

MARKETING IN CROATIAN FEATURE FILM – EXPLORATIVE RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Croatian cinematography and Croatian feature films in general are not achieving great success neither in terms of viewership, especially when it comes to box office, nor in terms of recognition and reputation and are seen by the public as inferior to foreign movies, particularly American movies. Despite the rewards they are receiving at festivals in Croatia and in the rest of the world, the general perception of public and even among the members of profession is negative. In regards to that, the aim of this paper, of this research, was to find the answer whether marketing can be helpful in achieving the better success of Croatian feature film, what the role of marketing in the film industry really is or can be. Throughout the paper it was hypothesized that marketing isn't applied neither enough, nor systematically nor correctly, in Croatian film industry and that better, more correct and systematic, implementation of marketing would help Croatian feature films achieve much greater success in terms of viewership, recognition and reputation. Moreover, it would help Croatian film industry in the long run to gain much better reputation and recognition both in the film world and among general public.

Concerning the research, the research was carried by interviewing 20 experts on the Croatian feature films and films in general that were specifically chosen by the author on the basis of their knowledge in the matter and their professions. Among the participants were film critics, distributors, cinema owners, directors, producers, film theoreticians and academic professors with a Ph.D. in film art. Through interviews with them obtained was the qualitative insight into the state of Croatian film industry, Croatian feature films and marketing in Croatian feature films, as well as insight into trends related to those.

KEY WORDS: Croatia, marketing, film, experts, explorative research.

1. INTRODUCTION

Croatian cinematography and Croatian long feature film in general are not enjoying much success not just in box office, which is essential, but also in viewership in general, nor are they enjoying great reputation and recognition. Indeed, the general Croatian public perceive Croatian long feature films negatively, as inferior to foreign films, especially inferior to American films. Moreover, despite the awards Croatian long feature films receive at festivals in Croatia and around the world, they are not regarded among the general Croatian public while Croatian cinematography is not perceived and considered as important branch of the economy. With regards to that, research about Croatian feature film was carried out. The aim of the research was to find the answer whether better (more systematic, more correct) implementation of and approach to marketing and bigger role of marketing concept in Croatian feature film would help it achieve better results, in terms of

viewership, reputation and recognition. Thus, the problem of the research was to find out the perceptions and thoughts of the experts related to Croatian feature film and implementation of marketing and marketing elements in Croatian film.

Film marketing, as John Durie defines it, is “any activity which helps film reach its intended audience in any moment of its life (product life cycle), that is reach its potential for earning profits.”¹ Francois Colbert, on the other hand, states the goal of marketing in culture is to „facilitate establishing the connection between art work and audience that will appreciate it“² Marketing, in general, is defined, by the American Marketing Association as „activity, set of institutions, and processes in creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.“³ Offerings include, per definition, any product which in turn includes audiovisual works (in this case long feature

¹ Kerrigan F. (2010) *Film Marketing*, Bulterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, p. 10. – adapted, from the source: Durie, J. et. al. (2000) *Marketing and Selling Your Film around the World*, Silman-James Press, Los Angeles

² Colbert, F. (2010) *Marketing u kulturi i umetnosti*, Clio, Beograd, p. 10.

³ <https://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx> (17.10.2017.)

films), and not just as a standard physical product but also as an art and culture product in which authors instill their own opinions, ideas, thoughts which may or may not be liked by the viewers, that is consumers. In this regards, as authors of the paper *Strategic Approach to Film Marketing in International Setting (Strateški pristup marketingu filma u međunarodnim okvirima)* point out the role of marketing is “to influence decision-making in terms of where the money will be invested, which film is going to be shot, how distributors will be found and how the budget and strategy of showing the film to intended target audience will be established. Film marketing should be based on the public’s expectations of the film.”⁴ However, when discussing marketing in Croatian feature film and Croatian film industry in general, it can be said how film marketing is underdeveloped, or how it is rarely applied, in overall. Only in recent times there are some examples of adequate implementation of marketing which as a consequence had good succes of these films, but they remain few and far between.

Therefore, the aim of the paper was to show that implementation of marketing can help Croatian feature film, and, in accordance to the problem of the research, the following research hypotheses were defined:

H1 (Main hypothesis): Inadequate marketing approach in production and decision of scenario/project results in comparatively lower production quality, and thus in effect in lower appreciation of Croatian film by the public (market approval) in comparison with foreign films (especially of American production).

Auxiliary hypothesis 1: From the point of the producers (business subjects) and authors in film industry, the opinions that dominate are those that due to insufficient budgets the increasingly less-demanding scenarios/projects are developed and, as a resort, the artistic (art) films without commercial potential are made.

Auxiliary hypothesis 2: Due to small earnings from the distribution and due to insufficient budgets for film promotion and lack of insight into habits of Croatian viewers, the poorer results are achieved in viewership of Croatian feature films.

Auxiliary hypothesis 3: Consumers (wider public) perceive overall national cinematography as not of sufficient quality in terms of genres and themes, while particular Croatian films (film titles) they value more. Consumers are also not familiar enough with all the forms of usage of the audiovisual works (screening, airing...).

Auxiliary hypothesis 4: Croatian cinematography and audiovisual industry (film industry) are not recognized as a branch of economy that employs a lot of people, although it is clear that film can promote country as touristic destination and contributes to the image of the country.

Auxiliary hypothesis 5: Overall audiovisual industry, especially cinema infrastructure, negatively affects the visibility and accessibility of national (domestic) film to the cinema public.

2. METHODOLOGY

Methodology used for the research about marketing in Croatian feature film was based on interviews with experts on Croatian feature film and films in general. The author of the paper, himself from audiovisual industry, personally interviewed the experts. For the purpose of this paper and research, and in accordance to aims and hypotheses of the paper, the interview guide was devised as a research instrument. With the help of this instrument interviews with the experts on films and experts from film industry were carried out. Main goal of this research was to get expert, precise, deep and wide insight into the state of Croatian feature film.

Twenty experts participated in the research. The research was conducted in the period of: end of year 2015 and first quarter of year 2016. In accordance to ethical research practices the experts were guaranteed anonymity. The interview guide – research instrument - can be found in the appendix: *Research carried out on the sample of experts of Croatian film: interview – questions.*

The field of research consists of the following:

- reputation (image) and viewership of Croatian film
- marketing in Croatian film and viewership (how marketing is applied in Croatian film, what effect it has in terms of diverse aspects of marketing and similar)
- state of Croatian cinematography
- importance of Croatian film industry as economic industry
- state of Croatian film

3. SAMPLE

Participants were chosen on basis of their expertise and knowledge on Croatian film and their diverse professions, all in order to cover as much fields in audiovisual industry and to gain as broader, deeper and better insight into state of Croatian film as possible. Thus, among the interviewed experts there were: film critics, distributors, cinema owners, directors, producers, cameramen, film theoreticians and academic professors with a Ph.D. in film art. Their opinions and answers are shown and analyzed in the research results in next part of the paper and on the basis of that the main conclusions are drawn out. Author of the paper chose experts based on his judgment of their knowledge, insight and expertise, in consultation with his mentor and co-mentor. It is clear from that the sample is purposive or convenience sample, consisting of twenty participants.

