

Innovation, Renewal and Public Intervention in the Television Production Sector

Abstract:

‘The digital era, often referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, represents an enormously exciting opportunity for a further wave of growth and innovation. But we will need to work hard to harness the value of the IP... [and nurture creative industries] as enablers to the wider economy.’

Bazalgette Report, 2017

Television production is a major and growing component of the creative economy. In the UK, of the £112bn that creative industries contributed to the UK economy in 2018, in excess of £20bn was accounted for by ‘film, TV, video, radio and photography’ (DCMS, 2020). Sales of finished television programme and formats are a major contributor to UK creative industries exports (DCMS, 2015: 26). According to data commissioned regularly by the trade association for producers PACT, the value of UK television exports had reached £1.4bn in 2018/19 (Pact/3Vision, 2019).

Drawing on original research into the experience of the UK production sector, this paper addresses the following questions: Why is innovation important in the television production sector and what forms does it take? How effective has UK public policy been in promoting renewal, innovation and success in the production sector? To what extent is cross-innovation a feature?

The analysis presented derives from a 3-year project which investigates the experience of a range of leading UK-based television production companies and whose methodologies include analysis of financial data, quantitative content analysis, analysis of policy texts and expert interviews carried out with policy-makers and with senior executives at several leading television production companies (including Left Bank, Mammoth, Endemol-Shine, Sony Pictures Television International, All3Media and Tinopolis).

Building on Schumpeter's pioneering work on the role of innovation and on earlier studies that have examined the relationship between creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship (Fadaee and Alzahrh, 2014; Anderson, Potočnik and Zhou, 2014), including in creative industries (Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009) and on previous work that examines the role of public policy in supporting independent television production (Doyle and Paterson, 2008; Doyle 2019; Lee 2012; 2018) and innovation in production sectors (Cunningham, 2013), this paper seeks to extend earlier work on the role of public policy in facilitating and promoting innovation and growth in the TV production sector. Findings will show that, in the UK, there is a strong association between public policy, economic performance, renewal and sustainability in this sector. Despite the ever-increasing dominance of large players, the production sector is still characterised by high levels of creative renewal and its much lauded recent commercial success has, in some instances at least, served as a catalyst for innovation based on harnessing new digital technologies.

Keywords: Independent television production; innovation, renewal, public policy; economic performance.