



Market Research of Nordic Furniture Design Market in Japan. Case Study Lundia Oy

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Abstract

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<p>Nordic furniture design has been a trend in Japan during recent years. There are several similarities in the design styles of the Nordics and Japan.</p> <p>The aim of this research-oriented bachelor's thesis was to examine the market of Nordic furniture design in Japan. The thesis gave recommendations for the case company Lundia Oy on what to consider when expanding to the market. Special focus of this thesis was on Finnish companies and Finland in Japan.</p> <p>This thesis is divided into two sections: theory framework and empirical research. The theoretical framework of this thesis covers theories related to brand image, country-of-origin branding and pricing strategies. PESTEL analysis is used as a tool to examine the Japanese market. The furniture design market and trends in the market are discussed based on secondary sources.</p> <p>The empirical research was divided into two phases. In phase one, data was collected from written sources, reliable online sources, and statistics. Competitor analysis was part of the phase one research. In phase two, interviews were conducted. In total, five interviews were conducted with consultants working with Finland-Japan relations and in the design industry. The sample was chosen with non-probability sampling method. Qualitative content and thematic qualitative analysis methods were used in analysing the data.</p> <p>The key findings from this research conclude that there is demand for Nordic furniture brands, including the case company, in Japan. There are several Nordic companies in the market, but Danish companies are the most well known. Partner companies are used in managing the business operations in Japan. Small sized, minimalistic furniture items are preferred by the Japanese consumers. Cost-based pricing strategies are commonly used. The most influential trends that can affect the demand are the increased time spent at home, and sustainability.</p> <p>For the case company Lundia Oy, the author recommends utilising the image of Finland and nature in their branding. Finland is currently one of the most popular and trendy countries in Japan. Lundia Oy should choose a partner company, which is aligned with Lundia's brand image. Furthermore, the author recommends highlighting sustainability in marketing, and tailoring product and service selection to fit to the Japanese preferences.</p>
Keywords Furniture design, Nordic design, Japan, market research, country-of-origin

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1 Introduction

This is a research based bachelor's thesis for the degree programme in International Business in the major specialization of customer relationship management in the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. In this chapter the framework and objectives of this thesis are covered. This includes the thesis' objectives, benefits, demarcation, risks, key concepts and company introduction.

1.1 Background

Finland and Japan have close relations and a long, shared history. The diplomatic relations were established in 1919 and now, over hundred years later, the two countries are closer than ever. The crucial point in the relations was the implementation of direct Finland-Japan flights by Finnair in the 1980's. This brought the culturally close countries closer to each other physically. The political relations have been maintained with continuous country visits from both parties. Recent verification of the close relationship is the strategic partnership agreement that was signed by President Sauli Niinistö and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2016. (Finland Abroad 2021a; Embassy of Japan in Finland 2021.)

Japan is one of the most important economic areas outside of Europe for Finland. Finnish exports to Japan reached 1.3 billion euros in 2017. (Finland Abroad 2021a; Finland Abroad 2021b.) Investments between Japan and Finland have been on the rise during the previous years (Finland Abroad 2021b), and the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, that has been in force for couple of years, increases the possibilities and easiness of business even more (European Commission 2020).

Finnish culture, especially classical music, architecture, and design are popular in Japan (Finland Abroad 2021b). For example, Asia-Pacific, and especially Japan, is the second largest market of leading Finnish fashion brand Marimekko after Finland (Marimekko 2020, 4). In 2019, Finnish furniture brand Artek also opened its first store in Japan (Artek 2019). Finnish design is considered to be of high-quality. The visual aesthetics and simplicity are similar in both countries. In interior design and furniture, simple design and wood as material choice are common both in Japanese and Finnish design. Because of these similarities, Finnish design can be easily implemented to Japanese interior spaces. (Leikos & Villberg 2009, 55-58.)

This thesis focuses on researching the market of Nordic furniture design in Japan, to help the commissioning company Lundia Oy to re-enter the market. Possible customers have

contacted the company which shows that there is demand for the brand in the market. The company has decided to use retailers as the entry mode but wants to have more information that could help with the market entry. (Von Wendt 27 January 2021.)

