

SYSTEM INNOVATION APPROACH IN LITHUANIAN FILM INDUSTRY

by

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Abstract

The products of creative industries are not R&D intensive, attributed to “Low-tech“ industry, yet their rate of growth and profitability ratios may exceed the indicators of “High-tech“ industry (EC Green Paper, 2010; Cooke & De Propris, 2011). The companies of creative industries usually use a new paradigm in innovation development. They invest more willingly into the development of a new system based on the existing knowledge, rather than in the development of R&D-based innovation. In this paper this new paradigm is perceived as the system innovation. Further we look at the new skills and approach which could be used for the system innovation development in Lithuanian film industry. System innovation approach focuses on the novelty of the context of the entire system instead of an individual element of the system. The article examines the Lithuanian film industry from the point of view of system innovation. Two main areas, i.e. the production and marketing/sales of film development are explored. The analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the Lithuanian film industry is based on the interpretation of the statistical data and expert interviews.

1 Introduction

Creative industries now form a distinctive economic sector where the creation, production and marketing of goods and services are intertwined. The growth of creative industries has been facilitated partly by the growing popularity of leisure and entertainment activities in advanced industrial economies. By providing an ‘experience’, creative industries represent a new and growing source of value in many economies. Such industries produce consumer goods that convey lifestyles and values of both of its functions, i.e. informative and entertainment, as well as produce creative services that cover intangible activities, such as the promotion of performing arts, films and values.

Over the last five years, when the growth of creative industries was significantly increasing, the innovation development became crucial for the sector. Innovation and creativity are not only the prerogative of high-tech firms, but they are also very much part of such high-concept activities as producer services, consumer services and creative industries (Brandellero, Kloosterman, 2010).

In terms of innovation processes within the creative industries a wide range of studies have been carried out on the role of micro and organisational factors in the process of artistic innovation (Castaner, Campos, 2002), on the factors contributing to innovation in the media industries (Handke, 2006, 2007), on not-R&D-based innovation measures in the creative industries. Such studies address the question of how the creative industries sector may require a distinct internal account of its own organisational and industrial innovation processes. The creative industries are innovative, however not all industries produce goods and services that are considered to be inputs into innovation processes – UK's National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) and the ARC Centre for Creative Industries and Innovation (CCI) in Australia have sought to emphasize the value of the creative industries as the innovation contributors to a wider economy. J. Potts outlines a model of creative industries which consists of the origination, adoption and retention of a new idea or technology, i.e. where creative industries provide distinct 'creative innovation services' in each of these phases (J. Potts et al, 2008). The greatest mass of value creation possibilities of creative industries arise because they solve problems triggered by technological and socio-cultural change. The significance of creative industries emerges from processing innovation in the social and cultural context. Respectively, they are intensive users of new communication technology, contributing to the increasing demand. This 'creative innovation service' (Potts, Morrison 2009) has value proportional to the broader rate of economic evolution.

There have been a few attempts to explore the aesthetic and content innovation using the methods of innovation research. Stoneman (2007) noted that the creative industries sometimes engage in traditional technological innovation. He terms their aesthetic innovation as 'soft innovation' and distinguishes two aspects of such soft innovation: (1) innovation in products that are themselves largely aesthetic in nature (e.g. music, books, film); and (2) innovation in industries where innovation output is not aesthetic per se but functional.

Miles and Green (2008) noted that the innovation patterns of creative industries have featured in common with those described for other information goods, services and experiences. Moreover, Green et al. (2008) present a 'diamond-shaped' framework of innovation to identify six dimensions prominent in creative industries. They argue that four of these six dimensions, i.e., cultural products, user interface, cultural concepts and delivery are particularly prominent in creative industries.

The competition within creative industries is based on the ability to generate experiences for consumers (Caves, 2000). To generate value for consumers, cultural products

(film plots, artworks, literary texts, advertising, etc.) link aesthetic processes and consumption practices into consumer experiences. Consumer tastes are so undefined that it is impossible to predict which one of cultural products will be a success. This means that the creative industries sector needs a continuous fast product innovation that the consumer may easily recognize. Cultural products innovation is concerned with the research, development, application and diffusion of cultural products and their processes (i.e., how products are made, delivered and distributed) (Jaaniste, 2009).

During the period of growth of creative industries the process of innovation development has become much more sophisticated and reveals a new paradigm in innovation development.

