

Cultural Exchange Entrepreneurship

**Business Model for Touring Urban Drama Theater Performances
to Cities with Small Populations**

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Abstract

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Abstract <p>The thesis examined how a sustainable business model can be developed for organizing touring drama theatre in small Finnish cities. The aim was to design a practical and scalable plan, with a simulated case applied to Lappeenranta.</p> <p>A functional approach was used, combining literature review, public data, and an expert interview. The Business Model Canvas served as the core tool, supported conceptually by SWOT and PESTEL analysis. Public cultural policy sources and statistics were used to assess the local context.</p> <p>The study proposes a sponsorship-led model supported by municipal grants and subsidized ticket sales. Emphasis is placed on local partnerships, marketing strategies, and community engagement. The Lappeenranta case illustrates how the model could work in practice and be adapted elsewhere.</p>		
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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction overview

Culture plays a major role in people's lives — it brings inspiration, helps us connect with emotions, and lets us reflect on society. But access to culture is not equal for everyone. While major cities like Helsinki offer a wide selection of professional drama theater performances, many smaller cities and towns in Finland have very limited access to this type of cultural experience. People living outside of big cultural centers often do not have the opportunity to attend high-quality theater performances on a regular basis. As someone who loves culture and has worked in event and marketing roles, this situation feels unfair, and also seems like an opportunity for development.

During my own experiences — both in work and study — I've often thought about how culture and business could support each other. Many people separate these two areas, but I believe that meaningful cultural projects need strong planning, structure, and sometimes even entrepreneurial thinking to survive. This is especially important when trying to bring art to places where it's not easily available. That's why I became interested in the topic of cultural exchange through touring theater, and how it could be developed in a sustainable and realistic way.

In recent years, Finnish and European cultural policies have started to focus more on regional accessibility. This includes programs that support artists touring outside of big cities, as well as funding opportunities for cultural organizations working in smaller communities. There is also growing awareness that culture is not only about entertainment — it also supports wellbeing, education, tourism, and regional attractiveness. Small cities like Lappeenranta are often interested in becoming more culturally active, but may lack the resources or networks to organize large-scale events on their own. In this situation, cultural exchange — for example, by bringing touring drama theater from urban centers — can be one of the answers.

However, even with good intentions and policy support, organizing a touring cultural project is not easy. It requires financial resources, reliable partnerships, and a strong business structure. In reality, many interesting ideas do not move forward simply because there is no clear plan for how to make them work in practice. That is why

the goal of this thesis is to create a business model that could support touring theater performances to smaller Finnish cities in a professional, organized way. I want to find out how such a project could work not only artistically, but also from a business and operational point of view.

The city of Lappeenranta was chosen as a case. It is not too small and already has some existing infrastructure for cultural events, but it still fits into the category of a regional city. Using Lappeenranta as the base for this model makes the plan more realistic and helps simulate how such a cultural exchange project could be developed in other similar locations in Finland. The project idea is to create a project or organization that brings professional drama theater performances from major cities — such as Helsinki — to Lappeenranta and, potentially, to other cities with populations under 100,000.

This topic is important to me not just academically, but also personally. I enjoy working with culture, and I believe that combining creativity and structure can lead to something impactful. Through my studies in international business and my practical experience in marketing and events, I have seen how creative projects need more than just a good idea — they need good planning. This thesis will combine theoretical knowledge with practical experience.

In the following chapters, the potential and challenges of organizing touring theater in small cities will be explored. Also using practical tools like the Business Model Canvas, SWOT and PESTEL analysis, and an expert interview with someone who has already produced a similar project, a sustainable business model will be built. This work will not only meet the academic requirements of a bachelor's thesis but also offer a practical example for future cultural entrepreneurs or city planners who want to bring more professional art to smaller communities.

1.2 Personal interest in a topic

This thesis originates from a personal and long-standing interest in the performing arts, particularly in the field of contemporary drama and its societal role. As an international student living in Lappeenranta and actively engaged with cultural discourse, I recognized a gap in the regional accessibility of professional theatrical productions. Motivated by this observation, the work was undertaken independently,

without a commissioning company or external project partner. The study was self-directed, allowing for full creative and analytical control over both the methodological choices and the development of the proposed business model. As such, the process not only reflects academic inquiry but also personal initiative in contributing to Finland's decentralized cultural infrastructure.

2 Objectives and Research Questions

2.1 Objectives

The main objective of this thesis is to develop a sustainable business model for organizing touring drama theater performances from major Finnish cities to smaller regional locations, using Lappeenranta as a practical case example. The core idea is to treat cultural exchange as a meaningful artistic mission. Moreover, it is important to treat it also as an entrepreneurial activity that can be structured, managed, and scaled over time.

This thesis work is a good way to combine cultural passion with business logic. Many cultural projects rely too heavily on temporary funding and lack long-term structure. This work aims to show that it is possible to build a model that supports artistic quality and also meets practical needs, such as cost-efficiency, clear stakeholder roles, and strategic audience development.

To achieve the main goal the focus will be taken on five specific objectives:

1. Analyze the cultural demand and motivation for organizing touring theater performances in cities with smaller populations.
2. Explore funding, logistics, and organizational structures that make this type of project possible and sustainable.
3. Apply business development tools, especially the Business Model Canvas, to map the complete concept.
4. Create a detailed business plan for a Lappeenranta-based pilot project that brings drama theater performances from urban centers.
5. Offer a flexible and transferable model that could be adapted for other small cities in Finland or even abroad.

By combining these goals, the thesis will produce both a theoretical understanding and a functional output — a concrete plan that could realistically be implemented or developed further by a cultural entrepreneur, municipality, or nonprofit.

2.2 Delimitations

To keep the research process focused and achievable within the timeframe of this thesis, several clear delimitations are defined:

- Artistic scope: The study focuses exclusively on professional drama theater (not musicals, dance, opera, or amateur groups).
- Geographic scope: The research is based on the Finnish context, with Lappeenranta serving as the reference case.
- Practical scope: This thesis does not include the actual execution of a touring event. It stays at the planning level.
- Thematic scope: The work focuses on the business and management side, such as funding, partnerships, and marketing, rather than artistic programming or directing.
- Data scope: There will be no audience surveys or ticket sales data, but expert input and public cultural reports will be used to inform the planning.

These delimitations help ensure that the thesis stays grounded and that the results are both realistic and academically valid.

2.3 Research Questions

To guide the project and support a logical structure, the thesis is built around one main research question and three sub-questions:

Main Research Question:

How can a sustainable business model be developed for organizing touring drama theater performances from urban centers to small cities in Finland?

This question reflects the core idea of combining cultural accessibility with business-oriented planning. It is the foundation for the whole thesis and connects the practical and theoretical elements.

Sub-questions:

1. What are the essential elements of a successful business model for a cultural exchange project in the performing arts sector?

This includes topics such as value propositions, key partnerships, customer segments, and revenue streams.

2. What funding and operational strategies can make this type of project viable in smaller cities like Lappeenranta?

Here, the focus is on sponsorships, grants, ticketing, and collaboration models with local institutions or venues.

3. How can the project build and maintain interest from both the touring theaters and the local audiences?

This question covers marketing, branding, and audience engagement, which are critical for long-term success.

Together, these questions will help build a structured and meaningful foundation for the thesis. They also reflect the dual nature of the project, as both a creative cultural initiative and a serious business plan that needs to work in the real world.

3 Cultural Entrepreneurship and Theater as a Business

3.1 Business in the field of culture overview

In the context of the evolving creative industries, cultural entrepreneurship has emerged as a critical framework for understanding how artistic practices, including theater, intersect with business logic and market realities. Rather than treating culture and commerce as opposing forces, this approach views them as interdependent elements that must be skillfully managed to ensure both creative integrity and organizational viability.

This chapter introduces the concept of cultural entrepreneurship and explores how professional theater, particularly in its institutional and producer-led forms, operates simultaneously as a cultural and commercial enterprise. Cultural entrepreneurs act as intermediaries who navigate between artistic values and the demands of financial sustainability. They develop innovative models to fund, market, and manage creative work, often under conditions of uncertainty and resource limitation (Stonkutė et al. 2022.).

Special attention is given to how these dynamics unfold in Finland, where the public funding system coexists with a growing need for entrepreneurial initiative among cultural workers. Through examples from both Finnish and international contexts, this section highlights how producers in theater use tools like the Business Model Canvas, audience engagement strategies, and cross-sector partnerships to sustain operations and reach new publics. Ultimately, by examining the balance between artistic expression and economic strategy, the role of the cultural entrepreneur is clarified as central to the vitality of contemporary theater.

