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The Visual Cliché of the Mask in Tourism Advertising. An Interdisciplinary Approach

Abstract: In the context of tourism, advertising as a “place” for the encounter of various fields, the destination as a landscape of identities appears as a mediatized image at various levels, among which the pragmatics of a specific promotional language. This specific language consists in specific techniques and generates meaning beyond the camera as a ubiquitous condition of the third Greimasian category (the aesthetic). Based on qualitative research methodology borrowed both from discourse studies and tourism studies, I aim at placing my model contradicting the tensed relation between the three categories (the sacred, the ludic and the aesthetic).

Keywords: Tourism Advertising; Authenticity; Mask; Archetypes; Stereotypes; Promotional Discourse; Spirituality.

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Introduction

If we examine the history of religions attentively, we shall see that the mask appeared in the Paleolithic as part of a symbolic or spiritual manifestation. In general, masks represent animal figures and are worn by two categories of actors in the spiritual process: either by the protectors or by the dancers incarnating the spirit of the dead. A first such proof was found in the Trois Frères' cave, where the drawing is interpreted as representing a dancer masked as a bison while playing what is presumed to be a flute¹. During the Mesolithic and Neolithic we have the reference to the mask through the Saturnalia celebrations and, in general, the rituals around the powerful beliefs concerning the moment of the New Year; thus, for the decade mentioned above, we find traces of masks in Mesopotamia, where the maskers mark the symbol of the return of the dead. The research of Eliade indicates that the symbolism of the mask varies from culture to culture, as in Southeast Asia we find a reference to the “masks of the secret societies”². In Egypt it was thought that the gold mask could offer the dead

supernatural powers, equivalent to those of the immortals (as *quoted* in Eliade, 1978: 415). As we advance in mankind's history, Ancient Greece also mentions the usage of the mask by the Masters of Achilles (*idem*: 286), or parade participants wearing masks which represent animals; the mask also accompanies the rituals and processions of Dionysus³. The mask as an embodiment of the dead in Japan or Germany, but in other cultures too, is considered by Eliade a sign that all barriers have been destroyed and all forms of life have merged together⁴.

One of the central elements of primitive culture, engendering mythical significations and manifesting as the object of myth, the mask erases spatial and temporal boundaries, creating new understandings of the *beyond* and of the present as a convention. In our view, the mask represents a complex element triggering semiosis for the individual, opening a new gate toward the exploitation of the imagination, escapism and subtle transformation and interpretation.

The literal fact that the apparition is composed of A, a mask, B, its reference to a mythical being, and C, a man, is dismissed from the mind, and the presentation is allowed to work without correction upon the sentiments of both the beholder and the actor.⁵

This tacit convention engages the participants in the mutual gaze between divinity and the individual, nature and the individual, the dead and the living, the primitive and the modern, especially as the mask has a ubiquitous character, associated with a superior force: "A god can be simultaneously in two or more places – like a melody, or like the form of a traditional mask"⁶.

In the chapter "Man and the world" from his book *Myth and Reality*, Eliade speaks about the openness of man and his capacity of communication and understanding of the world through symbols; here, the mask is a vehicle that transposes the being into different hypostasis, places and moods, conferring the reciprocal gazing as a confirmation of existence itself:

He achieves communication with the World because he uses the same language-symbol. If the World speaks to him through its heavenly bodies, its plants and animals, its rivers and rocks, its seasons and nights, man answers it by his dreams and his imaginative life, by his Ancestors or his totems (at once "Nature", supernatural, and human beings), by his ability to die and return to life ritually in initiation ceremonies (like the Moon and vegetation), by his power to incarnate a spirit by putting on a mask, and so on. If for archaic man the World is transparent, he feels that he too is "looked at" and understood by the World.⁷

