

ACTUAL ISSUES OF PUBLIC POLICY IN THE FIELD OF CINEMATOGRAPHY

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Abstract. Cinematography is one of the least studied and emerging areas of research in public administration. The main principles of state policy in the field of cinema are support for domestic cinema and providing access to Kazakhstani film products.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the topical problems of domestic cinematography, taking into account the principles of state policy in the field of cinematography.

The methodological basis of the research is based on scientific works on the issues under consideration, regulatory legal acts. The work used the official statistics of services in the field of cinema. A factorial analysis of the current state of the film industry was carried out using the analytical tool PEST-analysis. In addition, a discursive analysis of the representation of ideas of state policy in modern Kazakhstani cinema was carried out. Modern Kazakhstani films of the last 10 years were considered as additional materials.

The study showed that the support of national films is an important direction in the public administration in the field of cinematography. Socially significant films have non-commercial, spiritual and artistic value. Financial profit belongs to commercial films of private companies. The sharp decline in industry statistics confirms that the global pandemic in 2020 was a tough time for the film industry. Further development of the industry should be a common task not only of the state, but also of all interested parties.

Keywords: cinematography, government policy, government support, national films.

JEL codes: Z18

Аңдатпа. Мемлекеттік басқару саласындағы ғылыми ізденістердің шеңберінде кинематография аз зерттелген, тың бағыттардың бірі болып табылады. Кино саласындағы мемлекеттік саясат ұлттық фильмдерді қолдауға, қазақстандық кино өнімдеріне қолжетімдікті қамтамасыз етуге бағытталған.

Мақаланың мақсаты – кино саласындағы мемлекеттік саясаттың қағидаттарын ескере отырып, отандық кинематографияның өзекті мәселелерін талдау.

Зерттеудің әдіснамалық базасы проблематикалық мәселе бойынша жазылған ғылыми еңбектерге, нормативтік-құқықтық актілерге, статистикалық деректерге негізделеді. Мақалада отандық кинематография саласының қазіргі жағдайына факторлық талдау жасалынды. Бұдан бөлек, қазіргі заманғы қазақстандық кинодағы мемлекеттік саясат идеяларының репрезентациясына дискурс-талдау жүргізілді. Қосымша материалдар ретінде соңғы 10 жылда шыққан қазақстандық фильмдер қарастырылды.

Зерттеу нәтижесінде кинематография саласын мемлекеттік басқару жүйесінде ұлттық фильмдерді қолдау маңызды бағыт екені айқындалды. Әлеуметтік маңызы бар фильмдер коммерциялық емес, рухани-мағыналық және көркемдік жағынан құндылыққа ие. Қаржылық қайтарым жеке компаниялардың коммерциялық фильмдеріне тиесілі. 2020 жылғы өлемдегі пандемиялық жағдай кинематография саласы үшін күрделі кезең болғанын статистикалық көрсеткіштердің күрт төмендеуі растап отыр. Саланы алдағы уақытта жетілдіру мемлекеттің ғана емес, барлық стейкхолдерлердің ортақ міндеті болуы тиіс.

Түйін сөздер: кинематография, мемлекеттік саясат, мемлекеттік қолдау, ұлттық фильмдер.

JEL кодтар: Z18

Аннотация. Кинематография – одно из наименее изученных и новых направлений научных исследований в области государственного управления. Основными принципами государственной политики в сфере кино являются поддержка отечественного кино, обеспечение доступа к казахстанской кинопродукции.

Целью статьи является анализ актуальных проблем отечественного кинематографа с учетом принципов государственной политики в сфере кинематографии.

Методологическая база исследования основана на научных трудах по рассматриваемой проблематике, нормативным-правовым актам, статистическим данным. В статье проведен факторный анализ текущего состояния отечественной кинематографии. Кроме того, был проведен дискурсивный анализ репрезентации

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идей государственной политики в современном казахстанском кино. В качестве дополнительных материалов рассматривались современные казахстанские фильмы последних 10 лет.

