

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

THE DEVISE OF THE MYTH OF LA MANGA DEL MAR MENOR THROUGH THE TOURIST PROMOTION OF NO-DO

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La Manga is a shoal located in the Region of Murcia that at the end of the sixties became an emblematic space as a tourist destination. A circumstance favored by the production of NO-DO that contributed to the identity construction of the area since the fifties in which it made its first appearance until 1981, the year in which the entity disappeared. In this context, the chambers of this body were responsible for recording the process of transformation of the area that started from a traditional model, where fishing was the main activity, to become an example of developmentalism and urban growth linked to the tourism promotion interests that emerged in the Spain of that decade. This circumstance, in the specific case of La Manga, was consolidated in the following years with the expansion of the hotel, sports and services offer.

The fishing village gave way to a privileged place for a national and international tourism that saw, from soon, the advantages of this place for the holiday periods due to its climate, its low cost and its favorable natural conditions. Therefore, tourism policies found in La Manga an option with specific characteristics that differentiated it from other areas. The particularities that defined La Manga related to the ideas of paradise, tranquility and rest, aspects far from the massification of other areas such as Mallorca, the Costa del Sol or the Costa Brava. In this order of things, the official cameras were decisive in the creation of the myth.

Since 1943, when the NO-DO reports reached the cinemas, the contents of the images were at the service of the political ideology of the Franco regime, in charge of constructing a visual identity of the country following the premises of his speech; the recovery of the «glorious past», the exaltation of tradition, the value of the army, religion, the recognition of the family as the only valid model within society and the implementation of new industrial processes that would shape the modernization of the systems of production, among others. These issues were present throughout the dictatorship, although it is true that in certain stages other matters that began to have importance were included.

This was the case of tourism, because it would not be until the sixties when it became a constant in the news and documentaries.

In this regard, in recent years there are numerous studies that have highlighted this circumstance, that is, the fundamental role played by state cinema in the iconographic construction of the different tourist destinations in Spain (Zamarreño, 2010; Brotons, Murray-Mas and Blázquez-Salom, 2016, Zamarreño, Ruiz and De los Reyes, 2017). However, the case of La Manga del Mar Menor has not been addressed to date from this perspective. However, its importance is remarkable, since it occupies a large part of the materials shot in the Region of Murcia by the NO-DO. Consequently, the objectives of this work are concrete in collecting, classifying and analyzing these cinematographic images in order to approach the face that was given to La Manga at that time, while we can see how the urban development and tourism of the zone was.

This approach generates a series of questions, such as: what was the role that NO-DO played in the representation of La Manga in the collective imagination? How did this contribute to the promotion of the area? or what elements did they use to enhance your tourism potential?

Thus, the study will assess the cinematographic variables used in the construction of the identity image of this area of the Murcian coast, while allowing the analysis of tourism development and the urban expansion of a natural environment as a paradigm of developmentalism. In addition, the repertoire made for this purpose will help to highlight the importance of La Manga within the filmic representation in the regional context.

At the beginning of the fifties, Spain undertook a timid international opening that was consolidated in the Stabilization Plan of 1959. This circumstance is verified in the inclusion of tourism in the cinematographic field, a matter that begins to take shape at this moment. We can not ignore that, the tourist development from the creation of the Ministry of Information and Tourism, in 1951, saw in NO-DO an ideal vehicle to disseminate the policy guidelines on tourism, coming together, in this sense, in the filmic materials produced by the organism are the two main interests that gave this ministry its name.

However, “in these years, Franco was uncomfortable with the idea of promoting tourism; until the end of the 1950s, it did not begin to accept tacitly that the economic benefits outweighed the social costs” (Pack, 2009: 75). For this reason, we see that between 1950 and 1958 only eleven pieces were made on tourism, when the total production exceeded eight hundred (Pack, 2009: 212). The sixties represented a significant increase in tourist films recorded by official cameras. Between 1963 and 1969 one of every eleven documentaries revolved around tourism policies (Pack, 2009: 217). These figures reveal how the decade of the sixties will be prolific in the production of this type of cinematographic material with propagandistic effects. The interests that linked the tourism to the filmic are based on the fact that the cinema was established as an effective tool for dissemination at a national and international level. At this time, a series of actions was undertaken by the State Administration aimed at promoting the sector within the framework of the Development Plans.