The Orient went deeper and offered an unexpected name along with a different attitude for the two worlds: *play*. In the meditation of Ramakrishna⁸, we find out that God and Play are the same. If, in the words of the Greek philosopher Antisthenes, God cannot be translated by an *image*, Kant strengthens the idea with the concept of *analogy*⁹. The author understands from here the representational status of the festival and ceremony, including the mask as a great factor of dissolving the barriers of the immediate reality:

The play state and the rapturous seizures sometimes deriving from it represent, therefore, a step rather toward than away from the ineluctable truth.¹⁰

In this context, the image appears as something that stands for something else, evoking its function of representation; intuition seems to be left in order to attain truth, and the mask, as an intermediary that involves us in the play, beyond the theatrical conventions, bringing to our mind the understanding of the word *Schau* in Gadamer's view. This German word forms different ones such as *Schauplatz* which means scene, or in the expression *etwas anschauen* – to be intuitive, or *etwas beschauen* – to contemplate or to be a spectator (*Zuschauen*)¹¹. Thus, in this sense, German language seems to be the only language in which intuition and spectacle share a common root.

From the “primary images” (Freud) to the archetypes (Jung) or “elementary ideas” (Bastian) and “the ethnic ideas”¹², I realize that the discourse of tourism advertising is imbued with such “local manifestations of the universal forms”¹³. My paper's aim is not to demonstrate particularly the uniformity of symbols and the cultural variations of spirituality, yet, as I introduce a concept coined by Dann Graham, namely the *promotional language of tourism* as a language *per se*, I shall see myself obliged to outline my demonstration in respect to the semi-otic methodology and qualitative empirical-deductive research.

Advertising, a scene encapsulating a whole range of symbols and archetypes, invites the spectator to cathartic experiences; as the spectator identifies with the actors, the process of *imitatio* takes place as intuition helps the individual to decode

the symbols and access the information of *play* through the ludic. In a Greimasian understanding, up to a point, non-verbal communication is the core where this information converges, as the gesture reveals discourse at the level of dichotomic relations of the sign, in the author's view, between *the sacred*, *the ludic* and *the aesthetic*. Actually, through these three dichotomies in Greimas view, the author travels, from the ancient societies and their manifestation of the “*ethnosemiotic state*”¹⁴ to the “*sociosemiotic state*”¹⁵, that is from the *sacred* to the *aesthetic* reminding us of the passage from the *local* to the *universal* invoked by Campbell.

Tourism (Advertising) as Discourse

The root of today's image of the world is found in myth as the sacred manifestation of former heroes or beings transgressing the powers of mortals. If the world was revealed to primitive man through symbols, the modern individual, as “a mortal, sexed, and cultural being”¹⁶, achieves this image through “several superimposed, or even sometimes juxtaposed, layers of signification”¹⁷.

Advertising in general and tourism advertising in particular reveal to the modern individual as a space of transition, where the symbol is encoded in specific structures of signification addressing actualized competences, but containing the mythological essence, because:

[...] symbols never disappear from the reality of the psyche. The aspect of them may change, but their function remains the same; one has only to look behind their latest masks.¹⁸

The mask that Eliade speaks about might be, in Greimas' terms, the artificialization that gestuality undergoes when staged within the dichotomic relations between the sacred, the ludic and the aesthetic; for instance, the author considers ballet, in comparison to folk dance, a modern form of gestural narrative, deprived of the sacrality conveyed by myth and its codes. Although the three categories are culturally imbued, Greimas starts from the hypothesis of "all programmed gestuality exceeding the dimensions of sememe/phoneme, insofar as it is used in communication, is mythical in origin"¹⁹. The communicative function of gestuality, divided into "gestuality of communication" and "gestuality of transposition", while the second one comprises the mimetic and the ludic sub-categories which transfer the *signifiers*, are not enough, in the author's view, to create a discourse, and only the mythical content creates the semantism beyond the language²⁰ as a mere shell.