3.2 Definition of Cultural Entrepreneurship

Cultural entrepreneurship can be broadly defined as the process by which cultural goods and experiences are created, produced, and distributed through entrepreneurial practices. While traditional definitions of entrepreneurship emphasize innovation and profit (Shane 2007.), cultural entrepreneurship is rooted

in values that often transcend economic gain, such as artistic integrity, community engagement, and cultural significance (Ashton 2011; Oakley 2014.).

According to Ashton (2011), the notion of "becoming" a cultural entrepreneur involves ongoing negotiation between entrepreneurial behavior and cultural identity. Cultural entrepreneurs rarely align with the traditional business persona; instead, they may oscillate between roles—artist, activist, organizer, and manager—constructing identities that challenge the caricature of the lone capitalist innovator. In this sense, cultural entrepreneurship is as much about identity and values as it is about business strategy.

In the international context, the figure of the theater producer embodies this hybridity. As David Smelyansky (2020) writes, the producer in theater is not merely a manager but a “visionary risk-taker,” someone who orchestrates artistic projects while bearing full financial, creative, and organizational responsibility. This aligns with Bourdieu’s framework of capital, habitus, and field, applied by Ashton to understand how cultural entrepreneurs operate within specific social and institutional contexts.

3.3 Theater as a Creative and Cultural Enterprise

Professional theater is a quintessential example of a cultural enterprise—it relies on creative labor and artistic innovation but also depends on organizational structure, strategic planning, and financial management to function sustainably.

Cultural entrepreneurs in theater navigate the inherent duality of producing work that is both artistically meaningful and economically viable. This dual mission is particularly evident in the work of theater producers, who, according to Smelyansky (2020), must understand not only the artistic process but also the preferences of audiences, logistical realities, and financial forecasting. The producer thus serves as a bridge between art and audience, creator and consumer.

In Finland, this intersection between cultural work and entrepreneurialism is further complicated by national identity. As Koskinen (2020) shows, Finnish startup culture has been “domesticated” through a negotiation of global entrepreneurial ideals and local cultural values such as humility, public responsibility, and trust in institutions. Similarly, Finnish cultural entrepreneurs often pursue ventures not just for private

gain but to advance national competitiveness, support the welfare state, or foster community. This model illustrates how cultural entrepreneurship often incorporates broader social missions beyond commercial goals.

3.4 Artistic and Commercial Viability in Theater

One of the defining tensions within cultural entrepreneurship in theater is the struggle to balance artistic freedom with commercial success. This conflict is especially pronounced in professional theatrical production, where market-driven pressures, such as the demand for popular genres, celebrity actors, and predictable financial returns, can clash with the desire for innovation or experimentation.

Smelyansky (2020) critiques this tendency in theater, noting that modern producers often rely on proven formulas, prioritize star actors, and choose “light comedies” to guarantee ticket sales. He argues that this risk-averse behavior limits creative breakthroughs and reduces theater to a consumer product. At the same time, he acknowledges that “forecasting success” and “hearing the time” are essential traits of a competent producer, indicating that commercial sensitivity is not inherently opposed to cultural significance, but must be balanced carefully.

This tension is echoed in the UK context, where cultural entrepreneurs navigate similar contradictions. As Ashton (2011) observes, many cultural workers reject the label of entrepreneur, fearing it compromises their artistic integrity, even while they adopt entrepreneurial behaviors to survive financially. The reality of project-based work, freelance contracts, and self-employment necessitates a form of entrepreneurship that is often reluctant, hybrid, and emotionally complex. The UK material was taken as a source to have the possibility to compare experiences from different countries. As the theater field of culture was not developed at the same time, it may be useful to have a broader picture of the topic to have an opportunity to implement the best practices from an international point of view into our own new project.

3.5 Public and Private Models of Theater Production

The balance between artistic and commercial goals is further shaped by the structure of theater funding and institutional support. In publicly funded models, theater often benefits from long-term investment, state subsidies, and cultural policy

frameworks that prioritize artistic merit and social impact. In contrast, privately funded theaters must rely heavily on ticket sales, sponsorships, and market appeal.

In the UK, cultural policy under New Labour positioned cultural entrepreneurs as central to urban regeneration and economic growth, particularly through initiatives linked to the “creative city” (Oakley 2014.). While these policies opened new opportunities, they also imposed entrepreneurial expectations on artists, contributing to the precarious conditions of cultural labor. McRobbie (2002b) critiques this neoliberal logic, warning that it masks the structural vulnerabilities of freelance work by promoting self-reliance and individualism.

Finland presents a hybrid model, where startup culture and public welfare systems co-exist. Despite skepticism toward entrepreneurship, Finnish startup actors have leveraged public education, social safety nets, and state funding to build a startup ecosystem that is uniquely Finnish (Hyrkäs 2020.). This suggests that public support and entrepreneurialism are not mutually exclusive but can reinforce each other when aligned with shared values.

Smelyansky emphasizes that real producers are those who bring creative will and visionary purpose to their work, not merely coordinating logistics, but sensing cultural trends, taking artistic risks, and uniting the needs of creators and audiences. Theatrical entrepreneurship, in this view, is both a craft and a calling.

4 Role of the Theater Producer

4.1 Introduction of the Producer's Role

The theater producer plays a pivotal role in shaping, managing, and delivering theatrical productions, particularly in modern drama and touring contexts. Distinct from the director or artistic manager, the producer is responsible for aligning artistic vision with financial and organizational realities. This includes budgeting, scheduling, stakeholder coordination, and logistics, especially vital when managing touring projects across regions.

In the international context, researchers emphasize the strategic leadership required of producers, highlighting their responsibility to balance sponsor interests, artistic quality, and technical feasibility (Orlov et al. 2020.). Producers initiate and steer projects, ensuring alignment with broader cultural and institutional goals.

At the same time, producers often take on entrepreneurial roles, developing funding strategies and using planning tools like the Business Model Canvas to support sustainability. Their role bridges the artistic and administrative, ensuring productions are both impactful and viable. In touring projects, especially, producers enable high-quality cultural content to reach diverse regional audiences through thoughtful, scalable planning.

4.2 Producer's Role in Modern Drama Theater

A theater producer is the central managerial figure responsible for turning an artistic vision into a viable theatrical production. They are involved in everything from early planning and creative coordination to financial oversight and execution. According to Barbican Centre's insights, a producer "brings together all the elements—people, money, time, ideas—to bring a production to life." They make decisions about what to stage, secure rights, hire directors and designers, raise funds, manage budgets, book venues, and oversee marketing and touring logistics (Barbican 2020.).

In touring contexts, as shared by first-time producer Andrew Sharpe, the responsibilities become even more layered. Tour producers must manage relationships with different venues, adapt staging requirements to local constraints,

coordinate cast and crew logistics, and ensure financial sustainability in each location (London Pub Theatres 2023.).

From the international perspective, particularly as outlined by Smelyansky in the publication “The Theater Producer: Stories About the Profession”, the producer is described as a creative entrepreneur—a person who navigates both the artistic and market demands of theatrical production.

Smelyansky describes the producer as “an author of innovative projects,” someone whose main task is not only organizing but envisioning the theater’s future. Producers are often responsible for developing long-term strategies, initiating partnerships, and selecting projects that balance artistic innovation with economic survival. Unlike artistic directors, producers in this context also carry full responsibility for the risks involved—creative, financial, and psychological. Professionals frame this role as demanding a hybrid skill set: sensitivity to artistic processes and a pragmatic sense of market and audience demands.

Moreover, the producer is tasked with rebuilding public interest in culture. As Smelyansky notes, a successful producer must “sense the time,” responding to societal shifts and using theatrical projects as tools of both expression and public engagement.

4.3 Distinctions Between Producer, Artistic Director, and Project Manager

While collaboration among leadership roles is essential, the producer’s duties are distinct from those of the artistic director and project manager. The artistic director is primarily responsible for the artistic vision of a company or production. As noted by the Theatres Trust, the artistic director “develops and curates the artistic programme presented by a theatre” and often serves as a lead creative voice (Theatres Trust).

In contrast, a producer must balance this creative vision with the practicalities of budget, audience engagement, and logistics. The project manager, often working under or with the producer, typically handles scheduling, day-to-day coordination, and detailed operations. While a project manager may focus more narrowly on

execution, the producer remains the strategic leader responsible for both artistic realization and business performance.'