Thus, the cinema contributed to configure and implement various tourist areas, while consolidating the idea of “destination brand”, a concept based on the endogenous peculiarities of the territory with differentiating qualities (Huertas, 2014). In general, the values

pursued by the creation of that brand transcended the defining aspects of the territorial for the attainment of others, away from the strictly tourism and related to the social, materializing in a series of positive aspects that helped build “the look tourism» (Urry, 1990). This look was provided by the cinematographic image that cemented that objective in the productions of that moment. It is evident that the cinema was established as the mass media that most promoted tourism (Riley and Van Doren, 1992: p.267), an ideal tool to build a collective imaginary that, at times, made certain spaces suitable spaces for the creation of a myth that attracts visitors.

The presence of La Manga del Mar Menor, although it began in 1950, will reflect mainly the process of expansion linked to the tourist activity that took place from the end of the sixties until the suppression of this state agency in 1981. The production carried out during this time for NO-DO includes nine news articles for the news and two documentaries, one belonging to the Images magazine, and the other to the Documentaries section. In addition to these materials in which La Manga acquires prominence, there are three other reports that collect, almost anecdotally, images of this enclave, but in these cases their presence is immersed in another context.

The reports for the newscast shot in La Manga total a total of 20 minutes and 8 seconds. The documentary belonging to the magazine Images lasts 12 minutes and 43 seconds, while that of the documentary section lasts 10 minutes and 23 seconds. The images dedicated to La Manga occupy a total of 1 hour, 6 minutes and 8 seconds for the NO-DO cameras, a significant figure within the regional realization, as shown in the graph.

From these data, it is clear how La Manga was one of the focuses that aroused most interest for institutional production, since, when comparing the amount of news and documentaries shot in this area with the rest of regional localities, it is located how the third place, only behind the two big cities: the capital, Murcia, and Cartagena, which by its idiosyncrasy brought together all the axes around which the Francoist government's discourse (military, industrial and religious) was articulated. The rest of places in the Murcian geography, except San Javier and Alcantarilla with a marked military character, have a less notable presence (Durante, 2014: 364).

All these factors that articulated the filmic content strengthened the construction of the myth of La Manga del Mar Menor that linked with the idea of paradise (Cardona, Azpelicueta and Serra, 2015: 719-721). The purpose of generating a rest icon was favored by the work that was done from NO-DO.

The iconographic configuration that defined the imaginary of La Manga was determined by the reiteration of a series of themes and elements that led to the construction of an own and characteristic face that made this destination one of the most exceptional in our country. The thematic constants of which the official cinematography was used to channel the myth of La Manga were diverse. On the one hand, the territorial singularities of the enclave, characterized by good weather, special maritime conditions and paradisiacal corners. To these peculiarities the construction of infrastructures and the provision of services for the vacationers was incorporated, as they insisted on promoting the NO-DO chambers, above all, emphasizing the sports offer, not only nautical but, mainly, golf. In this area, an outstanding promotion was made based on relevant figures within sectors such as the cinema or the sport itself that reinforced the spread of La Manga in the national territory.

In addition, the presence of authorities such as ministers and officials related to the government, on the occasion of inaugurations related to the hotel and services sector, supports this idea. On the other hand, tradition was always present, through the numbers that dedicated their images to represent the fishing activity and the idiosyncrasy of a system such as the one of the enchained ones.

Tourism was established as one of the backbones of the Francoist discourse since the 1960s, when La Manga began its transformation. However, this town delayed its tourist take-off to the later decade, the seventies, a time of crisis at international level that, nevertheless, knew how to take advantage of to position itself as one of the favorite destinations of the holiday makers, as it is verified in the wide production of NO-DO.

In the formal section, documentaries and news focused on the representation of La Manga through a language characterized by the use of aerial planes and pans, trying to provide an overview of the endogenous condition of the aforementioned territory. Both formats followed a similar discursive construction, based on these visual parameters, consecrating narrative codes common to the representation of the tourist image.

The cinema contributed, in this way, to consolidate the idea of destination brand, boosting the advantages of the offer that were the ideal vehicle to build the tourist look, a circumstance that was consolidated after the creation of the Ministry of Information and Tourism, under whose denomination converged the two interests promoted by NO-DO. However, the political guidelines that marked the cinematographic productions had a clear ideological aspect that responded to national interests and that served to build the image of Spain.