The Business Case for Creative and Cultural Industries - Report from the Leicester Business Festival 2017

Creative and Cultural Industries Group,
De Montfort University
Introduction

The creative and cultural industries are now recognised as being a major asset for developed economies worldwide, and the UK recognised as a world leader by virtue of rich and diverse cultural and creative activities entrenched in our towns and cities. The UK Industrial green paper Building our Industrial Strategy rightly recognises and celebrates the UK’s achievements in creative and cultural activities especially over the last two decades, and places them centrally within a strategy for economic growth. The Paper’s acknowledgement of the so-called Midlands’s Engine further cements this role.

Whilst London’s position as a globally orientated powerhouse in creative and cultural expertise is unrivalled, it is clear that several leading cities including Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, and Leicester have string creative clusters that position them at the vanguard of the UK’s world-leading creative and cultural activities and exports. Thousands of digital and software studios and technology firms have made these cities their home, and in these same cities cultural activities have flourished and operate hand-in-hand with successful creative ventures. In Leicester, the growth of design, visual and performing arts, textiles and fashion, crafts, and museums and archiving have accelerated in recent years, buoyed by the diverse and practice-based skills of De Montfort University, the rich creative heritage and cultural infrastructure of the city, and by key investments in creative and cultural assets and flagships.

The Creative and Cultural Industries Research Group at De Montfort University reflects this rich and inter-disciplinary nature of the city, whilst offering a diversity of skills and research expertise, which the university applies to enhance the lives of people and businesses living and working in Leicester.
The Group brings together more than 25 academics that operate through 4 main strands of work:

**Strand 1 – Cultural and Creative Cities** – looking at the urban transformation arising from the cultural regeneration of cities, the cultural consumption and commercialisation of urban space, diversity and cultural identity, use of cultural and creative capital in re-imaging cities, place-making, cultural programmes, and cultural and creative quarters.

**Strand 2 – Creative Business Ecologies** – looking at the operational dynamics of creative workers and businesses, networks and communities of practice, supply chains and the value structure, innovation, industry structures of production, disruption, emerging business models and business needs, including Leicester’s role as a leader in digital media, music, textiles, fashion, and design.

**Strand 3 – Cultural Heritage** – showcasing Leicester’s work in arts, especially participatory arts, textiles heritage, work with cultural organisations including museums, and the design and management of public spaces for place-making.

**Strand 4 – Emerging Technologies and Applications** – looking at the management of emerging technologies in terms of society products and services, consumer culture, the design and co-creation of products and processes, and future changes in society.
Leicester Business Festival

Leicester Business Festival is a free two-week business festival that runs in the Autumn of each year. How in its third year of operation, it is the largest festival of its kind in the UK and an event organised by businesses and stakeholders for businesses and stakeholders.

The primary focus of the festival is to provide businesses with the skills they need to grow and invest in the region and are synonymous with the core values of both De Montfort University who is the headline sponsor of the festival through the Leicester Castle Business School, but also synonymous with the core values and activities of the research group, which prides itself on research, which is informed by practice.

The Creative and Cultural Industries Research Group organised 5 events at the 2017 Leicester Business Festival:

**Event 1 - 1st November 2017**

*Design Approaches to Business Innovation*

**Event 2 – 1st November 2017**

*Mixed Economies: Diversifying income streams in cultural and creative businesses*
Event 3 – 2nd November 2017
Creative Technologies in Textiles and Fashion

Event 4 – 2nd November 2017
The Value of Heritage in Textiles and Clothing

Event 5 – 3rd November 2017
Immersive and Cultural Roles of Emerging Technologies
Design Approaches to Business Innovation

Professor Peter Ford and Dr David Heap

Drawing on the expertise of De Montfort University’s Design Unit, the Research Group demonstrated to businesses attending the festival event, the value of design thinking to solve complex business problems.

Businesses were given the opportunity to learn about the University’s 3D printing capabilities, and to explore the advantages and disadvantages of 3D printing in manufacturing and for businesses creating products.

**Advantages** – offers flexibility for replacing defunct products and creating personalised products (responding to the challenges and rewards afforded through ‘mass individualisation’), as well as creating objectives impossible through traditional moulding techniques

**Disadvantages** – time (6 hours to produce a lamp base plus lead-in time for the CAD designs), the fragility of the material, ownership of intellectual property where customer and CAD designer have co-created a design.
The Group then explored the potential for businesses to adapt new 3D printing technology and design thinking, by outlining a model for assessing and benchmarking design capability in businesses – drawing on Dr David Heap’s DIME Audit model.

The Dime Audit Model:

- Design
- Information
- Maturity
- Evaluation
Mixed Economies - Diversifying Income Streams in Cultural and Creative Businesses

Jennie Jordan and Ruth Jindal

With stakeholders from Curve Theatre and Cultivate, who specialise in helping arts organisations in the East Midlands, the Group used this Festival event to explore the financial barriers faced by cultural and creative industries in the work they do. The Institute of Fundraisers' Cultural Sector Network and Cultivate support arts organisations in finding audiences and exploring new income streams across the East Midlands. Cultivate works with individuals and companies to develop strength and resilience across the culture sector, focusing on organizational development, philanthropy and fundraising, leadership and skills development, and audience development.

The event examined the financial environment for arts organisations in the aftermath of the financial crisis and as city and regional stakeholders have pursued a programme of austerity. Exploring the limited potential for philanthropy vis-à-vis the cultural environment in North America, the Group explored the potential for alternative income streams from: revenue generation from subscription activities, hosting dinner with patrons, and even costume sales.
Cultivate indicated that an American model of philanthropy was the key to ensuring sustained funding for the arts. In the US, it is common for wealthy backers to donate to particular museums or venues, and board members are expected to make a financial contribution to the organisations, which they help run.