For quite long it was expected that R&D activities would lead to R&D based innovations, which would lead to the competitiveness and economic growth. It is obvious that the focus on only R&D-based innovation has not ensured the economic growth. The ability to use the existing knowledge and to integrate this knowledge into new products and processes is getting more important than the ability to discover new knowledge. Many cases have revealed that creative industries are more innovative than the common knowledge-intensive business services (e.g., research, finances, legal and other professional services) (Cooke & De Propris 2011). An innovation in creative industries could be perceived as something new from the point of view of aesthetics, topic, narrative and distribution strategy, etc.

The products of creative industries are not R&D intensive, attributed to “Low-tech“ industry, yet their rate of growth and profitability ratios may exceed the indicators of “High-tech“ industry (EC Green Paper, 2010; Cooke & De Propris, 2011). The companies of creative industries usually use a new paradigm in innovation development. They more willingly invest into the development of a new system based on the existing knowledge, rather than in the development of R&D-based innovation. In this paper this new paradigm is perceived as the system innovation. Further we look at the new skills and approach which could be used for the system innovation development in the Lithuanian film industry. System innovation approach focuses on the novelty of the context of the entire system instead of an individual element of the system. Due to this, system innovation is not an individual but a collective task that is developed by teams. In the film sector the coherent work of all involved parties and individuals is extremely crucial. System innovation development teams represent a collective creativity model. To implement it, in order to be successful with system innovations, the teams require collective creativity skills from each member of a team and especially from team leaders.

The concept of the system innovation complements and supports the “structured creativity” concept (Bilton, 2010). A turn to the social context and relationship networks in the creative industries theory is visible from 1990 when the individual creativity was replaced by a network of relationships rather than individual intuition (Sawyer, 2006). A turn from individual towards collective creativity in the creative industries is getting increasingly obvious (putting more emphasis on creativity coordination and management systems rather than creating a favorable environment for a creative talent. (Bilton, 2010). The basis of the system innovation development is the focus on the wideness, i.e., searching for the existing knowledge in different areas instead of the depth, i.e., discovering new knowledge).

In order to select the right elements of the system and to develop new relations between these elements, broad knowledge of various fields is required as well as team work and collective creativity efforts. A certain amount of R&D might be necessary for the development of new relations between the existing diverse elements, but usually it is not essential. For example, the film may not necessarily apply new knowledge generated from the R&D, while the novelty appears as a new match and integration of the already existing knowledge and practices. In order to understand the novelty of a film, it is necessary to look at a film as a certain system. The novelty of the film lies not only in production, but also in marketing and distribution areas. In order to achieve a symbolic and commercial success of the film two areas of its development are equally important, namely, the production (film creation and shooting) and marketing/sales.

The development of system innovation involves the innovation development team or even a few teams rather than an individual inventor–scientist. For example, a lot of developers from the scriptwriter to the composer take part in making a film, each of them “bringing personal tastes with regard to the quality or configuration of the product. “A cinema film results from the efforts of many different potentially conflicting priorities and preferences that are pressed upon the director who coordinates their efforts” (Caves, 2000). The film makers are used to their everyday work routine therefore they might not consider their work to be an innovation. They would rather treat something substantially new introduced in making a film as innovation. However, new technology, new genre developed, etc. could be regarded as radical innovation. As a rule, radical innovation requires more adoption time on behalf of the consumers, thus the film makers are not able to introduce radical innovation as the time of adoption is very limited in most cases. The audience has to identify and adapt innovation in real time while watching a movie. It means that consumers have to be prepared for radical innovations step by step (Caves, 2000).

2. System innovation approach in analysis of creative industries

A “system innovation” is not the same as “innovation system” (Lundval, 1985) or “systemic innovation” (SI-OnlinePortal 2013). The system innovation is a newly developed system, the individual elements of which are not new but the novelty appears in the novel composition, integration and new relations between these elements (Strazdas et al. 2013). In developing the system innovation we do not focus on R&D or new knowledge development, but on finding an elegant solution based on the existing knowledge. An elegant solution could be defined as a solution that solves the problem in the simplest and most effective manner. The fundamental difference of the system innovation development is that we do not need to go deep (discovering new knowledge) but should go wide (searching for the existing knowledge in different areas). In order to select the right elements of the system and to develop new relations between these elements, broad knowledge of various fields is required as well as team work and collective creativity efforts. A certain amount of R&D might be necessary for the development of new relations between the existing diverse elements, but usually it is not essential.