1.2 Research Question, International Aspect & Demarcation

This thesis aims to give comprehensive view on the furniture design market in Japan and provide suggestions on how to increase Lundia Oy's sales and brand visibility in the market. The outcomes of the thesis are information of current situation and demand in the Japanese market, and recommendations for Lundia Oy on what to take into consideration when expanding to Japan. The company can use the results of this research when taking further actions for expansion. However, this thesis does not offer a concrete action plan.

The international aspect required by degree programme of all theses is covered by researching a foreign market area and possibilities for a Finnish company to succeed in the market.

The research question (RQ) of this thesis is "What should Lundia Oy consider when re-entering themselves in the furniture design market in Japan?" The research question is divided into investigative questions (IQ) as follows:

IQ 1. What is furniture design market like in Japan?

IQ 2. What is the situation with Nordic furniture design brands in the market?

IQ 3. What kind of prices and price strategies are there in the market?

IQ 4. What are the current trends in furniture design market that affect marketing?

IQ 5. How can Lundia Oy make use of the country-of-origin branding concept?

IQ 6. What should be considered when selecting retailers in the Japanese market in order to ensure the target brand image?

The table 1 below lists the investigative questions of the thesis along with related theoretical framework and research methods used.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative question	Theoretical Framework	Research Methods	Results (chapter)
IQ 1. What is furniture design market like in Japan?	Furniture design market, PESTEL analysis of Japan	Desktop study, interviews	4.2.1
IQ 2. What is the situation with Nordic	Furniture design market	Desktop study, interviews	4.2.2

furniture design brands in the market?			
IQ 3. What kind of prices and price strategies are there in the market?	Pricing strategies, furniture design market	Desktop study, interviews	4.2.3
IQ 4. What are the current trends in furniture design market that affect marketing?	Furniture design market, trends in the furniture design market	Desktop study, interviews	4.2.4
IQ 5. How can Lundia Oy make use of the country-of-origin branding concept?	Brand image, country-of-origin branding	IQ1-4, interviews	5.2.1
IQ 6. What should be considered when selecting retailers in the Japanese market in order to ensure the target brand image?	PESTEL analysis of Japan, brand image, country-of-origin branding	IQ1-4, interviews	5.2.2

This thesis focuses on researching the furniture design market in Japan, and especially the North European companies in the market. More specifically, this thesis focuses on researching competitors' pricing, product range, retailers, and location. The competitors considered in the research are demarcated to companies with similar brand position and thus, companies with low-end prices are excluded. The thesis mainly focuses on Finnish competitors but also considers other North-European brands in the Japanese market. This thesis aims to find out how country of origin branding and trends in the industry affect Lundia Oy's sales opportunities in Japan. The thesis focuses on current and possible future trends, excluding the previous trends.

The thesis focuses on using retailers as it is the entry-mode the commissioning company has chosen. For these retailers, the thesis gives recommendations on what to consider when choosing which retailers Lundia Oy should contact. B2C customers' preferences are considered in trends and with the product criteria considerations. Pricing recommendations are based on the B2C market prices.

1.3 Benefits

The thesis benefits the commissioning company Lundia Oy. The company has plans to re-enter and re-brand themselves in Japan (Von Wendt 27 January 2021). This thesis helps the company to get information about sales opportunities in Japan, and to determine how

they will proceed with their re-entry. The thesis also provides ideas on how the company can utilize country branding and trends in their Japan market re-branding. The retailers of Lundia Oy benefit from getting a new brand and products to their product category. As previously mentioned, Finnish design is very popular in Japan. Thus, the consumers in Japan benefit by getting more options to buy Finnish interior design products in their home market. Other Finnish design companies planning to enter Japan can also benefit from the results of this thesis. Finland as a country benefits from getting more visibility in Japan, and Japanese interior design market benefits by getting more diversity.

For the author, there are several benefits of writing this thesis. She learns how to conduct academic research. She gains valuable information of Japanese business climate, new contacts, and interesting information about design industry. She gets valuable experience considering her future career. This experience will hopefully enable her to work in the industry in the future.

1.4 Key Concepts

Furniture design refers to designing and creation of furniture; objects designed to have a specific function and to be placed in a specific interior space (Postell 2012, 1-5).

