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**CROSS CULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION:**  
**A case of Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce, Wroclaw,**  
**Poland**

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**ABSTRACT**

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<p>The purpose of this paper is to examine the extent to which Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce gives thought about cross cultural communication within the specifics of these four cultural dimensions; Power Distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Affective versus Neutral, and Time and also to particularly determine if cross culture communications has any bearings on the organization's business endeavours internationally.</p> <p>Qualitative research approach was adopted in this study. Research is based on four face to face interviews conducted with staff of Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce. Theories on cultures and communication in the theoretical section are based on theories of four scientists; Geert Hofstede's national culture theory, Fons Trompenaars culture business theory, Edward Hall's high and low context theory and William Gudykunst's anxiety/uncertainty management theory.</p> <p>Research findings showed that Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce exhibited some character traits which have been established by scientists for business in cultures such as the Polish culture. For example, the study showed that staff of the chamber prefers to work individually. This is a characteristic of employees in individualistic cultures according Geert Hofstede. Respondents however, also showed that some established theories are not the case in the organization. For example, the study proved that authority is not extensively explicit in the organization as it is a characteristic of businesses in high power cultures according Geert Hofstede. Research results also showed that cultural dynamisms have bearing on all aspect of the chamber's activities.</p>		

**Key words**

culture, communication, intercultural communication, business communication

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Globally, people are interacting with each other more in recent years than they were in the mid twentieth century. The increased interaction among people from around the world has been enhanced greatly by the advancement of technology. Traditional telephone communication increased and extended to countries and regions of the world which did not have such facility before. Mobile phone communication has greatly influenced the communication industry globally in ways which were otherwise limited in traditional landline telecommunications.

The internet which has nowadays become the mostly sought source for information, has also contributed enormously to the rise and stay of globalization. Increased numbers in possession and use of television and radios are also contributing factors of globalization.

The Levin institute, the state university of New York, states that globalization is a process, meaning a series of ongoing activities. According to the institute, “globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology”. Globalization has influences on political structures, economic development and culture, actual well-being of people in societies and also on the environment ([http://www.globalization101.org/What\\_is\\_Globalization.html](http://www.globalization101.org/What_is_Globalization.html)).

### **1.1 Problem Background**

Certainly, Poland and in particularly Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce, being the organization in focus, benefits from whatever merits that are associated with the globalization process. Just as there are upsides, there are also downsides which come with the whole globalization phenomenon. Culture difference is the most prominent challenge facing Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce in the face and era of globalization. The staff of the organization regularly conducts negotiations across Polish borders in the interest of the organization’s members. Language therefore, becomes an important aspect of these

negotiations. Concern is also raised on how well people at each end of the line perceive the wording and gestures in relation to their own cultures.

Even though Lower Silesian Chamber of Commerce primarily conducts negotiations across the Polish border with neighbouring countries, Germany and Czech Republic, it is apparent that cultural values between these nations are different as they all possess individually unique cultural attributes. The cultural divide poses greater challenges to the organization as business activities stretches further into Western Europe and across the continent. Norms, beliefs, values and language amount to the cultural differences in different countries. Hence, these cultural constituents have been influenced and learned as a result of belonging to a specific group of people and they have been shaped by a number of factors such as; the law, religion, politics, economics and so forth. It is therefore crucial not to make decisions based on how we operate in our home country (Hofstede 1991, 3-4).

## **1.2 Aim of the Thesis**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the extent to which Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce gives thought about cross cultural communication within the specifics of these four cultural dimensions; Power Distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Affective versus Neutral, and Time. The writer would also like to particularly determine if cross culture communications has any bearings on the organization's business endeavours internationally.

## **1.3 Limitations**

A number of alternatives were faced during this study with regards to choosing the purpose, methodology and theories. The writer recognises that such results have been achieved in this paper because of the choices made from the alternatives. Perhaps, there would have been different results achieved if a different research method and different thesis purpose had been opted for. Considerations were given to the environment and timeframe for the entire study.



The author acknowledges that results presented in this paper do not absolutely and generally reflect the organizations state in line with the subject. Nevertheless, the content is appreciated with the findings which are a result of choices and interviews conducted. The research interviewees are knowledgeable in the subject area and are all staff of the company in focus.

Research interviews were conducted in the time when the writer had served with the organization and thus, findings gathered depicts the state of the organization with regards to the topic of this paper during the time of service with the organization

For the purpose of this thesis, the reader should bear in mind that, where “culture” have been used in this thesis, it refers to the culture that is shared by people in the organization and also those shared by most people in the country. Also, all staff of Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce are Polish and thus, share a common culture.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

The entire research was primary conduct based on interviews. Qualitative research method was chosen because of the basic reason that the writer had opportunity to directly work with the respondents and was able to interact with them. This provided me with the flexibility needed, prospect of being able to ask follow up questions based on what respondents say and open discussions with respondents. The environment within which interviews were conducted was conducive because it was the respondents’ natural working environment. Since the intentions were to understand respondents’ value and their world view of the topic, quantitative approach could not have adopted for this particular research because the purpose of the thesis is not to accept or reject a hypothesis on the subject (Ghauri& Grønhaug 2005).

Kotler, Armstrong, Wong & Saunders (2008) stresses that there are two main source of data; primary data and secondary data. “Primary data is information collected for a specific purpose at hand and secondary data is information that already exist somewhere, having been collected for another purpose”. Data for this paper is base on these two types; an interview research and literature review.

Information gathered from four interviews with staff of the organization who are the main people who deal directly with issues in the interest of the chamber's members, is the research's primary data. The chamber has nine staff heading and working in various departments at the time of the writer's service with the organization. Out of this number, four are directly responsible with business on behalf of members' interests. Considering the subject of this thesis, it was deemed appropriate to select these four for primary source of data.

Gratitude to these four interviewees;

1. Zbigniew Sebastian, President
2. Jowita Cetnar Kupracz, International Cooperation and Projects.
3. Iwona Wielgo, PR and Training Coordinator.
4. Ewa Eliasiewicz – Skoberla, President's Assistant

The research began with a literature review of earlier studies and theories within the area of business communication and cultural diversity. The purpose of this literature review in the subject field was to provide the author with general idea about relevant literature. Care was taken to evaluate and select literature before using it in this paper since secondary data usually provides information of already served purposes.

Text materials from Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences, text books from the Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences and internet files are the main source secondary data for this paper. Keywords used when searching for literature on the internet includes cross culture communication, business communication, communication, culture, business culture, intercultural communication and Poland.

### **1.5 Methodological Reflections**

As it is in qualitative research, the researcher's perceptions and/or interpretations regarding the studied subject are in focus, the writer therefore try to capture his respondents'

perception and to depict the reality as they experienced it, hence interpreting the answers of respondents. Information gathered from the interviews would be different if another interview is conducted with the same interviewees and by a different researcher. This is because interpretation of research is dependent on the researcher and to some extent the environment in which interviews are conducted.

It is not uncommon that the author's own cultural background may affect interpretations of the interviews and may lead to subjective undertones in the analysis. Nevertheless, information viewed and conclusions drawn are as objectively as possible. During interviews, care was taken to refrain from asking leading questions and adding own values and thoughts into discussions. Trots describes these subjective thoughts and asking of leading questions as the so-called "interview effect" in interviews between the interviewer and interviewee (Trots 2001).

