

Mediterranean influence in the Spanish design identity

Influencia mediterránea en la identidad del diseño español

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Recibido: 19 de junio de 2014

Aprobado: 31 de julio de 2014

Abstract

The diversity of Spanish design has led us to question its identity, values, intentions and national characteristics. This paper study the importance of the design identity as a key element in creating a local culture of design, checking the mediterraneanness and the influence of lifestyle called "Mediterranean way", mentioned by several authors, trying to decipher the Mediterranean character of the Spanish design. Various fields have been studied looking the characteristics of the "Mediterranean way", and were extrapolated to the design, showing through a product analysis how this identity is reflected in the Spanish design. The claim of this work is to get an own discourse for Spanish design, recovering the transmission of the cultural and social values.

Key words: Identity, design culture, Mediterranean, Spanish design, semantic field.

Martínez, R., Pastor, J. & López, A. (2014). Mediterranean influence in the Spanish design identity. *ArDIn. Arte, Diseño e Ingeniería*, 3, 36-60

Resumen

La diversidad del diseño español nos ha llevado a cuestionarnos su identidad, valores, intenciones y características nacionales. Este trabajo estudia la importancia de la identidad en el diseño como un elemento clave en la creación de culturas del diseño locales, empleando la mediterraneidad y la influencia del estilo de vida denominado como “Mediterranean Way”, mencionando por varios autores, tratando de descifrar el carácter mediterráneo del diseño español. Han sido analizados varios ámbitos de la cultura mediterránea buscando las características del “Mediterranean Way”, extrapolándolas al diseño y mostrando a través de un análisis de producto como esta identidad es reflejada en el diseño español. El objetivo principal de este trabajo es plantear la obtención de un discurso propio para el diseño español, recuperando la transmisión de la cultura y los valores sociales del mismo.

Palabras clave: Identidad, cultura de diseño, Mediterráneo, diseño español, campo semántico.

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1. Introduction

The development of industrial design has always been linked to historic periods from which some movements or design currents have emerged, such as modernism or pop design. It has also been linked to movements motivated by necessities of some particular geographic region, as reflected in American styling or Russian constructivism. These historic and geographical associations generate some characteristics in design, and set a style; an identity. As Guy Julier (2010) argued, an identity is marked by all the circumstances that influence that matter; in this case, the design is directly influenced by geography, culture, politics and economics (Fig. 1). Similarly, we speak of “cultures of design” beyond a simple visual culture: the design needs a distinctive culture (Julier, 2006).

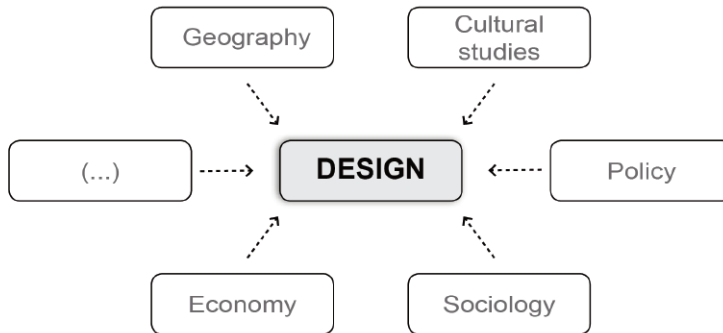


Figure 1. Elements that influence the design characterization of a given territory, made from Guy Julier's book "The Culture of Design".

When we are talking about style, among its different meanings, we are referring to the set of characteristics that individualize an artistic trend of a defined period of time. Usually, a style has a geographical and temporal origin, and this is the reason why it is inherently influenced by the culture and some specific circumstances (Rae, 2001). In some other examples, a style may be directly associated with the work of one or more designer. Thus, for example, the British design, specifically in the 40's and 50's, seeks to achieve the appreciation of good design and good taste by the public (Dormer, 1993).

Once a style has been established and acknowledged, the phenomenon of "stylistic recognition" takes place. Through this phenomenon people are able to extract the characteristics of the style, and they are able to distil an image of the works that belong to it. In the same way, we are able to categorize a work and confirm that it belongs to a specific style. When this happens, we can affirm that the work relates to one identity, which means the work has some concrete typical features that distinguish it from others (Rae, 2001).

This categorization takes place in many disciplines that surround our lives, and has defined artistic, literary or architectural styles in the course of the history. Similarly, in the recent history of the industrial design, a great number of styles have emerged, and thus, their designs have been categorized (Bürdek, 2002).

If we talk about Scandinavian design, anyone who has even minimum knowledge of industrial design can list some of its characteristics and the scope of action even though in this case it is linked to his own name. We could say that its identity marks are its pure forms, the use of laminated timber, the experimentation with the flexibility of wood and its elegant lines, and that its appearance highlights the modernity of Scandinavian society at the beginning of the 20th century (Fiell, 2005).

It is necessary to evaluate the importance of a product falls within a certain identity, as agent or reason of consumption in the design industry. A clear example is the aforementioned Scandinavian design, and the cultural and economic exploitation of their identity.