The novelty of the system innovation is difficult to trace due to the fact that we usually tend to look at separate elements of the system rather than at the composition and relations between the elements. A new business model can serve as an example of the system innovation. The business model consists of various elements such as product, production process, financing and marketing mix, etc. Each element of the business model taken separately may appear to be already well known but the composition and relations between the elements could be unique and able to provide a huge competitive advantage for a company. If there is no obvious marketing, organisational, product or process innovation in the developed new business model, it will be treated as innovation (OECD, 2005).

The creative industries are more innovative than many knowledge-intensive business services (e.g. research, finances, legal and other professional services) (Chapain et al., 2010), (Cooke & De Propriis, 2011). In accordance with the definition of innovation, innovation is something new and useful like a new film, a new advertisement, etc., and could be treated as innovation, but the novelty of these products is not obvious. Given the elements of a new film could be same (the same actors, sound, costumes, genre, etc.), the composition and relations between these elements may cause totally new emotions and experiences for the audience. The film makers being used to everyday, i.e. routine creativity, as usual, do not consider it to be innovation either. They would rather treat something substantially new introduced in making a film as innovation, for example, new technology applied, new genre developed, etc.,

which in creative industry is treated as radical innovation. As a rule, radical innovation requires more adoption time on behalf of the consumers, so the film makers are not able to introduce radical innovation as the time of adoption is very limited in most cases. The audience has to identify and adapt innovation in real time while watching a movie. It means that consumers have to be prepared for radical innovations step by step (Caves, 2000: 202). As a result, some radical innovation in creative industries is possible to be identified only in due time.

In order to be able to identify and distinguish the system innovation from other types of innovations we have to clearly define the features of the system innovation: Lower R&D; Wider scope and integrative thinking skills; Collective creativity skills requirement; Knowledge retrieval skills requirement; Shorter life cycle; Adaptive novelty and usage of templates/patterns; Higher efficiency and effectiveness (Strazdas et al., 2013).

In order to achieve an economic sustainability of system innovation all elements of the system innovation should be balanced. Especially it is important to achieve a balance between the production sub-system and sales/commercialization sub-system (see Figure 1). Economic sustainability of system innovation could be calculated by using the following formula

$$IS = \frac{P}{I_n}$$

Where: IS – economic sustainability of a system innovation, P – profit generated from a system innovation; I_n – Investment needed for new system innovation development. Higher value of “IS” corresponds with the higher level of economic sustainability of a system innovation.

System innovation approach could be applied for the analysis of economic sustainability of a film industry. The film industry could be divided into two parts (see Figure 1):

- *Production subsystem* (film production companies, film studios, cinematography, screenwriting, film directing, producing, shooting, post-producing and other film crew personnel, etc.).
- *Sales/commercialisation subsystem* (commercial institutions of film marketing, distribution, exhibition, etc.).