I say a space of transition, as tourism advertising displays certain peculiarities in this respect. I can draw a parallel between the two elements from Greimas's less explored chapter, "Cultural projects and objects"²¹, and assert that the commercial stands for a cultural project, while generating a variety of objects, or I could say that one of the objects of the sacred dance as a cultural project might be the mask, as in the author's words:

A cultural object can be determined by its use, that is to say, its function as helper (tool) or substitute for a subject (machine) that it can take on in a new gestural program along with its genetic and morphomatic definitions.²²

While Greimas too is interested in myth from a sociolinguistic perspective,

scholars in tourism have developed four perspectives on tourism and their sociolinguistic correlations. In fact, tourism offers a great potential of research not only for scholars from various fields, but also to the individual, as an opportunity to achieve what Campbell expressed as "local manifestations of the universal forms":

[...] tourism serves as a very influential, privileged lens through which many people make sense of not only a particular destination or culture but of the world at large.²³

In fact, for MacCannel, the tourists are the modern 'pilgrims' seeking for *authenticity*, while "sightseeing is a modern ritual"²⁴, a reaction to inauthentic modernity, to the commodified symbol deprived of spirituality:

Advanced technology is found everywhere in modern society, of course, [...], but it is not a reactive structure that expresses the totality of the modern spirit as, for example, a modern religion might. If a modern religion existed.²⁵

Actually, the first perspective on tourism mentioned by Dann in his work was coined by MacCannell as the 1. The *authenticity perspective*, with the sociolinguistic correlation of *tourism as a language of identification*²⁶. The other three perspectives are: 2. the strangerhood perspective – *tourism as a language of differentiation*; 3. the play perspective – *tourism as a language of recreation*; 4. the conflict perspective – *tourism as a language of appropriation*²⁷.

In his book, Dann (1996) depicts three types of promotional techniques, as

tourism advertising has developed a language of its own: visual, verbal and mixed techniques. As I shall insist on the visibility of tourism, while agreeing upon Dann's theory, I admit, in fact, the paradox of tourism, which has developed its own promotional language, but which substantiates signification with its cultural and epistemological prolongations when it becomes discourse. Let us consider the three Greimasian categories and the premodern manifestation of tradition and spirituality as showcased within the tourism commercials. I witness a "process of becoming of the gestural sign"²⁸ as the stage of the *sacred* is represented by the presence *per se* of these manifestations in the destination, the stage of the *ludic* is translated by their manifestation within the destination as spectacle, while the last stage, the *aesthetic*, might be the mere packaging of its previous manifestation within the advertising filmic discourse (as in the case of the audio-visual commercial, which constitutes the corpus object of the present paper, as it will be developed later).

The mythical aspect of the sign confers it the power of a symbol; when the gesture within the ceremonial is more than a sememe, its sacred valences are being visually transmitted. The image here may know different degrees of symbolization and semiosis in the three stages of the general dichotomies discussed by Greimas. As in Langer's view, a symbol trespasses the thresholds of the reality, of the present or the physicality of the mere world²⁹.

The economic side of tourism, though, reinforces the economy of symbol theory³⁰, transforming tourism into one of the greatest exchange of signs and symbols. In our view, the sociolinguistic correlations of the

four perspectives on tourism trigger its discursive side, which tourism's activity as well as its promotion or the mythologies included engender. Tourism advertising also becomes discourse when the anchorage of *image* and *text*³¹ infers *identity*, when it articulates its specific language on *myths*, such as the "myth of the primitive", reconnecting thus the modern being to primordality, as Eliade asserts on the myths of the primitive³² and reactivates epistemologies of *alterity*.