During the interviews, notes of all keywords and all important information given were noted down so as not to forget vital details during interactions. It was then possible to compare information provided by each respondent with the others. It was realised that interviewees provided similar information which led to the belief that conclusions would not have been altered considerably to any degree, should another interview had been conducted with the rest of staff of the chamber.

## **2 INTRODUCTION OF LOWER SILESIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce was established in June 1992, when a group of businessmen, during a general meeting of Lower Silesian Chamber of Industry and Trade also in Wroclaw, suggested establishing the Lower-Silesian Chamber of Commerce. The meeting passed the constitution and elected the board, consisting of 9 persons, and the board of directors (5 persons).

During another general meeting in 1993, the Lower Silesian Chamber of Trade passed a merger of the Lower Silesian Chamber of Trade and Lower Silesian Chamber of Commerce. Since that moment the institution has been called the Lower-Silesian Chamber of Commerce.

### **2.1 Scoop of activities**

Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce is a large organization with over 500 small-to-medium size enterprises (SMEs) making up the chamber's members. It operates in the interest of its members both on the Polish market and across national borders. The chamber seeks for prospective clients and partners across the globe for members of the organization. It negotiates for its members on chamber to chamber level meetings. It represents its members in European Union SMEs meetings.

The chamber prepares conferences for its members in the premises of the chamber. Where mandated by a member, the chamber negotiates and conducts meetings with a client or partner on the member's behalf. The chamber is also responsible for the announcements of business opportunities from other chamber and advertising of offers from their own members to the world.

## **2.2 Mission and culture**

The mission of Lower Silesian Chamber of Commerce is bringing top quality assistance to firms working in production, trade and service. It concentrates on integration of the business environment. The Chamber searches for new solutions that can be helpful to its members and other entities. Standardized procedures contribute to increase in the level of DIG clients' satisfaction. The success of Lower Silesian Chamber of Commerce is determined by satisfaction of the members ([www.dig.wroc.pl](http://www.dig.wroc.pl)).

Culturally, Lower Silesian Chamber of Commerce appreciates competence and encourages learning. The organization promotes innovation of ideas which would boost the achievements of laid objectives. As the writer had realised while with the organization, he could assume that it is the tradition of the organization to allow employees room to work in ways which seems fit but within boundaries of regulations and working ethics. Hence, flexibility in working structure which promotes positive working dynamism. Time is adhered to with little or no exceptions. It is imperative that deadlines are met and this, workers of the organization exhibit in their giving duties by showing the urgency and importance attached to their tasks.

## **2.3 Responsibilities of the writer during his service with the organization.**

The writer had served with the organization for a period not exceeding five months. It began on the Tuesday, 18.07.2009 and ended on the Thursday, 24.12.2009. Specific tasks as part of his service with the organization included (1) translating profiles of members of the chamber from Polish into English on the organizations website for the aid of the chamber's international partners and prospective partners.

(2) Seeking and establishing new co-operation with other chambers of commerce from other parts of the world, especially, the Americas, Asia, and Africa. (3) Updating members of the chamber of any offer from other companies from other countries and also help advertise offers from the chamber's members to other companies across the globe

General office duties were also part of expected duties which accompanied the writer's position as an intern. Such general office duties included helping colleague with their tasks when he is less busy, help with communication outfits especially where the language of

communication is English and help prepare conference facility prior to a conference to be held.

## **2.4 Accomplishments**

Under clear and effective supervision and support from writer's supervisor and staff, he was able to accomplish all specific tasks given to him. Most noticeable of these accomplishments was the successful establishment of co-operation between the Lower Silesian Chamber of Commerce and a number of other Chambers particularly from Africa and Western Europe.

Lower Silesian Chamber of commerce currently has an updated English version of members' profiles on the organization's website. This is as a result of writer's efforts and help from colleagues who helped explain some difficult words in the organization's natural language (Polish). In the same vein, the writer has been very instrumental in disseminating information and organizing events with international partners of the organization.

### 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Culture, which was derived from the Latin *cultura* stemming from “*colere*”, meaning “to cultivate”, does not have an accepted definitive meaning. Dating back from the early 1950’s, there has been over 400 different definitions for culture. For example, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, in 1952, compiled a list of 164 definitions of “culture” in their book, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Writer’s understanding of culture simply means a way a group of people live. Culture is defined as a collective programming of the mind; it manifests itself not only in values, but in more superficial ways: in symbols, heroes and rituals (Geert Hofstede 2001, 1). Culture is also defined as “a shared set of meanings that are lived through the material and symbolic practices of everyday life” (Knox & Marston 2001, 2). Anthropologists and other behavioural scientists regard culture as the full range of learned human behaviour patterns. The English Anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book, *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871, defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

Most of the known definitions of culture, however, emphasise on some amount of key themes. Culture, first and foremost is learned, not inherent. Culture is a “collective programming of the mind” (Hofstede 1984, 21). Culture should be separated from the human nature and from the individual personality (see graph 1). Exactly where the boundaries are between nature and culture and between culture and personality is a question that has been discussed among social scientists.



GRAPH1: Uniqueness on three levels in the humans' mental programming (Hofstede 2005 p. 16).

Thus, an individual's behaviour can only be understood from an examination of the culture to which they belong. Communication is a key emphasis of culture. We communicate based on accepted patterns of communication that form the basis of our mindset. People from different cultures perceive the world through their mindset. Lastly, culture is not static but rather, it is dynamic. Thus culture is subject to change. Culture loses some of its traits and gains new ones, hence constantly evolving, as it perceives appropriate (Agar 1994).

Culture is mostly limited to national level, that is, for example, it would be widely presumed that people from Ghana would all behave in the same way, would speak the same language and hold the same values. It is often overlooked that there are few if not several different ethnic groups in a country. Indisputably, people from the same country would depict some level of identical cultural trait. However, a broader look on the cultural background shows that, people though from a same country have difference in values and norm based on their ethnicity and the area of the country that they live in. For example, Ghana being the country the writer originates from, has over 20 ethnic groups and over 15 different languages.

Most western countries also differ in cultural attributes they hold on the national level and also on ethnic or area based levels. For example, people from north of United Kingdom speak a different language (being Scottish) from the people from the south (being English)



and from the south west regions (being Welsh). Traditions depicting their unique cultural traits also differ in the same respects.

For the purpose of this work, cross-cultural and intercultural would be intended interchangeably.

### **3.1 Hofstede's national cultural model**

Geert Hofstede is an influential psychologist and researcher in the field of cross-cultural management. During his time working at the information technology company, IBM, between 1967 and 1973, Geert Hofstede conducted two research rounds on the company's employees in the area of employees' values in achieving organizational goals. His research consisted of surveys in which the international employees of IBM responded to over 11600 questionnaires from 72 countries and in 20 languages. Geert Hofstede developed a four dimensional national culture models from his research outcome (Hofstede 1991, 25).