4.4 Key Responsibilities

- **Tour Planning:** Touring productions require meticulous planning. A producer must identify appropriate venues, adapt the production's technical setup to varying spaces, and handle the travel and accommodation for cast and crew. As Sharpe emphasized, learning to negotiate with venues and adapting to unforeseen circumstances, such as weather issues or marketing shortfalls, are key skills a tour producer must develop to keep the project running smoothly (London Pub Theatres 2023.).
- **Stakeholder Management:** A producer manages a wide range of stakeholders: creative artists, funders, venue partners, technical teams, and audiences. They must align these interests toward a shared vision while resolving conflicts, building partnerships, and maintaining morale across extended tour periods. Producers also act as the face of the production in many contexts, representing it in negotiations, publicity, and funding appeals (Get Into Theatre).
- **Budgeting and Fundraising:** Financial management is central to the producer's role. They construct and monitor budgets, allocate resources efficiently, and respond to changing financial circumstances. Fundraising involves applying for grants, seeking private sponsorship, ticket income forecasting, and sometimes personal investment. As highlighted in "Behind the Scenes of Theater Arts," producers in media and live performance alike are tasked with not only delivering artistic quality but also ensuring commercial viability, often under tight financial constraints (ResearchGate 2024.).

5 Theater Finance and Funding Models

5.1 Introduction to The Theater Finances

The financial architecture of professional theatre—especially in contexts involving touring productions and regional outreach—is inherently complex and multidimensional. Unlike commercial enterprises that rely primarily on direct consumer revenue, theatre projects often require a hybrid funding model to remain viable. This model typically combines public subsidies, private sector contributions, and earned income from ticket sales or ancillary services. Touring initiatives, in particular, demand careful budgeting due to the additional costs of transportation, accommodation, logistics, and venue-specific adaptation. Financial planning in this context must be both strategic and adaptive, capable of addressing the fluctuating availability of cultural funding, the economic disparities between urban and regional audiences, and the varying expectations of institutional sponsors. As noted by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM), the state’s cultural funding prioritizes regional equity and access, underscoring the importance of sustainable financial structures for non-metropolitan cultural initiatives (OKM 2024.). In this framework, long-term sustainability depends not only on financial viability but also on the capacity to demonstrate social value, audience engagement, and artistic integrity. Accordingly, any touring theatre business model must be grounded in a flexible yet accountable financial strategy that can respond to both cultural mission goals and economic realities.

5.2 Funding Streams in Professional Theater

In Finland, public support for the arts is robust and structured. The Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM) provide national-level grants and subsidies to theaters, artists, and organizations (Taike). The Finnish government allocated approximately €480 million to arts and culture in 2023, indicating consistent public investment (Statista 2024.). Local municipalities also play a significant role, often supporting regional theaters as part of broader cultural strategies.

Regional and touring productions can also apply for grants like the "World on Stage" initiative by the Finnish Cultural Foundation, aimed at supporting international visibility for Finnish stage productions (SKR 2024.).

Private contributions—through corporate sponsorships or foundations—are significant, particularly for projects that enhance visibility or innovation. For instance, the Finnish National Opera and Ballet partners with businesses to support its programming, illustrating how cultural institutions can align with CSR and branding strategies (Opera & Ballet 2024.).

Ticket revenue remains an essential component, though rarely sufficient on its own. Modern theaters, according to The Theater Producer's Library, have shifted significantly toward online sales channels, reducing dependency on traditional intermediaries and embracing automation and digital marketing. This has been essential in expanding reach and improving revenue efficiency (GITIS 2020.). In Finland, especially for regional and touring productions, pricing strategies must balance accessibility with revenue needs.

5.3 Financial Sustainability for Touring Projects

Touring adds complexity to theater finance. From technical riders and venue compatibility to audience analysis and marketing localization, the cost structure can escalate quickly. According to the The Theater Producer's Library handbook, tours should be planned at least one year in advance, factoring in logistics, competing events, and regional demographics. Types of touring arrangements include:

- Box office-based tours (all costs and revenues borne by the producer)
- Guaranteed fee tours (theater receives a fixed honorarium)
- Parity tours (profits and costs shared proportionally between parties)

Each model carries different risks and benefits, necessitating tailored financial strategies.

5.4 Risk Management in Budgeting and Forecasting

Budgeting for theater, especially tours, requires proactive forecasting. Several modern models emphasize the importance of:

- Multi-source income planning (public + private + earned)
- Early identification of fixed vs. variable costs (e.g. transport, accommodation, insurance)
- Risk mitigation through scenario planning and buffer funds

The Nordic-Baltic Mobility Programme also emphasizes cross-border collaboration, offering funds that minimize financial risks for regional touring in Northern Europe (Arsrapport 2024).

Overall, Finland benefits from transparent, merit-based funding mechanisms, supported by clear institutional mandates and a relatively strong welfare safety net. Touring is often incentivized as part of national cultural policy, and support is available for international mobility.

6 Theater Marketing and Audience Development

6.1 Introduction to Theater Marketing

In regional settings, where competition for audience attention is steep and resources are often limited, theater marketing must operate strategically, not only to sell tickets but to generate long-term engagement and deepen relevance within the community. This section explores how contemporary theater organizations, especially in smaller cities or while touring, use marketing frameworks and audience development strategies to build visibility and cultural value.

Traditional arts marketing has largely been driven by product-centric models, where cultural organizations push a finished offering toward a passive audience. However, O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2018) argue in *The Death of Arts Marketing* that this model is outdated. They propose a relational and dialogical paradigm, where marketing is a form of engagement—listening, responding, and building co-created meaning with audiences.

This shift is also seen in regional marketing efforts, where understanding audience behavior, motivations, and barriers is as important as promoting the product. Audience development becomes a matter of building trust and relevance, especially crucial for theaters operating in unfamiliar or rural territories.

6.2 Audience Segmentation in Regional Contexts

As emphasized in the Theater Producer's Library (Knyazeva et al. 2020.), the cornerstone of marketing strategy is self-audit: theaters must define their mission, determine their market position, and analyze their potential audiences through a SWOT framework. Audience segmentation in this context involves more than demographics—it requires understanding psychological, cultural, and behavioral traits.

According to recommendations from the Theater Producer's Library, effective audience research in the cultural sector should combine macro-level analysis with micro-level techniques. On the macro level, this includes examining the broader socio-economic, cultural, and political context in which a project operates. At the micro level, techniques such as interactive quizzes, analysis of social media

behavior, and targeted audience surveys are advised to gain specific insights. Additionally, creative tools like gamified online tests—for example, "Which character are you?"—can be employed to collect audience data in a non-intrusive and engaging way. Segmentation isn't just about outreach efficiency, it also prevents misaligned marketing that leads to audience disappointment, negative word-of-mouth, and reputational damage.

6.3 Touring Theaters and Visibility in Unfamiliar Communities

Visibility is not just about media saturation but about cultural positioning. Touring theaters, lacking physical infrastructure or reputation in the host location, must rely on localized partnerships and community presence.

The CircuitWest Theatre Marketing Guide (2024) recommends several strategies for effective regional engagement. It advises partnering with local cultural institutions, schools, and community centers to help contextualize performances within the local environment. Additionally, it highlights the importance of identifying and working with regional influencers and community leaders who can serve as informal advocates for the production. Crafting custom messaging that aligns with the cultural identity and needs of the local audience is also emphasized. The guide cautions against using generic, nationwide campaigns and instead encourages a localized approach to tone, visuals, and language. Moreover, TINFO (Finland) emphasizes the importance of continuous communication and transparency when entering new markets. Theaters must appear accessible and relevant—not as outsiders parachuting in, but as collaborators.

6.4 Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and Theater Promotion

In a digital-first communication environment, theater marketing must be integrated across multiple channels and touchpoints. According to the study by Fasasi (2018) on IMC, organizations that harmonize their message across traditional media, digital platforms, and face-to-face experiences see stronger consumer trust and recall.

In the context of regional theater, an effective integrated marketing communications (IMC) approach may involve aligning digital advertising with print materials and local media coverage to ensure consistency. It also includes creating branded

experiences that are coherent across both physical venues and online platforms. Furthermore, maintaining unified messaging across educational outreach efforts, box office interactions, and social media communication is essential to building a recognizable and trustworthy public profile. This alignment is critical for building audience loyalty and projecting a coherent identity.

6.5 Social Media and Digital Engagement

Today, social media is not supplementary, it is central to theater outreach and audience cultivation. Theaters that use social media as dynamic storytelling platforms rather than static bulletin boards show significantly higher engagement.

According to ThickHouse.org, effective social media theater promotion includes several components as posting behind-the-scenes content to humanize the creative process, another important way of social media promotion is encouraging audience-generated content to expand organic reach and last, but not least is creating platform-specific strategies: e.g., visual storytelling on Instagram, event campaigns on Facebook, discussion threads on X (formerly Twitter).