Nevertheless, as it is said, one of the key factors of the germination and flowering of any style is its geographical and cultural influence, and because of this, tradition, landscape, and the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian folklore are most determinative in the definition of Scandinavian design. "(...) The design is led down a path that includes things archaic and traditional burdens, because we are tradition, antique, ... and strangest emotions" (Sottsass, 1998).

Similarly, in early 20th century Germany, universal solutions were sought in the world of design, putting two known styles together, such as functionalism and rationalism. The Bauhaus, guided by the saying "form follows function" proposed by architect Louis Sullivan, worked with steel, glass and tubular structures to create functional furniture and buildings (Fiell, 2011). In short, if we talk about functionalism we can identify Germany as one of the most representative regions, and in the same way, if we talk about radical design, arts & crafts or constructivism, we identify countries like Italy, England and Russia, respectively.

This association or "stylistic recognition" highlights the existence of a native component (not original) in the emergence of a style, meaning, a link or connection between the characteristics that forms that style and its (geographical) scope of action (Pasini, 2005).

To be sure, the concept of identity can go beyond geographical appreciation, that is, beyond the link with the nationality or the nation, although the design is a highly cultural activity and that is precisely the cultural aspects those behind the idea of nationalism (Anderson, 1991). Several authors, from this starting point, refer to the term identity to speak of social belonging or acceptance in a certain group of individuals. For example, through experiments conducted by Henri Tajfel, Billig (1971) maintains the inherent classification of individuals into different groups and the strong implication of these therewith.

Returning to our scope of work, industrial design, it is interesting to understand the identity as design-user association, a design identity exists whenever a social group feel identified with this kind of design. As mentioned, the design identity should go beyond the national association. For example, we speak of ecodesign when a specific feature modulates the product identity (respect for the environment, low energy consumption, ...), but in this case the identity is not geographically referred. So we can understand as identity the Italian design, the emotional design or the aforementioned ecodesign.

An in-depth analysis of each of the previously mentioned styles would reveal that the culture, society, the resources, the ideology and the tradition of a region

are the factors that have modulated specific styles, and that those identities also influenced by the values and the feelings of society. We cannot forget the need of the design to focus on the user study and their needs, as well as for the society to which they belong (Cooper, 2011).

As argued Gimeno (2006), the creative industries have an important role in creating regional identities, therefore, the design is an important agent in the creation of an identity, consumption habits and lifestyle of a society, but otherwise cannot be treated individually, as an isolated element. The way in which the design is carried out, considering the circumstances surrounding it, generates the creation of a “culture of design” (Julier, 2010), transmitting a particular local narrative.

2. The Mediterranean concept

2.1 *The Mediterranean domain*

Talking about Mediterranean is talking unequivocally about multiculturalism, melting pot of societies and a region that has witnessed first hand the passage of time. Traditionally it has been a link between two worlds, east and west. Since the Roman Empire, the Mediterranean area has not been characterized by its homogeneity, nor its cultural, political and economic coherence, but by its radical diversity (Jaen and Martínez, 2002). This diversity makes almost impossible to characterize the Mediterranean style in a uniform way. From the industrialization to the religion, the Mediterranean area has been marked by great differences.

As said, the Mediterranean is a set of regions marked by cultural, social and geographical differences. From the point of view of industrial design there are countries with an industrial approach versus countries based on craftsmanship. (Pasca, 2009). Within this range, Spain and the Spanish Mediterranean are somewhere in the middle, being one of the regions that best combines tradition and present, committed to the development of projects that promote cultural heritage.

The Spanish Mediterranean is one of the most expansive areas of the Mediterranean coast. It is also a key area in the history of the region because of the traditions and the great cultural legacies that Greeks, Romans and Arabs have left behind.

Although having some similarities with other Mediterranean areas, also has its own characteristics, caused by its own circumstances. These characteristics have led to the assignment of the “Mediterranean” category when we refer to activities or behaviours of its society, and little by little it has penetrated as a style in different disciplines.

2.2 The “Mediterranean” label

In the middle of the 20th century, after the Second World War, physiologist Ancel Keys noticed that in his research about coronary heart diseases, the Mediterranean area (specifically the population of Crete Islands) had a significantly higher life expectancy than the inhabitants from other countries of northern Europe. He highlighted the beneficial role of Mediterranean cuisine (Keys, 1980) as a reason. Moreover, he observed that not just the eating habits were a key factor for this prolonged life expectancy, the lifestyle of local people was also relevant. It was Keys who coined the term “Mediterranean way” (Keys, 1975), which is also known as the Mediterranean diet. The lifestyle is marked in the DNA of its inhabitants, but also by its geography and knowledge of combining the qualities of the region, linked to the know-how of that place. It is a lifestyle demanded by the tourist sector, which has exploited it, and to a lesser extent, the industrial sector. This lifestyle is perfectly reflected in the slogan “Walk, don’t run!” (Pasini, 2005) used by the company Camper in its advertising campaigns (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Advertising campaign “Walk, do not run” of the Spanish company Camper in 2005.