Результаты исследования показали, что поддержка национальных фильмов является важным направлением в системе государственного управления кинематографией. Социально значимые фильмы имеют некоммерческую, духовную и художественную ценность. Финансовая прибыль принадлежит коммерческим фильмам частных компаний. Резкое снижение статистических показателей отрасли подтверждает, что пандемическая ситуация в мире в 2020 году была тяжелым периодом для киноиндустрии. Дальнейшее развитие отрасли должно быть общей задачей не только государства, но и всех заинтересованных сторон.

Ключевые слова: кинематография, государственная политика, государственная поддержка, национальные фильмы.

JEL коды: Z18

Introduction

Today, the film industry develops as an independent industry, and its social importance is growing. Any state carries about developing cinema considering its ideological values and economic efficiency. The socio-cultural value of the cinema lies in its ability to adapt to the needs of society. Its economic essence is gaining success through production, distribution, and sales of film products. At that, the quality of the film products should improve along with the country's modernization.

The pandemic situation that occurred in the world in 2020 affected filmmakers as well. Many premieres were postponed, some projects delayed or suspended, the revenues of film distributors decreased. The film industry has not completely recovered yet. Therefore, the local film industry needs wide support. In the future, a focus should be on such activities as restoration of the film market, varied assistance to filmmakers, and state support. This substantiates the need to define the role and significance of the film industry for Kazakhstani society and study the main principles and priorities of the state policy in the film industry.

In Kazakhstan, the film industry has an important economic and social meaning. This problem requires a theoretical and practical study. This research analyzed the achievements and shortcomings of the film industry and the main directions of the state policy regarding Kazakhstani cinema.

The film industry is a unique field of interdisciplinary interest. Film production, film market, film business, economic efficiency of cinema, its impact on society, and the ideological essence of cinema are widely discussed in the world. The variety of economic, technological, and socio-political aspects in the film industry stirs up interest and urges new research.

Literature review

The relevance of national cultural policy regarding film production is now studied worldwide (*Hill & Kawashima, 2016*). Much applied research is devoted to the development of the national film industry in different countries.

For example, *Parvulescu & Pitassio (2018)* noted that creating quality films is on the political agenda of the European Union with a focus on integration and competitiveness. *Kelly (2016)* analyzed the activity of the council that allocates government funds to films in the UK. *Billik (2020)* described the state management models and funding systems in the Czech film industry.

Zhabsky (2020) studied the Russian cinema that has become popular in post-Soviet and other countries. He reviewed the Russian film industry goals, results, and development problems within the framework of state support. He noted that the film industry's development should be guided by the social significance and commercial competitiveness of movies considered national films.

A. Golutva (2008) examined the strategic management of the film industry's socio-economic development, analyzed its effectiveness, the participation of state authorities in solving the strategic tasks of the industry development.

A significant part of modern research aims to differentiate the forms of state support for the film industry. The research literature was complemented by the analysis of the film industry's state support system as a prerequisite for developing the cinema market environment (*Kolobova, 2017*) and the studies of improved forms of state support for filmmakers (*Smirnov, 2019*).

The researchers also touched on the issues of state control over the film market using the example of China, the quotas,

ensorship, and screening of foreign films (*Al-Unser & Makarov, 2016*).

In her fundamental work, written under an international project, Karimova (2019) studied the place of the Uzbek film industry in Central Asia, the film industry's contribution to the country's socio-economic development, and the peculiarities of the formation and development prospects of the film market.

In Kazakhstan, the film industry was more studied by art sciences such as art history, directing, and film studies. Many scientists (*Abikeeva, 2001; Nogerbek, 2014; Urazbayeva, 2018*) studied the history of Kazakh cinema, its values and characters. However, such concepts as the national policy in the domestic film industry, fundamentals of public administration, economic efficiency, the film market specifics, and socio-economic aspects of the domestic film industry remained generally understudied. A singular work on this topic by Kazakhstani authors Aygazin et al. (2020) identified factors influencing the national cinema's economy, including the box office and financial profitability and film rating.