Ticketmaster UK (2023) further underscores the value of targeted social advertising and remarketing tools, which allow theaters to re-engage users who've visited their website or engaged with previous posts. This is especially effective in touring scenarios, where the time to build a following is limited.

the Theater Producer's Library (2020) adds depth to this with a detailed account of SMM (Social Media Marketing) tactics tailored to the performing arts, advocating for some more valuable points such as unique, value-driven content (not just promotions), platform-specific voice and visuals, interactive formats like challenges, polls, or live Q&As and strategic posting schedules (e.g., 13:00–15:00, 20:00 prime times).

The ultimate goal, according to the Theater Producer's Library, is to convert "passive scrollers" into brand advocates and attendees through lead magnets like ticket giveaways, exclusive content, or first-access offers.

6.6 Public Engagement and Trust-Building

Public engagement in the arts is increasingly recognized as a long-term relationship, not a transaction. The LA County Arts Commission's Public Engagement Literature Review (2017) frames this process as moving from "awareness" to "participation" to "belonging."

For regional theaters, particularly those engaged in touring or serving diverse communities, this involves building reciprocal relationships with local stakeholders, supporting community voices by integrating their narratives into programming, and ensuring that both physical and digital experiences are inclusive, accessible, and intuitive for all audience segments. As it known, the perception of accessibility begins before the first ticket is sold, as in any other field of business, it starts on the website, in the tone of social posts, in the warmth of the welcome.

7 Business Models in Creative Industries

7.1 Tools for Managing Creative Projects

In managing creative projects within the performing arts, particularly theater, structured business planning is essential. Frameworks like the Business Model Canvas (BMC), SWOT, and PESTEL analyses help cultural producers and managers articulate, evaluate, and adapt their operational and strategic goals. These tools gain added value when contextualized with practical examples, including those from several theater practice as outlined in the publication *Performance marketing* (Knyazeva et al. 2020.).

Developed by Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur, the Business Model Canvas is a visual framework consisting of nine key building blocks that describe how an organization creates, delivers, and captures value. It is especially adaptable for structuring both traditional and touring theater projects.

In the Table 1, each BMC component translates to the theater context.

Table 1. BMC Elements applied to theater

BMC Element	Application to Theater
Value Proposition	Unique aesthetic experience, cultural enrichment, social dialogue. Could include immersive, site-specific, or touring productions.
Customer Segments	Spectators (by age, taste, geography), educators, sponsors, cultural institutions, critics, government.
Channels	Ticketing platforms, social media, newsletters, partnerships with schools or local councils.
Customer Relationships	Engagement via talkbacks, season subscriptions, loyalty programs, digital content.
Revenue Streams	Ticket sales, merchandise, licensing, grants, sponsorships, venue rentals.

Key Resources	Creative team (actors, directors, designers), venue or touring infrastructure, technical staff, brand equity.
Key Activities	Production, rehearsal, marketing, community outreach, tour logistics.
Key Partners	Funding bodies, cultural ministries, co-producers, tour venues, PR agencies, local authorities.
Cost Structure	Salaries, set construction, marketing, travel costs (for tours), licensing, administration.

From real Case Example: Touring shows often build their business models around minimalistic yet adaptable scenic designs and flexible casts to reduce costs and maximize mobility. As Fokin (2020) outlines, many theaters operate using paritet-based contracts with receiving venues—sharing both profits and expenses. Different aspects of fixed venue theater and touring production are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of Fixed Venue and Touring Theater

Component	Fixed Venue Theater	Touring Production
Value Proposition	Local cultural continuity, season offerings	Unique access to distant audiences, cultural exchange
Customer Segments	Local repeat audiences	One-time or occasional audiences in various regions
Key Partners	Municipal sponsors, venue staff	Host venues, logistics providers, local promoters
Cost Structure	Maintenance-heavy (building, utilities, staffing)	Travel, freight, accommodation, per diems
Revenue Streams	Subscriptions, regular ticket sales	Split box office, touring fees, state grants

As seen in Performance marketing, touring models—particularly under guaranteed fee or profit-sharing—help theaters mitigate financial risks while expanding cultural influence (Knyazeva et al. 2020, 172–175.).

7.2 SWOT Analysis in Theater

A SWOT analysis can support decision-making by identifying internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats:

- Strengths: Renowned cast, institutional backing, innovative content.
- Weaknesses: High production costs, limited marketing budget.
- Opportunities: Grants, digital streaming, international tours.
- Threats: Competing events, economic downturns, changing audience tastes.

Theaters are often use SWOT to prioritize projects during seasonal planning and to optimize resources during touring. SWOT analysis matrix is shown in Image 1.

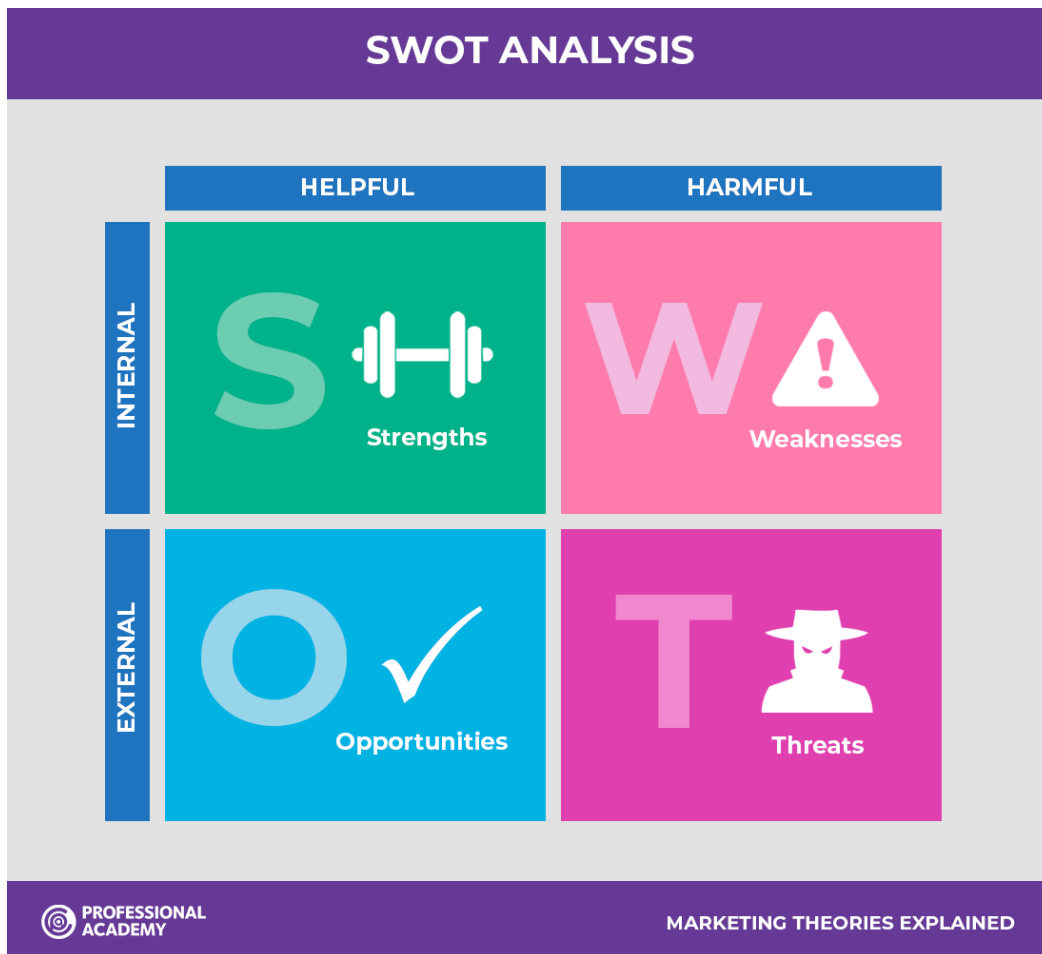


Image 1: SWOT Analysis Matrix (Professional Academy, 2024)

7.3 PESTEL Analysis (External Factors)

The PESTEL framework evaluates macro-environmental factors impacting a theater's business model:

- Political: Cultural policy, censorship, funding structures.
- Economic: Inflation, public spending on culture.
- Social: Audience aging, education, leisure trends.
- Technological: Livestreaming, e-ticketing platforms.
- Environmental: Sustainability of productions, travel footprint.
- Legal: Licensing, labor laws, copyright.

PESTEL analysis components are shown in Image 2.