When we talk about the Mediterranean, people seldom think just of the geographic region, because its mention calls to mind to the qualities of the region as a whole. These qualities define an idea, a style, a universe (Maalouf, 2002).

Mediterranean cuisine, Mediterranean diet (nowadays the concept of cuisine is replaced directly by the concept of diet), Mediterranean lifestyle or “Mediterranean way”, Mediterranean craftsmanship, ... all of these are terms consolidated as one idea in current society. The series of defining characteristics makes this possible. And what about the scope of the design? Can we talk about a Mediterranean influence? The older brother (in scale) starts to identify this style in its scope of action, referring this way to “Mediterranean architecture”.

What we know as Mediterranean architecture is based on local and ancestral assets, and it is unequivocally characterised by the use of local materials and techniques, apart from the influences of the geographical area, such as the climate and the relief. If we talk about Mediterranean architecture we can imagine wide retaining walls, white washed buildings that alleviate the scorching temperatures, and the influence of the nature from grapevines or vertical gardens (Maalouf, 2002). As a general rule, there are low buildings with flat roofs that combine colors of the earth with white walls, and where the light has an important role. Formally these characteristics fit in a simple, basic and almost minimalist aesthetics. This archetype of Mediterranean architecture can be considered the base of some recent modern or contemporary creations, such as the initial works of Josep Lluís Sert, where balance, light, space and color play an important role (Juncosa, 2011). In this way, Sert (1960) asserted, “(...) we need to pay more attention to the types of Mediterranean houses”, referring to the need to take advantage of resources, such as materials or the southern light, of the Mediterranean area.

The “Mediterranean” label is therefore a descriptor that several disciplines have acquired, on the basis of characteristics related to social, cultural and geographical aspects of the region in question. A “Mediterranean” is an attitude that communicates specific sensations, feelings and emotions. The appearance of this label shows the importance of registering a work in a concrete moment and place, making this work extremely dependent on its specific circumstances (Baltanás, 2004).

Spain has used in the past its relation to the Mediterranean, as evidenced by advertising campaigns or marketing strategies undertaken by various governments in recent years. The Mediterraneanness has served as a strategy and an argument in the country-brand image. As Camper, other companies have used this argument as advertising strategy; for example, a popular beer brand invites consumers to live the life “Mediterráneamente” (Fig. 3).

The exact same happens in the Mediterranean region: the Spanish territory has various languages, traditions and nationalities, which complicate the extraction of the main features of Spanish industrial design (Capella, 2010). However, there are some characteristics in Spanish design that are regularly repeated, giving it certain homogeneity. The study about Spanish industrial design made by Centro de Arte Museo Reina Sofía (1998) proves this fact. This study emphasizes the diversity, expressiveness and personality of the design. Moreover it stresses the simplicity and the use of ingenuity to solve problems, the versatility and the originality. “It also exists a sensual and refreshing trend that people from abroad consider as mediterranean and latin”. We can also highlight the role of the fine arts, the applied arts and the craftsmanship, even though the technological level of its solutions is relatively low.

3.1 Some keys to understanding Spanish design

Industrial design in Spain is still today a growing and evolving discipline, its role has evolved historically, always in pursuit of credibility and acceptance. Despite this, it is a discipline well considered by the international community, which continues to grow in the Spanish companies.

There are several starting points that have characterized the way of understanding design in Spain, firstly understanding of industrial design and its birth from the world of decorative arts, the discipline grows from the hand of the fine arts field in its early stages, and then from the hand of the architecture. Therefore, the understanding of an autonomous discipline was slow and paused. On the other hand, it is important to highlight the deep roots of the crafts, due to slow industrialization and almost nonexistent in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution, establishing large differences with the rest of Europe. Within the Spanish territory this industrialization enjoyed more success in certain areas, such as Catalonia, the Basque Country and Valencia. As highlighted by Anna Calvera (1998) in its “Background” on the 20th century Spanish design, from the earliest stages of design, was challenging the paradigm shift and the passage of decorative arts and crafts to industrial design and industry respectively. Despite the distance, today Spain is checking these differences in the industrialization of their regions, being a country of very different regions, so can't to find a final style of Spanish design (Julier, 1991), prevails an eclectic design, consisting on various styles and opinions.

The Spanish design eclecticism must be understood beyond its current stage, i.e. beyond globalization. Today, the world and its civilizations are understood as a global entity who feel affected by each and every one of the parties thereto: societies and cultures (Morace, 2009). Thus explains that the eclectic character of the design appears in many countries or regions, the borders are gone and we are in a global community. Therefore, although the eclecticism could be explained due to migration and technological advances (Appadurai, 2001), in the case of Spanish de-

sign, this feature has been reflected practically since its inception, therefore goes beyond the influence of globalization.