⁴ Štavljanin V., Miličević V. i Makuljević J. (2011) Strateški pristup marketingu filma u međunarodnim okvirima, Marketing: časopis za marketing teoriju i praksu, vol. 42., no. 2, str. 89-96; str. 90., free translation

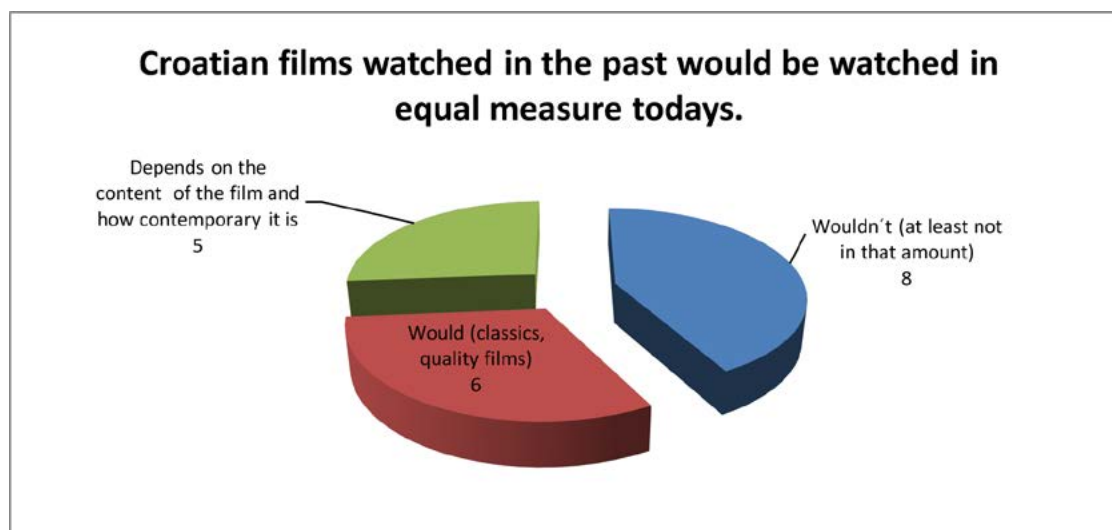
4. RESULTS OF RESEARCH

Reputation (image) and viewership of Croatian film

Related to viewership of Croatian film the majority of experts think that Croatian movies watched in the past wouldn't be watched in equal measure today. However, on the other side, some experts are of a thought that they would be watched, under the condition that they were Croatian film classics or successful, quality films. Interesting is the opinion of one participant who mentions the problem of accessibility of Croatian film classics to audience due to unsystematic network of cinemas as well

as need to distance from confusing *art* projects and to get closer to audience with films that have contemporary themes and stories. That would then increase viewership of Croatian films, in his opinion. Certain number of experts is of opinion that it depends on the content of the film and how much the movie is current (contemporary) for nowadays, on the momentum, context, but also on audience's profile and its current (today's) taste. One expert summarizes majority of opinions: "No, it wouldn't be equally watched. The habits of watching movies have changed, the structure of cinema public has changed, the economy has changed... I think they would be watched much less."

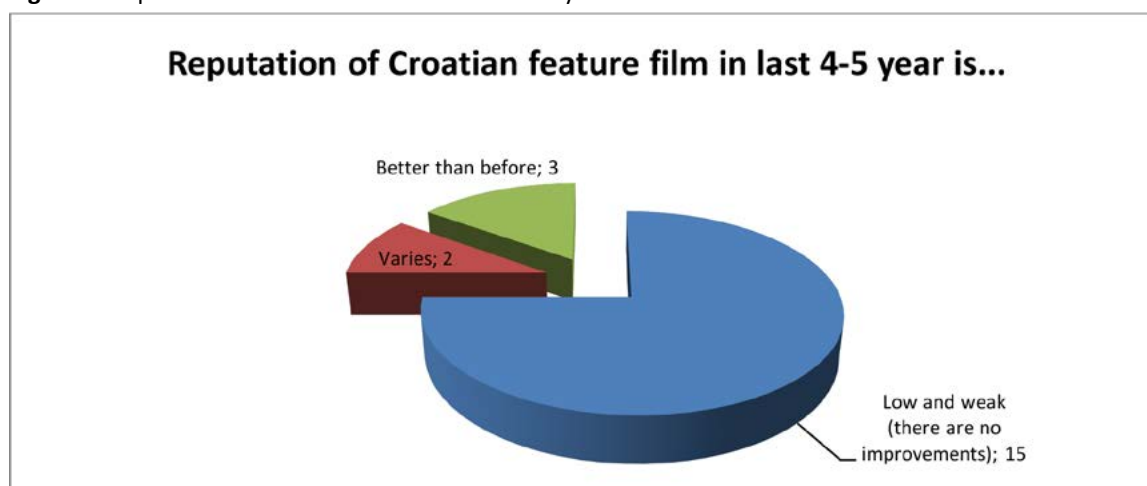
Figure 1. Viewership of Croatian film today and in the past



Source: Authors

Regarding the reputation (image) of Croatian feature film in last 4 to 5 years, the majority of experts think that reputation (image) is as poor and low as it was in 1990s and that public still doesn't trust Croatian film. However, bearing in mind that, according to some there are some indications that the image, that is reputation is slightly improving, albeit slowly. Only small number of experts holds that the image has improved greatly in last 4 to 5 year, and mostly thanks to several titles with significant success among the public and more positive reactions, but also with quality repercussions at international festivals of A category, including the three greatest: Cannes, Berlin and Venice. Some experts think that reputation varies, that is that image is not constant and that, according to one, this lack of continuity is the main problem in regards to improving the reputation. Reasons why majority of experts think that reputation of Croatian film in last 4 to 5 years is bad are the following: themes of the films (excess of war movies as a consequence of 1990s), inconsistency in quality and scenarios, too many social dramas and not enough diversity in genres, old-fashioned films, lack of quality and authenticity, bad PR, stigma of boredom that follows Croatian film, and as one expert put it: "...overestimating the importance and auctioning the success

at usually less important festivals." However, one of the experts who think reputation is bad, holds that bad reputation is ungrounded because of tendency to speak badly about domestic film without even being familiar with it and watching it. Moreover, according to one expert "production is diverse, often very ambitious, technologically truly impressive." According to him today's image, still primarily poor, was built on poor image in 1990s, when the image founded in public was that Croatian films are uncommunicative and amateurishly realized works. Other expert however praises the organizational improvement made by HAVC (Croatian audiovisual center), but states how HAVC is only recognized among professional public and not among the wider public. Specifically that was shown in politically tainted turbulence in that institution in recent times which definitely didn't do any good to image of Croatian film. Besides that, it is important to highlight the opinion of the expert who claims: "Media constantly insisting on showing the commercial success of every Croatian film in cinemas, of course in relation with its cost, creates completely wrong image in the public. Cinemas are only part of distribution chain, Croatians film have much bigger viewership through other distribution forms, primarily through (national) TV channels."

