Chapter 1

The Cultural Product: Integration and Relational Approach

Lucia Aiello
Universitas Mercatorum, Italy

Claudia Cacia
University of Salerno, Italy

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors approach the theme of the definition and classification of cultural products according to the major Italian and international authors dealing with the issue, knowing that culture, before being the core product of an enterprise, belongs to people. They argue for more theoretical discussion into the organizational and managerial dynamics of cultural product, drawing from the consideration that to date management research is neglecting cultural product as a serious object of investigation despite its economic, social, and political significance. Starting from the analysis of the main literature on “culture,” the authors show a new concept of cultural property: the integrated cultural product. Moreover, the analysis of cultural product, the distinctive characteristics and dynamics of cultural industries are made adopting a relational approach. As a result, the aim of this work is to define the unique dynamics of the integrated cultural product in a relational perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Culture is considered a common good, a key element of community’s wellbeing, for the entire humanity (refer to the definition and classification of Cultural Heritage adopted by UNESCO), and as such everyone is responsible for preserving, maintaining and developing it. “Culture” defies easy definition (Knight, 1999). It is not just the arts, but the larger meaning of our pastimes, habits, images, institutions, perspectives on the world, collective memory and our bilingualism and multiculturalism” (Canada Vital Link, 1987). Such a broad definition makes it difficult to grasp fully the precise scope of the subject being considered. However, in the context of the culture debate, the concern is both with culture per se both with the means by which it is delivered, that is to say, cultural industries.

The term cultural industries encompasses a wide variety of commodified activities, including the mass media (print and broadcast media.
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and advertising), film, new media, art, design, music, and architecture. Conversely, although it is an important area of research and of economic activity, there has been a significant gap in systematic studies of these industries (DiMaggio & Hirsch, 1976; Pratt, 1997a; Sadler, 1997; Scott, 2000b; Powder, 2002).

Due to the importance of such industries in the dissemination of culture, different governments have sought to provide support for their maintenance and growth. The more complicated questions are for the debate around culture in considering if whether cultural products are goods or services and also, whether cultural products from different countries constitute “like” or “directly competitive or substitutable” products. Despite the importance of these issues, the previous consideration reflects the confusion created by the dual nature of culture.

Braun and Leigh Parker have noted that culture does not fit easily into the definition of either a service or a good. Clearly, cultural products have both significant service and good components. In this context services seem to be more labour-intensive and less tangible than goods, so cultural performances more closely resemble services. As well, things such as legal and financial services involve the dissemination of information, or skill and knowledge; this dissemination appears analogous to the role played by books, periodicals and even audio-visual products-all of which are clearly physical products. Many cultural products must exist in physical form in order to be distributed to potential audiences (for example a legal opinion may be contained within a written memo, but this would not transform it from a service into a good).

Technological advances have blurred the distinction further, as satellites and the Internet now allow cultural products to reach wide audiences without being packaged and shipped across borders. For these reasons, it is impossible to fit culture neatly into either category of good or service. Although, the WTO put a little clearly on the question of how cultural products are to be treated but disputes will likely continue as to whether culture is a good or service (Bernier, 2005; Löhr, 2010).

Culture is also an exchange value so it is a product (good, service, idea), but one that calls for good, consistent and shared economic, social and cultural models (AA.VV, 2005), these models however, must not disregard the UNESCO’s definition of World Cultural Heritage considering culture a good belonging to all mankind: “Everyone must be enabled to enjoy culture” - “Culture is a world heritage site” (UNESCO, 2005).

The key to addressing this debate is to acknowledge, as Voon does, that cultural products have cultural as well as commercial value, and to understand that cultural value is highly prized, just as is the multi-billion-dollar industry that produces cultural products (Voon, 2007). Accordingly, many authors such as Bassett (1993), Bianchini (1993), Bryan et al. (2000), Dziembowska-Kowalska and Funck (1999), Fuchs (2002), Heilbrun and Gray (1993), Hudson (1995), Landry (2000), Lorente (2002), Myerscough (1988), O’Connor (1998), Throsby (2001), Weinstein and Clower (2000), and Whitt (1987), among others, have all commented on the potentialities of the cultural economy for job creation and urban regeneration in stagnating areas, and value creation (Scott, 2004).

In this perspective, this research approaches the theme of the definition and classification of cultural products according to the major Italian and international authors dealing with the issue, knowing that culture, before being the core product of an enterprise, belongs to people.

From this perspective, cultural products should be under attention, well known, must be disclosed and attractive and spread through a common and accessible “language.” The analysis of the main literature on “culture” leads to a new concept of cultural property: the integrated cultural product (Ferri & Aiello, 2009).
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