As in every geographic region, the design was strongly marked by the turbulent history of the country, conforming to their stages and the political changes (Fig. 4). So went from to be a suspicious activity to the Francoist regime, due to the adoption of the modern movement in the 40's, to obtain recognition beyond the borders in the 60's, helped by the end of autarky instituted, until a cultural outbreak, coinciding with the fall of the dictatorial regime and a deep economic crisis in the 70's. Industrial design in Spain suffers a gap with the international design. Despite the political constraints, many Spanish designers proposed a new design concept, relying on the theoretical argument before practice, and this is how through figures like Antoni de Moragas or André Ricard the design walks away out of Francoist proposal and the "typical Spanish".

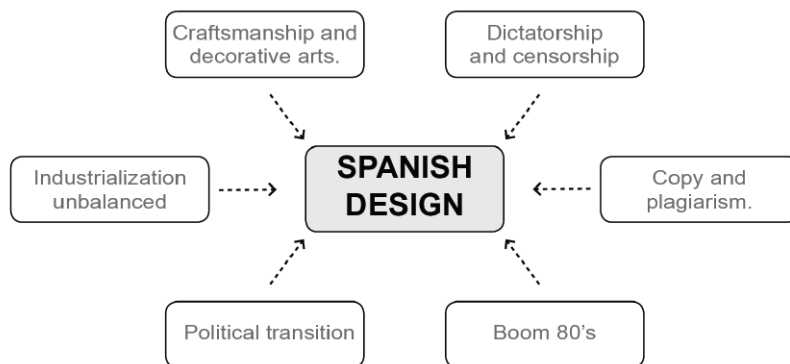


Figure 4. The conditioning factors of Spanish industrial design.

Another feature of Spanish design from the beginning is the approach to culture, as a transmitter capable of expressing a particular set of values. Its exclusive, focused to the highest levels of society, and its character of protest from the political point of view, finished in a boom in the 80's. During this decade, events happen that will change the future of this discipline of consumption, as Spain's entry into the European Community or the introduction of the single European market. Despite the important work of promoting the design, how was demonstrated in the study by Gisele Raulik, Cawood and Povl Gavin Larsen (2008), in this case the promotion of the Spanish design caused a mismatch between image and identity, seeking greater visibility rather than continue investing in the cultural value (Narotzky, 2008). Arises in Spain a design boom which is enhanced by the large events like the Olympic Games of Barcelona '92 or the World Fair in Seville. Preparations for these

events are an opportunity to show the world the character of Spanish design and its mediterraneanness (Moragas, 1993). The design falls squarely into Spanish society, in which everything becomes designed and is popularized this activity with the famous phrase “you design or work?” (Zabalbeascoa, 2011). This is a curious question, because today still made efforts to explain and understand what we mean by design. This bonanza, instead of reversing positively was a brake to the role and importance of design in Spain (Capella 2005).

The design ignores its roots and designers join to the radical movement emerged in Italy. While in this country, in a postwar context, they adopted this design as a reply to “Belle design” of the 60’s (as a form of rebellion), Spain just took their code and aesthetics, without promoting its ideals. The adoption of this movement, despite a supposed a great success in promoting the design, slowed the creation of a separate identity in Spanish design.

The term “design” was devalued rapidly, beginning to identify with the aesthetic whim, lack of functionality or discomfort (Capella, 1998). The challenge ahead was to recover the truth of this discipline, this task has come to our days, in which start to break and forget old bad habits, and the design recovers its initial purposes.

Besides the eclectic character highlighted by Guy Julier, currently the Spanish design is recognized, and it fight to regain their cultural capital, prioritizing the national characteristics and abandoning the vanguard desire, in a search for its origins to know where want to go, in the words of Anatxu Zabalbeascoa (2012), “Recovering common sense.” Traditionally, Spanish design is imaginative and daring, considered expressive, rooted in latin and mediterranean character of our latitude (Capella, 2005).

3.2 The special case of design in Catalonia

Thanks to the aforementioned aspects as “benevolent” industrialization in various areas of Spanish territory, Catalonia becomes a special example, that gets an own culture of design, oblivious to the rest of the country. With the fall of the dictatorship in the 70’s, power is decentralized to regional government, and it takes the decision to Europeanize the region, becoming an example of modernity. With the city of Barcelona as reference, the Catalan area becomes the state benchmark in design, producing a rethinking urban and social, which will serve as an example to other European cities. Through urban landscape evoke values as modernity, Europeanism and technology. To become the best example of the change from the previous regime, Catalonia used design as a tool for change, understanding this activity as a cultural practice, falling in reflection of that culture has to be associated with an economic value (Julier, 2005).