Furniture design trends can be defined as direction where forces, such as products or social movements, are going. Trends influence the future of the industry. (Raymond 2019, 7.)

Brand image is a set of components that consumers associate with a brand. These components connect meanings and memories to the brand. The reputation and consumers' perception of a brand affect the brand image. (Keller 2013, 72-73.)

Country-of-origin branding refers to the use of country-of-origin (COO) of the brand in the company's brand image. It can also refer to the usage of the product's production country in the company image. (Johnson, Tian & Lee 2016, 403-404.)

Pricing strategy is the management and planning of prices that helps the company to compete in the chosen market. When setting prices, there is a minimum price and maximum price that are based on the production costs and market demand. Pricing strategies help to define where between these two values the price should be set. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 308-309.)

Competitor analysis is the practice of evaluating company's competitors. It is an important step which helps the company to acquire information about the market situation, especially when entering a new market area. (Barringer & Ireland 2016, 173-188.)

1.5 Commissioning Company

Lundia Oy is a Finnish family business established in 1948. The company manufactures and designs wooden furniture in Finland from Finnish materials. Nowadays the company is part of SINI corporation. The company has a long history in Finland, and the brand's furniture can be found in 600 000 Finnish homes. Domestic, ethical, and ecological production are the company's core values. The company has 3 physical stores, online store, and several retailers in Finland. (Lundia 2021a; Lundia 2021b.) Abroad, Lundia's products are sold under the Lundia trademark in Northern Europe, the Baltic countries, Italy, Japan, China, and South Korea. In countries where Lundia trademark is not available, the products are sold under LND Design and Libra brands. Such situation is used in, for example, US and UK markets. (Von Wendt 14 May 2021.)

Lundia Oy's product range includes furniture, such as beds and desks, lamps, and small wooden boxes. Lundia's most well-known products are shelves, that can be extended and modified. 95% of the products are manufactured in Finland. (Lundia 2021c.)

Lundia Oy made a contract with a Japanese retailer in 1980's when Lundia's brand image was different from the current one. Contract with this retailer hindered Lundia's further expansion in Japan since the retailer had exclusive rights to sell the products. The brand image of this retailer did not match Lundia's current brand image. This retailer also sold only one product from Lundia's product range. The contract was terminated in 2020. Currently Lundia Oy does not have retailers in Japan, but they are eager to enter the market again with a brand image that better fits to the company's current image. Possible customers have contacted the company asking where in Japan can Lundia's products be bought. This shows that there is demand in the market for Lundia. (Von Wendt 27 January 2021.)

2 Brand & Target Market

In this chapter, the theoretical framework of the thesis is discussed. The framework forms a base on which the research will be built.

The figure 1 below presents the theoretical framework of this thesis. The framework is divided into two main categories of brand theories and target market information. Both categories include theories that will be presented in more detail. The two categories together will form the theoretical knowledge base for this thesis.

