

Chapter 8

Production Complexity of the Iranian Performing Arts: An Economic Analysis in Three Acts

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ABSTRACT

Theater is referred to as a cultural product which plays a major part in the cultural paradigm of civilized societies. Public theater is a type of performing arts in which the production receives financial support from the government. Therefore, the public theater production follows a complex trend controlled by a particular socio-economic system. The aims of this study are to identify interactions among financial and economic factors in the Iranian public theater and to find the possible threats and suggest effective policies in order to improve the position of the Iranian theater. For this purpose, the authors use system dynamics methodology to build a model that can explain or mimic the system. They present their analysis in accordance with principles of microeconomics. The analysis is conducted in three acts, namely production, distribution, and consumption. Findings reveal that the position of the Iranian public theater is undesired due to accumulated workforce, lack of distribution networks, and underconsumption. Finally, policies are suggested to overcome the shortcomings.

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, the culture is of a socio-economic formation, thus cultural activities can be considered as a vocation. Durrant (1954) believes four elements constitute the human civilization: economic provision, political organization, moral tradition, and the pursuit of knowledge and the arts. It is imperative that theater, as an important artistic-cultural activity, receives a great attention due to its potentials to civilize societies, nurture constructive thoughts, and create political and societal attitudes. On the other hand, cultural producers need an abundant financial supply because producing cultural products like theater needs a substantial capital. Owing to the fact that economics deals with the studies of production, producers, and their relationships therefore all cultural products, including theater, can be considered as goods and services following a specific trend determined by a particular socio-economic system.

Socio-economic systems investigate the relationships between economics and social/cultural values. This investigation is characterized by interacting patterns which usually compound environmental, behavioral, and dynamic relationships. Therefore, System Dynamics (SD henceforth) approach is an appropriate tool for studying and understanding socio-economic systems. Literature reports that the application of SD has been proved to be functional in modeling cultural and artistic phenomena (see Haslett, 2012; Wyburn and Roach, 2013). The aim of SD is to achieve the standards of controllability and dynamic behavior which are commonplace in various systems (Coyle, 1996). SD is a way of incorporating all available information including written description and personal experience with computer simulation to reach a better understanding of social systems (Forrester, 1976). By means of the result obtained from simulation, a lucid perception of system's future behavior will be achieved so that the policy analysis will be more effective.

The objective of this study is to investigate the relationships between Iran public theater economy and production structure based on a dynamic model including the all economic stages, namely production, distribution, and consumption, in order to achieve practical and theoretical solutions for the dilemmas of the Iranian public theater. The production process is defined as all economic activities that aim to satisfy human needs directly or indirectly. Therefore, in this context production is equivalent to the creation of a cultural product. Before going any further, it is essential to categorize the Iranian theater to gain a comprehensive cognition of the public theater position. Sadeghi (1997) presents a thorough classification of Iranian national theater as follows:

- i. Commercial theater: This category encompasses plays performed for entertainment purposes without having a slight tinge of artistic creativity. The aim of this theater is to produce profit for investors.
- ii. Academic theater: This class contains theatrical performances produced by students in the Iranian universities and academies using rudimentary facilities. Academic theaters are generally performed sporadically due to lack of available halls. Also, such performances fail to attract public attention due the paucity of desired experience and equipment.
- iii. Festival theater: This class is refereed to special theaters produced to be performed in occasional festivals offered by various organizations. Considering the characteristics of the host organization, these theaters have miscellaneous themes but, reportedly, the performance quality is not revered by the experts.
- iv. Private theater: This type of theater is a long-standing class with a meandering pattern. In the past, comedy theatrical performances would be performed in private theater houses. However, these theater houses were closed or changed functionality after 1979 revolution. Nowadays, this term is

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