Materials and Methods

The methodological basis of the research included the scientific works, regulatory legal acts, official statistics on the film industry. We used general scientific methods of description, synthesis, comparison, factor analysis, and content analysis. We applied the PEST tool to analyze the current state of the film industry, taking into account political, economic, social, and technological factors.

Public administration of the film industry is guided by the Law "On Film industry" (2019) and relevant by-laws. With that, the Concept of Cultural Policy of Kazakhstan (2014) sets out the task of developing the film industry as an important cluster of the modern cultural space. The roadmap for implementing the Concept of Cultural Policy of Kazakhstan provides for ten major actions of the republican and regional levels in the film industry.

The state program "Digital Kazakhstan" covers such topical issues as the film industry's transition to digital format, launching start-ups including online cinemas, and selling cinema tickets online.

Kazakhstani films have also become the core ideas and directions of state programs, concepts aimed at the socio-economic and political modernization of Kazakhstan (the "Rukhani Zhangyru" (Spiritual Revival) program, the social modernization program, the idea of "Mangilik El" (Eternal country), regional development programs, etc.).

The article also analyses the representation of public policy ideas in movies filmed in Kazakhstan over the past decade at the expense of the state budget and private funds.

Results and Discussion

Kazakhstani film industry institutional structure

In any industry, institutional structures have a decisive role in the industry's successful development. The institutional environment ensures the formation of competitive potential and effective functioning.

The main institution of state support for the film industry is the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Within its competence, this state body implements the state policy in the film industry, regulates public relations, supports the national film industry, develops international relations, and exercises other powers provided by law (*Article 5 of the Law on Cinematography*).

Institutional changes in the film industry occurred by adopting the Law "On Film industry" in 2019. This law was adopted for the first time in the history of independent Kazakhstan and determined the priority directions and strategy for the development of the industry.

In pursuance of this law, the National de la Cinematographie Center (CNC) in France and the State Center for the Support of National Cinema were created in 2019, similar to the Cinema Foundation in Russia. With its strategic goals and directions, the State Center for Supporting National Cinema has taken an important place in the public administration of the film industry in Kazakhstan. The Center aims to support the national cinema, increase its competitiveness, create conditions for creating high-quality films that meet national interests, popularize domestic films not only in Kazakhstan but throughout the world, and

attract investments in the film industry (2021). An Expert Council, established at the Center, develops recommendations for selecting film projects for state funding. The council includes highly qualified, experienced filmmakers from Kazakhstan.

The National Film Studio “Kazakhfilm” remains an important and powerful entity as the largest cinema platform in the country. Kazakhfilm offers everything necessary for film production, provides a process for modern technological equipment (*Kazakhfilm JSC, 2021*).

As a major flagship, Kazakhfilm plays a special role in the cultural development of Kazakhstan. The professional film industry was institutionalized thanks to this national film studio. This film studio was the curdle for the masterpieces of Kazakh cinema. In the future, they should continue to create films that promote patriotic and cultural values, moral and historical heritage, and positively impact the younger generation.

Mobilizing public organizations, like the Creative Union of Cinematographers, the National Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and the Film Critics Association, also play a key role in the institutional structure of the film industry. Their position in the institutional environment is especially important in determining the strategy and directions for the development of the film industry while supporting the rights of filmmakers.

The quality of movies largely depends on the qualifications and experience of the filmmakers. Education in the film industry, retraining, and advanced training of filmmakers make a necessary part of comprehensive industry development. Today, three universities in Kazakhstan train film industry specialists. They are Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of Arts, Kazakh National University of Arts, and Turan University. The effectiveness of film schools is assessed not only by the number of graduates but by the quality of their future products. These universities, like other Kazakhstani universities, strive to raise the demand for their education services.