The four dimensions were; Power distance (PDI), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS), and Uncertainty avoidance (UAI). In the 1980's, Geert Hofstede added a fifth dimension based on a new cross- national study, Bond's Chinese Value Survey, which was conducted by Michael Harris Bond. The fifth dimension was Long-term orientation versus Short-term orientation (Hofstede 2001, 18-36).

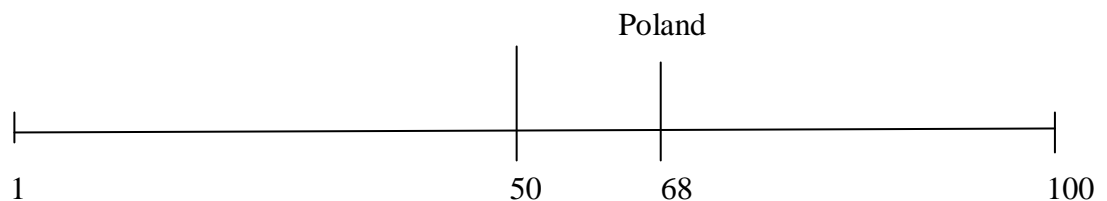
As already stated, two of these Hofstede's dimensions primarily serve the purpose of this paper; Power Distance and Individualism versus Collectivism. However, the remaining three would also be briefly detailed enhance the reader's understanding of cultural importance in globalization.

#### **3.1.1 Power Distance (PD)**

Hofstede's Power distance indicates the extent to which power is distributed equally within a society and the degree that society accepts this distribution. Hofstede's Power distance Index measures the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and

institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (clearly cultural 2005). In organizations as society units, Hofstede stresses that we will always find inequality of members' abilities, skills and inequalities in power. Hence, an unequal distribution of power among members is the essence of the organization (Cotta, 1976, 178). According to Hofstede, in cultural framework, power distance is either high or low.

In culture where the power distance is high, employees wait for instructions for managers before they work. Communication is vertically flowed from top to down. Authorities in organizations in high power distance cultures are centralized. Companies in such cultures depict strong hierarchical organizational forms. Large gaps in salaries, fringe benefits and respect as they come with the level of seniority in organization in high power contexts. A High Context culture is one in which the communicators assume a great deal of commonality of knowledge and views, so that less is spelled out explicitly (openly) and much more is implicit or communicated in indirect ways. From Hofstede's power distance model, Poland is seen to be a high power context country with Power distance index (PDI) of 68 on a scale of 1 to 100 (Hofstede 2001). See Appendix 1



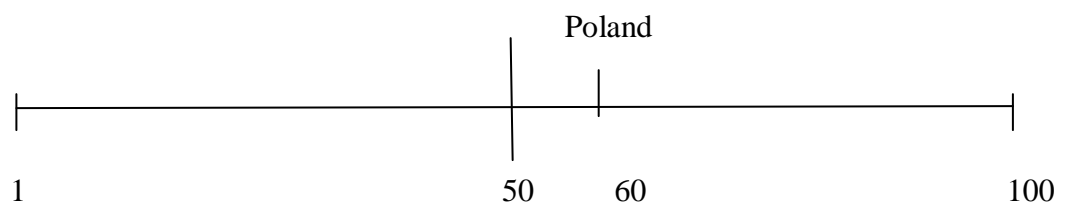
GRAPH 2: Poland "Power distance" dimension indexes.

Above representation is an own creation by the writer, based on Hofstede's research scores. See appendix 1.

Flat structured form of organisation is a characteristic of a low power distance culture with less management levels. Supervisors and employees are considered almost as equals which means subordinates and superiors could easily interact. Communication flows are usually horizontal and or from one level to the other in no particular order. Whereas, equality is important than freedom in high power distance cultures, freedom is rather seen important than equality in low power distance cultures. Low power distance companies are more decentralized and hierarchical systems are created for convenience rather than to show status (Hofstede 1991, 55).

### 3.1.2 Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)

Individualism is the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, that is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. Hofstede's 'Collectivism versus Individualism' dimension relates to the degree to which people in a culture prefer to act as members of a group or as individuals. It also reflects whether the group's interests are most important or the individual person's interest. On the scale of 1 to 100, Poland scores 60 based on this index (clearly cultural 2005).



GRAPH 3: Poland's "Collectivism versus Individualism" dimension indexes.

Above representation is an own creation by the writer, based on Hofstede's research scores. See appendix 1.

It is important to recognise that a high IDV would represent individualistic culture whereas a low IDV would represent a collectivistic culture. On the individualist side, societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. Employees are independent and the identity is connected with the individual person rather than to the family or group the employee belongs to. In an individualistic culture people make business with a company rather than with a person and the employees are viewed as individuals with own interests and needs. Individualists value their freedom to make own decisions, and it is important to have a challenging job in which they can adopt their own approach.

It is rather inappropriate to hire a family member or a relative in a highly individualistic society. In organizations in strong individualistic cultures, employees who perform inadequately get dismissed and employees who perform well get bonuses. These bonuses are paid to single individuals instead of to the whole group. Relationship between the company and its customers is based on equal treatment. Preferential treatment is considered unethical and bad business practice and no customer should be treated better

than another. In individualistic cultures only a short small talk is needed before getting down to business. The business is much more important than the relationship. To get a good deal and profit is at the end of the day what really counts (Hofstede 1991, 73-101).

On the collectivist side, societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Groups and families are very important in collective cultures. Group goals and norms supercede personal goals. Collectivistic companies employ not only an individual but also a person; belonging to a group. It is not unusual that the person is a relative of the manager or of one of the employees. To recruit relatives or friends is a good way to reduce the uncertainty about the people hired. The group is looking after the employee so that he or she will not embarrass the rest of the employees, which usually consists of other relatives. Employees who embarrass themselves not just lose their face; they embarrass the whole group; their extended family and friends. Inadequacies in work performance are no reason to dismiss anyone in a collectivistic culture. That would be the same thing as dismissing one's child. Instead of being dismissed, the employee would get relocated or transferred to another area that requires less skilled tasks.

### **3.1.3 Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)**

This refers to how much a society sticks with, and values, traditional male and female roles. Masculine culture are exhibited in countries where men are expected to be tough, to be the provider, to be assertive and to be strong. If women work outside the home, they have separate professions from men. Feminine cultures are found in countries where women and men working together equally across many professions. Men are allowed to be sensitive and women can work hard for professional success

Masculine cultures stress earnings, recognition and challenge whereas feminine cultures stress good working relationship, cooperation and employment security (Hofstede 1991, 118).

Masculine and feminine cultures create different management types. In a masculine organization the manager is decisive and makes most decisions singlehanded. Opposite is

true in feminine cultures where this autocrat leadership is frowned upon. In feminine cultures there is a preference for making decisions in a group and the manager is less visible (Hofstede 1991, 141).

Individuality and employees being rewarded in accordance to performance and seniority is a characteristic of an organization in a masculine culture society. Employees' value for mutual help, social contact and teamwork is characterised in a feminine culture. Thus, people are rewarded according to their knowledge, education and performance.