Imaginary of Otherness

Advertising, in nature, represents a great reservoir of visualized mythologies, as a digitalized inheritance of the collective imaginary. At the same time, scholars speak of an *imaginary in tourism*³³ (Salazar, 2010), which aggregates within the commercial, the verbal techniques with the visual ones as I speak of their aim to touch on realms of semi-imagined experiences which place emotions into a virtual sensorial. The image situates itself somewhere between the reality and the imaginary, or in a point where the two superpose and become confused³⁴. The filmed image is precisely performing this passage from the reality to the imagination. But so is the case of the image *per se*, behaving as the masked character of the ceremony, who, beyond the convention, becomes one with his/her representation: "The image is a lived presence and a real absence, a presence-absence"³⁵. Moreover, in the author's view, the image is invested with extraordinary capacities of being separated from itself and circulating as an entity distinct from the individual who created it on the basis of their own experiences³⁶. Edgar Morin also invokes the myth of the *double*, which might be our projection on any exterior

manifestation of life and life-style, reaching the point of death, showing that, eventually, the individual seeks for immortality. Yet, this double can also be found in literature, in the author's view, which reminds us, in advertising theory, of the latter's role of identification. Tourism is highly covering this role, not only through the *perspective of strangeness*, which emphasize on otherness and the meeting with the local imaged as the primitive, in the Western thinking. Also because tourism brings hosts and visitors into a dialectics of travelling toward the Other.

Actually, etymologically speaking, advertising originates in (Lat.) *advertere*, which means to head towards something/someone; the ethos of the semiotician/advertiser also finds in such a dialectics with the potential consumer.

Tourism at large, and tourism advertising in particular, succeeds in absorbing the three elements – *language-image-other* – in a non-conflict dimension from a paradigmatic point of view. The particularity of language's role and place in the case of tourism advertising is due to the filmed image which carries different parameters of space and time, as spaces, from “global to national” – I might add from real to virtual – “are filled with various sorts of material and symbolic attributes and constitute an active, contextualizing³⁷ semiotic source of indexical meaning³⁸”; as the individuals move, the linguistic landscape changes too³⁹ (*Ibid.*). It is considered that the *tourist's gaze*⁴⁰ is responsible with the dissolution of barriers of any kind, when in destination, that is when in the real place.

Augé considers a *non-place* the space where the individual interacts with certain terminals, among which leisure, while language can recreate images of a touristic

objective, which encourages the myth to exist⁴¹. *Places*, on the other hand, are considered by Harvey to be conveyed by semiotic activity, the axis mundi of the “imaginary and beliefs”⁴². In our preoccupation of the relation individual-space, we find out that, when defining the body in a nexus to the city, Grosz takes into consideration the psychoanalytical aspect of the Other as limitation to the entity that mediates the *non-spatial*, by the consciousness or the mind, with the *materiality*⁴³.

At the same time, “the mediation of interpersonal relations by terminals”⁴⁴ modified the corporeal experience and the spatial perceptions. In fact,

Empathetic understanding requires distance between the one trying to understand and the object of understanding (the cultural ‘other’, or the geographical or historical ‘other’).⁴⁵

Today's imaginaries of virtual reality replace the imaginary of cinema, as the extent to which the body is involved changed the perception on the *double* to a higher degree of corporeal transportation within the cyberspace as a copy of reality “from the ordinary physical world into worlds of pure imagination”⁴⁶.

Tourism and Advertising: Research Methodology

The computerization of labor has brought changes in the perception of urban space, as well as in the imaginary of the potential tourist. After the post-Marxist interpretation of the former sign exchanges and the commodification of culture, it is obvious that the relation

body-machine brings new challenges to the researcher in the field.

In our case, the interaction of the individual with the destination through a tampon-space which can, again, be considered virtual – the audio-visual advertising still consists in principles of cinematographic imaginary. Moreover, the semiotized space lingers at the back of the collective imaginary as a form of accepting and revealing at the same time the convention of the backstage. While the future interaction, that this *prospective reading* (Crăciunescu, 2018) aims at encouraging, brings the bodies in the dialectics of the dominant tourist's gaze toward the Other, the profound *double* might be pursued in the aestheticized ceremonial of the primordial spiritual manifestations that the camera transmits as images. Nonetheless, the sign here will be understood as a gestural one, part of the non-verbal message. The static body of the viewer is still 'augmented' by the tourist's gaze, while watching the bodies that transgress the sacred and perform as sememes in what contours itself as discourse. I believe that tourism advertising, in particular, is highly influenced by the *visual turn* in that the image mediates between the irrational (the symbolic Other in Lacanian understanding) and reason as language, which tames and activates the primitive impulse into norm discourse. And the same is applied in the case of the *promotional language of tourism* which represents an accepted form of signification, of reconnection with myth, in an economy of symbols that circulate globally. Authenticity in the destination represents a promise of the return of the being to the ontological roots of its primordial values, even if it is a different one in genetic or cultural