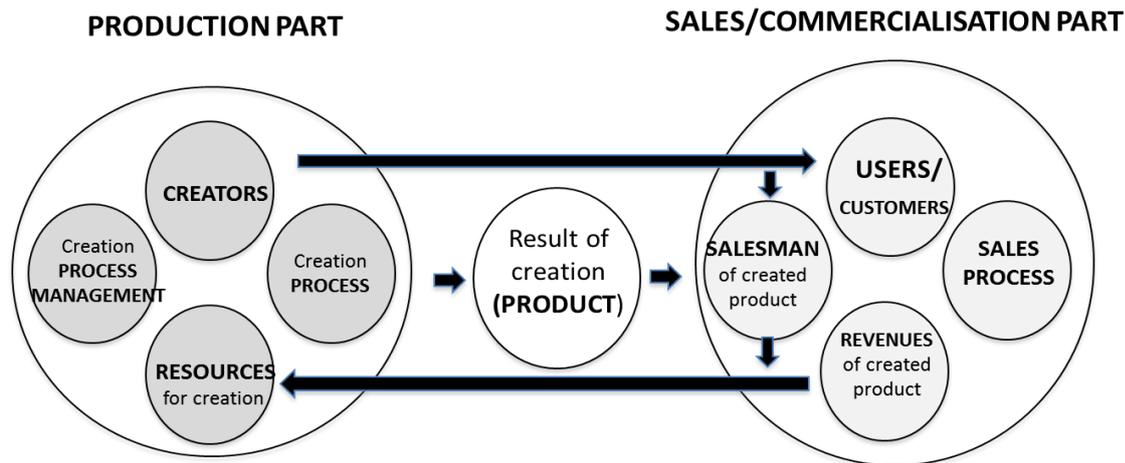


Figure 1. System innovation approach to creative industries development

In order to achieve the economic sustainability and persistent growth of film industry both of its subsystems (production and sales/consumption) have to be equally well developed. The balance between the subsystems as well as between the elements within subsystems has to be achieved. Only film industries with well-balanced production and sales/consumption subsystems can demonstrate economic sustainability and persistent growth. His hypothesis is based on the Theory of Constraints (TOC) saying that any manageable system is being limited by a very small number of constraints. There is always at least one constraint, and TOC uses a focusing process to identify the constraint and to eliminate it (Goldratt & Cox, 1992).

3. Lithuanian film industry: national cinema or creative industries

Smaller in population than London or New York, and with an economy smaller than that of the State of Bavaria, Lithuania is one of the world's most modest film production countries. It gets relatively little public funding (mainly administered by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian Film Centre) which explains the small amount of feature films produced. Lithuanian production companies are typically small in size and focus on producing from 1 to 3 feature film projects at a time. The average budget of a local feature movie is between 400,000 Euros and 1,000,000 Euros (including promotion costs), which is quite small in comparison with the budget of an average European film. It is worth noting that the biggest national box-office ever *Redirected/Redirected. Už Lietuvą!* (Emilis Vėlyvis, 2014, Lithuania / UK), in a few weeks after the national premiere managed to earn 1 million

Euro which is an astonishing result for Lithuania and some neighbouring countries such as Latvia and Estonia, but quite a mediocre result if compared to bigger European countries.

Dependency from a small linguistic market (less than 3.5 million people live in Lithuania), as well as negligible private funding and support by local broadcasters makes the performance of local film producers really challenging as the Lithuanian audiovisual industry depends very much on public funding, co-production with foreign companies, success in international festivals, cooperation with foreign sales agents and pan-European film support initiatives, such as the MEDIA programme and the Eurimages Fund.

It should be noted, that recent debates on the Lithuanian cultural policy are about how to reframe state subsidies for national arts to an economically viable business and to regard it as a long-term investment for the state. These kinds of debates are mirrored in discussion over the specificity of the Lithuanian cinema and the directions it might take. A traditional view of cinema with its role in sustaining a national culture identity encounters a new industry development logic that focuses on the spatial configuration of the industry sector within the global context. New “creative industries” policy points to the failure of the national cinema discourses, i.e., with an increasing universality in the aesthetics, images and cultural references of cinema and an increasingly problematic demarcation line between the “national” and the other (O’Regan, Venkataswmy, 1999).

Creative industries ideas refer to the increased activity around the commodification of culture, on the effects of digitisation and convergence, the assumption that content creation is the growing industry and the idea that the creative industries (of which the film and television industry are an intrinsic part) will take a centre stage in this ‘new economy’ that is increasingly ‘informational, global and networked’ (Flew, 2002:114). Creative industries discourse recognises the converging relationship between film/television production and other forms of content delivery, and offers the commodification of culture in a ‘neutral’ language that avoids the polemics of national cinema. Apart from that, it recognises a lot of practices, fields of specialisation and commercial practices that tend to be collapsed into the idea of ‘film-making’, as well as the commonalities in technology and skills sets that can be applied across a number of industry sectors (Ward, 2004:120).

The inclusion of film production in the creative industries paradigm is not only a departure from national arts policy based on subsidies and state patronage, but from the prevailing orientation of the Lithuanian film industry producers. The Lithuanian model of film development has largely been driven by a product orientation, which could be turned into films of sufficiently high artistic quality, but has often failed to generate sufficient box office

receipts and long-term profitability. Lithuanian film producers strongly believe that they can only do better by making the best films that they possibly can in terms of the artistic quality of the film. They attribute the success of their film on national and international markets mainly to the auteurist features of their production that differentiates them from commercial success-driven or Hollywood films. Moreover, they tend to identify much more with the creative production of movies rather than marketing activities. Most of the Lithuanian film producers identify themselves as producers of the films of high artistic value therefore they tend to be workers of an art field. Only a few of them identify themselves with the film sector as a certain business sector.