### **3.1.4 Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)**

Hofstede's "Uncertainty avoidance" dimension relates to the degree of anxiety society members feel when in uncertain or unknown situations (Hofstede 1991, 164). It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, and different from usual

In cultures known for high uncertainty avoidance, people feel comfortable in structured and known situations. There is an emotional need for written and unwritten rules, regulations and laws controlling and governing employers' and employees' rights, duties, and obligations. Very formal business conduct with lots of rules and policies in high uncertainty avoidance societies

Employees in weak uncertainty avoidance cultures however do not feel as threatened by unpredictable situations. They accept risks to a greater extent and they adapt easier to changeable situations. Instead employees from weak uncertainty avoidance companies seem to have an emotional fear of formal rules and laws. Rules should only be created when necessary and employees take pride in order to solve problems without formal rules. Business attitudes in low uncertainty avoidance societies are rather informal as compared to high uncertainty avoidance cultures.

A culture with weak uncertainty avoidance stimulates fundamental innovations easier because the tolerance towards dissenting ideas are bigger, but on the other hand it is more difficult to develop innovations and realize them in these cultures since they require accuracy with details and punctuality and these character traits are mostly possessed by

employees from strong uncertainty avoidance cultures. One can therefore say that it is generally people from weak uncertainty avoidance cultures who come up with ideas and innovation while it is people from strong uncertainty avoidance cultures who develop and implement the ideas (Hofstede 1991, 182-183).

### **3.1.5 Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation**

Hofstede's "Long-term orientation versus Short-term" dimension deals with the time aspect and cultures' attitudes towards the past, present and the future (Hofstede 2005, 167-186). This is the fifth dimension that Hofstede added in the 1990s after finding that Asian countries with a strong link to Confucian philosophy acted differently from western cultures. Poland was not particularly scored on this dimension index as at the time when the research was conducted, Poland was not recognised as a typical western country in Europe.

According to Hofstede's analysis, people in societies with low Long Term Orientation scores can pretty much have anything in this culture in terms of creative expression and novel ideas. The model implies that people in low Long Term Orientation culture do not value tradition as much as many others, and are therefore likely to be willing to help you execute the most innovative plans as long as they get to participate fully.

In long-term cultures family companies are common. The working environment has a stable hierarchy which makes it easier for new companies to set up business in the country. This can affect the entrepreneur market negatively, since the people do not stress initiative and risk taking in these cultures. Short-term companies the employees focus on the last month, quarter or last year's result. Their control systems are based on this short period and their managers are being judged by the last year's results. In long-term companies employees aim for future goals and these are often set 5- 10 years ahead. (Hofstede 2005.)

### **3.1.6 Arguments for Hofstede**

Hofstede's research is one of the most widely used pieces of research among scholars and practitioners despite the many criticisms against his work. Hofstede's 1980 study received 1,036 citations, while another highly regarded study on strategy by Miles and Snow received only 200 citations (Søndergaard 1994, 448).

Søndergaard insinuates that research framework used by Hofstede was based on rigorous design with systematic data collection and coherent theory (Søndergaard 1994, 448-449). However, many critics claim the sampling was flawed, being sparse and unevenly distributed (McSweeney 2000, 91).

In Søndergaard's bibliographical analysis (1994) he compared the replications (Hofstede original IBM study) of Hofstede's research. 61 replications were analysed. The majority of the replications confirmed Hofstede's predictions. Four of the replications concurred in their entirety, and 15 showed partial confirmation. The only dimension of Hofstede's that could not be validly confirmed was "Individualism", however, Hofstede addressed this issue by predicting that cultures will shift over time (Søndergaard 1994, 450-453).

During the time of its delivery there was very little work on culture, and at this time many businesses were just entering the international arena and were experiencing difficulties; they were crying out for credible advice. Hofstede's work met and exceeded this demand for guidance. Scholarly attention was also turning toward culture during this period, and Hofstede was considered a pioneer and pathfinder (Søndergaard 1994, 448-449).

### **3.1.7 Arguments against Hofstede**

Graves and McSweeney both stresses that, a study based on only one company cannot possibly provide information on the entire cultural system of a country (Graves 1986; McSweeney 2002). Hofstede in his defence, said he was not making an absolute measure, he was merely gauging differences between cultures and this style of cross-sectional analysis was appropriate (Hofstede 1998, p.481)

According to McSweeney, due to national divisions, nations are not the proper units of analysis as cultures are not necessarily bounded by borders (McSweeney, 2000). DiMaggio

(1997) states that research in recent times has found that culture is in fact fragmented across group and national lines, a consideration of cross-border influences of Arabic cultures would take one to see this weakness (Straub ,D., Loch, K., Evaristo, R., Karahanna, E. & Strite, M. 2002). Hofstede, however stresses that, national identities are the only means we have of measuring and identifying cultural differences (Hofstede 1998, 485-486).

### **3.2 Company culture**

Sometimes culture-anthropologists do research in industrial- and business economical contexts. These types of studies focuses on if organizations can be looked upon as societies in miniature with distinctive social structures, which can be reflected in different patterns for actions, languages, discourses, laws, rolls, rituals, habits, ceremonies, histories, myths and so on. In short, business organisations can be viewed upon as mini-cultures that operate in a wider national culture context, but can be viewed upon as cultures in its own as well (B. Bjerke 1999, 16). A company's culture is reflected by the attitudes and values, the manager style and the problem solving behaviour by its members (ibid, p. 39).

### **3.3 Trompenaars' cultural business model**

Trompenaars defines culture as a way in which a group of people solve problems (Trompenaars 1993, 6). This is based directly on Schein's definition of organizational culture. From the solutions to three types of problems (relationship with others; time; and the environment), he identifies seven fundamental dimensions of culture. Differing from Hofstede's research methodology, Trompenaar based his theories on a research which covered 15,000 people from various companies, across fifty countries. From the collected samples 75 per cent of the participants had management positions and 25 per cent covered secretarial positions (Trompenaars 1996, 37).

Trompenaars' definition of culture is generic across national and organisational cultures and there therefore often confounds the two. The seven dimensions are Time, Affective versus Neutral, Universalism verses Particularism, Individualism verses Communitarianism, Specific versus Diffuse, Achievement versus Ascription, and internal



versus External. These two; Time and Affective versus Neutral primarily serve the purpose for which research was conducted in this work. However, the remained of Trompenaars' cultural business models are also introduce to enhance the reader's understanding.

### **3.3.1 Time**

Perception of time can range from sequential (linear series of passing events) to synchronic (interrelated past, present and future). This orientation of time from past, present and future is a central dimension of culture (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961, 11) enabling members to co-ordinate activities (Durkheim 1960, 36). This construct has implications for both individuals and groups since an agreed meeting time may be precise or approximate. Time allocated to complete a task may be critical or merely a guide. Thus depending on the individual's attitude to time, managers may plan for the next century or get obsessed by monthly-reporting.

Cultures can be either past-, present- or future-oriented. A past-oriented culture views the future as a reflection of the past's experiences. The respect for ancestors and historical experiences is huge. In present-oriented culture people do not give much attention to past experiences nor to future prospects. Instead they let day-by-day experiences direct their lives. In future oriented cultures most activities are directed towards future prospect and future planning (Trompenaars 1996, 125).

### **3.3.2 Affective verses Neutral**

This dimension includes the range of feelings expressed. Reason and emotion both play a role in relationships between people. Members of neutral cultures keep their feelings and expressions carefully subdued and controlled. People in affective cultures tend to be demonstrative.