Catalonia symbolizes the modernity, through design is achieved reflect a new image, which exclaims differences with the rest of the Spanish territory. The regional government supports institutions and design schools, reverting benefits: Catalonia understands that design can be the best vehicle to transport their own culture. The design and architecture lead the local identity and are examples of social and cultural values. The design passes from restricted social circles to popular culture, thus there is a “democratization of design” (Narotzky, 2000). With one foot in tradition and the local feel, Barcelona and Catalonia are committed to the recognition in the rest of Europe, becoming the eminent participants in globalization. Barcelona is still today one of the best examples of joining the global and the local, which is known today as the term “Glocal” (Marchesteiner, 2007), a globalization that knows his limits.

Due to the concern for the design and understanding of its benefits, Catalonia has become an incubator for designers and companies committed to this discipline, and have led Barcelona to be considered the capital of design.

But it would be unfair to talk only of Catalonia as a pioneer region. Apart from Catalonia, other authors cite the Valencian Community as a key area for the development of industrial design in Spain as a discipline. Javier Gimeno (2002) highlights the importance of these Mediterranean regions in the creative development of the 80s, the above mentioned as the “design boom”.

Beyond the diversity, a series of common characteristics exists. These highlight a certain identity in the Spanish design, despite its eclectic character. This categorization has led us to approach the influence of Mediterranean factors, establishing a parallelism with some other disciplines that have had a clear geographical influence.

4. Methodology phase

In this work we have sought analogies between industrial design and diverse disciplines, referring to the similarities between them, to understand that common attributes exist between industrial design and other fields. Language, music, food, and architecture... are linked, although indirectly, the characteristics of design (Can, 2009). In the case of design, it cannot be considered without understanding other social dimensions (Margolin, 2009), without the opening and viewing of other fields, so it is then necessary to look, observe and understand the surroundings. A clear example is the work of A.C Özcan (2009), establishing relationships between disciplines such as music and food with the industrial design, applying their characteristics in the case of Turkish design.

The link between industrial design and other disciplines, in which the Mediterranean has had an important influence, allows the creation of a semantic

universe that helps us to define the Mediterranean characteristics that influence Spanish design. The objective is to extract the characteristics that define “Mediterranean” from several disciplines and identifying the values that are evocative of it.

4.1 Creation of a semantic field

The realization of the semantic field is based on the analysis of some primary aspects of the Mediterranean scope. Those disciplines that already have that label or categorization, such as cuisine or lifestyle, are especially interesting. Even though at the beginning we have talked about the fields of study as single components, these are linked by ideas or key words (Fig. 5). Fields of study are interconnected and complement each other; for example, we can relate the climate with the lifestyle, or the landscape with the cuisine, using the flora as a link between them.

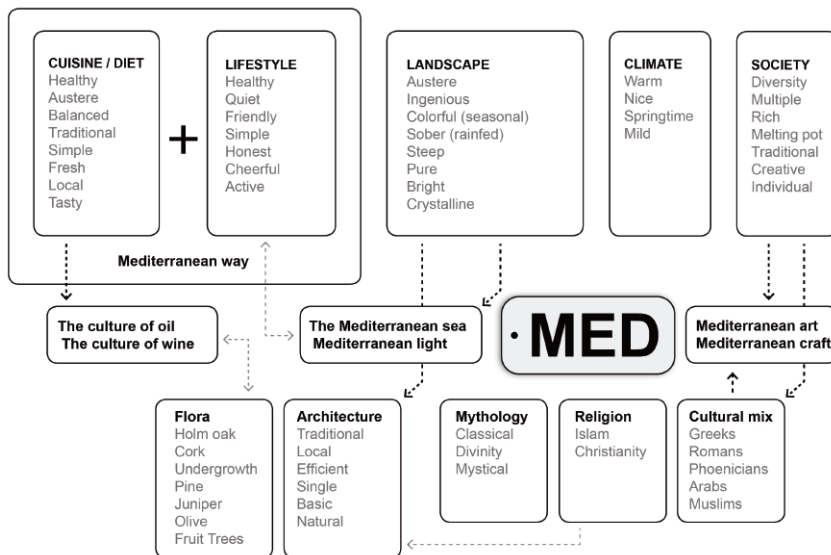


Figure 5. Construction of a semantic field that defines the “Mediterranean” label. The diagram illustrates the scopes where the Mediterranean has a great influence. The arrows show how the main fields generate secondary fields that help to define the previous, which correlate each other.

First of all, the objective of this analysis is to extract the characteristics of the different fields. To do this, we do not take into account the possible links that these fields have with the industrial design. Because from these characteristics we can understand what there is behind the “Mediterranean” identification, and what

users understand. Subsequently, we will see how the characteristics are linked or not to the design, providing it also some parameters of identity.

The cuisine / The diet

The Mediterranean diet is characterised by the use of local food, from which we can highlight the trilogy of “oil, bread and wine”. It is defined as healthy, traditional and balanced and combines its elements in a simple way. Apart from its proven benefits, it is interesting to analyze the attention given to its methods of creation, as the Spanish chef, Ferrán Adriá (1993) has confirmed.

