



Discover REACH'M:
Expanding the Reach of
European Arthouse Films

Introduction to REACH'M

REACH'M is a partnership between virtual cinema pioneers Picl and Medialoc, supported by the Creative Europe MEDIA program. Over the past three years, REACH'M has aimed to expand the audience base for European arthouse films and make them more accessible. By focusing on hybrid release models that combine online and offline viewing experiences, REACH'M seeks to broaden access, reach a diverse range of viewers, enhance these films' impact, and deepen audience engagement.

A Focus on Hybrid Viewing for cinemas

The film industry has undergone significant transformation in recent years, driven by evolving audience behaviour and rapidly emerging technologies. Cinemas face the challenge of integrating online programming alongside their traditional in-theater offerings, calling for a hybrid model that combines both viewing experiences and opens up new opportunities for engagement and growth. At REACH'M, our foundation is Virtual Cinema: offering films online in collaboration with local cinemas.

This approach allows for a deeper connection with audiences, improves film accessibility, and enriches the viewing experience. Additionally, data collection offers valuable insights, enabling cinemas to tailor programming to audience preferences and gain a better understanding of viewer interests.

However, this hybrid model also presents challenges. Combining Virtual Cinema and Classical Cinema requires a different organizational approach. There is strong demand for clear expertise on managing this transition. To support cinemas in this shift, REACH'M conducted research on how cinemas across Europe are developing and implementing their Virtual Cinema offerings.

Research Insights:

The state and future of Virtual Cinema in Europe

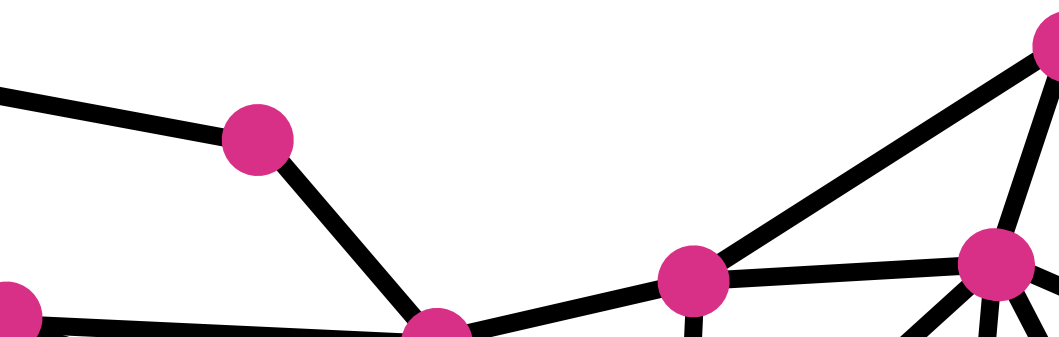
To understand how cinemas and distributors are developing their virtual cinema models, REACH'M conducted a study led by experts from the University of the Arts Utrecht (HKU). The study, co-produced with Europa Cinemas and Europa Distribution, involved 77 cinemas and 52 distributors from 25 European countries. The research revealed key insights:

- The added value of virtual cinema is recognized across Europe, by both cinemas and distributors
- Virtual cinema offers opportunities for content and audience development
- A deeper understanding of data management and audience behavior is crucial for future success
- Business models must be tailored to local needs and market realities

