landscape replicating the most famous spots in the city of Cuenca (Spain).[11] The narrative of the series points to an idealized past in a fictional fantasy genre scenario. Seize is part of a post-apocalyptic world, one of the remaining safe points amidst a background of everlasting war. This idea of 'sanctuary' is reinforced by the medieval architecture of the city as well as the plot. The story develops very slowly over thirteen episodes, which concentrate on main turning points that occur at the very end. There is a focus on the personal intimacy of its characters, in this case, the daily life of a military brass band.

The inspiration provided by the Spanish city is anything but subtle, and in fact, this was actually acknowledged by the authors. In October 2011, Cuenca's Chamber of Commerce gave Aniplex Inc./Sony Music the Honorary Award for the Promotion of Cuenca City. In response, the producer of the anime sent a recording accepting the award. In the message, the producer explained how, in March 2009, the team did a tour in the area over four days in order to locate areas around Cuenca's old city centre and Paradores de Alarcón.[12] As stated by Yokoyama (Cámara de Comercio de Cuenca, 2011):

> (...)The reason why Cuenca was chosen is because of the scriptwriter; Hiroyuki Yoshino showed us a DVD that featured world architecture and we were very amazed by Cuenca's wonderful architecture: "Casas Colgadas".

The success of *So · Ra · No · Wo · To* connects with other occasions in which the media representations influences the audience directly, eliciting other forms of transmedia consumption. This phenomenon has been named "Media Pilgrimage" and has been studied in other forms of popular culture, although serial forms seem to stimulate greater emotional engagement (Crouch *et al.* 2005). Anime and manga tourism are phenomena that have already been explored, although most cases are linked to tourism to Japanese locations depicted in anime (Seaton and Yamamura 2015) or places relevant

[11] Interestingly, this is not the first Japanese animation inspired by Cuenca. The theatrical movie *Tales of Vesperia: The First Strike* (2009) also features backgrounds depicting the city.

[12] It is still unclear why the pseudonym "*Paradores*" (Spanish word for "inns", but also name of the most famous old hotel in the area, an ancient castle from the twelfth century) was used in the credits of the manga version.

to *otaku* culture, such as Akihabara, which are promoted by national and local institutions (Sabre 2016). In the case of Cuenca, tours were managed by specialized Japanese agencies that started to notice how Cuenca became more in demand as a touristic destination after the success of the series. This resulted in bringing more than 4,000 Japanese visitors to the city (an increase of 48% from 2009), following the launch of the series (Hosteltur 2012). Through the series, the image of Cuenca is framed in a fictional setting, but it is not out of context. Characters develop throughout the story in a perfectly recognisable environment that includes St. Paul's Bridge, Bezudo Arch, Alarcón Castle, Ronda del Júcar viewpoint, and the landscape of the Julian Romero area, among other neighbourhoods. The scenes set in Cuenca are so abundant and so faithfully rendered that one could say that the series is 'shot' in the city [13] as if it were live-action.

There is no space here to discuss the intentional representation or misrepresentation of Spain in the line of icon films. As far as the series is framed on the fantasy genre, we are discussing *fictionality.* Moreover, it is difficult to argue that the series promotes in any sense an image of national identity. On the contrary, here the Spanish identity is actually hidden by the iconicity of a single space, the charm of a charismatic city that connects with the aforementioned 'poster films.' Only these well-known spaces are recognizable as part of tangible Spanish heritage. Yet, despite not being an image of national identity, the sense of this storytelling works perfectly from a tourist perspective, similar to the way it is portrayed in poster films. Journalistic sources describe groups of Japanese tourists taking photocopies of the anime on their visits to Cuenca. There is in their performance a motivation, similar to a 'tourist video game', in which the aim consists of completing a list of checkpoints. *Fictionality* and engagement (similar to those of "gamification" environments) are both parts of the tourism narrative.