terms. The role of the Other, in this case, is to erase the barriers of a space-and-time conditioned gaze; as is the quality of the cinematographic image to actualize and retrieve the past⁴⁷.

In this context, advertising appears as the 'aesthetic' spectacle, the third Greimasian category or the last stage, in which the locals *play* and the potential visitors accept the convention of the filmed image. The promotional language of tourism respects to some extent the typicality of the anchorage image and text, developing visual, verbal and mixed strategies. The sun represents such an example for a visual cliché, as Dann (1996) coined one of the categories of visual techniques. When the visual cliché is analyzed as symbol, while, in some cases, anchored with the text also stresses on the referentiality of the language, the co-production between the two transforms into discourse. In this light, the promotional language of tourism tackles upon *identity* and otherness in the context of Western research methodologies and epistemologies.

The new physicality of the space of the tourism advertising as a proto-consumed image of the destination made me think of new approaches of the 'classic' theories, but also of the question of identity and the meeting with the other, as:

We create our identities in part through the process of geographical imagining, the locating of self in space, claiming the ownership of specific places, or by being excluded from them, by sharing space and interacting with others⁴⁸.

However, the ubiquity of the tourist's gaze reminds us of the same attribute that

the filming camera possesses, while exploiting the “metamorphosis of time”⁴⁹ and space. In this sense, tourism audio-visual advertising should assume the *metaphor of landscape as tension* (Wylie) which addresses the dilemma of the landscape as “the world we are living in, or a scene we are looking at, from afar?”⁵⁰. The screen recreates, in our view, the world we live in as a scene looked at from afar; we witness, thus, to a “mediatisation of the place”⁵¹.

The role of the promotional language of tourism through its techniques is to instill the *desire* of travelling through simulated sensorial syncretism. The projection of glimpses of performed authenticity on the screen triggers emotion and recreates landscapes of the pleased body:

If authenticity is no longer to be seen as objective qualities in objects or places, but rather something experienced through the body, through performance, management and media, authenticity becomes a feeling you can achieve. In tourism authenticity is a feeling you can experience in relation to place.⁵²

Based on Adorno’s point of view on the concept of authenticity and Merleau Ponty’s phenomenological approach of the sensorial body, the two authors advance the idea that the mediated reinvestment in authenticity augments the relation between the body and the places and the place in itself, in a phenomenology of the flesh and senses that is reattributed to the world in a strategy of its own, surpassing barriers of language⁵³.

From the concept of “layered simultaneity”⁵⁴ to that of “site of engagement”⁵⁵,

Jaworski and Thurlow distinguish between the *physical space*, *virtual space*, *relational space*, *screen spaces* and the *third space*:

These are the physical spaces (including body spaces) in which the social actors operate their computers; virtual spaces created by the computer interfaces; relational spaces created between the participants by the instance of communication; screen spaces as the locus of their visible act of communication; and third spaces which may be talked about but not inhabited by the participants at the moment of communication.⁵⁶

The authors further argue that the sites of engagement manifest beyond their physicality, as they remain places of recognition, interpretation and selection of the culturally imbued elements that attract our attention.