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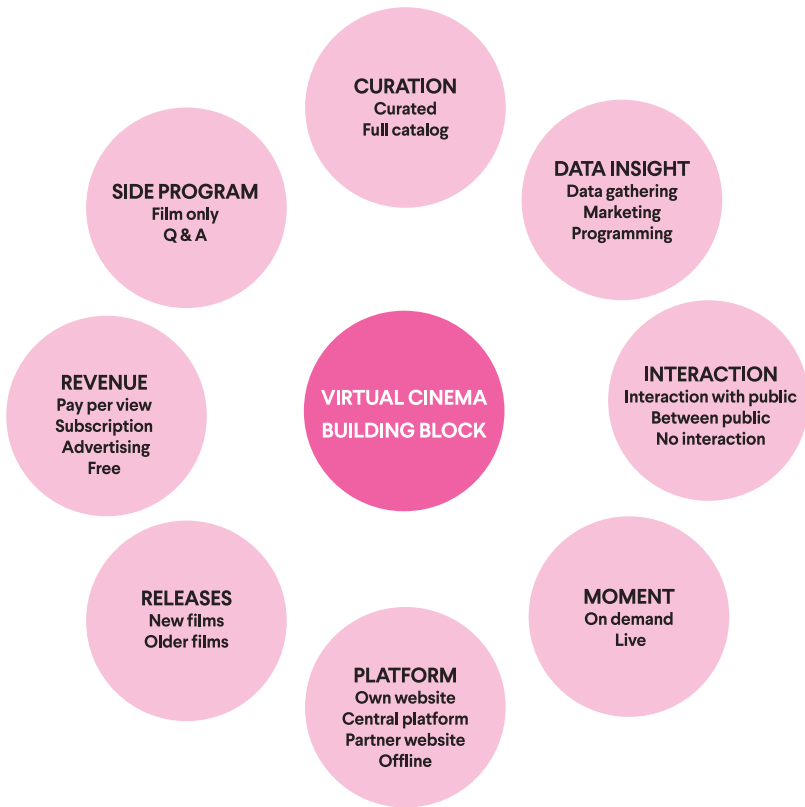
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Success factors for Virtual Cinema: Building Blocks and the Toolkit

The findings from this research offer valuable insights into how cinemas are shaping their Virtual Cinema strategies. We have outlined effective approaches using “Business Model Building Blocks,” which serve as practical guidelines for cinemas and distributors to structure and implement their hybrid strategies.



Business Model Building Blocks

The REACH'M Virtual Cinema Toolkit provides practical solutions for implementing hybrid models. This toolkit supports all business models, facilitating both online and offline screenings for cinemas, film festivals, distributors, and producers.

Discover the toolkit now at reachm.eu.

The role of technology

One of the most fundamental building blocks of business models for cinemas is technology. Technology is not only a facilitator of film screenings but also opens up new possibilities for business models. In traditional cinema, for example, the introduction of 3D created a new way for cinemas to engage audiences and generated a new revenue stream. Thus, technology can either enhance existing models or drive new opportunities.

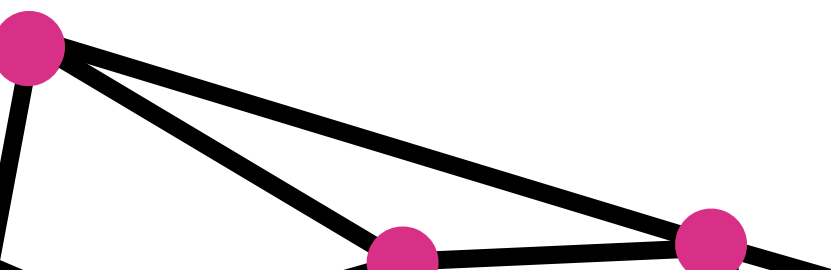
In REACH'M, we have explored solutions that reduce technical barriers for cinemas adopting a hybrid business model. This includes a system for distributing films both offline and online, as well as tools for facilitating online ticketing and streaming directly within a cinema's own website. Additionally, we've seen how technology can create new opportunities for cinemas, such as using online platforms for offline screenings, developing integrations to offer films in external venues and with cultural partners, or introducing new programming options, such as broadcasting conferences or presenting in-depth and interactive programs following film screenings.

Data marketing for future audiences

To attract new audiences and keep them coming back, understanding their preferences is essential. Future audiences are hybrid, blending online and cinema viewing interests. REACH'M has demonstrated that data sharing and collaboration between cinemas and streaming platforms can effectively expand audience reach.

Localized, targeted marketing campaigns are key to engaging audiences with hybrid offerings. Data-driven strategies make a significant impact, showing that online and offline programming can complement each other and draw in additional viewers.

The insights REACH'M has gathered and shared in this area help ensure that European arthouse films are accessible to diverse audiences, enhancing their reach and deepening engagement with compelling stories.



Impact and Results in practice

The future of film distribution lies in hybrid models that combine physical and virtual elements to extend the reach of European films. The findings have been explored through several inspiring case studies, analyzing how the building blocks were structured and how they function in practice.