Lifestyle

As the cuisine, the lifestyle shapes the “Mediterranean way” and it is object of praise in an amount of studies. Based on the tranquility, in the know-how and in the good living (Calvera, 2011), the Mediterranean lifestyle is linked to the peaceful and quiet life in the countryside, not free of daily work.

The landscape

The Mediterranean landscape has been a source of inspiration in the course of history. The sea and the light are its maximum representatives: the white and blue landscape (Braudel, 1987). It is characterised by austerity and purity. Beyond the land, Mediterranean landscape is modulated with architecture and color accents from its monochromatic flora.

The climate

Kind, warm and pleasant. The Mediterranean climate helps to conceive a way of understanding life, outside, in the activity of the street, because it modules the mood and the personality of the people of a place. This climate has few contrasts, warm and mild, although it is also humid because of the sea.

The society

It is marked by the diversity and by the appearance of multiple cultures, but also by the roots of the tradition, generated by its multiple settlements over time (Secorun, 1982). Its culture, its tradition and the influence of religion mark this society and also the way of understanding disciplines such as art or craftsmanship. Mediterranean people are creative and skilful, they have a happy character and they are guided by their emotions and their feelings. However, they have an individualistic and autonomous personality.

Analysed the different fields of the Mediterranean, the following step will be to extract a semantic field through the terms that define each of the main scopes and the ones that arose from them. In this way we should extract the “Mediterranean

anean” from each of them. To do this we need to identify its main characteristic building a field. The main terms found are: basic, quiet, pure, functional, nuanced (with touches), soft, plural, rich, influential and deep-rooted (Table 1). These terms sum up the identity of the Mediterranean, defining its perception.

Field	Data synthesis	Impact on design
Cuisine/Diet	Basic	Influence of sensory Perserving tradition
Lifestyle	Quiet	How to understand the design: purpose
Landscape	Pure, unaltered	Material
+ Architecture	Functional	Formal
+ Flora	Nuanced	Leveraging resources Chromatic
Climate	Soft	Condition of the solutions
Society	Plural	Size of proposed
+ Culture	Rich	Large field of work
+ Religion	Influential	Impact on working
+ Mythology	Deep-rooted	methods

Table 1. Definition of the “Mediterranean” label. This shows the main characteristics of the fields studied in Figure 4, and the impact of these in industrial design.

4.2 Repercussion in design

Obtained the essential characteristics that define the generically Mediterranean identity, is also important to understand the direct influence that the areas analysed may have on the design. Which means, how design can be influenced by the cuisine, the lifestyle, the landscape ... taking a look beyond the possible sources of inspiration or fields of work.

Through the analysis of the cuisine appreciate their possible influences on the sensory aspect of design, remembering textures, smells or tastes, influencing the primary aspects of design, visceral level. Its original character, associated with preserving the tradition of good cooking practices, remembers well done.

Following this reasoning the lifestyle is directly related to how to understand the design and with the aim of the proposed concepts. The influence of the Mediterranean would confer wisdom and balance to the design, and this is understood as a practice that helps to know to live.

Indubitably, the architecture, the flora and the landscape affect the shapes and the material of the offerings, as an inspiration and as a reference, but the landscape could also be also an analogy of how to take advantage of resources, recalling the exploitation of water or the treatment of light. Furthermore, as with the influence of material, the design keeps in its aesthetics the complete range of colors of these fields. Moreover, the climate could be, on many occasions, determinative of a design. The climate highlights the lifestyle of people, and it affects their mood. In line with this, the solutions provided by the design are considered for lifestyle, and take into account the mood and humour of the society.

Finally, in the sociological aspects, doing an exercise of abstraction, the plurality can be linked to the great extent of solutions generated by design, and also with the extent of its range of work. Furthermore, society, culture and religion form the designer who has the influences of these different disciplines in his or her roots. A great number of beliefs come from mythology, and these beliefs generate many of artistic representations and traditions, such as the art of bullfighting.

4.3 Mediterranean identity in Spanish design

As we have seen, the Mediterranean idea is inspiring and therefore, throughout history, it has been used different disciplines. Artists like Picasso used several aspects of Mediterranean culture, from mythology, to the fauna and landscapes. Antoni Gaudí introduced the Mediterranean sea in its architectural (Zerbst, 2005), and also used traditional techniques such as “trencadis”, the use of which has been revived nowadays by architects like Santiago Calatrava.

A variety of specific products were born of Mediterranean culture. From the culture of oil, which is central to the Mediterranean diet, appeared multiple oilers, such as the Vinagreras 4, of the Spanish company Valira. Another clear example of the Mediterranean culinary influence was the Braun juicer Citromatic MPZ-2, designed by the Spanish team headed by Gabriel Lluelles, in collaboration with Dieter Rams. The German brand entrusted this project to the Spanish team because they “know more about oranges”. The result was an emblematic product, which has been on the market since 1970 and remains almost unchanged.

However, beyond the appearance of products based on the know-how and the influence of Mediterranean character, this analysis seeks to extract, from several products, the characteristics determined in the presented semantic field.