Figure 2. Reputation of Croatian feature film in last years

Source: Authors

According to general opinion of experts in regards to reasons for (not)watching Croatian feature film in cinema: in last approx. 5 years, before 2000, and before 1990s, quality and scenario and stories, as well as themes and characters, make main reasons of (not)watching Croatian feature film which are always present and hold *"in all periods and in all societies"*, as one expert put it. Besides that, the most common reasons in the opinion of experts are bad reputation of Croatian films, then the fact that Croatian cinematography mostly comes down to *art* movies and introversion and uncommunicativeness, that is the fact that Croatian movies are not made for wide audience. Some experts stated quality as the reason, and one expert said it is the bad quality of the films that was the main reason for not watching Croatian films before 2000s, and also one of the main reasons before 1990s. As one of the reasons of poor viewership of Croatian films during the 1990s some experts stated the fact that a lot of movies made in that time were propaganda movies with themes of war, that is films *"tainted by excessive national enthusiasm"*, as one expert put it, which audience soon found boring. Some agree, on the other hand, that before 1990s Croatian film in general didn't enjoy popularity and wasn't much watched. So, it can be said the crisis began at the start of 1990s with the beginning of Croatia's War of Independence (Homeland War) which had effect on national cinematography which started producing war-themed films which soon wore out, that is they never even began to live, because of which Croatian film even today suffers bad reputation. It is interesting that, besides that, one expert states bad and unsubstantial marketing as main culprit for low viewership during the whole that period, and unattractive films as reason for low viewership during the 90s (*"war movies with similar themes and motives and art films, and lack of diverse genres, more cheerful themes and similar"*), while competition of media platforms remain today's problem. Some of the less mentioned reasons which experts stated are: engagement of distributors, (wrong) decision of presentation and place of screening the film(s), high price of cinema tickets and the change in structure of public that goes to multiplex cinemas, the emergence of mentioned multiplex cinemas,

new media as well as new options/ways of watching films, then global crisis of viewership, strong competition, changed media perception of film and bigger impact of television, the loss of cinema going-out as important event and the loss of social status of film, and in general changes in tastes and habits of the public, under which it is meant viewers' habits.

The main influencing factors on the viewership of Croatian film for majority of experts are firstly the story itself and/or scenario and related directing and actors, that is acting. To be precise eight experts have stated some or all of these factors as main factors. Then follows promotion, distribution, genre (which is connected to the story), cinema owners, changes in viewers' habits/behaviors and expended offer as (next) most important factors. Some experts have remarked that story, actors, promotion, media and critic, HAVC, distributors, and cinema owners are all equally important and that everything needs to be reorganized. One expert stated that it is number of factors and depending on circumstances every one of them can be crucial, that is more crucial than the others. Interestingly, only one expert recognizes the importance of HAVC, and only in case when un-populistic film is in question, while on the other hand other expert completely disregards any role of HAVC on viewership. Also, indicated is the problematic of bad positioning of Croatian film and need to distinguish and divide films into those which are intended for narrower public and those which are intended to wider public, and mentioned is also the problem of lack of true acting stars.

One expert has stated festival rewards as influencing factor on image of Croatian film among the members of film industry, meaning professional foreign and national juries, film distributors and so on, while stating the quality as crucial factor among the public, meaning average viewers. Another expert has also stated quality as main influencing factor on the image of Croatian film, while others stated as factors bad scenarios, films themselves, unauthenticity and unoriginality which altogether falls under quality of the film, so therefore it can be said that quality has the most important role in the image of Croatian film. Some

experts listed media coverage related to the film and genre specification as main factors. Besides that, one expert has indicated viewership as main influencing factor on the image of Croatian film, and backed that opinion with assumption that the more viewers there is in cinemas, the better the image of Croatian film is created. There is also an opinion that prejudices that follow Croatian film are crucial, prejudices that everything Croatian is worse than foreign, as well as opinion that the general wider media perception is the main culprit, that is main influencing factor on the image of Croatian film. Also, the low presence of Croatian film amongst the cinema audience is stated as influencing on the image as well, more precisely it is remarked that without (larger) presence of Croatian film there can be no image at all. In addition, one expert stated scandals that surround Croatian cinematography as main influencing factors on the image.

The role of critics of Croatian film in last five years and its influence on viewership is minimal or nonexistent according to majority of experts. One expert has remarked that the role is minimal in the sense that this influence is only present among smaller number of people and for specific profile of film titles, and that is because of the profile of audience itself (the multiplex-cinema audience, that is the audience that frequents multiplex cinemas, which is mainly consisted of people younger than 30 years and teenagers) and because of lack of relevant names among critics. Some experts are of opinion however that the role is big and significant, and others think it is only partial. Of those who are of opinion that the role is big and significant one expert has specifically stated that the reasons for that is because in today's world of Internet and fast information everyone can become critic and can determine from the start the fate, success of certain film as the first one who publishes the critic of that film. One expert mentions as reason of partial role of critics the problem of Pula Film Festival which in his/her opinion is taking place in the worst period (summer season) and then it is written about the film the most which in turn has effect only on those who attend or follow the festival (and that is small part of potential audience), and later when film goes in cinema distribution it goes unnoticed. Also, one expert mentions there is influence in case of total and constant critics and that then can persuade the people to go watch Croatian film.

However, that influence of critics (criticism) before year 2000 was greater and that today it diminishes majority of experts thinks, with explanation that critic was then more important, more relevant and more present and that newspapers, that is media had greater credibility while critics enjoyed bigger reputation. Still, some think that influence remained the same, more precisely that it wasn't great and significant then and it isn't great and significant today. Also, there is an opinion that influence of critics (criticism) increases due to technological revolution, changes in viewers' habits and incredible number of titles in the offer on all distributional platforms so people depend more on recommendations and critics (which assumes then greater impact of critics in the future as

well), and that is then stated as more important factor than the expertise of the critics itself.