Conclusion

The literature review and case study have pointed to the existence of recurrent Spanish 'national images' and the way these images remain in Japanese transnational narratives. In some cases, the iconic portrait of well-known spaces passes to a secondary plane, making the anthropological portrayal an accessory. The clearest

[13] Fan projects on web communities collected hundreds of photographs of the city, which were compared with screenshots of the series. See for example: (https://infinitemirai.wordpress.com/2012/02/25/cuenca-spain-home-of-sora-no-woto/)

example of this type of representation is given by urban and monumental spaces that coincide with images that other audiences (i.e. tourists) use to search out Spanish heritage. In the selected examples, rural spaces were much more important than urban locations. These types of studies in the future could cover in a deeper way other contemporary cases in which Spanish cities (i.e. Barcelona, Madrid, Segovia, etc.) are represented in Japanese anime.

I have also noted tendencies toward stereotyping and de-contextualization. In both processes, the iconography derived from Andalusian indigenous culture (*majismo*) plays an essential role. Finally, I pointed out the idiosyncrasies of the images of Spain and the Spanish constructed in Japanese media products. These are aspects that are intended to be shared with tourism, such as a special interest in performative cultural signs and other forms of intangible legacy. It should be emphasized, once again, that the existence of these 'national images' is not a direct result of tools and institutional strategies. The origin of these images is uncertain, although institutional agents assume some capacity. Governments, through their agencies, can feed these images or contribute to their reduction (Anholt 2013; Ahn & Wu 2015), supported by the mobility and reach of international cultural industries.

It is also necessary to remember that, in the context of Japanese cultural studies, there is a long tradition in relation to the construction of mutual images with the West and its influence in the media (Carrier 1995), and particularly anime (Miyake 2013; Deninson 2010). Traditions of Occidentalism and Orientalism should not monopolize the discourse on the representation of transnational images, but for better or worse, they have a prominent place in the understanding of these forms of mutual Otherness and exoticism.

National images of Spain in Japanese media products present an intriguing feature: for Japan, Spain is not part of the Western image as other European countries are. This may be due to historical reasons such as the delay of Spanish social and economic development in earlier periods. This may have affected the remaining 'national images'. For some experts, the term 'Otherness' is key in order to explain the mutual attraction between these countries (Gómez Aragón 2011, 159). Japan's gaze to Spain is influenced by this Otherness in cultural production but also by other parallel industries such as tourism. However, in many aspects, this image could be a generalization of other

Mediterranean countries, and other studies have indicated how similar the images of Italian and Spanish individuals are among Japanese perceptions (Noya 2004, 66).

Other works have deeply examined the similarity between different forms of fiction and tourist language that we could find in brochures and travel books (Moeran 1983; Gómez Aragón 2011). From this research, I also pointed out some cases in which fictional forms replicate Spanish 'national images', and it is expected that the tourist discourse shares such fictional features. In the future, studies framed in the theory of communicational genres will provide more evidence, establishing relations of familiarity or belonging among these discourses. Despite the progress that has been made in the field, it is unclear if the understanding and enjoyment of contemporary Spanish culture are constructed in a form similar to other touristic speech; that is, I question if appreciation for Spanish national identity among Japanese visitors is acquired through the vivid and performative representation of tourists' memories or expectations. Fortunately, Spain and Japan will be valid case studies, as long as they remain appealing as tourist destinations, offering increasing evidence to the study of narrative and the construction of national images.

Fig. 1. Screenshots from *Crayon Shin-Chan*. On the top, a scene from the episode "Hola! Hey, I travel to Spain" (2008); on the right, Parc Guell as depicted in "Hey, we search for a Spanish treasure" (2013). **© Futabasha, Shin-Ei Animation & TV Asahi (2008 & 2013)**

Fig. 2. Screenshots from *Andalusia no Natsu* or "*Summer in Andalusia*" (2003). **© Madhouse (2013)**

Fig. 3. Promotional image of So・Ra・No・Wo・To (2010). **© Aniplex (2010)**

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