Obtained the Mediterranean identity, we propose an analysis of products and relevant cases in the history of Spanish design, as an example of application of this identity, illustrating the previous semantic field through the appearance of defined values.

The objective of this analysis is to understand the identity of Spanish design, and to reflect how the Mediterranean character influences in its diversity. For this, have been analyzed design cases that have transcended time, success cases of Spanish design, as well as examples of new practices that recover the lost action line by Spanish design.

The following analysis demonstrates ten cases in which the design approximates the label “Mediterranean” as proposal here (Fig. 6). They are ordered chronologically to show the influence of the Mediterranean identity through the history of Spanish design.

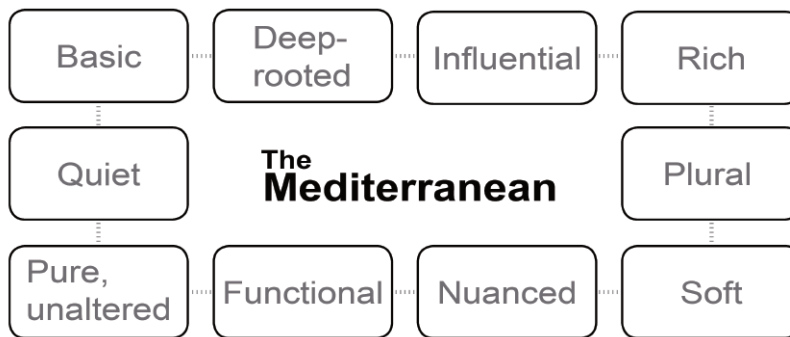


Figure 6. Identity parameters of the “Mediterranean” label.

4.4 Analysis of products

Bottle “Agua Lavanda” (Lavender Water). 1963

The forms the Bottle “Agua Lavanda” (Figure 7) container have the notable influence of the Mediterranean sea, representing a drop of water. The fragrance “Agua Lavanda”, made with native herbs, was a sign of tradition, and became a souvenir for tourists of the time. Because of this, the designer of the bottle, André Ricard, added a small strip of raffia, to evoke Mediterranean values (Capella, 2010), because it was a typical plant of the Spanish Mediterranean area.

The case Camper. Since 1975

The Camper company is the best example of the “Mediterranean” label. This footwear company sells the lifestyle directly from their place of origin: Mallorca. Their first shoe, the “Chameleon” (Figure 7), was a design based on the typical

local shoe that peasants used and which tourists bought as a souvenir. From the beginning, Camper sold tranquility and comfort, and also the attachment to the land, “constant emotional thread that has guided the decisions of Camper” (Pasini, 2005). In addition to selling shoes, it sold this lifestyle through other initiatives such as the hotel “Casa Camper” or its “Foodball” restaurants. Camper sells a lifestyle: the Mediterranean, transmitting it through the sensory characteristics of their products.

Library “The Literature”. 1985

The Library “The Literature” (Figure 7) is one of the most universal pieces of Spanish furniture (VV.AA, 2009). This is a design that was to solve a problem: the accumulation of books and the difficult access to those that are in a second row. Its success lies in the simplicity of solving the problem. Vicent Martínez addressed the issue of storage with a minimal intervention.

Hanger “Ona”. 1992

Hanger “Ona” (Fig. 7) is an emblematic object of Spanish design. Its own name (ona = wave) indicates the influence of the sea. But beyond being redundant, this hanger designed by Montse Padrós and Carles Riart, ingeniously solved the attainment of an inclined plane through its own shape. Despite the attractiveness of its form, this hanger is designed to fulfill a function. This is an example of imagination from a simple module, and an optimal use of resources.

“Rebotijo”. 1999

Halfway between bottle and Tetra Brik, Martín Azúa makes a redesign of the traditional Spanish jug (botijo), not only adding creativity and imagination, but also elegance to an existing product that already existed. Despite its ingenuity, it stands out for its simple and soft lines (Fig. 7). Its clay material responds to the characteristics of the warm Mediterranean climate, and keeps water cold due to the porosity of this traditional material.

The case Lékúé. The 2005 explosion

The Lékúé company had created low cost silicone molds until 2005, when it decided to change its approach through the introduction of design. The company produces, under his own signature, silicone utensils for cooking, selling fun, excitement and functionality. Its products are designed for healthy cooking, recovering the Mediterranean cuisine. Its vapor boxes (Fig. 7) provide for recovery of flavors of traditional cooking, while saving time and minimizing resources. Lékúé is an example of how the design seeks to sharpen the ingenuity of functionality through nice and flashy solutions. However, beyond the functionality, these products are destined to be shown and explained: they tell a story that justifies their existence.

Umbrella “Ensombra”. 2006

From the influence of the Mediterranean light, the umbrella “Ensombra” (In-Shadow) (Fig. 7) was born. Odos Design Group proposes an opening and closing system based on the operation of a fan. This umbrella lets you create dynamic spaces combining light, color and shadow. Despite its ingenious operating system, it is characterized by the simplicity of its lines. It is produced by the company Gandia Blasco, a Valencian company that sells “Mediterranean spaces” through outdoor furniture.