In regards to familiarity of Croatian public with all the forms, legal and illegal, of public showing of Croatian film, several experts are of an opinion that large number of the public is well familiar with these, and especially the younger public to whom everything is accessible. However, they are opposed by some experts who think that public is not familiar enough with these, with one expert stating that public is not taught to view piracy as criminal act. The opinion of one expert who thinks that piracy is harming the whole industry supports this. Another expert points out that today people go to cinemas for specific reasons, so they can watch certain rare film, and the rest of the films are watched later, when there is already a possibility of watching for free. That cinema is too expensive, that is that cinema tickets are the main problem and main reason why people illegally download and watch films, including watching via YouTube, several experts claim. This has important implications since as one expert put it: *"People are prepared to pay premium price for premium product."* And Croatian film, according to opinions of experts, is not that or at least it is not perceived as such.

Experts have dividing opinions whether the information that is positive in regards to viewership of Croatian film, information that indicates that (how much and in which ways is Croatian film watched), would change the negative perception of Croatian film. Thus, several experts think this information wouldn't change significant or at all its negative perception, while several experts on the other hand think it would, and positively at that. Others claim that for that to happen it would require a lot of time and effort. Moreover, one expert points out that when viewership is the only criteria then this creates image and changes perception, while another expert completely rejects cinema viewership as important factor, parameter.

That price of cinema tickets should be lower in order to increase the viewership of Croatian film think majority of experts, with one expert stating that prices of cinema tickets for all films are too expensive not just for Croatian film; so, in general the prices of cinema tickets should be lowered. According to them, that would not harm the image of Croatian film, since, as one expert put it, image doesn't depend on price. One expert claims that interest in the film still has crucial role, and two experts think that lowering the price of cinema tickets should not be the only measure. With that agrees one other expert who thinks that even if the Croatian film was free that wouldn't help much because price is not the factor. In addition to that, one expert expressed concern that although it is somewhat possible the increase in viewership of Croatian film would be achieved through lower ticket prices, the long run consequence of that could be Croatian film starting to be perceived as of less value and lower quality. Other expert has pointed out, however, that even then the viewers could be more inclined to choose more expensive and attractive foreign film. Some experts think that the price of tickets in multiplexes should remain the same, that is

that they shouldn't be lower because that would harm the Croatian film, but that it would be good to have lower price of tickets for Croatian films in independent cinemas and in organized distribution. Only one expert responded that the situation wouldn't change much either way.

That price is too high, that is that cinema ticket is too expensive for Croatian standard despite being lower in comparison with other European countries is the opinion of great number of experts. Some of them have pointed out that when other expenses for other things that accompany the cinema going-out, like popcorn, drinks, parking, etc., are added up to the price of tickets the whole thing becomes too expensive and almost turns into "elitist" fun, especially when there are illegal ways to watch films for which nobody pays any consequences. It is clear how that has effect on viewership.

Concerning the familiarity of experts with viewership of domestic film in countries of European Union the opinions are divided. Several experts agree that in France domestic film is watched more, that situation related to viewership is much better. Amongst them one expert thinks how in general situation is better than in Croatia, and one that situation is similar. Also, some experts think how majority of countries in European Union have same problem, especially in terms of "competing" with American films.

Marketing in Croatian film and viewership

When familiarity of Croatian producers, distributors and directors with marketing is in question, several experts hold that Croatian producers, distributors and directors are familiar and know marketing, some think they relatively know, and one expert thinks they don't know. Other experts didn't give specific answers to that question. Concerning who knows and applies marketing the most and who the least, several experts claimed that producers and distributors in general know and apply marketing the most, as it is in the nature of their jobs, but also that it can be seen that some of them know marketing excellent, some well and some not at all. Also stated is the opinion that producers and distributors always think they know the best what is marketing, but that they should let professionals in these fields handle marketing and marketing activities. Some experts, on the other hand, stated that directors are those who know marketing the least, and one expert has pointed out that *very small number* of directors knows marketing. One expert responded he couldn't say/assess, and five experts didn't give the answer, but only stated that marketing in general is poor, bad or practically nonexistent in Croatian film.

Moreover, majority of experts think that through usage of marketing tools the viewership of Croatian film would surely be improved, with some experts mentioning preconditions for that such as: that the film itself is of quality and of genre attractive to public; if marketing tools would be applied at the stage of imagining and conceptualizing the film and systematically implemented all the way to

the distribution; if they would come in combination with adequate distribution and if it would be implemented by the people who really understand and know marketing. Some experts are of an opinion that it depends on the quality of marketing performance itself and if it is the case of average or above average film in terms of quality – if the latter holds then definitely, otherwise not. On the other hand, two experts think that problem is somewhere else, more precisely in quality of the film itself and that successful product can't be made out of a bad product regardless of marketing abilities and tools. One of the experts goes on to say: *"If the implementation of marketing tools would start already at the stage of creating and conceptualizing the film and systematically implemented all the way to its distribution – surely the viewership of the film would increase."* Other expert is also of an opinion that usage of marketing tools would increase the viewership of Croatian film but adds: *"Through increased viewership in cinemas the image, without a doubt, would be improved as well. Namely, according to profile of Croatian cinematography as author cinematography and the fact that films are dominantly created from internal need of author, and not for market reasons, in most of the cases later marketing implementation and processing that starts when the film is already finished is destined to fail in advance. Result, in the end, depends mostly on creativity, that is improvisational inspiration of distributor houses that try to save what can be saved. Results, as it can be seen, are in most cases very weak."*

That through implementation and usage of marketing tools the perception and acceptance of Croatian film by the public (market approval) would improve the majority of experts think, precisely eight think that it definitely would and two more think that it probably would. Others, looking at their responds in general, claim that it depends on marketing approaches but also the "product" itself, meaning the precondition is good, attractive and quality film.

According to the opinion of majority of experts the commercial or market-oriented films for wider audience should be more clearly defined and separated from "artistic" films that have no commercial purpose, and different marketing, distribution and other approaches should be applied. Some experts mention the role of HAVC in everything, and that HAVC decides on these questions and in which direction will Croatian cinematography go since HAVC (co)finances films. Only one expert has stated opinion that that should be done so the viewers aren't cheated, in a sense that public would know exactly what kind of film it is and so that every film would then reach its intended audience, and that they should be advertised in a way that would bring them closer to their intended audiences – meaning commercial films should be advertised as American *blockbusters* are, and *arthouse* films purposely brought closer to alternative, art-inclined audience. One expert thinks that the simplest solution would be to call for different competitions for authors' films and commercially oriented films, and other expert thinks that content itself and even genre of the film would

set and determine this line. However, some experts think that this division is wrong and even totally amiss since, relatively speaking, commercial films have art potential and art aspirations, and one expert mentions that is more the question of whether populist or creative films will be made and both require specific type of promotion and distribution.