In a strong affective culture it is not considered necessary to hide feelings and keep them to yourself. People are used to show feelings in public by laughing out loud, use a strong body language, grimacing, and gesturing. They are very spontaneous in their way of

communicating and for a strong neutral person this approach can sometimes come across as aggressive attitude ([http://www.7d-culture.com/Content/dim\\_4.htm](http://www.7d-culture.com/Content/dim_4.htm)).

Trompenaars (1996) insinuates that subordinates of organizations from neutral cultures do not express their emotions in public. They keep them controlled and they rarely talk about vulnerable subjects, such as lack of health, relationship problems and so forth with their work colleagues. Their upbringings have taught them that this is incorrect.

### **3.3.3 Universalism verses Particularism**

Trompenaars' 'Universalism verses Particularism' dimension deals with whether rules or relationships control people's conduct. Employees from universalistic cultures prioritize rules, codes and standards over friends and relatives' needs and claims. In universalistic cultures everybody falls under the same statute and should be treated the same. They do not usually make exceptions to rules as they believe exceptions weaken rules.

In particularistic cultures the ideal company focuses on friendships and relationships. These cultures also have rules and laws, but they are mainly there to make it possible for employees to make exceptions for particular cases and people. While a universalist is concerned to follow rules in life and at work, a particularist is more concerned about the needs of people closest to them are being fulfilled. Clashes can easily occur when employees from both cultures need to conduct business with each other. (Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner. C., 1998).

### **3.3.4 Individualism versus Communitarianism**

Trompenaars' "Individualism verses Communitarianism" dimension deals with whether we function in a group or as an individual. In individualistic cultures people place the individual ahead of the culture, or the employee ahead of the company. People look after themselves and their immediate family only. Employees are expected to make their own decisions and take responsibility for their own actions. In communitarian cultures people place the culture ahead of the individual, or the company ahead of the individual. In business situations employees must act in a way that serves the company and by doing so

the individual will be taken care of naturally by the company and its employees. (Trompenaars 1996).

Trompenaars, like Hofstede, views Individualism and Collectivism on a continuum which implies that collectivists have little Individualism.

### **3.3.5 Specific versus Diffuse**

Trompenaars' 'Specific versus Diffuse' dimension deals with the degree to which people engage others in specific areas of their lives, or diffusely in all areas. It distinguishes people who have a lot of friends; normally brief and superficial friendships, and those who make few but deep friendships

([http://www.brefigroup.co.uk/newsletters/november\\_2003\\_3.html](http://www.brefigroup.co.uk/newsletters/november_2003_3.html)).

In diffuse cultures acquaintanceship is the norm and a close friendship an exception. Person who is diffuse usually takes a long time to open up to another person, but when that point is reached the friend has access to all areas of the other person's life. Qualities valued by diffuse cultures are trust, understanding and ambience.

In specific cultures people are immediately friendly and welcoming to new people. However, they only engage people in specific areas of their lives. There is a clear separation line between private life and work life and people in specific cultures do not expect their colleagues to be a part of their lives outside work. In specific cultures managers have power over the employees only when at work. In diffuse cultures the employees refer to the manager even if meeting him/her on a golf course. (Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner. C., 1998).

### **3.3.6 Achievement versus Ascription**

Trompenaars' 'Achievement versus Ascription' dimension pertains to who cultures accord status to people. Is it based on their achievements or on who the person is? In achievement cultures status derives from what the employees have achieved and accomplished at work. To keep their status the employees continuously need to prove themselves.

In ascribed cultures employees' status relates to who they are. This can derive from; birth, age, gender, education, class, families' reputation and so forth. Employees in ascribed companies do not need to keep on achieving things or in other ways prove themselves to retain their status.

According to Trompenaars, clashes can occur when achievement-oriented companies communicating with ascription-oriented companies. (Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner. C., 1998)

### **3.3.7 Internal versus External**

Trompenaars' 'Internal versus External' dimension has to do with how cultures have developed their attitudes towards the environment. The way people relates to the environment is linked to the way they try to control their lives. During his research, Trompenaars found two main orientations towards nature; Internalistic cultures and Externalistic cultures.

Internalistic cultures view nature as a machine that can be controlled with the right expertise. The people do not believe in predestination and luck. They believe that you can dominate nature if you make an effort. Externalistic people do not believe that they can shape their own destiny; nature is a mystery and you never know what will happen to you.

In internalistic cultures it is more significant to control the nature rather than to understand or recreate its harmonies. The reverse is true in externalistic cultures. Differences between the two cultures are often reflected in international companies. While employees from , employees from externalistic cultures are used to disagreements and suppose the best way to solve a difficult situation is to have an open discussion, internalistic cultures intend to avoid confrontations and craft techniques to preserve harmony. (Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner. C., 1998).

### **3.3.8 Criticism of Trompenaars' theories**

Trompenaars works, like other great researches, have attracted a number of criticisms on his theories. Among the various critiques of Trompenaars' research is Hofstede (1996)

who claimed that the theory of Trompenaars is not supported by his database. Hofstede claims that only two dimensions could be identified, both of which correlated with Hofstede's "Individualism" dimension. Trompenaars, in his response to this criticism, presented a contrasting list of assumptions attributed to Hofstede's work and his own, to show their different points of view. Hofstede's approach appears to be about the analysis of the variables of national culture, whereas Trompenaars' (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars 1997) are more involved in the process of cultural creation (<http://bora.nhh.no:8080/bitstream/2330/1467/1/Hole%20Anders%202006.pdf>).

### **3.4 Polish business culture**

The writer of this paper seeks to stress that, this paper would be written on the above mentioned heading mainly based on his experience having worked in a typically all-polish organization. This may not entirely correlate with established written facts about Polish business culture from other writers. It is purposely for the usefulness for the company under study.

The business culture of the Poles does not on a great deal differentiate itself from business etiquettes of other European countries. Nevertheless, national traditions of the Poles play significant roles in the nature of business in the country.

Working practices with regards to time is different from the traditional "9 am – 5 pm" which is used in most European and western cultures. Business day in Poland starts at 8 am and closes at 4 am, Mondays to Fridays with no official tea/coffee and lunch breaks. During afternoon hours (between 1pm and 3pm) employees take turns to have their own lunch breaks. This is, to writer's believe, to keep business running without abrupt halt during the entire working hours. However, many international businesses and companies that employ foreign staff have taken a more western approach to hours, from 9 am to 5 pm. It is not uncommon for business lunches to take place around 4pm in Poland and continue well into the evening.

Punctuality during business meetings is important as it is with most business cultures worldwide. Although, during actual business meetings, expect that the business meeting would not necessarily end on the scheduled time. Poles have tendencies to bring forth new

idea or a programme which is not originally included on the agenda and thus prolongs the duration of the meeting. In Poland, being punctual is an effective tool to establish your reliability.

Organizations in Poland have a strong respect for hierarchy and authority, with structure and delegation coming from above. This hierarchical style is reflected in many Polish business formalities and settings, including the decision making process and the use of professional titles.

