

# FINANCING INDEPENDENT FILM IN JAPAN: EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF FUNDING

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## Abstract

The Japanese film industry is one of the largest in the world, with a thriving commercial and independent sector. Although hundreds of films are made each year, independent filmmakers are finding it increasingly difficult to raise funds. In this research project report, I explore the *alternative sources of funding* available to them. Since there is no definition of what exactly *independent film* is in Japan, I provide a definition, before plunging into how to effectively raise funds in the industry. Organisations that support independent filmmakers are then examined and a conclusion regarding the role that they play in this environment is made (in the context of film finance). Through a series of interviews with active professionals in the industry, I was able to conclude that *crowdfunding* is the pre-eminent alternative source of funding, although limited in breadth of coverage. The traditional film financing structures in Japan, driven by *film production committees (FPCs)* will continue to play a relevant role in financing films, but independent filmmakers will be more drawn towards *blended forms of FPCs*, which introduce a lot more flexibility than the current form. On the other hand, the government can only make a real and lasting impact on the industry if it provides *development funding*, whereby filmmakers are supported financially from as early as the planning stages of any film project. I found that Independent films stand a greater chance of survival if they have a *healthy inter-dependence with the commercial film sector*, and independent filmmakers will need to *compromise on their creative freedom* in order to attract funding in future. But a focus on *building important networks*, and on improving the *quality* of films is necessary for independent films to thrive. I also conclude that organisations supporting these independent filmmakers have much to do in creating *an environment that is conducive to information sharing*, which will positively influence the funding options made by independent filmmakers.