Concerning how to more clearly define and separate commercial or market-oriented films for wide public from “art” films that do not have commercial purpose and how to apply different approaches to marketing, distribution and other, the opinions are following. Some experts deem *art films* should be distributed in independent cinema network along organization of special events so the interest for them would be prolonged, and some think that *art films* should find their own way to their audience through festivals, revues and/or television. One expert, however, is of an opinion that every film is product for itself and should be approached in that way, individually, and that it is then wrong and unnecessary to define boundaries, lines.

Opinion that experts stated the most in regards to who should have the main say on that kind of distribution and/or promotion is distributors and/or cinema owners, then follows the opinion of several experts that it should be HAVC. One expert mentioned that HAVC should have main say only at the beginning of decision-making, and later producer, distributor and cinema owners should also participate. That all “actors” and participants should together decide several experts think, and two experts hold that producers and distributors should primarily have the main say. Other opinions are that the main say should have: producer and director together, marketing experts, producer and HAVC but with consultation with distributor. It should be mentioned that one expert thinks there should be a company or people in whose profession it would be to work on positioning and marketing, but in the absence of that all the “actors” should together decide on that.

Also, majority of experts think that through the “division” definitely better picture of Croatian cinematography would be achieved especially in terms of viewership, with one expert stating, however, that only holds for commercial films and not in the case of art films. Several experts said they believed it would, that is it probably would, while two experts stated precondition is firstly that films are better, interesting and of quality and without that nothing will help, and also stated is the opinion that in general there won't be greater viewership and better perception of Croatian film without commercial *hit* films.

Moreover, almost all the experts think that Croatian films with market potential can compete with American films, that is several experts have specifically said in general they can while some said particular films, films with quality, interesting scenario and story which communicates with the audience, has market potential, good acting, directing, production and so on. Of those who said Croatian film with market potential can compete with American films several expressly agreed marketing tools can help a lot with that. However, one expert thinks they can compete

with great difficulty but that usage and implementation of marketing and marketing tools can at least partially improve the position of Croatian film. Some experts claim they can compete, and in great amount, and even be better, that is fare better. As evidence of that experts claim the successful cases in other European countries and their positive experience. One expert stated and proposed that whole country should get behind domestic film so that position of Croatian film improves.

In regards to whether and how much artistic (*art*) films have market potential, great number of experts is of an opinion they don't really, that is they think the market potential is very weak, small and limited, and several experts have responded expressly they don't. Regarding festivals and awards and their influence on market potential, lot of experts agreed they do definitely help, while some stated they don't help or that they help minimally.

Great number of experts thinks presence (promotion) and viewership are interrelated and that smaller presence has effect, in larger or smaller scale, on smaller viewership of Croatian film. However, several of them state that although Croatian film has presence, still this doesn't have effect on viewership, rather it depends of the quality of the film, reputation of the film, the number of commercial films and good stories.

Relating to budget for promotion, opinions of experts are divided. Several think that Croatian film doesn't have big enough budget for promotion, while others think, on the other hand, how it has. One of the later points out that is the case only when Croatian radiotelevision (Hrvatska radiotelevizija – HRT) is co-producer, and another that it is barely enough and that it is difficult to make good promotion of it. One expert responded neither yes nor no, and one that it depends on expectations related to the particular film and that if film has potential producer and distributor will anyhow secure the funds necessary for its promotion. Two experts hold that problem greatly lies in promotion being included under production budget and that promotion should be financed afterwards as is the case in many European countries.

Similar situation is in the case of the effect of smaller/insufficient budget of promotion of Croatian film on its lesser presence and visibility in the media. Here as well the opinions of experts are divided. Several experts think Croatian film isn't less present and visible due to smaller, insufficient budget. They think budget is sufficient and that Croatian film has sufficient promotion in the media, with one expert pointing out there is a lot more layers here that should be improved when talking about state of Croatian film, and one stating how media coverage or its lack doesn't necessarily depend on the budget. On the other hand, some experts claim how smaller budget of promotion directly effects the presence and visibility of Croatian film in the media. One expert stated that in cases when HRT is co-producer film has even more significant and greater promotion than American films. In addition, one expert has mentioned that it depends on producers and distributors, and one other remarked how Croatian

film is definitely less visible compared to American and, in general, European film.

Majority of experts think that state of promotion of Croatian film in last approx. 5 years is solid or good, or better than it was before; one of them points out that holds for promotion in abroad. According to one expert it is clear producers pay more attention to promotion and invest more in it than before. In addition, several experts stated that state of promotion varies too much and it depends on producers and distributors, meaning there are good and bad examples. Only one expert has expressly remarked that the state of promotion is bad.

That promotion has effect on viewership of certain film in general it can be concluded upon the opinions of experts in regards to relatedness of relatively good viewership of, relatively speaking, "bad" American films. Namely, experts identify promotion and visibility in combination with the education of the public as main reasons of relatively good viewership of mentioned "bad" American films. Besides that, reasons also mentioned were: education of the public, education of the public in combination with themes of the films, and customs and habits of the public. Cinema or, more precisely, multiplex audience is younger and mostly goes to cinema because of hanging out and because of fun and the last thing they want is to watch a film which will 'give them to think'. One expert stated that viewership is not at all in significant correlation with the quality of the film but with communication potential certain film has, whether that be story, style of storytelling, actors, special effects or other. Therefore, it can be said that the main factors of good viewership of "bad" American films are their promotion and visibility and the education of public.

The great majority of experts agree that Internet has the most significant role in promotion of films and thus state that as the most effective channel for promotional activities, especially when taken into consideration is the ever-growing popularity of various Internet portals and social networks. However, they also recognize the importance of other media, mostly press and television and mobile phone. As evidence to that speaks the fact that almost all of experts recognized Internet as very important channel that should definitely be used for promotion. Two experts responded they do not know and they are not competent to say, and some pointed out that it depends on the audience, public for whom the certain film is intended since not everybody use and follow same media. Several experts indicated cinema *trailers* and *teasers* while one expert stressed importance of women magazines (and portals) in the case of female population. Two experts stated word of mouth as the most effective channel, only one expert stated that all channels are important and significant, while another expert stated exclusively TV as the most effective channel (since everybody is watching TV).

Regarding the usage of new "telecommunication and information" technologies in promotion of a film and achieving the greater visibility and possible viewership of Croatian film, experts in majority agree that

telecommunication and information technologies are if not indispensable and crucial then either very important or very significant and useful. Two experts are of an opinion they are good method of promoting a film, with one expert pointing out they can have negative effects since negative reactions and *word-of-mouth* spread quickly via Internet and social networks. However, some experts stated their usefulness depends again on type of public the film is intended for, while other, otherwise of an opinion they can help a lot and are significant, still points out that no kind of promotion via social networks is going to help a film that is not contemporary. One expert remarked how film trailer is crucial, and that all other methods are only auxiliary. Also expressed is the doubt concerning efficiency of sending *sms* and *mms* messages and concern for being careful when sending e-mails so that e-mails reach exclusively people who want them, meaning those subscribed on *newsletters*, because otherwise they will have completely reverse effect from the desired one.