In Poland, business negotiations adopt a reserved and contemplative approach to settling deals. Extended periods of silence are not uncommon and are an essential part of negotiating. Therefore, it is advisable to refrain from breaking the silences with unnecessary talk and avoid pressing your Polish counterparts for final decisions.

It is customary to start business meetings in Poland with some introductory small talk. This allows you to become more acquainted with your Polish counterparts and establish an initial business rapport. Conversational topics may cover a wide range of issues; including public life, family and your work experience. However, the subject of money should be avoided (<http://www.communicaid.com/cross-cultural-training/culture-for-business-and-management>).

### **3.5 Communication**

Communication could be defined as transferring thoughts, opinions, information or feelings from one entity to another. The transmitting process requires a vast repertoire of skills in intrapersonal and interpersonal processing, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, and evaluating. According to scientist William B. Gudykunst, communication occurs when a person attaches meaning to the information. Effective communication can be defined as when two or more individuals attach similar meanings to the message exchanged. Another definition is that effective communication reduces the risk of misunderstanding (Gudykunst 2003, 288).

Culture and communication influence each other. Culture acts as a sieve and it is our cultural background that decides what is important and unimportant for us to listen to and

communicate to others. Different signs and symbols or even words also have different meaning according to what culture one comes from (Gudykunst 2003, 289).

### **3.5.1 Intercultural communication**

Intercultural communication is sometimes used synonymously with cross-cultural communication. In this vein it seeks to understand how people from different countries and cultures act, communicate and perceive the world around them. As a separate notion, it studies situations where people from different cultural backgrounds interact. Intercultural communication plays a role in anthropology, cultural studies, linguistics, psychology and communication studies (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

According to Gudykunst, “communication is a process involving the exchange of messages and the creation of meaning” (Gudykunst 2003, 289). To that end, Gudykunst theorized a model of communication that sought to facilitate message exchange and meaning creation at the interpersonal and intercultural level. Gudykunst argues that intercultural theories fall into “five categories that are not necessarily mutually exclusive: (1) theories focusing on effective outcomes, (2) theories focusing on accommodation or adaptation, (3) theories focusing on identity management, (4) theories focusing on communication networks, and (5) theories focusing on acculturation or adjustment” (Gudykunst 2003, 168).

### **3.5.2 Gudykunst’s Anxiety and Uncertainty Management Theory**

Gudykunst’s theory on Anxiety and Uncertainty Management (AMU) focuses on interactions resulting in effective communication between members of a cultural or co-cultural in-group and strangers, people who are not members of the group, especially in situations where interactions with strangers create or are rooted in fear or suspicion (Griffin, 2003, 423; Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, 30).

Effective communication as described by Gudykunst is a process of minimizing misunderstandings. In order to do so one need to look at how similar and/or different the cultures are from each other. Gudykunst believes the best way to communicate in intercultural relations is to decrease uncertainty and increase confidence. Uncertainty refers

to how well a person can predict how a stranger will behave during their initial meeting and the person's ability to elucidate the strangers' behaviour (Berry, J. W. & Segall, M. H. & Kagitcibasi, C. 1997, 197).

According to Gudykunst (2003) in his book "*Communicating with strangers: an approach to intercultural communication*", anxiety and uncertainty are related aspects of this lack of shared scripts, and he believes they are the basic causes of communication breakdowns between members of different groups. Uncertainty refers to cognitive differences—thinking differently in similar contexts. Anxiety refers to affective differences—feeling differently in similar contexts; one or more people are uneasy or worried because they do not know how to respond when another person does or says something that would be “inappropriate” in the first person's original culture. While some limited amount of anxiety produces a motivation to succeed in the interaction, too much causes disrupts the communication, and may produce a dysfunctional response known as “culture shock”.

### **3.5.3 High- & low-context theory**

Edward Hall, is one of many researchers in the field of culture and its dimensions, has come up with a theory where he classifies cultures as being a high context culture or a low context culture. Hall laid emphasis on the connection between communication and national culture. He says that it is essential to know the culture of a country to productively communicate with a person from another country. He divides cultures into two groups; High and Low context cultures. A country being either a Low-context or a High-context culture is reflected in the way the people communicate (Hall 1989 in Mindess 1999).

Hall asseverates that a crucial dimension of culture that has particular relevance for negotiation situations is the context of communication. More specifically, Hall (1976, 129) affirms that cultures fall along a high to low-context continuum, according to the role of context in communication. Individuals rely on formal communication with information transmission concerning behaviour being chiefly verbally expressed (Cateora 1983; Foster, 1992; Root 1987). Such low-context countries include, among others, the USA, Canada, Switzerland and Germany (Graham 1988, 48-54; Onkvisit and Shaw 1993,105).



In high-context cultures, less information is contained in precise verbal expression, since much more is in the context of communication. The context of communication is high because it includes a great deal of additional information, such as the individual's background, associations, values and position in society (Keegan 1989). As such, a message cannot be understood without its context (Onkvisit 1993, 104).

According to Hawrysh and Zaichkowsky, (1989, 35) high-context cultures are “those in which the perception of the individual is inextricably bound to his or her relationship and the context in which they occur”. High-context cultures are characterised by the expressive manner in which the message is delivered using non-verbal behaviour, such as facial expressions, gestures and body language (Root 1987; Usunier 1993, 45-56). People unfamiliar with the complexities of non-verbal behaviour may experience difficulty in understanding messages. This premise leads Hall to suggest that it is “sheer folly” to get seriously involved with high-context cultures unless one is really “contexted” (Hall 1976, 127). Such countries include Japan, China, Brazil and Mexico, Spain, Italy and Middle Eastern Arab nations (Graham 1988, 48-54; Onkvisit 1993, 105).

## **4 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH**

Results of research conducted are presented in this section. This analysis will focus on the thoughts of research respondents in these four areas; Power distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Affective versus Neutral and Time. Let the reader bear in mind that, respondents thoughts on these areas mentioned are in respect to that part of their normal task which they have to relate to people from different cultures.

### **4.1 Power distance**

On Hofstede's Power Distance dimension, Poland scored 68, which implicates that Poland is a high power distance country (Hofstede 1991, 43). However, results from the research conducted depict a different picture in the organization given Hofstede's definition of high power distance.

#### **4.1.1 Hierarchy**

All the respondents attested that in the chamber, authority is not extensively explicit as it is a characteristic of businesses in high power cultures. Communication is somewhat horizontally channelled. Geert Hofstede insinuates that a culture's hierarchy structures also affect how information is transferred within the companies (Hofstede 1991, 56). However, in the case of Lower Silesia chamber of Commerce, this is not the usual case of where the culture in which the organization exist would have influence the styles and mode in which information is transferred. According to Hofstede, a company in a high distance culture is characterised by autocratic leadership styles but this not the case in the chamber as respondents recorded (Hofstede, 1991, 55-57).

Surprisingly, the chamber has less management levels which is a characteristic of low power distance culture according to Hofstede, bearing in mind that Poland is a high power distance culture (Hofstede, 1991). Respondents believe that the hierarchical structure that exists in the chamber makes it easier when negotiating with people or companies in low power distance cultures, such as Germany (Hofstede, 1991, 56).