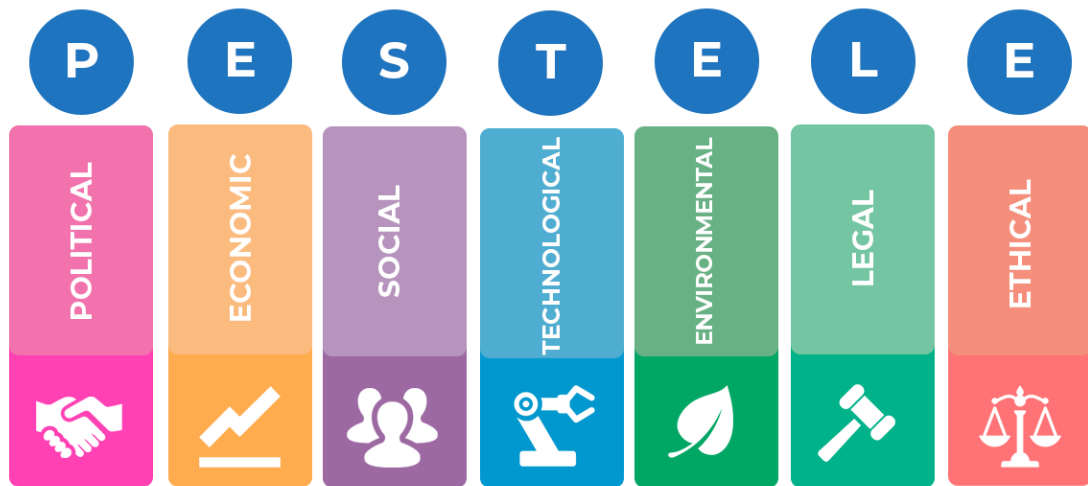


Image 2: PESTEL Analysis Components (Professional Academy, 2024)

8 Research Approach

8.1 Introduction to the Research

This thesis follows a functional approach, focused on producing a practical outcome: a business plan for a simulated theater tour in Lappeenranta. The aim is to apply existing knowledge and tools to a real-world cultural context, creating a usable model for theater producers and arts managers.

The research uses a case study method centered around planning a regional theater tour. Lappeenranta was chosen as a representative location to explore the challenges and opportunities of touring in Finland's smaller cultural hubs.

This case-based method suits the functional thesis format by grounding the business model in realistic planning and operational scenarios. It reflects the Creative Lenses initiative's emphasis on rethinking sustainability and resilience in the cultural sector through business model innovation (Creative Lenses, 2020).

8.2 Case location context

Lappeenranta serves as the point for this simulated business case due to its position as a mid-sized Finnish city with growing cultural ambition. With approximately 70,000 residents and a vibrant university community, the city offers both logistical feasibility and untapped audience potential for touring performing arts.

As an international student currently living in Lappeenranta, I have direct, personal insight into the local dynamics, infrastructure, and cultural climate. This firsthand perspective adds realism and practical relevance to the case. The presence of a large student population, both Finnish and international, suggests an emerging, culturally curious audience segment that can be reached through targeted programming and communication strategies.

Data from Taika (Arts Promotion Centre Finland) and Statistics Finland indicate that regional audience development, especially outside metropolitan areas, remains a strategic focus for cultural policy. Lappeenranta's investments in cultural venues such as the City Theatre and Karelia Hall, alongside its active event calendar, reflect an environment open to new cultural initiatives.

By focusing on Lappeenranta, the project aims to test the feasibility and adaptability of a theater business model in a city with real-world constraints but clear potential. This controlled, simulated environment enables analysis of strategic planning, audience engagement, and financial sustainability — all within a manageable, relatable context.

To support the development of a practical business model for a touring theater production, this project relies on secondary data and simulated insights, aligning with the functional nature of the thesis.

8.2.1 Literature Review

The theoretical base is informed by a selection of relevant publications and frameworks in the field of arts marketing, production management, and cultural business models. As key sources, this thesis uses the books Knyazeva A.E. et al. – Performance marketing (GITIS 2020.) provides practical strategies for promotion, ticketing, and premiere organization, and Orlov Y.M., Zhurova G.A. et al. – Creation of the new performance (GITIS 2020.) focusing on the production cycle, rehearsal process, and documentation of new performances. Furthermore, *The Death of Arts Marketing* (White Rose, 2019) will be used to explore evolving audience behaviors and the limitations of traditional arts marketing.

These works guide the use of Business Model Canvas as a central framework, with SWOT and PESTEL serving as supportive tools in assessing the simulated model's context and feasibility.

Contextual understanding of the case environment is developed through analysis of public cultural and demographic data, including possible reports from Taika (Arts Promotion Centre Finland) on regional audience development and cultural accessibility, Lappeenranta municipal cultural plans and budget statements (where available) and Statistic Finland data on demographics, with attention to the city's high concentration of students and educational institutions.

These inputs help frame the potential for audience development and logistical planning within Lappeenranta.

8.2.2 Analytical Tools

The main analytical framework applied in this thesis is the Business Model Canvas (BMC) developed by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010). This tool offers a structured yet flexible approach to designing the logic of a cultural enterprise. It breaks down a business model into nine components: value proposition, customer segments, customer relationships, channels, key resources, key activities, key partnerships, cost structure, and revenue streams. This format is especially suitable for structuring a touring theater concept, where the interconnection between production, promotion, and audience engagement is central.

The BMC is widely used in both commercial and cultural settings, and its relevance to the creative industries is supported by sources such as Business Model Generation (Professional Academy 2024.), Culture Hive, and the Creative Lenses initiative by Trans Europe Halles (TEH). These sources show how cultural organizations have adapted the canvas to explore financial sustainability, audience development, and organizational innovation. In this project, the BMC will serve as the foundation for planning the simulated tour model.

Although SWOT and PESTEL analyses are not applied here as independent models, they are acknowledged as useful conceptual tools. A basic understanding of these frameworks supports the development of the BMC, especially when assessing potential risks and external influences.

The SWOT framework—which focuses on identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats—helps inform internal and external perspectives that may shape key decisions in the BMC. Similarly, the PESTEL model—which considers political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors—provides a background scan of the macro-environment. This is particularly relevant in cultural project planning, where external conditions such as funding policies, technological access, or regulatory constraints may affect long-term feasibility.

Both frameworks are included here in a supportive capacity to inform and enrich the business model development process. Their theoretical underpinnings are drawn from Professional Academy and other applied sources referenced in the literature review.

9 Empirical Interview and Key Findings

9.1 The interview as a source of information

To deepen the practical relevance of the business model and provide an inside perspective on the functioning of touring theater projects, I conducted a semi-structured theme interview with a general producer who is currently managing a regional touring initiative. The interview focused on the operational logic, funding strategies, audience engagement, and lessons learned in the development and delivery of touring cultural productions.

The choice of an interview as a qualitative research method supports the functional nature of the thesis. While quantitative studies may be useful in measuring demand, they do not capture the complex dynamics and producer-level decisions required to establish sustainable touring operations. Therefore, the interview was used primarily as a source of expert insight to inform the practical development of the business model in the following chapter.

The respondent, Anastasia Romanova, is a senior cultural producer with extensive experience organizing large-scale tours of big urban theaters to regional cities.

The discussion was thematically structured and focused on several topics.

9.2 Strategic Planning and Project Vision

The interview confirmed that the first task of a producer in such a project is to align with the cultural and strategic goals of the sponsor. The producer emphasized the importance of defining the project's artistic and operational direction—whether oriented toward classical repertoire, modern dramaturgy, or high-profile names versus emerging talent. Once a general direction is set, the producer engages in negotiation processes with participating theaters. A major constraint mentioned was the technical limitations of regional venues, which often require compromise and adaptation from both sides.

The idea for the project itself was not purely creative but was initiated in response to a broader state-sponsored cultural agenda. As the producer stated, "It was not just an idea, but a defined task." The project was designed from the outset to be

ambitious in scale and reach, and it is currently implemented largely as originally envisioned.

9.3 Organizational and Logistical Planning

One of the main challenges of organizing a tour, particularly to remote or smaller cities, is logistics. Transporting stage sets across long distances and through mountainous regions in difficult seasonal conditions requires contingency time for delays due to weather.

The producer explained that these risks are planned for with buffer days and careful coordination of the tour schedule. Another important point was the internal distribution of tasks among the team. The producer emphasized the value of an experienced and adaptable crew that can take on unexpected responsibilities as needed.

9.4 Funding Structure and Cost Management

The project is fully funded by a single private company, which provides financial backing for 100% of the costs. This includes transportation, accommodation, catering, artist fees, and the local host's expenses. Ticket pricing is subsidized, allowing for affordable access even in smaller cities where standard market prices would not be sustainable.