The emergence of a new creative industries paradigm in Lithuania a market-oriented business model is becoming increasingly important which makes the film producers focus on the specific attributes that may appeal to particular movie audiences. By neglecting to understand the prevailing trends in audience preferences, most Lithuanian films have faced a battle in gaining sufficient support from distributors and exhibitors in a market place that is becoming more globally competitive. The relative lack of market orientation among the Lithuanian film producers has prevented them from developing the audience to whom these films can pass the message. In terms of marketing, these producers have failed to search for unique distinctive marketing efforts that would enable them to compete with the traditional commercial films marketing approaches. Instead of rejecting marketing orientation as not suitable for their films, the Lithuanian film producers may benefit from pursuing a market-driven approach which will facilitate them to actively build specialised markets for their films rather than to respond to broader market trends. (Jaworski, Kohli, Sahay, 2000)

It should be noted that in the course of the last decade, Lithuanian filmmakers have developed several more or less effective strategies, intended to internationalise and commercialise the local cinema, as they had and are still having very limited domestic funding and markets for their cinematic production and services, thus, were and still are extremely dependent on external markets and funding. Therefore, in order to survive, most of production houses foster the strategy of 'opportunistic transnationalism', which for Mette Hjort, 'involves giving priority to economic issues to the point where monetary factors actually dictate the selection of partners beyond national borders'. (Hjort, 2010: 19) Therefore, it mainly relates to the exploration of available economic opportunities at the given moment in time. As a result, some Lithuanian filmmakers turned to Western Europe (i.e. Germany, France and the Netherlands) and Northern America as the most preferred partners

for coproduction or any other film business. The cooperation with Western film companies have increased the number of possible funding bodies (regional, national, pan-Europeans) and the market for national films distribution, especially for films which creatively combined the ‘opportunistic’ strategy with ‘auteurist transnationalism’ strategy, which, according to Hjort, is driven by ‘an individual director who is very much attuned to film’s potential for personal rather than formulaic expression’ and ‘arises in (...) ad-hoc manner’. (Hjort 2010:22-23). Good examples of these kind of productions are Kristina Buožytė's *Aurora/ Vanishing Waves* (2013, Lithuania/France/Belgium) produced at Tremora Studio, already mentioned *Redirected/ Redirected. Už Lietuvą!* (Emilis Vėlyvis, 2014, Lithuania / UK) and Šarūnas Bartas’ films *Septyni nematomi žmonės/ Seven Invisible Men* (2005, Lithuania /France / Portugal / the Netherlands) produced by Kinokultas, *Indigène d'Eurasie (Eastern Drift, 2010, Lithuania/ France/ Russia)* produced at Kinema Studio.

4. Analysis of the Lithuanian film industry based on system innovation approach

In order to test the system innovation approach for the Lithuanian film industry, we have constructed an empirical research design based on interviews with 16 Lithuanian film experts (6 - directors, 5–producers/directors, 2-film distributors, 1- film critic, 1- composer and 1-financial expert in film industry). These experts represented both parts of the Lithuanian film industry, i.e. production and sales/commercialization. The data were collected based on a prepared questionnaire. The experts were asked to evaluate the level of development of each element of the Lithuanian film industry. The evaluation is based on a five-point scale ranging from 1 – very low level, to 5 – very high development level.

The results of the survey revealed that the Lithuanian film industry, from the system innovation viewpoint, is misbalanced, i.e., the sales/commercialization part of the film industry is much weaker (evaluation – 2.4 points) rather than the production part (evaluation - 2.8 points) (see Figure 4).