The event, led by Jennie Jordan then outlined the findings from 20 arts organisations involved in a two-year training scheme, which resulted in organisations bringing in 7 per cent more revenue and 72 per cent more corporate sponsorship, but conceded that this was not enough to balance the effect of funding cuts.
Creative Technologies in Textiles and Fashion

Dr Jo Horton and Dr Nicola Thomas

Drawing on the award-winning work of De Montfort University’s TEAM (Textile Engineering and Materials), Jo Horton outlined her innovative work on using creative technologies to perform craft-based skills i.e. electroplating embellishments in the fashion industry. Showing the audience a BBC film producing, which showcases her innovative work, the Group explored the opportunities for transferring knowledge in new areas of engineering and production in fashions and textiles, with work on fabrics, with local fashion, textiles, and craft-based businesses.

The Group then explored the technologies underpinning the work of Dr Nicola Thomas in developing her “Grow” model as part of the Fashion Purpose venture, which supports the growth of independent fashion businesses. GROW digital tools enable the fashion business user to: Gauge performance, Reach goals, Optimise practices, Win - and has been developed using a systems dynamics approach. Drawing Fashion Purpose’s bespoke mobile- and web-based interactive model to gauge different aspects of a business’ performance, the Group explored how online technologies might help to kick-start businesses on their growth journey. expectations”.

Dr Thomas indicated that “Big bang wins don’t happen overnight but the Fashion Purpose tools allow businesses to identify that they are on the right optimisation route, whilst also managing expectations”.

Fashion Purpose is a DMU enterprise project to help independent fashion businesses succeed faster, smarter, better. Dr Nicola Thomas held the Leicester Business Festival event to gain vital feedback on her work ahead of the digital platform launches early in 2018. The small lively event involved lots of stakeholder feedback and interaction. Attendees discussed and agreed that a ‘business is good enough’ mindset could place a false ceiling on performance, and that exponential growth is possible if a whole systems approach is adopted. While the platform will be used for business owners, managers and early career professionals, attendees suggested the Fashion Purpose platform could prove very useful to businesses looking to train apprentices in the fashion business management. A unique feature of the Fashion Purpose digital platform is its use of customisation technologies. As such, any user, irrespective of role, will be able to receive unique content to match their individual learning and business development needs.
The Value of Heritage in Textiles and Clothing

Dr Emily Baines, Helen Burbage, and Pasqualina Iarrobino

In this festival event, the research group explored the role of heritage in the textiles and fashion industry in Leicester and its impact further afield. Key issues explored were the importance of authenticity and heritage in determining brand value, and promoting a regional design industry founded on a rich heritage of traditional skills, tacit knowledge, and technical expertise, which has been a key driver in inspiring and shaping new design work.

The event then examined business case studies where design history has contributed to the creation of a strong brand, and the central role of museums and heritage centres (as well as archives) in creating a focal point for the identity and innovation in a textiles and fashion cluster. Dr Baines drew on case study material, which emphasised the importance of museum collections in new product development. Using real examples, Helen Burbage then went on to examined how archival studies of dress informed current fit practices, and went on to explain how this enables vital business support to high street fashion in resolving garment fit issues and supporting the development of niche markets.
The Group then explored the importance of De Montfort University’s expertise in craft production focusing on the innovative work of Pasqualina Jarrobin on 3 dimensional weaving: the development of paper yarn and wire weaving; and the use of enamelled copper and brass wire insertion in weaving, which is allowing for development of niche markets, which extends the reach of weaving and textiles techniques into wearable technology and the support of new applications.
Immersive and Cultural Roles of Emerging Technologies

Dr Tracy Harwood, Dr Fabrizio Poltronieri, Dr Nick Higget, Dr Mario Gongora, Dr Efpraxia Zaman, Dr Gema Styles

A panel discussion on the roles of emerging technologies was the final session of the leicester Business Festival, hosted by the Creative and Cultural Industries Research Group and chaired by Dr Tracy Harwood.

The open panel discussion was initiated by a short presentation of the work of 5 researchers working with a range of technologies:

- Fabrizio Poltronieri, a researcher at the Institute of Creative Technologies, highlighted the roles of technologies for creative applications that challenge perceptions;

- Nick Higget, researcher in design-led applications of technologies highlighted hsi work on virtual Romans that resulted in the development of an augmented reality app used to support the Richard III exhibition in Leicester and also assisted with unravelling the mystery of what happened to Beagle II, the Mars Lander
Mario Gongora, who is director of VenueSim, talked about the university's spinout company that undertakes big data analysis of large scale venues, such as airports and shopping centres, to support their development of new security systems;

Efpraxia Zaman, a researcher in computer information systems, described how her work on blockchain is helping to support the development of new business models for creative industries and artists;

Gema Styles, described the work of the De Montfort Interdisciplinary Group on Intelligent Transport Systems, which focussed on the development of infrastructure for new smart transport systems;

Immersive technology refers to technology that blurs the line between the physical world and digital or simulated world thereby creating a sense of immersion. Immersive technology enables mixed reality.
Audience questions led to an interesting discussion about the changing nature of the technologies, which are becoming more ubiquitous and integrated with services. The types of customer demand for new technologies are often described as latent, or not demanded, because many are completely new to them.

The event ended by concluding that it is often the work of artists that enables consumers to generate insight and understanding and it is through this type of engagement that demand for new kinds of technologies, or solutions to problems emerge.

As Dr Harwood indicated: "Small businesses in particular struggle with accessing the latest research into the roles of emerging technologies, so this kind of event is invaluable in enabling them to access new thinking and potential applications".
For More Information...

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