The producer provided insight into how sponsorship partnerships are structured: sponsors are offered a curated selection of potential performances and have the final say in which shows are booked. This ensures alignment with their cultural agenda. The funding model also allows the project to absorb the high costs that would otherwise require tickets to be sold at prices between €150–€250, which are unrealistic for the target regions.

9.5 Audience Engagement and Marketing

Promoting performances in unfamiliar cities involves targeted outreach through local media, including regional TV and radio, as well as collaboration with key employers and institutions. Press releases are distributed, and information is disseminated through trusted local platforms. The marketing strategy emphasizes visibility in

public spaces and direct engagement with community “anchors,” such as local enterprises and cultural centers.

Audience success is measured not only in ticket sales but in visible shifts in behavior such as patrons dressing up, bringing flowers for performers, and engaging in online discussions. These indicators suggest not only growing interest but also increasing cultural literacy.

9.6 Project Outcomes and Key Lessons

When asked about project outcomes, the producer highlighted the social and cultural transformation of the audience. Creating a sense of anticipation, engaging viewers emotionally, and instilling habits of theater attendance were cited as signs of long-term success. At the same time, the producer acknowledged several missteps—specifically, experiments with less professional or loosely organized groups that led to disappointing artistic quality. These experiences reinforced the project’s commitment to high standards and to working only with established institutional theaters.

Finally, the producer underscored the critical role of stable sponsorship and municipal support, as well as the need to cultivate an audience that is open to diverse forms of theater—not just commercial entertainment.

10 Business Model of The Touring Theater Project

10.1 Business models in a Field of Culture

This business plan presents a touring theater initiative designed to bring professional urban theater productions to smaller Finnish cities, beginning with a simulated pilot in Lappeenranta. The core idea responds to a recognized gap in access to high-quality cultural programming outside major metropolitan areas, while also aligning with broader audience development goals identified in cultural policy reports (e.g., Taike).

The proposed project invites state and municipal theaters from cities like Helsinki and Tampere to perform in regional venues, with the support of local institutions, sponsors, and cultural stakeholders. The model emphasizes cooperation between producers, theaters, municipalities, and regional tourism boards to ensure that cultural accessibility does not compromise artistic quality or financial sustainability.

The choice to simulate the model in Lappeenranta is deliberate: the city is mid-sized, culturally active, and hosts a large student population — factors which make it ideal for testing new audience engagement strategies. Furthermore, as a resident of Lappeenranta, I have direct familiarity with local dynamics and practical considerations, which enhances the realism and contextual understanding of this pilot model.

The following sections will apply structured tools — including the Business Model Canvas — to build the foundation for this initiative.

10.2 Business Model Canvas for Touring Theater Project

The Business Model Canvas (BMC), developed by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010), is used here to structure the touring theater project. This visual framework allows for organizing key components of the initiative in a logical and strategic way, helping define how value is created, delivered, and captured across stakeholders.

The model has been adapted to the cultural sector using insights from Business Model Generation (VACE 2010.), Creative Lenses research (TEH 2020.), and Finnish case materials. Supporting tools such as SWOT and PESTEL have been

considered in background analysis to inform decisions related to partnerships, audience, and resource planning.

Below is an outline of the nine elements of the BMC applied to this project:

1. Customer Segments

- Local audiences in smaller cities, particularly in Lappeenranta: students, young professionals, families, and retirees
- Institutional clients (e.g., schools, universities, corporate groups)
- Municipalities interested in cultural development

2. Value Proposition

- Access to high-quality urban theater performances without needing to travel to Helsinki or Tampere
- Cultural enrichment and community engagement for regional cities
- Scalable and adaptable model tailored to local needs
- Visibility and artistic collaboration opportunities for visiting theaters

3. Channels

- Partner theater venues (e.g., Lappeenranta City Theater)
- Online ticketing platforms
- Local media and event calendars
- Collaborations with universities, cultural boards, and tourism offices

4. Customer Relationships

- Community engagement through targeted outreach (workshops, post-show talks)
- Early access and discounted tickets for students and local partners
- Membership or loyalty options in future stages

5. Revenue Streams

- Ticket sales (with price categories for different demographics)
- Sponsorships from local businesses or foundations
- Municipal or state cultural grants
- Merchandising (programmes, souvenirs)

6. Key Resources

- Artistic content: curated performances from urban theaters
- Local venue partnerships and logistics support
- Project management and production staff
- Funding from sponsors and public bodies

7. Key Activities

- Program curation and contract negotiation with partner theaters
- Tour planning and logistics coordination
- Marketing and audience development in host cities
- Stakeholder communication and reporting

8. Key Partnerships

- State and municipal theaters in Helsinki, Tampere, etc.
- Lappeenranta City Theater and Cultural Department
- South Karelia tourism and education institutions
- Main sponsor(s) or local enterprises
- Media partners and student unions

9. Cost Structure

- Artist fees and performance rights
- Travel, freight, and accommodation for touring companies
- Marketing and communication

- Local venue rental and technical costs
- Administrative and project coordination expenses

10.3 Application to Lappeenranta

To demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed touring theater business model, a simulated implementation in the city of Lappeenranta is presented. Lappeenranta, located in South Karelia, is a mid-sized Finnish city with a growing cultural infrastructure and a high student population due to the presence of LUT University and LAB University of Applied Sciences. This makes it a viable location for testing a culturally enriching, yet economically sustainable theatrical tour initiative.

According to Statistics Finland (2024), Lappeenranta has a population of approximately 72,000 residents, with a notable demographic segment aged 20–34—a target audience particularly relevant for contemporary cultural consumption. Moreover, the city has expressed strong strategic interest in developing its cultural and creative sectors, as reflected in its cultural policy documents and public funding priorities (Stat.fi 2023; Taike 2022.).

The city is home to Lappeenranta City Theater, a modern venue located in the IsoKristiina complex. Designed by ALA Architects, the venue consists of multiple technically equipped stages with flexible capacities, which make it suitable for hosting external productions of various scales (ALA Architects, n.d.; Lappeenranta City Theater 2024.). This makes the site logistically appropriate for a touring drama production, as long as technical compatibility and pre-coordination are ensured.

The pilot model simulates a partnership with a Helsinki-based public repertory theater bringing one full-scale drama performance to Lappeenranta for a single-date engagement. The objective is not only to deliver cultural value but also to explore an economically viable partnership structure that includes the hosting theater, the municipal administration, local media, and potential private sponsors.

The tour organization is based on the operational practices discussed in the interview conducted with Anastasia Romanova, General Producer of a similar touring initiative. Her insights emphasized the necessity of pre-negotiated logistics, buffer time for weather-related delays, and the delegation of responsibilities within

a compact, mobile production team. The approach includes leveraging local media for targeted marketing and tailoring each tour's artistic content to the interests of regional audiences (Romanova 2025.).

A simplified operational schedule (Table 3) illustrates the proposed structure for the Lappeenranta tour scheduled in October 2025.

Table 3: Estimated Schedule for a Helsinki Theater Touring to Lappeenranta

Date	Time	Activity	Theater Personnel	Local Staff
14.10.2025	08:00	Loading set and equipment in Helsinki	Stage crew (5)	–
14.10.2025	17:00	Arrival and unloading in Lappeenranta	Stage crew (5)	Technical supervisor (1)
15.10.2025	10:00	Technical rehearsal at Lappeenranta Theater	Full team (12)	Lighting/sound (2)
15.10.2025	19:00	Performance: Main play	Cast, crew, producer (20)	FOH, ticketing, security
16.10.2025	10:00	Load-out and departure	Stage crew	Local coordinator (1)

This pilot simulation provides a structured starting point for understanding the resource and scheduling requirements in practical terms. The model prioritizes lean logistics, collaboration with local infrastructure, and precise pre-planning.

Overall, this pilot application reflects the practical goals of a functional thesis, translating conceptual tools such as the Business Model Canvas into context-specific operations. The next section develops the business logic in full detail, informed by the interview data and public policy sources.

10.4 Financial Plan and Funding Strategy

The financial framework for the proposed touring theatre initiative in Lappeenranta is designed to ensure sustainability through a diversified funding strategy. This approach integrates private sponsorships, public cultural grants, and ticket sales,

aligning with Finland's cultural policy objectives of accessibility and regional cultural development.

Drawing inspiration from successful models like the "Theater Seasons" – Anastasia Romanova's project, private sponsorships form a cornerstone of the funding strategy. Engaging local and regional businesses, particularly those with vested interests in cultural and community development, can provide substantial financial support. These partnerships not only offer financial backing but also foster community engagement and corporate social responsibility.

The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture plays a pivotal role in supporting the performing arts through various funding mechanisms. Central government transfers and discretionary grants are allocated to theatres and performing arts units, ensuring the availability and quality of cultural services across the country. Additionally, the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taika) offers grants to professional artists and communities, further bolstering the financial foundation of such initiatives.

