

# **FACTORS OF INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN THE ECONOMY, COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL MEDIA THAT INFLUENCE THE BUILDING OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE FILM "THE ANDROMEDA GALAXY"**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Due to the nature of film production and the market in which the film performs, the consumer is specific and unique. In the language of the market economy, "consumer market" and "consumer goods" mean the placement of consumer products that satisfy the individual needs of people. This market is heterogeneous and impulsive. Therefore, the main hypothesis of this paper is shaping processes through which the principles of competitive advantage and digital production determine the contemporary film form. Bearing in mind that the rest of these originate from the applicability of methodological principles and theoretical aspects for building competitive advantage in film production, including the single hypotheses.

Hence, different types of narrative can be found within the scope of the term cyberdrama, as the digital form of storytelling that is currently being formed encompasses different formats and styles, which nevertheless ultimately represent one distinctive entity. That form will not carry the prefix "interactive" film, spot, advertisement, etc. regardless of how much it relies on tradition. On the contrary, it is a new way of telling stories suitable for the new digital media.

**KEYWORDS:** Film, production, competitive, cyberdrama, storytelling

**JEL CLASSIFICATION CODES:** O34, Z11, O32

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The creative activity is the most important part of a creative economy whose currency is intellectual property. The impact of creativity in the economy is not limited to certain sectors. Intellectual property is a key element of traditional industries, such as the automotive (patents, design) or agriculture one (whose biotechnological products are considered as an integral part of it). In addition to industries based on copyright and related rights and which generally conflict with creative activities, there are other industries such as patent and licensing (science, innovation, research and development), trademark, and trademark industries in which value is based on design, and form is more important than content.

By its broader definition, creativity and the economy of the creative industry include other industries, while, at the same time, the definition of culture has been expanded to include both popular and commercial sources of entertainment.

In the competition for funds and prestige, the cultural sector highlights its economic impact (measured in jobs, distribution/export earnings, contribution to the GDP) and economic importance (in the context of promotion of the public interest, quality of life, sophistication). The result of these processes is the emergence of the creative economy, which prevails as an all-encompassing (complete, rounded, separate) phenomenon. Thus, industrial creativity

(dynamic managers who "draw strength from chaos") and the industrialization of creativity (it's not the quality that matters, it's the performance that counts) come together in a neoliberalist glorification of the value of the new creative economy. According to its proponents in industry, politics and the arts, the creative economy is the beginning of a new industrial age based on culture and creativity, not material goods.

Hence, the factors that dictate the modern economy directly affect the production of the "Andromeda Galaxy". The creative economy is associated with a fundamental change in the industrial order - shopping in stores has been replaced by online shopping via the Internet. The Andromeda Galaxy production, in addition to the pressure brought about by (the absence of) economies of scale, is directly exposed to the rigors of online marketing.

## **2.1 Factors of the creative economy**

The purpose of this paper is to reject arbitrary descriptions of the creative industry and the creative economy, to offer an applicable and usable definition of competitive advantage in film production in Macedonia (and the region). Namely, research on competitive advantage in film production speaks of its absence and spontaneous response to market circumstances. From there, "The Andromeda Galaxy" implies a strategic approach that overcomes the absence of a strategic decision, and faces economic factors that immediately limit the exploitation of the film. Namely, the small budget of the film (initially only 130,000 Euros from Kosovo and the own contribution of "DMF" from Macedonia). On the one hand, this starting position limits the production of the film in terms of implementing the most modern technologies. On the other hand, accepting those circumstances implies an appropriate strategy: a strategy of focus. The production of The Andromeda Galaxy rethinks the context of the creative industries, treating production (of film) as a set of different types of business practice, work models and organization - in which creativity is applied and examined. To this end, "The Andromeda Galaxy" is a work whose production (filming) is based on the practice of the French new wave - an extremely small crew, many ad hoc locations, excellent acting and a seriously synchronized tandem - director and director of photography. Keeping budget constraints in mind, the duo imposes a heavily stylized aesthetic that often relies on digital technology. With that, the film acquires a visual narrative recognizable to the young audience, which further allows the audience to connect with the work and the film's story.

Furthermore, all managers, i.e. producers, are looking for a creative approach that would be a solution for organizational changes, strategy and marketing. Some of those approaches rest on sterile concepts of creativity and are not coherent with the creative processes themselves. The Andromeda Galaxy proves that creativity is more than raw risk-taking and unconventional thinking. As mentioned earlier, the production of this film is based on a competitive focus strategy. This strategy is completely based on one narrower segment. Namely, in this case, the producers first decide to focus on one segment, and then adjust their strategy for working only in that segment, excluding the others. Optimizing the strategy in relation to the selected segment, the production of the "Andromeda Galaxy" achieves a competitive advantage. More specifically, "DMF" together with "Arena" decided to shoot according to a script which in its final form implies a film whose content is current and suitable for distribution to a niche audience. Through the subject of the film - which is intimate in itself, director More Racha reaches out to an audience that needs new, bold films that transform them from the inside. The creative team with a passion for engaging storytelling and jaw-dropping photography offers a unique concept that turns wishes into reality (in the context of cinematic action).