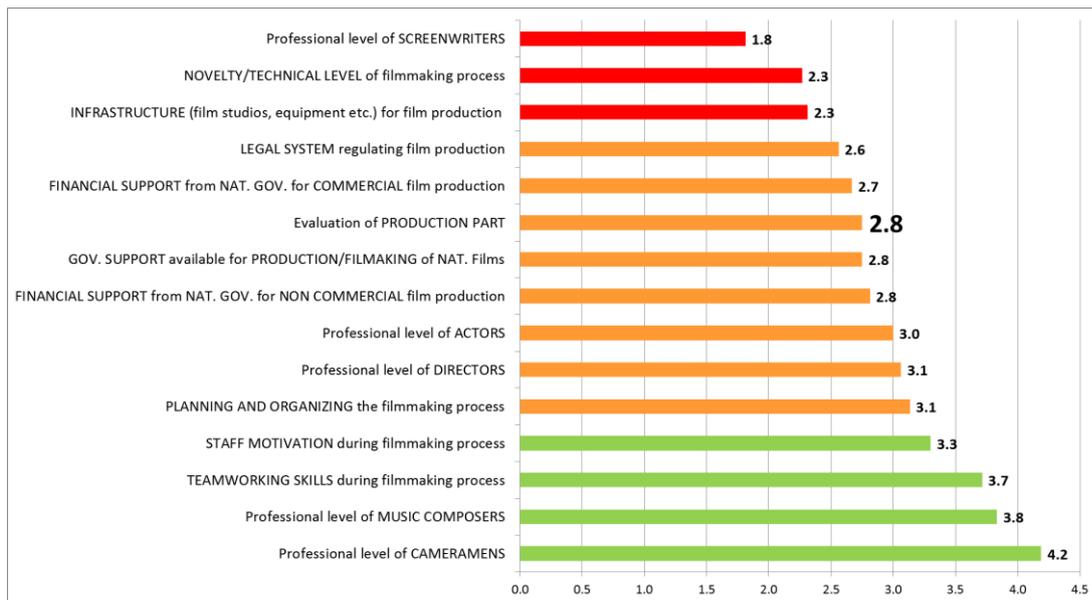


Figure 2. Evaluation of the production part of the Lithuanian film industry

The main strengths of the production part of the Lithuanian film industry are professional level of cameramen (4.2 points), composers (3.8 points), team working skills (3.7 points) and staff motivations (3.3 points) (see Figure 2). The weaknesses in the production part of the Lithuanian film industry are professional level of screenwriters (1.8 points), novelty (2.3 points) of film making process and infrastructure (2.3 points).

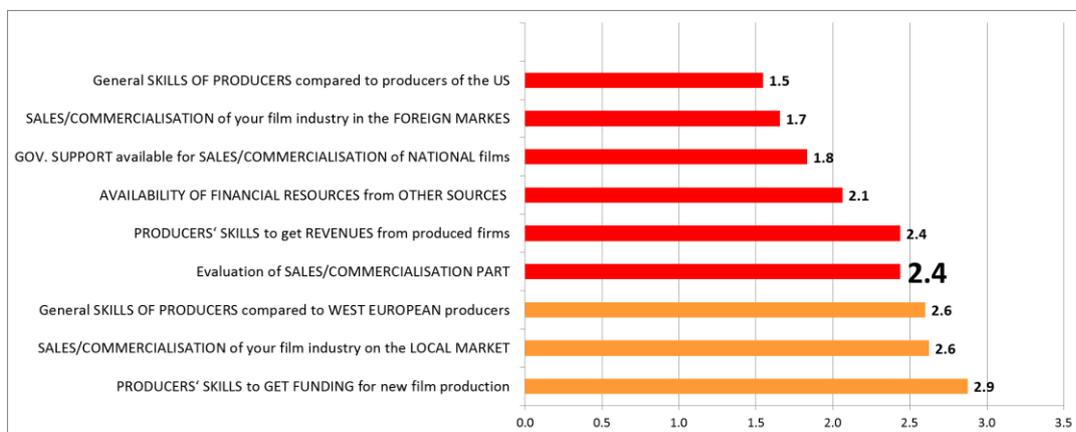


Figure 3. Evaluation of the sales/commercialisation part of the Lithuanian film industry

The main strengths of sales/commercialisation part of Lithuanian film industry are the producer skills to get funding for new film production (2.9 points). There are a number of weaknesses in sales/commercialisation part of the Lithuanian film industry. The main weak element is related to the Lithuanian producers' skills in sales and commercialisation of produced films (see Figure 3).

