

Does storytelling kill stories?

Just a few years ago, the word storytelling in the Italian cultural world was barely acknowledged. In recent times, however, this term knew an unquestionable success, soon becoming a “must do” for every practitioner or academic researcher in cultural related disciplines and organizations.

This kind of approach has been kind misunderstood by many Italian cultural organizations, and the coronavirus emergency displayed a sort of Italian Way to the storytelling that should probably be revised or, preferably, stopped.

Everything starts with a sort of Anglophilia phenomenon.

Despite Italian vocabulary shows a good translation for the term storytelling, most of the people choose to adopt the English term, which shows a double meaning.

On the one hand, storytelling refers to the act of knowledge transmission by oral practice; on the other hand, storytelling relates to a marketing technique, which adds a story to a product or a brand.

This difference, that is internationally acknowledged, seems to be less clear for Italian cultural organization.

This number of Tafter Journal points out some positive features of storytelling technique in international organizations: in the example cited by the authors, there is a clear difference between the two main meanings of the word “storytelling”.

Both Future Fabulators and Museum Hack provide visitors with a narrative approach, which intent is to create a deeper connection between the act of the fruition and everyday life.

Actually, Museum Hack, for instance, plays with this ambiguity, translating the narrative interpretation of storytelling in the marketing approach.

On the contrary, what we often see, especially in roundtables and in minor organizations is a lot different: while Museum Hack tells stories about History, in Italy we “storytell” the History.

So, here there is the misunderstanding of the phenomenon: culture, in its widest sense, does need “marketing storytelling” to reach new audiences, but marketing storytelling should stop when a person enters a museum.

Passing the threshold of the museum, people need a different kind of engagement. By adopting a marketing storytelling approach, we make people get tired, and we devalue our heritage.

We can learn this lesson by the marketing itself: all the newest marketing techniques, such as the omnichannel strategy, calls for different kinds of approaches based on the “exact position” of the potential buyer, whether this position is physical or in “the funnel”.

Today, cultural organizations treat visitors, in the same way, no matter whereas they are “potential visitors” or they are actually visiting the museum.

It probably improves both the visitor experiences and the success of the campaigns, realizing integrated approaches, and developing different kinds of engagement.

Cultural organizations should improve their ability in defining new “narration” in order to be attractive for different kinds of visitors.

In other terms, Italian cultural organizations should acknowledge that their real treasure is in the content. They should not limit themselves to storytell the museum, that is, in the best cases, create good creativity for the social campaign. They should simply adapt to the enormous quantity of stories in something exciting.



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