While ticket sales contribute to the revenue stream, the pricing strategy emphasizes affordability to ensure broad accessibility. This approach aligns with the Ministry's objective to foster inclusivity in cultural participation. By subsidizing ticket prices through sponsorships and grants, the initiative can attract diverse audiences, including those who might otherwise face financial barriers to cultural engagement.

The pricing model is carefully calibrated to balance financial sustainability with the goal of making high-quality theatre accessible to a wide audience. By leveraging subsidies from sponsors and public grants, ticket prices can be set at levels that are affordable for residents of smaller cities like Lappeenranta, without compromising the financial viability of the productions.

To optimize resource utilization and ensure the project's sustainability, several cost-saving strategies are proposed:

- **Bundled Tours:** Coordinating multiple performances across different locations can lead to economies of scale in logistics and production costs.

- **Local Volunteers:** Engaging community volunteers for tasks such as ushering, marketing, and logistical support can reduce staffing expenses and enhance community involvement.
- **Institutional Support:** Collaborations with local institutions, such as educational establishments and cultural organizations, can provide venues, promotional channels, and additional resources at reduced or no cost.

These strategies not only contribute to cost efficiency but also strengthen community ties and foster a sense of ownership among local stakeholders.

The financial plan for the touring theatre project in Lappeenranta is anchored in a multifaceted funding approach that combines private sponsorships, public grants, and accessible ticket pricing. By implementing strategic cost-saving measures and fostering community partnerships, the initiative aims to create a sustainable model that enriches the cultural landscape of smaller Finnish cities.

10.5 Marketing and Audience Engagement Tactics

Audience development for touring theatre initiatives requires a localized, multi-channel approach that is responsive to the cultural dynamics of smaller cities. This section outlines a strategy grounded in integrated marketing communication (IMC) principles and informed by both literature and professional insight.

As discussed in Chapter 6, IMC combines advertising, public relations, social media, and community engagement into a cohesive communication strategy (Kotler & Keller 2018.). For a project situated in Lappeenranta, where theatre is not always a central part of public life, marketing efforts must prioritize visibility, relevance, and trust-building within the community.

10.5.1 Local Media and Institutional Partnerships

One of the most effective tools in regional theatre promotion is collaboration with local media outlets. According to the interviewed producer Anastasia Romanova, successful touring projects often rely on established local radio, television, and newspapers to build early awareness. This is particularly effective in mid-sized cities like Lappeenranta, where traditional channels still have strong reach (Knyazeva et al. 2020.). Promotional partnerships with anchor institutions—such as the City of

Lappeenranta, Lappeenranta City Theatre, and regional educational institutions—can help distribute information through trusted networks.

Additionally, cooperation with local schools, universities, and museums can provide educational and cultural tie-ins, such as thematic lectures, post-performance Q&A sessions, or masterclasses related to the touring production. This is in line with the cultural policy goals outlined by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which emphasizes accessibility and audience engagement across demographic groups (OKM, 2024).

10.5.2 Digital Marketing and Social Media

Social media platforms offer targeted reach and a cost-effective way to build anticipation and maintain dialogue with potential audiences. As detailed in recent studies on digital theatre marketing (Thickhouse.org 2024; Ticketmaster UK 2023.), platforms like Instagram and Facebook can effectively reach young adults and university students—one of the core audience segments in Lappeenranta.

Tailored content campaigns that reflect the aesthetic and values of the production—behind-the-scenes photos, cast introductions, countdowns, and video snippets—can create a sense of involvement before the audience even attends the show. Integration of social proof through user-generated content (e.g. local reviews or photos at the venue) can further build engagement and trust (Creative Lenses 2019.).

10.5.3 Community-Based Engagement

A key insight from the interview with Romanova was the importance of cultivating emotional connection and repeat interest within local communities. For example, the gifting of flowers to performers, pre-show rituals, or audience dress-up traditions were noted as signs of cultural immersion. Community engagement goes beyond marketing, it becomes part of the theatre experience itself.

To this end, organizing complementary programming (e.g. informal pre-performance talks, amateur theatre workshops, or local artist showcases in the theatre lobby) can deepen the relationship between the touring production and its host city. These practices are well aligned with the findings of Creative Lenses

(2019), which advocate for cultural ventures to prioritize long-term community relationships over transactional marketing.

The marketing plan integrates offline and online channels to ensure broad reach and message consistency. This mirrors the integrated marketing communication approach, where unified messaging enhances audience understanding and brand coherence (Kotler 2018; Culture Hive, 2016.). Offline tactics—such as posters, flyers, and local press—are complemented by social media engagement and direct outreach via educational and municipal networks.

10.5.4 Sample Marketing Material

A sample 2 sides leaflet should feature:

- Title and headline of the visiting theatre
- Performance dates
- A short quote or review from a major city performance
- Ticket information
- QR code linking to ticket platform or Instagram page

The example is shown in Image 3 and Image 4. This example illustrates the application of the IMC model to a cultural product, ensuring message clarity and audience alignment.



Image 3. Marketing leaflet, page 1



Image 4. Marketing leaflet, page 2

10.6 Evaluation and Scalability

The proposed touring theatre model, piloted in Lappeenranta, demonstrates a replicable framework that balances artistic quality with logistical and financial pragmatism. Its structure—based on clearly defined stakeholder roles, a sponsorship-led funding system, and an integrated marketing approach—provides a functional blueprint for extending cultural access to audiences beyond major urban centers.

By aligning municipal interests, venue capacities, and professional theater standards, the model addresses common barriers to touring productions. It thus offers a strong foundation for broader application in other mid-sized Finnish cities seeking to enrich their cultural life sustainably.

10.6.1 Replication Potential

The model is designed with modularity in mind. As highlighted by Romanova in the interview, the core components of a successful tour include professional partnerships, logistical foresight, and local institutional collaboration. These elements can be adapted to the context of other cities such as Joensuu, Mikkeli, or Seinäjoki, where performing arts infrastructure exists but touring events are less frequent.

From a business design perspective, the Business Model Canvas structure allows for contextual customization. For example, the “Key Partners” block can flexibly include different municipal authorities or sponsors, while the “Channels” and “Customer Segments” elements can be adapted based on local demographic profiles (Osterwalder & Pigneur 2010.). This aligns with the scalable models described by Creative Lenses (2019), which advocate for adaptable cultural strategies that maintain core values while responding to local needs.

Additionally, the marketing framework, based on integrated communication and local partnerships, can be efficiently scaled. As established before, these tools do not require significant resources but rather a tailored communication plan, which enhances feasibility across different locales (Culture Hive 2016; TINFO 2024.).

10.6.2 Limitations

Despite its replicability, the model faces limitations. The most significant constraint lies in venue compatibility. As Romanova noted, not all regional theatres have the technical infrastructure to support large-scale productions—especially those from national or metropolitan companies. This may restrict the repertoire or require costly adaptation of sets and lighting (Knyazeva et al. 2020.).

Another constraint is the cyclical nature of funding, especially when public grants or private sponsorships are involved. The Ministry of Education and Culture (OKM 2024.) highlights that funding for performing arts is often project-based and subject to annual or multi-year reviews, making long-term planning challenging for new touring initiatives. Hence, a sustainable model must maintain flexibility and prepare for intermittent funding periods.

10.6.3 Opportunities for Cultural Development

Despite these challenges, the model presents significant long-term opportunities. Touring productions can serve as a cultural stimulus in smaller cities, increasing access to high-quality performance art and strengthening local engagement with national theatre. As seen in the Lappeenranta example, the theatre becomes not only a site of performance but also a space for community learning and social gathering.

This aligns with broader national goals, as articulated by OKM (2024), which advocate for balanced cultural provision across regions and inclusive access to the performing arts. Through repeated cycles, the project could contribute to building regional audiences, reinforcing local identity, and creating professional opportunities for regional cultural workers.

Furthermore, if supported with longitudinal evaluation, tracking audience response, ticket sales, and social impact, the model could become a best practice within Finland's wider cultural infrastructure. In doing so, it supports both cultural decentralization and the growth of Finland's experience economy.

11 Summary and Discussion

11.1 Summary and outcomes

This thesis set out to explore the development of a sustainable business model for organizing touring drama theater in small Finnish cities, using Lappeenranta as a simulated case study. The methodological framework, grounded in qualitative inquiry and functional planning, combined literature review, expert insight, and practical modeling through the Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder & Pigneur 2010.). The resulting model provides a holistic and adaptable structure that emphasizes public-private cooperation, audience engagement, and cultural value.