One respondent puts it, “we know that we do not have to wait for a long time for a decision to come from the Germans”

Another notable point raised during interviews was that of status. Staff of the chamber does not particularly give much regards to status when conducting their tasks and interaction in the work environment. The only status which is about recognized in everyday situation is that of the presidency of the chamber. Respondents say, even when having to interact with a foreign corporation, they usually refrain from the use of specific titles and most of the time resort to “a representative” of the organization

#### **4.1.2 Roles**

Respondents indicated that they would not generally act outside their areas of respect for their colleagues’ territories. They would rather seek help from colleagues or provide assistance to when being asked for it. Staff of the chamber are rather quite protective of their given roles. Each of them believes that, they are competent to undertake delegated roles and an evasion into another’s territory would mean disrespect.

Protectiveness of territories is an attribute of a high distance culture according Hofstede (Hofstede, 1991, 58). Respondents also showed that where individuals have been drawn to work in teams, then it is generally perceive that individual roles are stripped off for the sake of the team’s objective. In this case, individual roles are less defined in the team and communication is also flat.

Respondents indicated that where they have been involved in European team projects, people’s cultures come into play and they intended to reinforce their area of expertise. This creates virtual individual roles and they protect these territories

The management role in Lower Silesia Chamber contradict the assumption attributed to high power distance culture such as Poland where he says that autocratic leadership styles is characterized in such cultures (Hofstede, 1991, 58). Respondents thought that management is somewhat flexible, listens and motivates.

## **4.2 Individualism and collectivism**

Hofstede's 'Collectivism versus Individualism' dimension relates to the degree to which people in a culture prefer to act as members of a group or as individuals with Poland scoring 60 on the "Individualism versus Collectivism" dimension indexes.

### **4.2.1 Decision making process**

Respondents indicated that, they prefer to work individually rather than in teams. Since all research respondents are Poles, their preference only confirmed Geert Hofstede's established traits of individualism cultures. According to Hofstede, company employees in individualism cultures are independent and the identity is connected with the individual person rather than to the group the employee belongs to (Hofstede, 1991, 85).

Respondents also made notice that; management does not take it kindly with employees who underperform. This is also trait which Hofstede attributed to high individualistic societies (Hofstede, 1991, 99).

Respondents said that they have not had much of a difficult situation when negotiating with neighbouring countries especially, Germany and Czech Republic since this countries are also individualistic societies. One respondent who had had negotiation while one South American, Chile, country said she experience some difficulty in reaching decision from the Chileans because Chile as a collective culture country, negotiation usually takes a long time; first a relationship has to be built, trust established then the task ([http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede\\_dimensions.php](http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php)).

## **4.3 Affective versus neutral**

Trompenaars' 'Affective versus Neutral' dimension relates to the display of emotions. This section seeks to find out what the emotions at play when respondents deal with people from other cultures

### **4.3.1 Emotions and confrontation**

Respondents showed during interviews that, it is almost considered a virtue not to show emotions such as anger or use of strong language in the office. This they quickly limited it to being part of working ethics. Respondents insinuated that the Poles are considered to be aggressive and responded in kind when being confronted. Having mentioned that, the Poles exhibit a more direct approach to settle conflict which is also a characteristic of their masculine culture (Hofstede, 1991, 131-133). The Poles spontaneous approach to tackle problems is associated with Trompenaars "Affective" characteristic traits (Trompenaars, 1996).

Neutral cultures try to avoid showing their emotions in public whereas affective cultures are more inclined to display their emotions according to Trompenaars (Trompenaars, 1996).

Respondents believed that a criticism on a Pole maybe received or seen as an attack by the Poles may lead a reverse attack. When asked how this played out when dealing with the chamber's associates from other cultures, respondent indicated that they have to desist from personal emotions and confrontational situations when dealing with people from different cultures as it part of working ethics and code of conduct. One respondent stated "I had to negotiate with one lady from Norway and the Norwegians say it directly and straight forward, so I found some of her statements a bit offensive. I was upset but couldn't react".

### **4.3.2 Style of approach**

From the respondents, the Poles are not necessary direct in their communication. When asked about their relation to associates from Germany in this regard, respondents indicated the Germans are directly opposite to the Poles when it comes to style of approach in negotiations; "they are very direct and straight forward". "The Czechs are more like us, so we do not go straight to business in negotiation". However, respondent also indicated that, they sometimes find the Italians hard to adhere to when negotiating with them because the Italians unlike the Poles rather take a longer time talking about topics unrelated to the business at hand.

Respondents were asked about humour and personal space and what were their thoughts on those two. Respondents stressed that they use humour when interacting among themselves and personal space is not an issue among colleagues. However, they are conscious of their personal space and other people's space when they are in interaction with people from other cultures such as Germany. One respondent states "I am always conscious of personal space when I am with other people from different countries except the Italians. I have got used to them because they will always invade your personal space".

#### **4.4 Time**

In this section, respondents gave their world's view of time as an essential part of business dynamics. Respondents also reflected on how time plays a role in the whole negotiation process with associates from different cultures.

##### **4.4.1 Planning and Punctuality**

According to interview respondents, Poles plan, but not to the extent of every detail being laid down. Respondents have said that they plan to cover the general view of an agenda but not to every detail to the word as this in most cases would leave less or no room for spontaneous discussions outside the agenda's topics. It is not uncommon for Polish business meetings and discussions to have spontaneous discussions which are originally not included in the business agenda. Respondents believe that they are quite flexible with their time usage.

When asked how planning affects negotiations with partners from across borders, respondents sharply contrasted their attitude towards that of the Germans. They stress that partners from Germany plan to every detail to the letter and stick to every detail on the agenda leaving virtually no room for spontaneous discussions. One respondent notes "it is very intense and sometimes a bit quiet when in a meeting with the Germans". They however showed that other partners from other countries such as Czech Republic and Chile also plan but not to every detail in an agenda.

Time with regards to punctuality was also raised during interaction with interviewees. Edward Hall insinuates that Poland's relaxed view of time means that they are from a high context culture (Hall 1976, 91). This assumption however, may seem a little contradictory to the views shared by the respondents. As a general rule in the chamber, all staffs are to report in or on time according to respondents. However, they also indicated that, a staff to report in late by calling before they actually report in. Hence, the general rule reigns but exceptions could be tolerated with good reasons. Respondents also revealed that when attending meetings, being it with the chamber's members or with partners from overseas, they always report in early with no accommodation for lateness. Respondents did not see any real difference between them and partners from other countries.

#### **4.4.2 Personal time and work time**

The concept of time, work time, is of very high importance stressed respondents. According to them, they are quite careful to separate their own time from work time. However, they devote some time to chitchat or "small talk" and "babbling" before actual day's work starts and during tea or coffee breaks and lunch breaks. They also stress the importance of relationship building with colleagues so they time during breaks to interacting with colleagues. Having stated this, Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce does not have specific or scheduled time for breaks. This means break times are alternated between staff during general lunch times (13:00hours to 15:00hours).

One interviewee mentioned "we also interact with each other while working too as you would have realized, and this does not affect our work in anyway".

Respondents, when asked how this concept works when dealing with associates from different cultures, denoted that partners from Germany do not necessarily fancy "small talks" before and during any section of meetings. They however suggested that partners from Czech Republic and Italy allow chitchats before, during and after meetings.