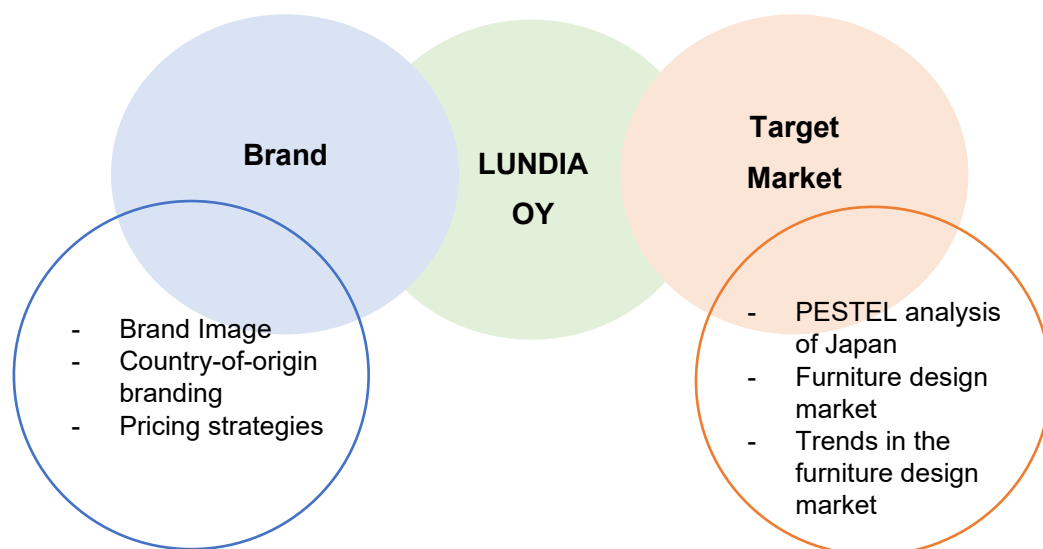


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

2.1 Brand

This subchapter discusses brand and branding related theories. Brands are prominent part of industries and companies. A brand usually consists of visual elements, such as name and colours, and of a mental image with certain awareness and reputation in consumers' minds. Brands are formed from brand elements. These can, for example, be likability and memorability of the brand. (Keller 2013, 30-31 & 143.) The first subchapter explains the theory of brand image. The later chapters focus on presenting the country-of-origin theory and pricing strategies, which are also integral parts of a brand.

2.1.1 Brand Image

Brands hold symbolic meanings. These symbolic meanings are formed in consumers and stakeholders' minds and contribute to the way they see the brand. Because of these interpretations the consumers hold of a brand, it can be said that products are not only purchased for their usability, but also for the meaning behind them. Brands exist because of the brand image consumers have. (Hatch, Schultz & Olins 2008, 26-29.) This subchapter discussed the connection of brand image and brand equity.

Creation of a brand helps a company to increase its brand equity. Brand equity describes marketing activities of a brand and how the results of these activities differ from non-branded activities and results. These differences are a result of added value that a brand brings to a product. (Keller 2013, 57-76.) Brand equity can also be defined as the assets linked to the brand, such as perceived quality and possible trademarks. Brand equity brings benefits and value to both, consumers and the company owning the brand. For customers, the benefits include easiness of handling information regarding products and possibly improved customer experiences. (Aaker 1991, chapter 1.) Main benefits a brand can bring to a company are differentiation from its competitors and the sense of belonging consumers can get from the symbolic meaning of a brand. (Hatch et al. 2008, 22).

Brand equity is formed when consumers have established awareness of the brand (Keller 2013, 57-76). Brand awareness describes how prominent a brand is in the consumers' mind (Aaker 1991, chapter 3). Brand awareness can be divided into two factors: brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition means how easily the consumers can recognise a previously seen brand in new surroundings. Brand recall means how easily consumers can remember a brand when talking about, for example, a certain product category. Brand recognition is important at a place of purchase and recalling when decisions are made somewhere else. Brand awareness can be created with exposure and consumer experiences. Various slogans, logos and musical tunes help to emphasise the exposure. It is important that consumers link the brand with its product category and usage. (Keller 2013, 57-76.)

After a brand has created awareness around it, it can focus more on the management of the brand's image. Positive brand image is formed of brand attributes and brand benefits that consumers associate with the brand. Attributes are features that separate the brand from its competitors. These features are unique descriptions of the brand. (Keller 2013, 76-77.) Attributes of a brand can be divided into attributes that are similar as competitors', attributes that differentiate the brand from the competitors, and experience-based

attributes. (Schultz, Doerr & Frederiksen 2013, 119-122). Brand benefits are unique to each individual consumer. These are the values and benefits that a consumer thinks the brand holds for them. (Keller 2013, 76-77.)

The associations a consumer holds for a brand need to be positive for the brand image to be positive in their mind. In other words, brand equity is formed when a consumer has strong, favourable, and unique brand image and associations formed in their mind. The stronger the associations between the brand and other information, the easier it is for the consumer to recall the brand. The strongest associations are formed with information that is not created by the company. Word-of-mouth is a good example of this. The associations a company has created for their brand can easily be changed and forgotten. (Keller 2013, 78.) Malaysian study found that brand associations have a strong correlation with brand equity, especially among younger population (Sasmita & Suki 2015, 286-287).