The research demonstrated that a viable touring model relies on three interlinked pillars: (1) sponsorship and grant funding to ensure financial stability, (2) strategic audience development rooted in local partnerships and community participation, and (3) logistical and organizational coordination between sending and receiving institutions. Drawing from the professional insights of a touring producer, the model reflects current best practices, particularly in aligning artistic quality with the expectations and constraints of smaller localities.

As outlined in before, this model emphasizes institutional partnerships, local engagement, and integrated marketing communications (Percy 2018; Knyazeva et al. 2020.). Local cultural infrastructures, such as Lappeenranta City Theater and educational institutions, can become key nodes in extending access to high-quality urban theater. The expert interview further confirmed that touring success is contingent on balancing professional standards with audience readiness and local stakeholder support.

The functional nature of the thesis entails several limitations. First, the business model was developed as a simulated plan; it has not yet been pilot-tested in practice. The insights from one expert, though rich in detail, do not represent the full diversity of touring practices across Finland. Access to broader datasets (e.g., ticket sales records, cultural consumption trends) was also limited by scope and time.

Moreover, technical compatibility between theaters and visiting troupes remains a persistent barrier. As indicated in the interview, venue infrastructure (stage size, rigging systems, etc.) may exclude certain productions or require costly adaptations.

Scheduling complexity and funding cycles (OKM, 2024) further add layers of uncertainty that need to be accounted for in real-life execution.

Despite these limitations, the model has practical relevance. It can be adapted by municipalities, cultural coordinators, or independent producers interested in strengthening regional cultural offerings. Especially in cities with strong student populations and existing theater venues (e.g., Joensuu, Rovaniemi, Vaasa), the approach could improve cultural accessibility and diversify local programming. The flexibility of the BMC format makes the plan scalable and customizable depending on local capacity and interest.

From an ethical standpoint, key considerations include the responsible use of public funding, ensuring artists are fairly compensated, and making performances accessible in terms of pricing and inclusivity. This includes attention to physical access for differently abled audiences, language availability, and promotional equity.

Further development of this work could take several directions. A logical next step would be piloting the model in one or two locations, followed by data collection on audience response, financial outcomes, and partner satisfaction. Complementary studies could explore the social impact of touring performances, including their potential to foster belonging, cultural participation, and local identity.

Additionally, deeper audience segmentation and behavioral studies would improve the accuracy of marketing tactics and help tailor programming to different community profiles. Working closely with public agencies like Taike and Statistics Finland could yield more robust data for planning and evaluation.

In conclusion, the touring theater model developed in this thesis provides a strategic yet flexible tool for revitalizing cultural life in smaller cities. While practical implementation will require careful adaptation and continuous learning, the core idea—bringing high-quality drama to a broader audience—responds to both cultural policy goals and community needs in contemporary Finland.

11.2 Personal Learnings and process evaluation

In addition to the practical outcomes of the thesis, the process itself provided valuable opportunities for personal and academic development. Conducting the

expert interview was a particularly engaging experience, offering authentic insights into the realities of cultural production and touring theater. This interaction deepened my understanding of the producer's responsibilities and the strategic thinking involved in planning sustainable cultural initiatives. Throughout the project, I developed stronger skills in research, critical analysis, and structuring creative concepts within a functional business framework. These learning outcomes contribute meaningfully to my preparedness for future work in the cultural and creative sectors.

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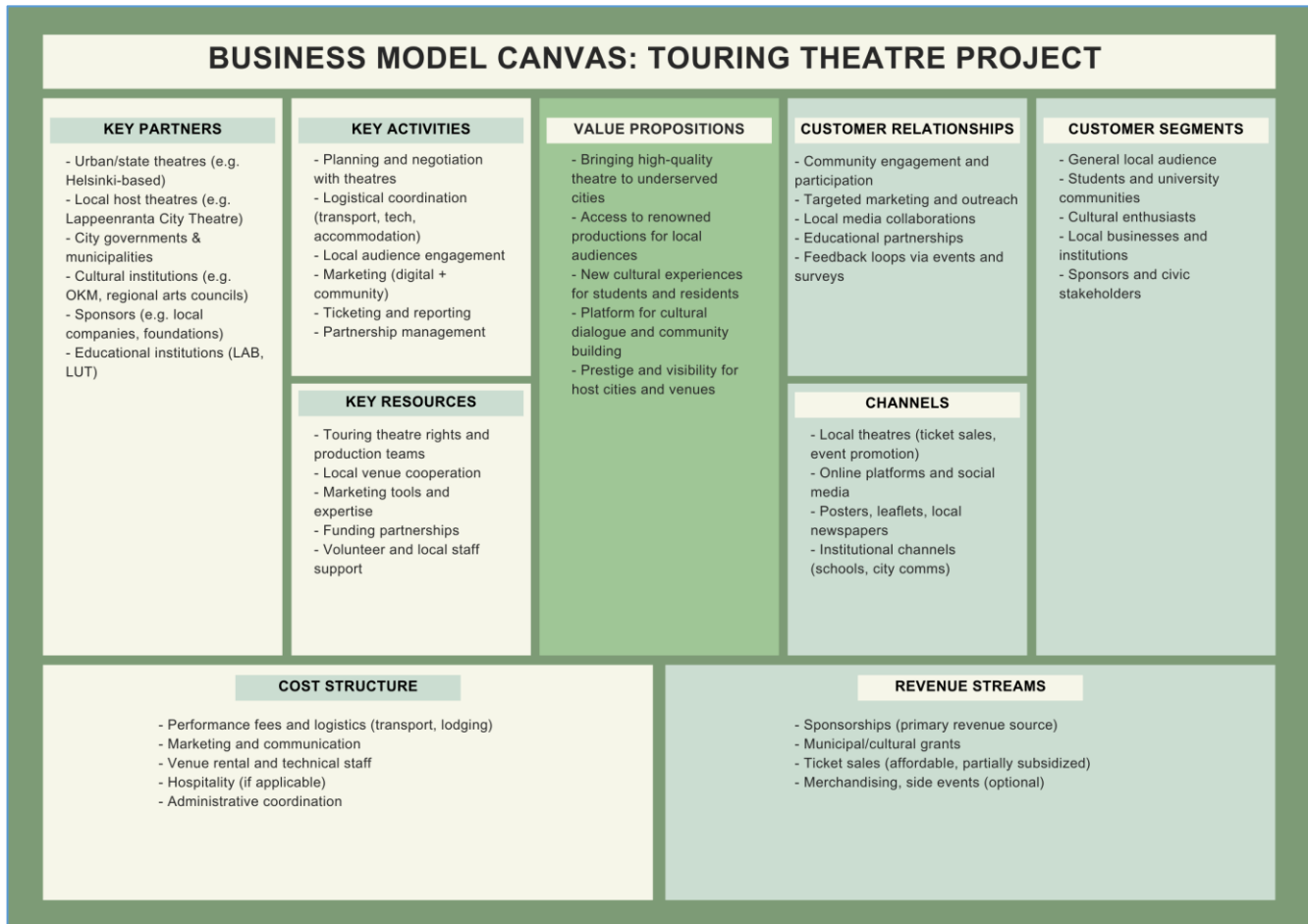
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Appendix 1: Business Model Canvas



Appendix 2: Interview Questions for the General Producer of a Touring Theater Project

1. Role and Background

1. Could you describe your role as the general producer in the cultural project that organizes touring theater performances?
2. How did the idea for this touring project first come about, and what was your vision for it?
3. What types of theaters and performances do you usually work with in this project?

2. Strategic and Operational Planning

4. What criteria do you use to select theaters and performances that will tour?
5. What are the main logistical or organizational challenges when touring to smaller or more remote locations?
6. How do you typically structure the production team and responsibilities during the tour?

3. Funding and Financial Sustainability

7. How is the project funded, and what private sector support does your work?
8. How do you approach potential sponsors or stakeholders when presenting the value of cultural initiatives like this?
9. What kind of cost and income structure do you usually plan for?
- 9.1 How do you balance expenses with ticket income and other revenue streams?

4. Audience Development and Marketing

10. How do you promote performances in smaller cities where the local audience may be unfamiliar with the performers?

11. Which marketing tools or channels have proven most effective for reaching and engaging regional audiences?

12. Do you collaborate with local institutions or media to help connect with the community?

5. Project Outcomes and Lessons

13. What do you consider the biggest success of the project so far — artistically, socially, or financially?

14. Have you encountered any difficulties or failures that led to important insights or changes in your model?

15. In your opinion, what are the key ingredients for a sustainable and impactful touring theater project?

6. Final Reflection

16. What advice would you give to someone who is planning to launch a similar cultural project in a smaller city?