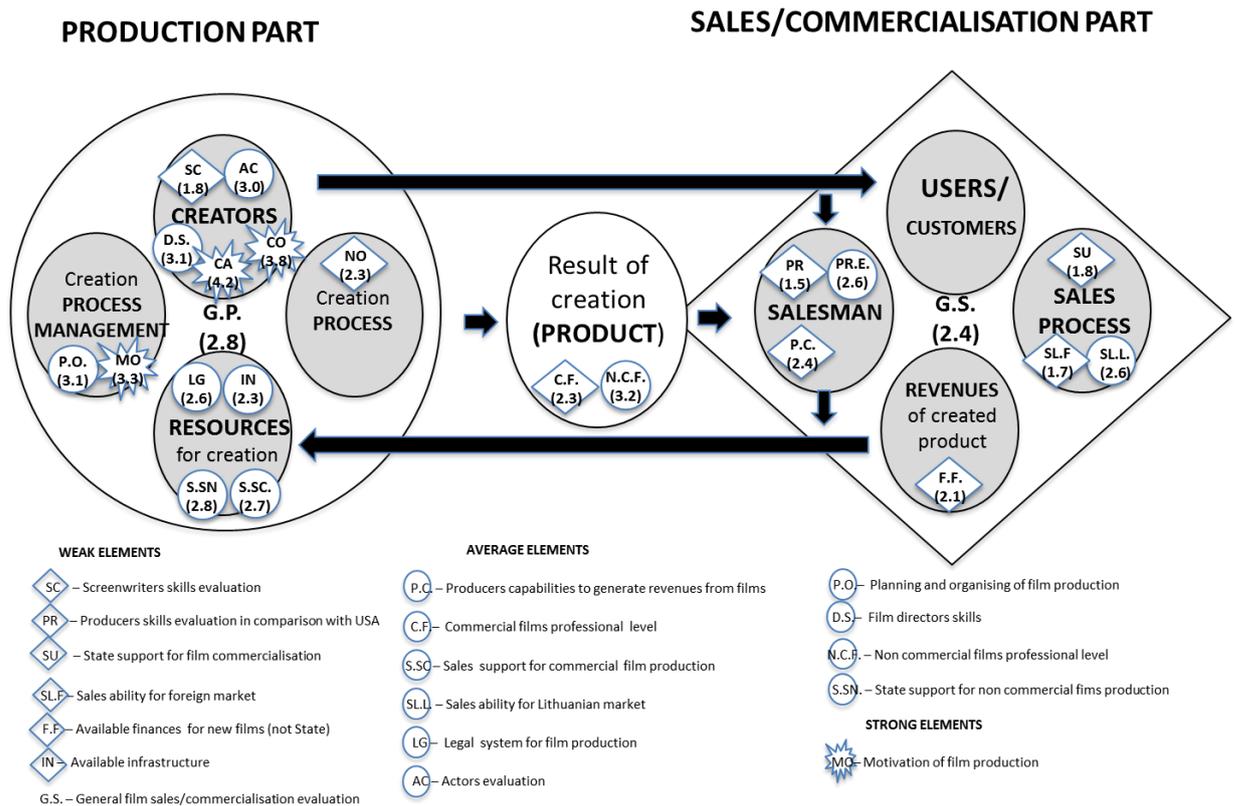


Figure 4. Evaluation of the production and sales/commercialisation part of the Lithuanian film industry

As a result of a misbalance between the production and sales/commercialisation parts the Lithuanian film industry lacks economic sustainability. The main source of the Lithuanian film production is funding from the State budget administered by the Lithuanian Film Centre, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and a newly established body, i.e. the Council of Arts. The funding for the Lithuanian film production is mainly focused on support for the Lithuanian auteur (non-commercial) firm production via selective funding schemes while an automatic support scheme which is used in many European countries to promote the production of commercially successful national films has never been applied in Lithuania. This leads to a higher professional level of auteur (non-commercial films) (3.2 points) than the films having a commercial potential (2.3 points) (see Figure 4).

Conclusions

The system innovation approach for the analysis of Lithuanian film industry clearly demonstrate that in order to establish economic sustainability of Lithuanian film industry the priority efforts should be allocated towards increasing the competence of Lithuanian producers in knowledge of international markets and marketing as well as ‘tastes’ for good

stories and prospective talents. In particular, it is related to the Lithuanian producers' skills to sell national films on foreign markets. However, the State support for film promotion in foreign markets is extremely important bearing in mind the competitiveness of a global audiovisual market. The system innovation approach is a suitable framework for the analysis of economic sustainability of the creative industry. This approach could be used for the cross-country analysis of creative industries.

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