

When quality measures the distance between valorization and commodification

There is a shared vision which wants that every kind of good and service can be transformed in a product.

It doesn't matter what kind of good or service is.

This perspective is not so bad as it could sound to many, and above all, looking at our daily lives, it is not so far from the reality.

We use and consume every kind of good and service, whether it is a cultural good, a relational good or an industrial good.

Though, when we talk about cultural goods, the setting-up of a value-chain or a value-system, obviously scares humanists.

Indeed, there is a point that we need to fix and to underline: there is a huge difference between valorization and commodification, and the measure of this difference is named quality. Quality of the processes through which we transform cultural or non-cultural assets in cultural products.

Skilled human resources, clever investments and proper management principles lead to a high-quality deliverable that, despite its market-driven approach, could improve knowledge, culture and social value more than a pure-cultural-driven approach.

It is the same difference that measures the distance between "territorial development" and "territorial marketing".

Having a look at both the definitions remove any doubt about it.

While "Territorial marketing can be defined as a process whereby local activities are related as closely as possible to the demands of targeted customers" the "Territorial development designates development that is endogenous and spatially integrated, leverages the contribution of actors operating at multiple scales and brings incremental value to national development efforts".

However, looking at the cultural sector, despite the glaring differences between these definitions, the output of these approaches could appear very similar.

Both the approaches, indeed, produce cultural services, cultural goods and touristic goods that third-sector organizations, enterprises and Public Administrations offer on the market.

So, what kind of variable should we use to interpret a cultural or touristic good as the result of a marketing approach or, on the contrary, of a territorial development approach?

Once again, quality could be the answer.

More in detail, the attention and the respect for the specific characteristics that cultural assets deserve.

Down to earth, we can valorize a territory in two main ways.

The first one is looking to the market and adapting our territory to it: statistics, research and customer questionnaires could show us what kind of expectations they have of our territory and adapt the territorial supply to those results.

The second looks to the market as a whole and adapt it to our territory: statistics, research and customer questionnaires, together with in-dept analysis of our territory, of our assets and of our tangible and intangible infrastructures could help us in nurturing market expectations, improving our revenues while valorizing our minor cultural assets.

This number of Tafter Journal examines, in different ways, the delicate difference between valorization and commodification.

Benvenga, retracing the development of the “hippie” counterculture, close his research underlining a key point for these reflections: when the “diggers-neighborhood” became famous, a bus-company started guided tour within these hippy territories.

In response, the inhabitants started protest-acts, forcing the company to the stop of the “service”.

The reasons are clear: a bus-tour (realized by subject external to the community) was perceived as a zoo-tour where inhabitants were the displayed animals.

Today, as Laura show us, we have tools and technologies allowing us in realizing a different kind of cultural service.

Today we can design cultural tours realized using citizenship generated content; anchor real-life histories and urban myths to specific places through GIS technology, or also create high-level cultural contents and mixed-reality reconstructions in order to provide visitors and “temporary citizens” (a good way for defining tourists) with a better understanding of our history and culture.

We’re experiencing an era that could be potentially awesome for cultural goods. Thanks to the technology development we are able to valorize our territories, our culture and our intangible assets more than ever.

And, above all, technology could help us in doing away old ideological prejudices, allowing us in looking to the future of cultural valorization from a less scared point of view.



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