Consumers favour a brand when they feel like it will fulfil their needs and wants. Because these demands for a brand and a product can change based on a situation, the favourability of a brand association can vary. Uniqueness of a brand is essential to its success. These unique features of a brand associations can be communicated indirectly through marketing or with directly comparing the brand's products to competitors' products. Customers can also hold a strong mental association between a brand and a product category. (Keller 2013, 78-79.)

2.1.2 Country-of-Origin Branding

Country-of-origin (COO) concept discusses the effects which a product's home country and its image have on customers' buying behaviour and opinions of a product (Dinnie 2008, 84). Country-of-origin concept is also used in branding, in which cases the COO can refer to either the brand's home country or the brand's product's manufacturing country (Johnson et al. 2016, 403-404). COO is closely connected to nation-brand image. Several factors affect the nation-brand image that consumers have of a country. When the consumer has visited the country, this direct contact with the country has the most influence on the image. Other factors that can form the country image are word-of-mouth, media portrays, political situation, sports teams, and people from the country. (Dinnie 2008, 46-47.) This subchapter discusses the COO theory and the image of Finland in Japan.

National identity is also connected to country-of-origin concept. For example, national stereotypes can influence how the consumer reacts to a country and a brand from that

country. A culture of a country has a significant relevance on how the country is perceived. (Dinnie 2008, 136-137.) The importance of COO branding in a product's life cycle can vary. COO is more used in the early phases of a products life cycle because the brand and product name are still unknown in the new foreign market. In this situation, the COO can be more familiar to the consumers in the market. In later phases of a product life cycle, brand name has more emphasis than COO. (Niss 1996, 6-22.)

Country-of-origin has a big impact on consumers buying behaviour. Research conducted in 2018 by Berbel-Pineda, Palacios-Florencio, Santos-Roldán and Ramírez Hurtado, found out that the country-of-origin has effect on not just the purchase behaviour but also on consumers perception about the quality of the product. Therefore, positive country image is critical component of the product and brand image as well. (Berbel-Pineda et al. 2018, 10.) Since consumers associate positive country image with the brands from those countries and thus see the value and quality of the brand's product higher, it is understandable that they are also willing to pay more for the product. If the COO image is positive, consumers are more willing to pay higher premium prices for the product. COO branding can also bring value to communications and advertising strategy. If the brand's COO has a positive image, it should be utilised in these activities. (Koschate-Fischer, Diamantopoulos & Oldenkotte, 2012, 32-34.)

The Japanese population holds a positive country image of Finland. Finland is seen as a country with high quality in education, well-being, and technology. The positive image is a strong combination of several factors. Japanese women, elderly people and young people see Finland in a particularly positive way. (Lindblom, Lindblom & Lehtonen 2016.) Finnish culture, especially Santa Claus and Moomins, are integral part of Finland's country image in Japan (Finland Abroad 2021c). The positive image of Finland in the Japanese market can be utilised by Finnish companies in business and commercial opportunities (Lindblom et al. 2016).

2.1.3 Pricing Strategies

There are several different pricing strategies. The three major pricing strategies are customer value-based pricing, cost-based pricing, and competition-based pricing (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 309-319). In this thesis, the general pricing strategies are discussed first, after which the focus is on international pricing strategies. The effect of pricing strategy to the brand is briefly presented at the end of this subchapter.

Customer-based value is derived from customers' perceptions and expectations about the product's price. The product is designed, and costs determined so that the price can be kept on the level of customers' perceived value of the product. Customer-based prices can further be divided into good-value prices and value-added prices. In good-value pricing strategy, the company develops and offers products with good quality and affordable price. Another common strategy is to differ with high value rather than price. This strategy is called value-added pricing. In this strategy, the company adds features or services to the product and this way, differs from the competitors without cutting the price. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 309-312.) Related to customer-based value pricing is psychological pricing. This way of setting the price does not only consider the perceived value customers have of the product, but also the psychological aspect of prices that customers have. When a price is set higher, the consumers often expect the quality to be higher as well. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 337.)