State support for the film industry

Now there is a legislative basis for the state support and financing of the film industry. Many countries have international

agreements in the film industry and special laws; they implement national cinema development programs. The main measures of state support for the film industry in the CIS countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, etc.) are the production of national films, also for children and youth; preservation and development of the material and technical base for distribution and screening of national films; implementation of educational and scientific and technical programs; holding and participating in international film festivals and other cultural events (*Development of film industry in the CIS member states: state, prospects, cooperation, 2020*).

Other countries provide other sources of funding national projects in addition to state funding. E.g., in the U.S., there is no government support, but there are business earnings, investors' and members' contributions, and grants. China allows for co-production, auxiliary production, custom production, UK – co-production, and private financing (*Smirnov, 2019*). The forms of state support for national cinema consider the regional specifics of each country.

For Kazakhstan, as for other countries, cinema is a powerful tool for creating a positive image of the country. It can also have a significant impact on the national economy and national competitiveness. Therefore, the development of the national film industry is an important task for the state.

According to the Law on Cinematography, the state policy in the film industry is based on supporting national films and domestic filmmakers and providing access to film products.

Government support in the film industry is mainly provided to national films. Such films serve to protect the state's interests and shape the country's global image.

The state support to the domestic film industry is provided in such forms as financing film projects, providing subsidies, preserving cultural heritage, improving the qualifications of filmmakers, creating conditions for its development in all respects. Authorized and interested state bodies participate in the film industry development. State support is provided to both state and private film studios and independent production companies.

Funds from the Republican budget are annually allocated under the budget program “Production of national films.” For example, in 2021, they amounted to KZT 1.1 billion. In 2020, KZT 963.9 million allocated for producing national films were fully utilized. The expenses amounted to KZT 4.1 billion in 2019, 8.5 billion in 2018, and 8.0 billion in 2017 (*official data from the RK Ministry of Culture and Sports, 2020*).

Since 2019, funds are also allocated from the Republican budget under the budget program “Organization of works to support and promote national films.” At that, stimulating and supporting the distribution and promotion of national films within the country and abroad are among the core principles of the state policy in the film industry.

Starting from 2019, national films and film projects applying for this status have to participate in open contests-pitching to receive government funding. Pitching is organized by the State Center for the Support of National Films. The Expert Council at the Center considers the relevance, artistic and spiritual level, compliance with relevant requirements, and the financial efficiency of film projects applying for state funding. Based on the open contest results, the list of films worthy of state funding is submitted for consideration to an interdepartmental Government Commission that pays special attention to the observance of state interests, legislative norms, and requested budgets.

Creating conditions for national films’ production

Kazakhstan provides the best conditions for filming. The National Film Company “Kazakhfilm” provides a wide range of technical and infrastructure services. There are special locations and shooting sets equipped with modern technologies. In addition, Kazakhstan has geographic and landscape opportunities for film production.

Cinema conveys the meaning of social life as a narrative (*Alexander, 2013*). Considering its socio-psychological impact on people, cinema can reflect both urban and rural atmospheres. It shows the situation in the regions, relations between people. In most cases, Kazakhstani films

are shot in picturesque places of Almaty, Almaty region, and Nur-Sultan. Other natural places appearing in the films are the Kolsai and Kaindy lakes, the Charyn Canyon, Shymbulak Mountain resort, Medeu ice complex, and Borovoye resort.

Almaty is the capital of Kazakhstani cinema. All film production facilities are located here, and most Kazakhstani filmmakers reside in this city with immensely picturesque nature and all the necessary infrastructure for filming. In Kazakhstani films, you can often see Al-Farabi and Abai avenues, Nurly-Tau business center, Esentai mall, Akbulak complex, and Medeu complex. Almaty has great opportunities to develop cinema tourism in the future.

Such natural and geographical opportunities and Kazakhstan’s rich history and cultural heritage allow domestic filmmakers to shoot high-quality films in any genre. Film production must be pleasing to the public and have a high artistic level.