Respondents by their responses seemed to reinforce the assumption which Hall attributed to high context cultures and when he says that mix work and private time is a feature of high context cultures (Mindess 1999, 125).

## **5 FINAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

As it has already been mentioned, the purpose of this paper is to examine the extent to which Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce gives thought about cross cultural communication within the specifics of these four cultural dimensions; Power Distance, Individualism versus Collectivism, Affective versus Neutral, and Time and also to determine if cross culture communications has any bearings on the organization's business endeavours internationally.

### **5.1 Final discussion**

Culture influences the way people conduct business not only in their own cultural settings but also when conducting business across their own cultural boundaries. It is apparent that when one knows their own culture and also understands other peoples' culture, he or she equips him or herself in matters of negotiation when doing business internationally. Staffs of Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce, from interviews exhibited fair amount of knowledge in cultural diversity and as a result, conducts successful business negotiation with partners from other countries. It is also fair to state that culture greatly affects every aspect of business by the chamber as the chamber mostly find clients and/or partners for the members of the chamber. Throughout this paper's theoretical section, Hofstede, Trompenaars, Hall and Gudykunst, emphasise the importance of understanding culture in order to achieve a triumphant communication in a cross-culture meeting.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

In the first area of the research, "Power Distance", results from interviews seemed to be on the contrary to the assumption attributed to cultures which fall under high power distance cultures. Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce which exists in Wroclaw, Poland, would have been presumed to exhibit such character traits as autocratic leadership styles and vertical communication flows, based on Hofstede's power distance dimension. However, respondents thought otherwise. They believe that leadership in the organization could not



be compared to autocratic leadership forms but somewhat participative style of leadership. Due to less management levels that exist in the chamber, communication is horizontally flowed, implied respondents.

“Individualism versus Collectivism” which was the second area of research is one of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. According to Hofstede, this dimension relates to the degree to which people in a culture prefer to act as members of a group or as individuals. In the analysis, respondents thought that they prefer to undertake their task individually rather than in a group. According to Hofstede, Poland which is individualistic society, employees in this society would prefer to work individually. This assumption by Hofstede correlates with respondents’ responses and beliefs. Respondents also believes that Hofstede is right when he says management frowns upon underachievement because they thought the chamber’s management does take receive failure in good faith.

“Affective verses Neutral” dimension by Trompenaars was the third are in this research. Respondents, as part of working ethics, said that they are to refrain from showing emotion such as anger in the workplace and in situation which are work related. They however, believe that not showing such emotion is not extended to their private lives as they consider people in the culture to be generally aggressive and confrontational as well. With regards to respondents’ individual lives, it is fair to assume that Poland is an affective society when Trompenaars says affective cultures are more inclined to display their emotions. Respondents also indicated that they are not direct in their approaches when in a discussion.

Trompenaars’ ‘Time’ dimension was the forth research area. Respondents showed that they plan and schedule agenda but not to extent of planning to fine details. Punctuality is thought to be a very important aspect in the organization’s culture. From the respondent, staff of the chamber allows spontaneous discussion during meetings and negotiations. Staff of the chamber also mix work time with private time.

Having identified cultural and communication dynamics in Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce and how it comes into play in business situation and negotiation with people from other cultures in this paper, the writer believes that the staff of the chamber would continue to strengthen their areas of intercultural capabilities by continual use of international interns in the chamber. By so doing, staff of the organization would broaden their knowledge and exposure to foreign culture which would comes as an added

advantage to their cross culture negotiations. The author would also recommend that the management of the chamber would encourage intern to undertake research assignments for the organization to explore and improve upon in areas which they may not have the strongest skill in cultural divestiture.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1/4

**Greet Hofstede's indexes**

Country                      PDI IDV MAS UAI LTO

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Malaysia	104	26	50	36	
Guatemala	95	6	37	101	
Panama	95	11	44	86	
Philippines	94	32	64	44	19
Mexico	81	30	69	82	
Venezuela	81	12	73	76	
China	80	20	66	40	118
Egypt	80	38	52	68	
Iraq	80	38	52	68	
Kuwait	80	38	52	68	
Lebanon	80	38	52	68	
Libya	80	38	52	68	
Saudi Arabia	80	38	52	68	
United Arab Emirates	80	38	52	68	
Ecuador	78	8	63	67	
Indonesia	78	14	46	48	

Ghana	77	20	46	54	16
India	77	48	56	40	61
Nigeria	77	20	46	54	16
Sierra Leone	77	20	46	54	16
Singapore	74	20	48	8	48
Brazil	69	38	49	76	65
France	68	71	43	86	
Hong Kong	68	25	57	29	96
Poland	68	60	64	93	
Colombia	67	13	64	80	
El Salvador	66	19	40	94	
Turkey	66	37	45	85	
Belgium	65	75	54	94	
Ethiopia	64	27	41	52	25
Kenya	64	27	41	52	25
Peru	64	16	42	87	
Tanzania	64	27	41	52	25
Thailand	64	20	34	64	56
Zambia	64	27	41	52	25



Chile	63	23	28	86	
Portugal	63	27	31	104	
Uruguay	61	36	38	100	
Greece	60	35	57	112	
South Korea	60	18	39	85	75
Iran	58	41	43	59	
Taiwan	58	17	45	69	87
Czech Republic	57	58	57	74	
Spain	57	51	42	86	
Pakistan	55	14	50	70	
Japan	54	46	95	92	80
Italy	50	76	70	75	
Argentina	49	46	56	86	
South Africa	49	65	63	49	
Hungary	46	55	88	82	
Jamaica	45	39	68	13	
United States	40	91	62	46	29
Netherlands	38	80	14	53	44
Australia	36	90	61	51	31

Costa Rica	35	15	21	86	
Germany	35	67	66	65	31
United Kingdom	35	89	66	35	25
Switzerland	34	68	70	58	
Finland	33	63	26	59	
Norway	31	69	8	50	20
Sweden	31	71	5	29	33
Ireland	28	70	68	35	
New Zealand	22	79	58	49	30
Denmark	18	74	16	23	
Israel	13	54	47	81	
Austria	11	55	79	70	

Source; Adapted from Greet Hofstede 2007: <http://www.clearlycultural.com/geert-hofstede-cultural-dimensions>

## **Interview guide**

Culture differences and business communication (negotiation)

- Values and norms
- Power and hierarchy
- Working relationships
- Forms of communication

What values and norms does Lower Silesia Chamber of Commerce hold? (Working ethic, individual responsibilities planning, time treatment, meetings conducts, etc)

What power and hierarchical forms there exist in the organization? (Communication channels, management levels, decision making process, negotiations, etc)

How do you see the working relationships in the chamber? (Individual or group oriented, working time, personal time, style of approach, emotions, etc)

What forms of communication exist in the chamber? (Verbal and/ or non-verbal, horizontal or vertical, etc)

How do you see the chamber's foreign associates in general?

What are the communication differences between the chamber and foreign partners?

What are the cultural differences you have noticed?

**Key words and phrases in responses**

Aggressive

Individually

Easy communication

Time conscious

Team work when needed

Detailed agenda

Spontaneous discussions

Relationships building

Respect for colleagues

Meeting objectives