Several experts think that sponsorships mostly have no influence on potential and actual viewers of Croatian film, while some, however, think they have influence and that their influence contributes. That media sponsorship is positive and can help the visibility of film, and that *product placement* can have positive impact, are also some of the opinions of experts and one expert thinks only global sponsor can have influence on the viewers. According to the opinions of experts, general public notices sponsorships the least. Except that, interesting is the opinion of one of the experts that *branding* as such is not recognized at all from the side of the Croatian film (Croatian film industry).

On the other hand, some experts believe that viewers rarely notice product placement in Croatian film or they notice it only partially and thus the product placement doesn't have any influence on their experience of the film. Some experts have nothing against the product placement in Croatian film, but they point out it need to be utilized in a good way. Its financial, that is commercial value which is apparent in improvement of financial situation of the project, meaning film, was recognized by smaller number of experts. Two experts stated it doesn't exist, and the same number of experts stated it is unproductive in Croatian film, while one expert stated it is insignificant. Other opinions are: it has sense, it can positively influence when it is good, that it has huge but unused potential, it is positive but depending on who is using it.

Also related to marketing and promotion of Croatian film, and thus its viewership, it needs to be mentioned there are positive and negative effects of its showing (screening) on festivals, concretely at Pula Film Festival. *Positive effects* would, according to (some) experts, be: positive PR (public relations), media promotion of films, building the *awareness* of the public to the film, treating the film as cultural fact, lot of people get to see the film. *Negative effects* on the other hand would be: loss of good timing for screening the film in cinemas and the burnout of PR so it is less written and said about the film later – it loses its first noticeability, especially among the average public which

doesn't even in the time of festival follow events and stories related to the festival and program of films being showed at the festival, and even if it does, usually by the end of the summer they forget all about it. Except that, in opinion of some experts the bad grades of the public and bad reviews (critics) can result in negative word-of-mouth and films being remembered in negative context and that harms them more than it helps them. On the other hand, in opinion of some other experts *premiere* of Croatian film on Pula Film Festival has no effects whatsoever, neither negative nor positive.

Just the same, there are positive and negative effects of knowing Croatian film will be showed on television (usually on HRT) about a year from its cinema premiere. Thus the opinions of experts can be reduced to that the *positive effects* are the awareness of the film being the part of national culture, opportunity greater number of people, that is wider public can see the film, with that that for two experts there are no opposite, negative effects. However, the rest stated negative effect is that affecting negatively on the cinema admissions, since people will have fewer incentives to go to cinema to watch the film as they know that the film will be shown on television, so they will rather wait. One expert only stated it is positive, and another it doesn't have negative effects, but he didn't mention positive effects. The rest of the experts said that it doesn't have any effect, neither positive nor negative, since as one expert put it: *"today in the age when it is known in advance when the American films will be shown in Croatian cinemas, that still doesn't harm their cinema results (box office)."*

In the end, the most experts explicitly or implicitly agreed that distribution via multiplex cinema, where there is fierce competition, harms the visibility and viewership of average Croatian film. In short, if the film is shown among the great number of excellently promoted high-cost, big-budget American films it is very probable that the public won't notice it, see it and would completely skip it. Contrary to their beliefs, several experts share the opinion that kind of distribution helps accessibility and viewership of average Croatian film. Some experts stated it depends whether film in question is commercial or art film, concretely distribution through multiplex cinemas can definitely help and ease accessibility and viewership of commercial Croatian film, but not of art film which should be screened at independent cinemas since the public that goes to multiplexes goes with the intention of watching commercial film.

Croatian cinematography

The complete new production of all Croatian feature films in last ten years most of the experts perceive and grade as weak or just sufficient (expressed in grade it would be D). Several experts think complete new production of all Croatian feature films in last ten years is very positive and solid, meaning good, and some experts think it is very bad with several exceptions, that is the feature films are much

worse than all the other kinds of films. However, some opinions are the production is diverse, meaning there are mixed results, but it is better than it was ten years before that.

However, in regards to the overall new Croatian cinematography in the last ten years, the great majority of experts think it is very good or in better position than before. More precisely, six experts have recognized significant improvement in Croatian cinematography compared to period before ten years, while five experts graded the overall new Croatian cinematography as very good and positive. One expert graded it only as good, and one expert graded it as sufficient (D). Except that, only one other expert thinks it is very diverse and interesting which also falls under positive grade as well.

However, most experts think that long feature films lag behind or stagnate compared to other forms in Croatian cinematography, stating they are either worse or that other forms, for example, documentaries and short feature films, adapt faster or they are given more attention. One expert states: *"I think that long feature films are a lot worse compared to other kinds – documentaries, short feature films, animated films... Within that, there is several excellent films, a lot of solid, good films, but the general average isn't satisfactory because there is no continuity, nor something we could call recognizable picture of actual Croatian film. Especially in last several years, when there is a paradox – the more system is organized (HAVC), films are weaker. In all segments except long feature film cinematography from year 2005 to 2015 is better from the one of ten years before that."* Besides that, one expert stated that proportion of relatively quality documentaries has increased, but he (or she) doesn't specify how he (or she) sees the relation of overall cinematography and feature films. The opinion of another expert is that there is a lack of good feature film, but he also doesn't explain exactly how he sees this relation. Some experts, on the other hand, think (long) feature films have advantage over the other forms, except – as one expert states – when it is the case of a festival. One expert merely stated how in all cases situation is similar, how short feature films are produced a bit more, but the range of quality is the same.

Moreover, according to the opinion of great majority of experts, interested public and potential viewers perceive negatively today's overall Croatian cinematography in comparison to the world cinematography, more precisely they perceive it as insignificant, unimportant, inferior and as lagging behind the world cinematography. Some experts think viewers and the interested public are sceptic and don't have trust in Croatian film, which can also be characterized as a negative perception. One expert however thinks that, despite that, viewers still perceive it and regard it as the best one in the region.

Concerning the public's perception of Croatian theatre, literature, painting, music in comparison with the world's equivalents, several experts think it is equally bad as is the perception of Croatian film in the same comparison. Several experts stated however they don't have sufficient

knowledge, how it is hard for them to judge, evaluate, with one giving opinion that Croatian theatre is still perceived better than Croatian film in comparison to the world's equivalents, while painting and especially music lag behind a lot. Also some of the opinions of experts are: perception of these branches of art in public is much better, public perceives them in a good way compared with world's equivalents, perception is similar, but music and theatre is somewhat better perceived. Mentioned is also the problem of a narrow number of people that follow and understand all these branches of art and situation in world and home culture.