Therefore, when selecting film projects for state funding in Kazakhstan, priority is given to films that have a spiritual, patriotic impact, reflect the country’s natural beauty, and characterize the people’s moral qualities.

Reflection of the state policy in cinema

Cinema is a tool that reflects social reality. It can characterize social interaction between people, inequality, social processes, and the activity of social institutions.

The state approach to the film industry public administration relies on the ability of the film industry to reflect the state policy and ideology concepts. Cinema is a “soft power” that can communicate the political, social, cultural, and value foundations of a state or a region to other countries.

Most modern Kazakhstani films focus on acute social problems in the country. They use cinema to convey direct and indirect messages within the priority directions of state ideology and policy. This is relevant not only for socially significant films made by government orders. Private movies also represent the main areas of state policy. E.g., the “Akim” movie (2019) shows the shortcomings in the public administration system, including corruption of officials, incomplete implementation of

the digitalization program, lack of Internet access, an incomplete command of the state language, the poor economic situation in remote regions, lack of water supply. The filmmakers focus on acute social problems to highlight the need to solve them. This movie also shows the confrontation between urban and rural life, the reluctance of modern Kazakhstani youth to live in the countryside, the desire for more urban life. This is because of the few opportunities for youth development in the village. The “Kelinka Sabina” (2014) movie by N. Adambay also advocates the need to develop the regions, including rural infrastructure.

The main directions of social policy are also represented in many movies. For example, the “The Girl and the Sea” (2017) movie discusses the problems of disabled people, their struggle for life; “Oralman” (2017) is about ethnic Kazakhs living abroad and the social adaptation of repatriates; the “Prepod” [The Teacher] (2013) – about higher education and the demand for qualified specialists. “Brother or Marriage” (2017), “My Stranger” (2016), “Business in Kazakh” (2016) talk about family values and mutual understanding issues. “Kelinka is also a human. Part 2” raises the acute gender issues. The “Astana – mahabbatym menin” [Astana is my love] (2010) series deals with socially significant topics like city construction, competition between companies, interethnic relations, the role of the media.

Thus, state ideology is still reflected in movies and influences the mass consciousness. Each movie bears a certain explicit or implicit meaning. Rational use of cinema as an influence tool might increase its social efficacy.

Historical movies that describe and popularize life and cultural heritage of historical figures and historical events such as “Kazakh Khanate,” “Almas kylysh” [Diamond sword], “Amre,” “Tomiris,” and “Baluan Sholak” provide a unique opportunity for Kazakhstan to enter the global film industry.

Challenges in the film industry

Till 2020, Kazakhstani cinema was developing evenly. Then, its figures went down due to the global pandemic. The official statistics reported 962,000 film

shows in the country in 2019 vs. 292,000 in 2020. The cinema audience decreased from 19 million in 2019 to 4 million in 2020. The film production also decreased two times (480 in 2019 vs. 242 in 2020). Revenues of film distributors decreased four times – from KZT 21 billion in 2019 to 5 billion in 2020 (*Film distributors’ operation, 2020*). That was due to closing the cinemas according to long-term quarantine measures.

Today, the efficiency of the film business in Kazakhstan is quite low. Modern domestic films bring more expenses than income, especially those filmed at the expense of the state budget. On the contrary, films by local private film studios are usually commercially successful (for example, the “Business in Kazakh in Korea” movie grossed KZT 1,107 million of profit in 2019 and became the highest-grossing film (*The victory over the Avengers, 2020*).

Income from the movies can be increased in two obvious ways: through internal or external factors. The first way involves opening more cinemas in Kazakhstani regions, cities, and villages and raising the interest of local viewers in Kazakhstani films. The second requires great success through entering the foreign film market.

With its global and transparent nature, the film industry is a result of informational and cultural exchange going on in the world. However, positive consequences of a wide global distribution of movies come together with negative issues. Globalization poses a threat to national cultural identity. The priority of Hollywood cinema in society should not weaken the ideological and moral functions of local movies.