Collection “Cuks”. 2007

Collection “Cuks” (Fig. 7) is a collection of carpets that reflect the sensory importance, awakening emotions through touch and sight. This collection, designed and produced by Nanimarquina, combines artisan tradition with modern and innovative aesthetics. Despite being static elements, carpets from the Cuks collection, demonstrate their dynamic qualities through changes in color and texture.

Collection “Naoshima”. 2009

Subtly, the “Naoshima” collection (Fig. 7) appeals to the idea of experimentation. This is an example of simplicity that seeks functionality. However, it also shows a great personality through the curvature of the material and its play of colors. This offer by Emiliana Design is a good example of a basic concept but with nuances that draw attention.

Collection “Natura Jars”. 2011

With an essentialist aesthetic, this collection designed by Héctor Serrano demonstrates the reinterpretation of the traditional material and the purity of something well done. The producers, La Mediterranea, work with glass as material heritage, and give a daring touch of the traditional, representing new forms and colors. Natura Jars Collection (Fig. 7) shows the beauty of simplicity, and emphasizes its timelessness.



Figure 7. Products analyzed in search of the "Mediterranean" label.

This analysis shows how the Mediterranean character is elicited by the different characteristics of the products. For example, the formal importance is shown in products like Agua Brava bottle, or the hanger Ona, products in which the im-

agery of the Mediterranean Sea is more than evident. In this case its values are seen by simple observation of the product.

Sometimes it is necessary to manipulate the products to discover their characteristics, for example, the creativity and imagination mentioned by different authors in the literature review of this work is reflected through products such as the “Literatura” library or the “Ensombra” umbrella. These products show the resourcefulness and the ability to problem-solving through simple variations.

As we have seen, the ways to carry out the transmission of values analyzed above can elicit through different strategies. With products analyzed have tried to show the characteristics that define the Mediterranean. These characteristics can be found in its conception.

4.5 Spanish Mediterranean design

Following the above analysis, we can say that in addition to serving as a source of inspiration, the Mediterranean character (purity, simplicity, functionality, ...) is reflected in the identity of Spanish design.

First, beyond the sample of selected products, it is important to highlight and reflect on the designs that have transcended over time: designs with an important cultural component, away from the vanguard, without excess, in which raw functionality over its artistic or expository.

Within the diversity of Spanish design, is accentuated the influence of the Mediterranean. It features transcend the years, emerging as simple and pure products, seeking the satisfaction of fulfilling a function, while conveying the feelings and local emotions. Its main task is to convey a relaxed lifestyle, paused and healthy. “Perhaps the Mediterranean design is rational, with sensible shapes, timeless, and is not dependent on fashions (...)” (Barranco, 2011).

Like any identity, the identity of Spanish design is influenced by its circumstances, so is affected by his surroundings, in this case the Mediterranean influence is clear, responding through the extracted parameters.

This style, close to essentialism, or the design called “super normal”, is repeated in the catalogs of the Spanish production companies. This is reflected in trend books, as one by Habitat Trends Observatory (2010) shows, where are trends like “Sublime by hand”, (which combines the expertise of the craftsman with the designer’s creativity), or “The Essentials”, (which suggests to return the path of good design), which improves the people’s quality of life.

5. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to understand the importance of identity on design as well as the parameters that influence their formation. In this case we have tried to decipher the identity of Spanish design and the influence of Mediterranean character. We analyzed how different aspects of the Mediterranean modulate this identity. You can refer to a style of design as “Mediterranean”, referring to a design that promotes certain values and characteristics, awakening specific feelings.

The identity of a design is defined directly by the surrounding elements, such as lifestyle, landscape, or cultural background, specific to a particular place. From these elements, a semantic field can be extracted, defining features of that environment. Many of the parameters extracted in the definition of “the Mediterranean” coincide with the main Spanish design features mentioned by most of authors analyzed. Does this mean that the Spanish design is purely a Mediterranean style? The answer to this question is that the Mediterranean character helps to understand the diversity of the identity of Spanish design, this has been possible thanks to the completion of analogies and observation of disparate areas, a priori, away from design, as suggested by Victor Margolin. The parameters obtained from the semantic field that defines the “Mediterranean” were shown through the analysis of case studies of Spanish design in recent decades. The emergence of these parameters in trend books reveals that identity is present in the Spanish design.

The Spanish design evokes the values of Mediterranean lifestyle or “Mediterranean way” through simple concepts, basic and functional, although they have their own personality, marked by the characteristics analyzed. As discussed, continue this line of action in the design may involve getting an identity, something that has been missing for decades, in which the Spanish design has been copying styles or following aesthetic trends established in other fields, generated by other circumstances. What sense does it bring to Spain international crumbs? Despite the complexity of obviating globalization, it is necessary to understand the influence of the local in design conception.

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