

INTRODUCTION

During the last ten years, changes in society's cultural policy, arts funding and social structure have led arts organisations to re-examine their activities from a more market-orientated perspective. In proportion to the decline in public subsidies for the arts, private funding has become an increasingly important source of funding. General attitude towards arts organisations have are also in the process of changing. Arts organisations and the content they produce must show their tangible or intangible benefit to society. The root for many cultural policy, at least in nordic well-fare state systems, has slowly broaden from monocultural democratisation of culture to the idea of culture democracy which emphasises pluralism of different art forms and art attenders interaction and attendance in arts. On the other words, old idea from 18'th century "art for art's sake" cannot necessary be the justification of existence for an arts organisation.

Arts organisations today, operating from more market-orientated perspective, face very different challenges than those more traditional organisations operating with almost 100% state subsidy. Need for seeking private funders leads to the situation where arts organisations must try to arouse broad public interest if they want to be attractive from the sponsor's point of view. Therefore, arts organisations have to develop their action towards more customer-orientated direction. At the same time, many arts organisations mission is to create very personal artistic content which often is marginal and linked to the institution and tradition of certain art form. This kind of content doesn't usually interest public in a broad sense, rather small marginal group of people, which sets the conflict between art institution and market orientation.

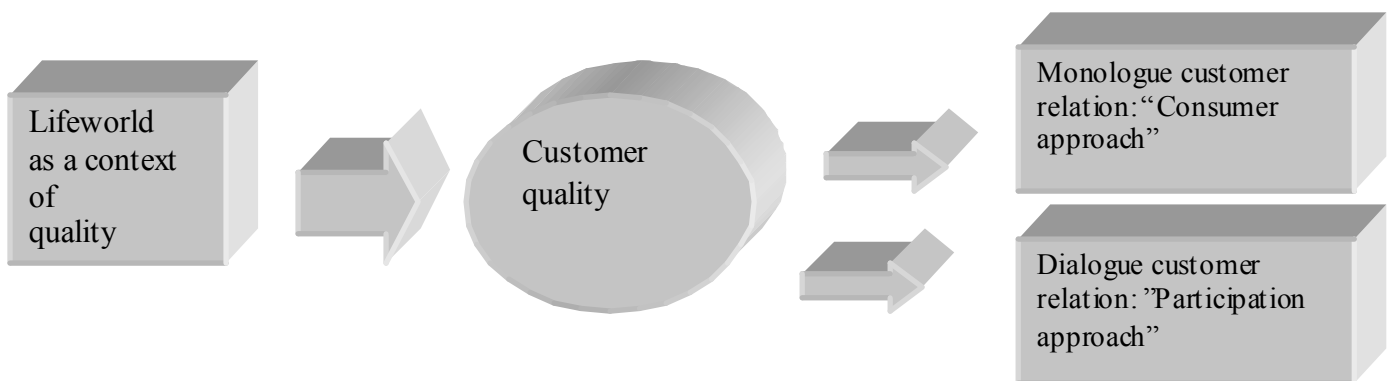
The question arises, is it possible to combine customer orientation and art which conform the technical and contentual demands of it's art form. The arts organisations operating with commercial mission do not necessary have this dilemma. They are not so tight to the norms and rules of art tradition and institution. The criteria for good art could simply be the enjoyment of a customer. Hence, is justifiable to ask what will happen to the organisations operating from so called "high art" context. Is there alternative ways to present also more marginal art in such manner where the content can interest also broader public or do we have to reconsider the whole tradition of "high art" in a new way?

Arts organisation's customer orientation has two dimensions. Firstly, it can be seen in organisations service supply. How comfortable restaurant and cafe organisation has? What kind of supplementary material, such as, exhibition catalogues, brochures, technical equipments or bookshop there is available? Secondly, customer orientation can be shown in the artistic content. For example, is the content presented in such a manner where it is experiential to the broad audience, not just small elite? Naturally, the problem here is not the customer orientation in service supply but rather the customer orientation in the content. Should the art organisations abide artist's or customer's taste when choosing the content?

An arts organisation emphasising customer orientation in its action, is probably interested in customer quality. Customer quality is a concept used normally in such businesses where quality of certain product is measured by the amount of benefits it produces to the customer. Customer quality focuses to the role of a customer as a paying and therefore quality defining part. What sells is also good quality. Problematic here is that often a customer chooses to buy a certain product because of subjective image. Hence, the nature of customer quality is that customer's needs manifests as expectations, which cannot necessary be fulfilled in reality. Quality constructs to a customer from the fact how close or far the expectations and reality of a product are from each other. (Lilrank 1999, 34-37.) What do we mean then by quality and especially customer quality, which is the focus in this study, when our special area is an arts organisation? Naturally, the concept customer itself can lead us to several misunderstandings, as well as, all the other concepts of quality thinking presented in this study. However, the concept of customer quality is used by purpose in order to connect the general quality debate to the field of arts organisations. In this study, the concept customer is used analogically with the concept audience.

Only few studies have made about quality in an arts organisation and none of them explores especially customer quality. Danish cultural policy researcher *Henrik Kaare Nielsen* suggests three possible ideological contexts of quality for art organisation and cultural policy. They are 1. The art institutions as a context, where quality is seen as an organisation ability to connect itself to the expert frame of reference i.e. to the tradition and institution of certain art form. 2. The political and economical context, where measurement of quality could simply be the amount of sold tickets. 3. The lifeworld as a context, where quality is seen as organisations ability to arouse aesthetic experiences among it's customers. (Nielsen 1999, 192.)

If an arts organisation manifests in its mission the lifeworld as a context of quality it has to determine what kind of customer relationship it holds. According to Nielsen, customer relation in an arts organisation can be dialogue, which in fact, is the lifeworld quality how Nielsen has defined it. Nielsen argues that cultural policy, and arts organisations as part of it, must be linked to enlightenment¹ “In the nordic tradition cultural policy has been endowed from the beginning with an enlightening and welfare-political aim. Or to put it another way: Nordic cultural policies are based on a overall socio-political objective of furthering the empowerment of the individual, universal enlightenment(Bildung) and the continued democratisation of society.” (Nielsen 2002, 5.) Art organisation is a place where art attracts its customers to the dialogue and discussion about, for example, moral or social issues of society. Therefore, an arts organisation is not just reacting to the demands coming from the market, but rather try to arouse a dialog between art and customers which can empower the society. Naturally, organisation's mission is then on very ideological basis. This dialogue approach is typical for non-profit organisations. However, customer's relation can also be monologue, which is a typical approach to commercial arts organisations. A customer wants emotional experiences and also defines what is quality. In monologue customer-orientation organisation can measure quality with the amount of sold tickets or other products. Beneath is a theoretical framework which combines Nielsen’s lifeworld quality to customer quality and how customer quality divides into two possible dimensions in an arts organisation.



Pattern I.: The theoretical framework for customer quality in an arts organisation

¹ "Bildung"

If quality is understood as a best possible analogue with the aim and achievement gives Nielsen's theory valuable insight when focusing to the values and mission i.e. the aim or of organisations action. However, this is not enough when discussing about the quality in an art organisation. We need to focus also to the fact what kind of processes we need and how to carry them out in customer quality in order to get best possible analogue between aim and achievement i.e. good quality. We must also study how well the concepts of quality, coming mainly from the business world, fits to the arts organisation.

The research problems for this study are as follows:

1. How customer quality can be defined in an arts organisation?
2. How arts organisations, emphasising the role of customer, carry out the customer quality with their processes?
3. What special conditions art sets to the quality thinking in an art organisation?

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