We know that Kazakhstani viewers prefer foreign films to those homemade. How to raise interest in Kazakhstani movies? The search for an answer should involve both film directors and all interested parties. Corporate governance of the film industry is important in this context. Both the plot, the script, the acting, the director’s and operator’s work, the location and sound, the soundtrack – everything must be at the highest level to make a movie interesting for the viewers. Movies are viewed by ordinary people, so a film product should be self-explanatory for all social groups.

Besides, Kazakhstani cinema is dominated by comedies filmed by private

studios for commercial purposes. Today, there are more comedies of national importance than historical movies because they have smaller budgets and fewer chances of receiving state funding. People have come into the film industry from show business, stand-ups; more movies are filmed. This trend might be optimal for small and medium businesses, increasing competitiveness. However, one should not forget about such topical components as the artistic quality and meaningfulness of the movies.

Factors influencing the development of Kazakhstani cinema

Many factors influence the further development of the film industry. They include political, economic, social, and technological factors (PEST).

Political factors (P):

- improving regulatory framework in the film industry, strict implementation of norms;

- increasing role of cinema as a political and ideological tool, effective implementation of the state policy.

Economic factors (E):

- government support for filmmakers as representatives of small and medium business;

- a system of tax incentives, subsidies, government funding of the film industry.

Social factors (S):

- jobs provided by the film industry entities;

- highlighting social issues through cinema;

- increasing a social, public function of cinema as an image product.

Technological factors (T):

- launch of an information system for monitoring films;

- digitalization of the national film festival, providing free access to local films.

These factors determine measures to improve the current situation further. The Law "On Cinematography" is the main document governing this industry. Its significance is due to a long absence of a separate law that would govern public relations in the film industry. Its adoption gave a new impetus to the industry; the film industry state administration system was revised. Today, the law has to be

supplemented and updated with new concepts and norms.

The political significance of cinema lies in its ability to convey ideological, semantic messages to the public directly and indirectly. This ability should be rationally used as a means of influencing the public consciousness, a "soft power."

The socio-economic aspects of cinema lie in developing filmmakers as small and medium businesses, providing them with tax incentives, increasing competition, and creating jobs.

The current globalization trend urges the digitalization of every industry. Digitalization in the cinema has both artistic and technological purposes. The use of state-of-the-art technologies in film-making can increase the viewer's interest and provide consumers with such opportunities as buying tickets online, monitoring the film-making, and receiving new information.

Conclusion

Cinema is a priority direction in developing the creative economy of the state. The film industry development in Kazakhstan guarantees the preservation of national identity, forming a positive image, and increasing competitiveness. Producing high-quality films that could satisfy the spiritual and cultural needs of the population is an important direction of state policy in the film industry.

Over the past 2-3 years, several management steps were taken to raise the efficiency of the Kazakhstani film industry. The regulatory framework in the field has improved. A separate Law on Cinematography adopted for the first time in the history of Kazakhstan has determined the main directions of the industry development and introduced regulation of public relations in the film industry. Since 2019, the institutional framework was adjoined by a new structure – the State Center for the Support of National Cinema. Today, film projects play a key role in state funding. An Expert Council, an advisory body at the Center, ensures the transparency and professionalism of government decisions in the industry.

In conclusion, the main goal of the state policy in the film industry is to create favorable conditions for the industry's future

development based on the efficient use of state funds.

The state policy in the film industry is based on five basic principles: 1) Creation of conditions for production and storage of national films; 2) support of the global distribution, promotion of national films; 3) state support for the local film industry; 4) ensuring access to Kazakhstani movies; 5)

supporting the functioning and development of the state language in this area (*Art. 5, Law "On Cinematography"*). These principles evidence the importance of further development of the film industry for Kazakhstan. In turn, it contributes to the country's cultural development, integration into the world-class cultural space while preserving national identity.

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