Croatian film industry as branch of industry

Majority of experts is of an opinion that Croatian film industry isn't recognized by the public, politicians and members of the profession as the branch of economy, with some experts remarking how it is only recognized by the members of profession and within professional circles. That it is recognized, but rather partially, or that it is insufficiently recognized opinions are of the several experts, while one expert states it is recognized and that is bad since it is perceived as a branch of economy that only costs money.

In addition, six experts didn't know nor didn't want to estimate how many people are employed in the Croatian film industry in a year, and several think around thousand people are employed. The rest of the estimates are: around two to three thousands, several hundreds, a lot.

However, almost all the experts agree that Croatian cinematography contributes to the country's budget, but could not estimate how much. Thus only one of them remarked how it contributes greatly, one said only films that are *hits* contribute, and one expert stated that it contributes more and more. Some experts stated it contributes minimally or insignificantly, and one stated it doesn't contribute at all, but rather that it "*wastes budget money*".

How much from the total budget of one film is "given back" via tax and surtax to the national budget experts could hardly tell. Of those that tried to estimate two said between 25 and 30 percent, one around 20 percent, one around 30 percent, one stated one third, one around 40 percent, and one at least 50 percent. Some stated they don't know but they think it depends on the budget of the film.

Finally, great number of experts agrees that foreign films that are shot in Croatia contribute to the tourism and image of Croatia, and mostly a great deal. However, at the same time they say how in comparison to them contribution of Croatian films is very small or practically non-existent considering that Croatian films, as one expert pointed out, are watched only by the festival public. On the other hand, several experts said that both contribute to the tourism and image of Croatia. One expert wasn't quite sure but stated how allegedly they contribute. However,

one expert pointed out how again insufficient number of foreign films is being shot in Croatia so it can be said the contribution is questionable.

Croatian film today – today's position, problems, suggestions

Film public in Croatia is, according to responses of the experts, mostly divided and diverse, and can be divided into much more common *mainstream/multiplex* public that usually watches commercial films and smaller art-inclined public that watches *art* films and consists of cinephiles and culture-enthusiasts. As one expert states: "*Film public in Croatia is extremely divided between multiplex public and festival public. Lines are very clear: festival public rarely goes to multiplex cinemas and vice versa. There aren't many consumers of art or festival films –usually always the same type of public goes to festivals. Exceptions are several festivals that visit people who otherwise don't go to all the festivals. The great gap between these two types of public is harmful to the reception of film art in whole as there is less and less true cinephiles that watch all the films, without prejudices. Public needs to be educated, but by who when the educators are the first ones stuck in ghettoization and educate children in equal measure to art as mass media to Hollywood.*" Moreover, film public in Croatia is mostly young and consists of teenagers and people younger than 30 that have "populistic taste", as one expert put it. According to the opinion of experts Croatian film public is generally very small, or not large enough, average, very susceptible to the influence of promotion, "reeducated" on new rules and thus has changed tastes and habits.

Concerning when the education of the public should start, majority of experts, actually everyone who stated their opinion in regards to that, agrees that public should be taught from early age, from the beginning of elementary school and even before that. Concerning the methods in which they should be educated, or taught film culture, several experts stated organization of mass visits or class visits to the cinema to watch *art* films, in equal measure of Croatian and European cinematography. Other suggestions are: film workshops should be organized, and, in general, film culture should be included in the education, with it being part of teaching curriculums. According to one expert, media should also have role here. At the end, related to the influence of Hollywood films on education of Croatian public, some experts mostly agree the influence is strong, significant and mostly bad.

On main difficulties and biggest problems of Croatian feature film opinions of the experts are divided. Some thus think the main problem is in directing and scenario, quality stories and ideas or their lack, and two stated the product itself is the biggest problem, that it is not attractive to the public and doesn't satisfy its needs. One expert namely stated discrepancy between written scenarios and budget potential as main difficulty, and negative attitude towards Croatian film as main problem. Other opinions are the

following: main problem is collaboration with HTV; bad treatment of the public, meaning ignoring the public; bad perception of the public and not doing anything in regards to that is the main culprit for the state of Croatian film; weak viewership and lack of source of financing.

In order for Croatian film to achieve commercial success, according to the general opinion of experts, there needs to be more elements of comedy and contents intended for children and above else quality and attractive stories and scenarios. Concretely, the opinion of great number of experts is that it needs to have comic, humorous contents, that is elements of comedy or be of a genre of comedy, and almost all of the experts think how Croatian film needs more contents intended for children as well. Some experts stated children for films should be produced more, based on either children literature or some other contents familiar to children. Some of them even mentioned the story of the film itself should be interesting, clear, good, some that the scenario should be excellent, and some that the films themselves should be attractive. When all of that is taken into account it can be said that great number of experts are of an opinion the story itself should be of a certain quality and attractive to the public. Added here can be also the opinion of one expert that contents and elements of the film should adhere to the taste of the public. Some experts stated that directing and director are also important. Thus two experts think that each element has to be of a quality, has to have quality, meaning that there needs to be quality in the product and production itself, in distribution, marketing and promotion as part of the marketing. One expert claims there lacks more emotions and genre diversity, and points out: *"There is a chronic lack of comic texts, children films, crime films, horrors."*

Finally, out of all the experts that participated in the research, four gave additional suggestions and comments on what else they consider significant and which wasn't mentioned in the interview. One stated it is necessary to improve perception and raise the consciousness about film industry as a branch of economy and about production as profession. Second expert suggested replacement of front-rank men in HAVC, third expert that the intrusion of crime in Croatian film should be investigated further, and fourth expert that the call (application) for scenarios/projects should be organized in interesting way, maybe postulated by genre, and application of scenarios stimulated, encouraged.

5. CONCLUSIONS

According to the opinions of the experts state of Croatian cinematography and Croatian film isn't the best – Croatian film is not watched, not followed, is not appreciated, doesn't achieve desired results, is marginalized and the public in general doesn't have positive opinion about it. This conclusion can be made based on the opinions of the experts.