The focus-based strategy generally comes in two varieties. The first variant, which refers to the focus of costs, implies that the organization tries to realize the advantage of low costs in the chosen segment, while the second variant, which refers to the focus of differentiation, implies building differentiation in the given segment. Both variants are based on the differences between the selected segment and the remaining segments. The selected segment must either have an audience with unusual needs (high art) as in the present case, or the production and delivery system that most effectively meets the needs of the selected segment must be different from the other segments. "The Andromeda Galaxy" shot with almost no budget, at first analysis gives the impression that the focus is on low costs. However, the written script is cleverly chosen to target a niche audience in a specific segment. The festival awards of this film, as well as the participation in renowned festivals, speak for it. The film builds an aesthetic that packs all the elements for a contemporary audience that recognizes originality. The form itself, on the other hand, makes the film accessible and especially attractive for the festival audience. Cost focus uses the differences in spending behavior of some segments, while differentiation focus uses the special needs of the audience in a certain segment, in this case the aforementioned audience. Accordingly, an organization that chooses to focus can achieve a competitive advantage

only if it devotes itself exclusively to a certain segment, as is the case with the Andromeda Galaxy.

In order for an organization to achieve above-average results, in addition to the fact that in the specific segment it should achieve sustainable leadership in costs or in differentiation, the attractiveness of that segment is of crucial importance, because not all segments are equally profitable. In the economic sector, there is often room for more sustainable strategies based on focus, provided that the organization decides on different segments. From an economic point of view, taking into account the development of the market, "The Andromeda Galaxy" does not represent a work from which economic profitability is expected. The economic rationale, which must always exist, for this work, is to establish a foundation upon which to produce films following the same strategic principles with greater potential for financial retribution.

Hence, it can be concluded that creative activities and economic policy directly meet in the international arena. At a basic level, the internationalization of the world economy is the context in which much of cultural production, distribution, and consumption takes place. Globalization is one of the key factors affecting the transformation of the international economy in recent years. According to this, the future of economic profitability of digital media is in the global market.

The local context of the "Andromeda Galaxy" facing the global market is a paradigmatic case of the clash of economic and cultural values in decision-making. Thus, in the international market for audiovisual products, on the one hand, operating cinemas such as the United States, which have access to economies of scale and which in many parts of the world see market penetration, are ready to resist any intervention that would limit their access to that market. On the other hand, the cinematography of many countries (including Macedonia) which import those products, only suppress their own production and placement both in domestic and even more so in foreign markets.

## 2.2. Visual-narrative contexts and meanings

Dario Sekulovski, the director of photography of the "Andromeda Galaxy" in his master's thesis "The meaning of the frame in the visual film narrative of the film "Andromeda Galaxy"<sup>5</sup> refers to the definition of Tom Guinness, who understands the moving image as rediscovering the wonder of the first audience, while acquiring a wide range of connections in which all these gestures, movements, activities, enigmatic objects and flickering light will not form a true lexicon, but a spectrum of possibilities, a table of combinations, the raw material of a new artistic form of collage and montage.

Considering the fact that films inevitably create "effects" that are the product of powerful communication processes, managed by different viewers in different ways - based on their "formation" and their "competence", it is a challenge for any author to predict the exciting dimension of film reaction. Practically, this is the main authorial axis along which "The Andromeda Galaxy" is seen.

This artistic discourse supports the production strategy of the play. Since the film work is a "communication", the bearer of the communication exchange, in this case, it is necessary to insist on the precise determination of the visual-narrative contexts and meanings that clearly function in the interpretation and identification of the author-spectator relationship. That, by itself, in the pre-production phase determines numerous film solutions through which Sekulovski interprets the aspects that influence them to be perceived as implanted "regulators" in the communication process, as "landmarks" that will direct attention in an appropriate and desired direction.

Given the function they have in scenes where verbal dialogue is foreseen and dominated, non-verbal shots should:

- To emphasize the verbal dialogue;
- To substitute the verbal dialogue;
- to complement the verbal dialogue.

Before the start of the filming of the movie "Andromeda Galaxy", it is necessary to show skill in devising solutions, that is, to manifest "reconnaissance" of various alternative possible solutions, from which the best ones will be chosen. The assigned task refers to the creation of a compact visual-narrative context, which shows that the "established" directions are universal landmarks in the decoding of the visual narration and are carriers of a precise communication exchange, which establishes a clear perception of the author's intention among the viewers.

The feature film "The Andromeda Galaxy" is produced by "Arena" from Kosovo, and the co-producers are "DMF" from Macedonia, "39 Films" from Italy, "Nephilim Producciones" and "No Problem Sonido" from Spain. The director

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<sup>5</sup> Sekulovski, Dario. (2021). The meaning of the frame in the visual narrative of the film "Andromeda Galaxy".

and screenwriter of the film is More Racha.