1. Cinema model: minimizing barriers

We developed solutions to reduce technical barriers for cinemas adopting a Virtual Cinema model, including a system that enables cinemas to set up an online platform with integrated ticketing and operations. Several cinemas have already implemented this setup. Another key challenge we addressed was designing a hybrid film distribution solution that seamlessly manages both online films and offline media (e.g., DCP) within a single platform. This unified system streamlines the processes for sending, managing, receiving, and unlocking content for both digital and in-theater screenings.

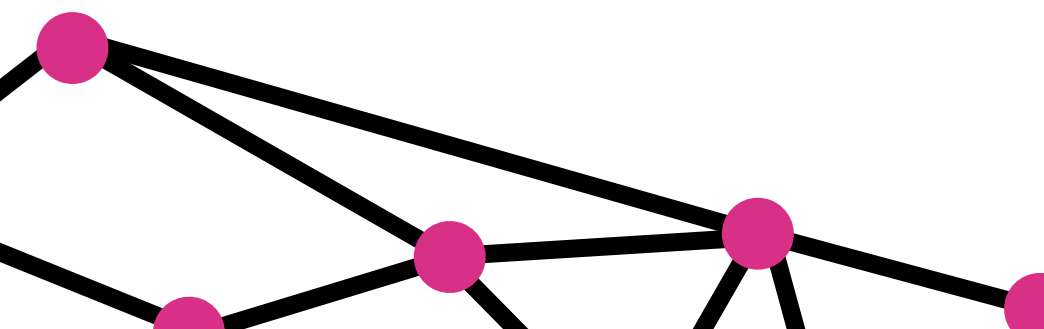
2. Distribution Models: boosting attendance and revenues

We demonstrated how technology creates new opportunities within hybrid distribution models by also allowing distributors and third parties to set up an online platform on their own website, curating films for their own specific audiences and using the above mentioned hybrid distribution solution. In Belgium, a pilot program has shown how a link to libraries helped reach a new audience for European cinema. Additionally, we have experimented with new screening models for online films, resulting in a hybrid format that combines online cinematech with the traditional shared viewing experience. These technological models open up ways to expand audience reach, introduce fresh programming formats, helping to attract diverse audiences, increase attendance, and boost revenue.

3. Central Platform: joining forces and increasing impact

We successfully piloted a central platform model with Picl in The Netherlands and Belgium, partnering with cinemas to offer on-demand virtual films. Through collaboration, we can meet the needs of modern film lovers, gain a competitive edge, and improve the visibility of European arthouse films. This platform manages technical, legal, and payment processes, ensuring cinemas receive a share of pay-per-view revenue. It also provides valuable marketing insights, helping attract new audiences to physical cinemas, extend the lifecycle of European films, and amplify their impact, with Picl driving innovation.

Inspired by these examples? Visit reachm.eu for more interesting cases and articles.



Learnings

With the REACH'M project, we have provided cinemas with greater insights and tools to develop their own Virtual Cinema strategies. By mapping out various aspects of potential business models—including the role of technology, data, and marketing—we aimed to establish a framework that cinemas can use to develop a sustainable, future-proof plan to reach a hybrid audience through Virtual Cinema. Our case studies in the Netherlands and Belgium illustrate how the accessibility of European films is increasing and how Virtual Cinema can boost both viewership and profitability. Collaborative efforts between cinemas, distributors, and film festivals have proven essential in engaging hybrid audiences.

- Virtual cinema is essential to reaching tomorrow's audiences
- Hybrid models are integral to cinema strategies going forward
- Tailored solutions ensure that business models fit local market needs
- Exhibitors benefit from shared expertise on best practices and proof of concepts to shape the business model that best suits them

Gains can be made through shared knowledge and resources in the technological, curatorial, and marketing domains. Many technological challenges have been overcome in recent years.

Technology is not just a facilitator in virtual and hybrid cinema; it can actually act as a catalyst.

REACH'M is paving the way for a vibrant future in European arthouse film distribution, combining hybrid models and data-driven strategies to ensure these films continue to resonate with audiences across Europe.

Join Us! Be part of the future of film distribution with REACH'M. Together, we can ensure that European arthouse cinema remains accessible, relevant, and impactful in an ever-evolving landscape.

Visit [REACHM.EU](https://reachm.eu) for more insights, best practices, the toolkit and an online symposium on Virtual Cinema and future audiences.



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