In his approach, MacCannell claims that both the seeking of authenticity in tourism and semiotics are animated by the same purpose – the discovery of alterity, and tourism is “the secular equivalent of the sacred that could have an analogous role in the society”⁵⁷. In his book, MacCannell completes Goffman’s assertions that tour guides are “extensive ceremonial agendas” and develops a model of “*the stages of sight sacralization*”⁵⁸ that I shall reiterate in the following lines in our analysis. In a structuralist approach, MacCannell seizes on the Hegelian notion of Order, which the latter attributes to consciousness, thus to the *absolute spirit*⁵⁹ as opposed to the Marxist interpretation of the sign in the capitalist production. Thus, in the capitalist space of labor and interactions,

the individual seeks for authenticity beyond the place as a reality of production. Capitalism seems to be the economic order which avoids the most the alienation of the sign, prompting the symbolic as a layer which integrates culture and commodity⁶⁰. Advertising stands as a powerful example of such integration, as a “symbolic representation” offering a guided experience of the future consumption⁶¹.

Leisure by definition is built in opposition to labor, that is, to productivity, yet it might segregate social classes, unless, I believe, it is pursued as a cultural endeavor of the sensorial body and its “empathetic” experience with the other: “We see the exercise of empathy as an expression of a longing for greater intimacy, for homeliness, and for historical and cultural truth and ethics”⁶².

The interdisciplinary character of my study, as well as the rather ontological approach of spirituality in promotional representations of tourism, led me to pay attention to the evolution of the principal phases⁶³ in tourism research methodologies. Thus, it determines that my study relies on the ‘modernist’ phase in tourism studies research methodologies (Riley and Love, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008), as I am focused on the symbolic aspects and their interpretation, as well as on phenomenological explanations for consuming behavior. I am also tributary to the “blurred genre” of the modernist phase, which leans on the artistic side of the phenomenon, including advertising, feminist issues in tourism, leading to the portraying of the Self through touristic imageries and landscapes⁶⁴. Eventually, as I am interested into tourism advertising as discourse, I shall extract other methods from this particular field, more precisely – discourse analysis. In

fact, “issues of epistemology and ontology have rarely been at the forefront of tourism discourse”⁶⁵.

DA seems to me the most eligible method of research in the context of an interdisciplinary approach, as “qualitative research is connected with interpretivism as a general philosophy”⁶⁶, while DA as a method in discourse research is preoccupied with the understanding, interpreting and decoding of meaning. This empirical, inductive method offers a multitude of interpretative-relativist approaches to a multidisciplinary phenomenon by definition – tourism discourse, at large, tourism advertising discourse in particular, associating itself, thus, with the ‘modernist’ and the ‘blurred genre’ periods of qualitative research in tourism, which are the periods of crystallization of the interpretative methods.

Also, as the problem of *trustworthiness* and *credibility*⁶⁷ are at stake in a qualitative inquiry, I have also opted for the method of *theoretical triangulation*⁶⁸ as:

Confronting emerging hypotheses with existing theories and looking for alternative interpretations further help in making more credible conclusions.⁶⁹

In accordance with the three Greimasian categories, I have proposed the *Process of the becoming of the gestural sign in tourism promotion*⁷⁰, extending its explanation in 2018 and showing that the three general notions are in a relation of continuity, as such:

1. the sacred – the purpose of the travelling in accordance to the theory of MacCannell.

2. the ludic – the authentic itself as the manifestation of traditions, spectacles etc. within the destination.
3. the aesthetic – the general advertising image⁷¹.

In fact, this order resonates with the hypothesis of authenticity as an empathetic exercise, and the interactions within the *screen space*:

Authenticity as the empathetic understanding of the world through the body can take place in cases in which the cultural ‘other’ is staged. This could be in screened encounters with the distant others, or in face-to face encounters in ‘exotic’ places and designs.⁷²

I propose, thus, the hypothesis of the “*organized gestural discourses comparable to the narrative structures of linguistic discourses*”⁷³ on audio-visual national tourism commercials serving as case studies. My purpose is to grasp the meaning of the sacred discourses of the *mask* as a new category of visual clichés⁷⁴ understood as gestural discourse with an important role within tourism advertising.