Concerning the viewership and reputation of Croatian film, experts mostly agree how majority of Croatian films wouldn't be watched today in equal measure as they were in the past, due to changed tastes of the public, habits of watching films, development of other forms of distributions, new production standards and expectations of the public. However, quality Croatian films, films that are classics in the Croatian cinematography would still be watched due to nostalgia, their quality, modernity and cult status. Also, great majority of experts consider reputation of Croatian feature film as bad as it was in the 90s, without improving much, however they consider there are some signs it is improving. Other reasons why Croatian film is not watched, besides bad reputation, are: excess of art films and war-themed films which either are not for the wider audience or the public has grown tired of them, lack of genre diversity and lack of quality films which are interesting with their scenarios, stories, characters and themes. The story and/or scenario, directing and actors/acting, and marketing are precisely the main factors of viewership of Croatian film in cinema, and quality itself and media coverage and genre identity main influential factors on its general image. Critics (criticism), according to the general opinion of experts, doesn't have any or it has little effect on cinema viewership (box office) of Croatian films, and its role was bigger and more significant before. Concluded is also that insufficient total production budgets greatly influence, negatively, more closed and narrower frame of themes and contents of the films in terms of production.

Producers and distributors in general know marketing in Croatian film the best and apply it, while marketing tools would definitely contribute to bigger viewership as well as better perception and approval of Croatian film by the public. However, experts should handle marketing and marketing tools during whole process of producing and distributing the film while the film itself should be of a quality. In addition, according to the opinions of the experts, artistic and commercial films should be more clearly distinguished and separated and different methods and approaches to marketing, distribution, financing, budgeting and all else should be applied for them. At the same time, distributors should have the main word in decision about this type of distribution and/or promotion, then followed by HAVC and producers. Moreover, marketing tools can help Croatian films with market potential to compete with American films.

Related to promotion of Croatian film, the problem is that the promotion still falls under production budget, and is not separated and financed apart, independently. Experts partially agree that smaller budget has an influence on or results in smaller visibility and presence of Croatian film in media, and thus its viewership, while the state of promotion of Croatian film in the last five years they consider as good, solid or even better than before. Except that, as the most efficient channel of promotion stated is Internet, then press and television, and the best effect is achieved when all three channels are combined. In the end, telecommunication and information technologies

in general are indeed very significant and can help in promotion of Croatian film and achieving its greater visibility and viewership, but to which public the film “speaks”, that is for which public it is intended, should also be taken into account.

Recent Croatian cinematography (in the last ten years) experts generally characterize as very good or in better state (position) than before, while total recent Croatian production of all Croatian long feature films they grade as bad or sufficient, of varying results. But what majority of experts thinks is that long feature films stagnate or lag behind the other forms, while documentaries and short feature film are improving. Moreover, interested public and potential viewers perceive negatively today’s overall Croatian cinematography in comparison with world cinematography, and, in addition, they are very suspicious and untrusting towards Croatian film. Similar situation is with other branches of art of *domestic*, national “production” – they are negatively perceived, that is inferior in comparison with world equivalents.

Croatian film industry is not recognized as a branch of economy by the public, members of profession and politicians and it doesn’t contribute significantly to the Croatian national budget, according to the opinions of the experts. However, experts mostly agree that Croatian films and foreign films shot in Croatia don’t contribute to Croatian tourism and image of Croatia.

Finally, related to the state of Croatian film today, significant problem is, according to the opinion of majority of expert, too expensive cinema ticket, that more significant when considered is the possibility of watching films illegally. Except that, the challenge is also *mainstream* Croatian film public raised on Hollywood and inclined towards American commercial films which is in majority, and which needs to be educated from early ages about film culture. However, much bigger, the biggest can be said, challenges of Croatian film are: directing and scenarios, lack of quality stories and ideas, the product itself, negative attitude and perception of the public, ignoring the public and lack of genre diversity, namely lack of comedies and children (kids) films.

From all these summarized opinions of experts, following problems of Croatian film and Croatian cinematography can be identified:

- Croatian film still suffers from its bad reputation gained in the 1990s when films that were made were mostly films with war themes which don’t look convincing and which the public grew tired of
- Structure of cinema public changed as well as the general context of watching films in cinemas in comparison to decades before
- Croatian cinematography is, in line with the small budgets, still focused mostly on more closed, artistic projects intended for narrower group of viewers, narrower segment, and as such does not follow the wishes and needs of wider public

- Croatian film is due to these reasons very genre-limited and unattractive to the wider public with its story, plot, scenario, characters and themes
- Marketing is not used enough and as well as it should be used in Croatian film, which is best seen in the need for distinguishing and separating the commercial and artistic films more clearly
- Marketing tools should be applied already from the stage of thinking about, imagining and conceptualizing the film
- Promotion (as element of marketing mix) is not adequately nor enough used which affects its visibility and viewership, and there is definitely room here for improvement, especially in terms of increasing the budget for promotion which should be separated from the production budget
- The public generally negatively perceives overall Croatian cinematography in comparison with the world cinematography and is untrusting towards Croatian film
- Croatian film industry is not recognized by the public, members of profession and politicians as branch of economy and does not have a support, so in this area there is huge room for improvement
- Cultural, economic and promotional effects (nationally) of cinematography remain disregarded, overshadowed by media coverage of viewership results
- High cinema ticket prices, untimely promotion and distribution of Croatian film, lack of content tailored to the (tastes, needs and wishes of the) public as well as the Croatian film public itself, which is mostly raised on Hollywood films and has low film culture, are very significant problems of Croatian film

Moreover, it is clear from the responses of the experts that all of the hypotheses are confirmed.

H1 (Main hypothesis): Inadequate marketing approach in production and decision of scenario/project results in comparatively lower production quality, and thus in effect in lower acceptance of Croatian film by the public (market approval) in comparison with foreign films (especially of American production.)

Auxiliary hypothesis 1: From the point of the producers (business subjects) and authors in film industry, the opinions that dominate are those that due to insufficient budgets the increasingly less-demanding scenarios/projects are developed and as a resort the artistic (art) films without commercial potential are made.

Auxiliary hypothesis 2: Due to small earnings from the distribution and due to insufficient budgets for film promotion and lack of insight into habits of Croatian viewers, the poorer results are achieved in viewership of Croatian feature films.

Auxiliary hypothesis 3: Consumers (wider public) perceive

overall national cinematography as not of sufficient quality in terms of genres and themes, while particular Croatian films (film titles) they value more. Consumers are also not familiar enough with all the forms of using (screening, airing...) the audiovisual works.

Auxiliary hypothesis 4: Croatian cinematography and audiovisual industry (film industry) are not recognized as a branch of economy in which a lot of people is employed, although it is clear that film can promote country as touristic destination and contributes to the image of the country.

Auxiliary hypothesis 5: Overall audiovisual industry, especially cinema infrastructure negatively effects the visibility and accessibility of national (domestic) film to the cinema public.

In conclusion, from all of the stated the position of Croatian film today can be discerned. Namely, how much effort and work is needed and what measures should be taken in order for Croatian film to start improving in terms of overall image and reputation as well as in terms of viewership and achieved earnings, meaning in terms of financial and other results. These qualitative results however are primarily of investigative character and further research should be made in order to gain better insight into the situation.

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