ARE LOCAL CREATIVE INDUSTRIES MORE GLOBAL THAN WE THINK?

A STUDY OF SMEs BASED AT BALTIC CREATIVE IN LIVERPOOL

CM Patha*, Nick Dunn, Roger Whitham · Lancaster University, UK · *Contact: c.patha1@lancaster.ac.uk

1. A GROWING SECTOR

Creative industries account for almost 6 per cent of total UK jobs and are the UK’s fastest growing sector (DCMS, 2016). In 2014, they accounted for an impressive 9 per cent of the UK’s total services exports (DCMS, 2016). The government’s Industrial Strategy: Creative Industries Sector Deal aims to increase exports by 50 per cent before 2023, claiming that “there remains a great deal of untapped potential in the sector, with many businesses not yet exporting at all” (BEIS, 2018). This poster, however, aims to show that creative industries firms are already deeply intertwined with the global economy.

2. THE COHORT

The research has been carried out at Baltic Creative, a Community Interest Company, which accommodates creative and digital businesses in a formerly derelict warehouse district in Liverpool, UK. The research comprises a 16-question online survey, which 59 Baltic Creative business owners completed in May 2018, and a dozen semi-structured interviews with these business owners.

3. THE EXPORTERS

While this research is based on a small, geographically isolated sample of companies and cannot claim to represent a broader snapshot of creative industries in the UK, the findings reveal a surprisingly large extent of income generated from exports, by even the smallest of SMEs. We applaud the Sector Deal for concentrating on exports. The government’s efforts, however, should not focus on only improving the playing field, but also keeping a steady course so that creative industries businesses can continue to do what they’re already doing exceptionally well: exporting their goods and services.

4. SIZE MATTERS

95 per cent of creative industries firms employ fewer than ten people (BEIS, 2018) and the Industrial Strategy sees “size in particular as a challenge to creative industries businesses seeking to export.” (BEIS, 2018) Again, we have not found this to be the case at Baltic Creative. Although several companies surveyed employ between 10 and 50 employees, the mean company size is 3.2 FTE (full-time employees), in line with the national UK creative company average size of 3.3 FTE (Bazalgette, 2018).

5. CONCLUSIONS

While this research is based on a small, geographically isolated sample of companies and cannot claim to represent a broader snapshot of creative industries in the UK, the findings reveal a surprisingly large extent of income generated from exports, by even the smallest of SMEs. We applaud the Sector Deal for concentrating on exports. The government’s efforts, however, should not focus on only improving the playing field, but also keeping a steady course so that creative industries businesses can continue to do what they’re already doing exceptionally well: exporting their goods and services.

6. REFERENCES