Glimpses of Spirituality within the Visual Cliché of the Mask in Audio-Visual Tourism Advertising

Contradicting Freud, Lacroze, and Barthes, who reduce the image to an “impoverished sign”, Durand maintains the eligibility of myth in the relation with the objectivity, advancing the role of imagination and the role of the fantastic function, which activates *non-repressive* realms of inner identity:

The fantastic function participates in the formulation of the theoretical consciousness, and [...] does not in practice play the simple role of an emotional refuge, it is effectively an auxiliary of the action. [...] because games are an initiation to action, but more profoundly because a culture, with its store of aesthetic, religious and social archetypes, is a framework for action⁷⁵.

The third stage of the *sight sacralization stages* designed by MacCannell is the mechanical *reproductive stage*, where I can include advertising, as its role coincides with the one attributed to this stage, consisting in “setting the tourist in motion on his journey to find the true object”⁷⁶. If Durand defines space as “the general ‘sensorium’ of the fantastic function”, the “locus of our imagination” and a realm of producing images⁷⁷, tourism advertising, this virtual space comprising specific imaginaries, is capable of producing and reproducing places as generators of narratives and messages to be interpreted differently. It processes images that in the light of our research appear as symbolic representations of the local imaginary that the object of promotion stands for. Tourism advertising space becomes what Durand explains to be a “representative space” with a “symbolic function”⁷⁸. Jaworski and Thurlow include advertising in the category of the *conceived space* (from the three categories proposed by Lefebvre, *conceived space*, *perceived space* and *lived space*) as integrating “mental or represented images of space”⁷⁹.

The “other metamorphosis”, as Morin names time, or the other dimension that changes within the cinematic reality,

has the unique property of “recovering the past”⁸⁰. For Durand, memory is again “absorbed into the fantastic function”⁸¹, and also, “by authorizing a return to the past, partially authorizes the repair of the depredations of time”⁸². Engaging tourism as a condition of ontological reconnection with the world, the past becomes a condition of reiterating spiritualized, anti-modernized emotions:

Within new spirituality discourse the wisdoms of the past surpass present-day knowledge, and to the tourist, the past is a source of experiences.⁸³

If the cinematographic *double* appeared as an incantation of a decaying future, of a premonitory image of the Self’s death, the reconnection with the ancestry through ritual conveys a different perspective to the Being as a replicated image reiterated each time through gesture – part of the collective imaginary reservoir. If I were to regard tourism advertising as a Euclidean space, I could underline the repetitive character of the mythical image within the filmed image, as “the faculty of repetition, or ‘duplication’, the synchronicity of myth”⁸⁴ cannot manifest itself within the physical space. In the same author’s words, “ritual [...] has the sole role of subduing time and death and, within time, guaranteeing eternity and hope to individuals and society”⁸⁵. Thus, I can say that the local host from the present, who is performing the ceremonial in a non-real time of the filmed image, incarnates the primitive from the past. The perception of time in advertising reveals the authentic as spectacle, as the final stage of the *continuum* of the three Greimasian general categories.

The visual cliché as a visual strategy of the promotional language of tourism confers the repeated symbol, through various forms of promotional discourses, among which the audio-visual commercial, connotative or mythical dimensions, depending on the angle of research. Besides the visual clichés such as the sun, the smile of the locals or the opened door/window⁸⁶ I have coined a new category in 2018, *the visual cliché of the mask*. In the light of the present paper, this visual cliché manifests itself among the “aesthetic activities” that traverse the *process of becoming of the gestural sign*⁸⁷:

Masks ‘are in the vanguard of the defense against death’, but they become secular, and are supports of purely aesthetic emotions.”⁸⁸