The greatest challenge for the producers and the author's team is the preservation of the creative aspects, in conditions of a budget deficit that is below expectations and predictions. More developed markets classify these projects as "no budget productions". It necessarily imposes a need for adjustment and finding solutions that enable a rational, efficient and effective production phase, without concessions in the creative component. That is why, in the pre-production phase, a large number of directorial and screenwriting solutions are defined/redefined, which, according to the author's expectations and observations, to the greatest extent of the director of photography and the director, need to influence the visual-narrative component. They necessarily encourage the ability to think and understand what is shown with the help of film rhetoric, and the solutions offered interact with the author's intentions and the "reading" of what is offered by the viewers.

During this process, they keep coming back to the following questions:

- How will those decisions affect the final product?
- What will they cause in the viewer?
- What emotions will arouse them, what information is important for the story and in what way is it placed?

Thinking in this context, keeping in mind the story, it was decided to shoot the majority of the film with a "hand-held" camera, with the intention of enhancing the sense of reality and presence, establishing a documentary-veristic believability. The same premise is the starting point in the choice of lenses and the way the film is lit, limiting itself to a small number of lenses, and those chosen are of normal vision to enhance the sense of reality. Sekulovski and Racha successfully "insert" the camera, which is still "invisible", appropriately styled and in function of the story. The limited budget and financial margins prove to be crucial in the lighting decisions, that is, the solutions require an exceptional creative effort for light-illumination procedures that will not be detrimental to the photographic-recording experience. Working with the so-called existing light, it is appropriately upgraded in the locations, but following the style that aspects the intentions to approach the spirit of the spatial-temporal dimension and the actions in the film. Diffuse, soft and in large parts of the frame overexposed lighting was chosen, with the sole purpose of approaching and interpreting the visual component appropriately with feelings, the fate of the main/main characters and events in the film story. In other words, all aesthetic decisions are made for functional reasons.

In the following, examples are indicated that apostrophes the procedures, dilemmas and final solutions that affect the definition of the visual narrative of the film and the meaning of the frame/frames.

A key element in defining the frames in the scenes is the joint approach of the director and the director of photography to the visual parameters and the intention to prioritize the latent values of the non-verbal context, which, according to them, should interpret and strengthen the emotional experience of the work as a whole. It motivates them to condense and rationalize the narrative content, highlighting the visual and creating specific cinematic poetics. Considering that such a procedure will contribute to strengthening the narrative flow through layers in the visual-content film framework.

## 2. Conclusion

Such a concept is applied in all scenes, substituting the non-verbal context as the pivot of the film and the way of framing and construction of the scenes, their arrangement, context and observational sensitivity when following the action in the film. In the first two scenes, all unnecessary dialogue lines were removed in pre-production, and the emphasis was placed on active grading of information. The overall combination of shots (driving in a car, static shots, in-car camera, hand-held camera, etc.) aims to introduce and familiarize us with the main character, but also through a visual metaphor (the characters are driving in a car) to suggest the painful life paths of the main character.

Practically, the financial constraint is the basic aesthetic motive. In the context of competitive strategy, technical limitations are not an inhibitor, but on the contrary - a basic element on which the strategic decision to enter a specific segment is based. Thus, what initially appears as a disadvantage is actually an aggregator of differentiation. The insufficiency of technique and logistical support motivates the entire production team to build a visual narrative that is unique and most importantly - desirable and meaningful to the audience.

A striking example of the solutions that express the strategy is the scene in which Shpetim and the prostitute discuss their children. The scene itself has a complex symbolic and informative nature. This scene "presents" the image and character of Shpetim, but also of the prostitute, who in the continuation of the film story has a key and significant role. By choosing simplicity in the compositional-artistic expressiveness of the shots used and their variation on two planes

(SKP and SP), the attention is kept on the main character, his masterful and appropriate acting variations that very clearly and precisely define the character of the honest, hard-working, but a very unfortunate man who clumsily navigates the corrupt and dishonest society. On the other hand, the medium shot of the prostitute is an appropriate replica of the work of art "Nude Maya" by Francisco de Goya, which the Inquisition describes as "indecent and harmful to the public good", and which for the film's needs shapes the character of the prostitute into "indecent, but because of the bad public good." The intimate approach to her SKP is when she talks about her son, that is, when mutual closeness, sincerity and connection are established.

This section from the film, which is an essential part of Dario Sekulovski master's thesis, talks about the implementation of strategic decisions. The artist's discourse and visual-narrative meanings are in favor of focusing the strategy towards a specific and limited segment. All film elements are in function of precise and clear communication with the audience. A clear message is conveyed with a minimalist manner and strong indications. That combination contributes to a sincere and deeper experience on the part of the audience, and that is the audience that needs a clean author's manuscript and wants to be exposed to emotional pressure that does not leave them indifferent at the end of the cinema show.

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