The second major strategy is cost-based pricing. In this strategy, the price is set by determining the production cost it takes for the company to produce the product and adding a profit margin on top of the costs. Cost-plus pricing means that the company uses a standard profit margin which is added on top of the costs to form the price of the product. Third major pricing strategy is competition-based pricing. In this strategy, the main basis for product prices are the competitors' prices in the market. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 313-317.)

Pricing strategies are especially important when introducing a new product to the market. Market-skimming pricing is a common strategy where new products are first sold with higher price. The price of a product will later decrease when the company develops updated versions of the product. This strategy allows the company to acquire maximised revenues from the product. The number of sales will be lower but the profit for the company will be higher. (Hollensen 2020, 517.) Another option when entering a new product to a market is market-penetration pricing strategy. This means that the price of the product will be set lower than the competitors', so that the consumers find the new product more attractive than the alternatives. With this strategy, the company achieves higher number of sales, but with lower profit. The strategy is only applicable if the production costs are cheaper for larger quantities and if the market is price sensitive. Product mix pricing can be used when it is common that the consumers purchase several products from the company at the same time. The price can be set as a standard to one product line and the profit can then be increased with setting higher prices for by-products. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 332-335.)

The pricing strategies of a product change when expanding the sales abroad. There are four main elements which affect the selection of an international pricing strategy. First is the nature of the market. This includes the financial situation of both, the consumers and the country, laws and regulations, and infrastructure. The prices and products might need to be adapted to suit the situation in different market areas. (Cavusgil, Knight & Riesenberger 2017, 475-476.) The competition in the market should also be considered (Hollensen 2020, 516).

Companies might use a pricing strategy called uniform-delivered pricing, in which prices in all countries and markets are the same. However, often the prices of a product differ abroad compared to the product's home market. Geographical pricing strategies help to set suitable prices for each market. In zone pricing strategy, the company divides countries into different zones. The countries inside a one zone utilize same pricing strategies and prices. The prices can also be categorised based on transportation. The company can request the buyer to pay for the delivery or to pay it themselves. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 339-343.)

The type of the product and industry also influence the selection of an international pricing strategy (Hollensen 2020, 514). If the product is of higher price range or has unique features, there is more flexibility and leverage for the company to set prices that benefit them. If the product's package has features that need to be modified or text that needs to be translated, that will increase the costs and further increase the price. As previously mentioned, the type of distribution method affects the choice of a pricing strategy, since the costs from distribution might be substantial depending on the product type. Various import documents needed for exporting can also increase the costs. (Cavusgil et al. 2017, 476.)

Defining the international pricing strategy starts from calculating an estimation of the costs it takes to get the product to the target country. To those costs, the company should then add distributors' and retailer's profit margin. After that, the existing prices in the market should be researched and the lowest and highest price limits that the customers are willing to pay should be defined. In between these limits, a company should calculate sales potential with example prices. After the background research, the price strategy should be decided. A company can decide, in what way they want to consider the costs in the pricing. If the company chooses rigid cost-plus pricing, it means that they add a set percentage to the product price. This percentage is used across all different market areas to cover the costs resulted from exporting. However, it does not account for cost differences in various markets. (Cavusgil et al. 2017, 477-478.)

Flexible cost-plus pricing strategy includes adding cost margin to the product prices but unlike rigid pricing, it takes market specific situation into account. The company managers consider the competition, demand and market specific costs when deciding the percentage. One way to ensure success in a competitive market is to use incremental pricing. This means that only variable costs will be added to the product prices. The fixed costs are included in the home market's prices. Even if incremental pricing strategy might help with the competitive situation in the market, the profits can be lower than anticipated. After the selection of a pricing strategy, the company must evaluate the suitability of the strategy against the existing prices. Even after implementation of the international pricing, the situation must be monitored, and prices adjusted to correspond the market situation. (Cavusgil et al. 2017, 477-478.)