The compressed time of a sacralized journey is identified in the commercial for Indonesia⁸⁹ (2012), where the mask appears in full ceremonial process (see 2’06”) accompanied by the “sacred dance” perceived “as belonging to mythical gestural practice”⁹⁰, the mask maintains the privileged of a journey situated between two worlds, the present and the past, the alive and the death, beyond the cinematic convenience. The unmasked portrayal of the ‘primitive’ local surprises all along the OK sign (see 2’08”) which proves the fact that the exchange of signs was realized, this time too, at the gestural level. It also signifies the preoccupation of tourism for otherness in different terms than the paradigm of the fifth phase in the qualitative research, which dislocates the geographies of power and offers a voice to the locals seen as the Other in the previous

approaches⁹¹. The slogan of the commercial, “Feeling is believing”, also resumes at the linguistic level the idea of spirituality as a sensorium exercise; other linguistic structures such as “life”, “journey”, “darkness vs. light”, “soul vs. mind”, “returning” anticipate and follow the scene of the ceremony and mask. In the 2016 full-version commercial⁹², part of the same campaign “Wonderful Indonesia”, in which the visual turn from discourse studies is fully applied, as there have no text, I notice a dichotomy of place in terms of urban vs. rural. The mask appears in a symbolic frame within the city (see 30”), as well as spontaneous flash mobs as modern reminders of the sacred dance and traditional costume, which seem to stand as witnesses of the tourist’s discovery through the destination. The rural is associated with the painted face and the ceremonial as a stronger maintainer of traditions; this time, the actant drinks with the locals, as they all wear the traditional costume (see 1’21”; 2’19”).

In a long spot of over five minutes⁹³, the same destination is revealed in 2020 through the selfie-cameras of four tourists of different nationalities. The mask is presented as a talisman and is reduced to the scale of a commodified product (see 1’57”). Yet, glimpses of the ceremonial and traces of the mask through specific costumes or the painted face are shown through the selfie-camera of the four travellers. The tourist’s gaze⁹⁴ is given a secondary lens whereas the general camera captures this self-filming and photographing with the locals or places in the destination as a tautological manifestation of recent expression and behavior. This multi-layered reality of the virtualized places which still keep their grand narratives might deserve

a new approach by the qualitative research scholars in tourism.

Conclusions

Imaginarities are meant to “travel in space and time” through defined conduits and channels⁹⁵. One of these channels may be advertising where the identity is grounded in sacralized prone-to-be interpreted geographies of otherness.

The ceremonial as a sacred practice that is reiterated on certain occasions displays a structure inherited since ancient times; the structure is composed of different gestures and objects, each organized in a specific order; the symbolic of these gestures and objects and the significations when used together are traced in a parallel world of the fantastic, imagination and beliefs, ontologically in the myth. Spirituality appears as a primordial semiotized act of a unique language – that of the sacred of the primitive man. It is this primordial belief that the modern, segregated individual seeks in his/her journey towards an artificially named *Other*, which the Western epistemologies conceptualized as norm. I believe that this is one reason for which tourism advertising encourages the occurrence of such manifestations, not as specific local ‘commodities’, but as anchors of spirituality for the modernized individual, living the narratives of uniformed places. This explains the *strangerhood perspective* on tourism and my approach of tourism advertising as discourse embedded in qualitative research methodologies that do not aim at stressing on the *conflict perspective* on tourism. Also, the locals or the exotic *Other* does not need to be given a voice, in this context, as I have analyzed *the gestural sign*

in a process of becoming, which means that I recognize but assume above imagination the convenience of the filming camera as a mechanized opportunity of transmitting primordial gestures played under certain circumstances of the aesthetic, as a tribute paid by the living locals to their ancestors.

My analysis of the corpus has revealed that the ethos of the advertiser/semiotician

adapts to the ethos of the future tourist. The vast interdisciplinary approach allowed me to combine specific research methodologies of tourism, in parallel with advertising and discourse. This has led me to discovering new paths of research through concepts or models coined by me in previous research and readapted in the light of the present study.

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