Because of the costs related to exporting, the final price for the end customer in the new market can grow up to be considerably higher than in the product's home market. This is called international price escalation. (Hollensen 2020, 514.) The higher price can put the company in disadvantage compared to competitors. There are, however, some strategies the company can utilize to manage this phenomenon. The distribution channel can be shortened by decreasing the number of intermediaries in the distribution chain. The products can be delivered unassembled, in which case the import tariff can be lower than with the end-product. (Cavusgil et al. 2017, 478.) Delivering larger quantities in a same shipment usually lowers the transportation costs (Forslid & Okubo 2016, 335-343). Since a product can usually be categorized to many different tariff categories, choosing the one with lowest tariff rates can decrease the exporting costs. Currency fluctuations should also be considered when planning and implementing international pricing strategies. With careful planning and continuous management, the negative impact of currency fluctuations can be minimized. (Cavusgil et al. 2017, 478.) Country-of-origin also affects global pricing strategies. Consumers and companies are willing to pay more for products of certain origin. (Hollensen 2020, 514.)

Price strategy can be used in building a brand image. Customer value-added pricing strategies are commonly utilised in building a brand image. These strategies allow companies to consider the costs and customer perceptions while setting a price, that allows them to gain profit and emphasise the brand image. Offering value with the product is not useful if the customers are not aware of it. It is important to emphasise the value in branding strategy and communicate it to the customers. (Keller 2013, 191-197.) Customer value-based pricing is also a very useful strategy for branding. However, many companies are reluctant to apply it in action. This is because measuring and communicating value

can be challenging. (Hinterhuber 2008, 41-50.) Customer retention and desired market share should also be considered when creating brand-based pricing strategies (Smith & Woodside 2009, 477).

2.2 Target Market

This chapter offers a closer look on the target market of this thesis: furniture design market and Japan.

2.2.1 PESTEL Analysis of Japan

PEST is an analysis method which helps to assess the various factors in an environment. These factors influence the company's strategy. The basis of the analysis tool is Political, Economic, Socio-cultural, and Technical aspects. Political situation and the decisions made by the government guide the business practices. Economic situation, for example inflation, affects the business climate. Differences in socio-cultural features, such as manners and norms, have substantial importance when conducting business internationally. Technological advances and infrastructure are important for the strategy as well. (Mooradian, Matzler & Ring 2014, 114-117.) Letters E and L, portraying Ecological and Legal situations, were added to the original theory later. With the help of PESTEL analysis, a company can get comprehensive picture of their strategic position in a market area. (Vuorinen 2013, 220-222.) This subchapter analyses the market environment of Japan with the help of PESTEL analysis. The analysis is conducted from the viewpoints of Lundia Oy's Japan expansion, and furniture design market.

Politically, Japan is led by the Diet which is divided into House of Representatives and House of Councillors with 465 and 245 members, respectively. Universal public voting is used to select the members for both houses. Out of the two houses, The House of Representatives holds more power over administrative decisions, including the selection of the prime minister. The prime minister appoints other ministers from the members of the Diet. Together the ministers form the Cabinet, which holds the executive power. Currently, the Liberal Democratic Party has the most members in both houses. The prefectures and municipalities of Japan hold some degree of autonomy for their decisions. Japan is part of several global trade agreements and organizations, such as United Nations and World Trade Organization. Japan also has individual Economic Partnership Agreements with several countries. (United States Securities and Exchange Commission 2020, 4-6.) These trade agreements, such as the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, further support and ease the business of international companies in Japan

(European Commission 2020). For Lunda Oy, these agreements cut down some of the trade barriers and ease the business expansion.

Japan is one of the world's biggest economic areas, which makes it an attractive market for foreign companies. The World Bank categorises Japan as a third biggest country based on gross domestic product (The World Bank 2021a). In 2020 Japan's GDP was 5,06 billion US dollars. The GDP is expected to grow 0,3% annually, where as inflation will see 0,6% annual growth. (The World Bank 2021b.) The biggest industries by GDP are manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and real estate. In 2019 before the pandemic, the unemployment rate in Japan was 2,4%. (United States Securities and Exchange Commission 2020, 14-16.) The furniture retailing is included in the wholesale and retail trade, making it part of the biggest industries based on GDP.

The Japanese economy has faced challenges during the past ten years. Japan was able to recover from the 2008 global financial crisis but in 2011 the Great East Japan Earthquake hit the country and set several drawbacks for the economy. To recover from the aftershock of the earthquake and nuclear accident, Japanese Government, led by the prime minister Shinzo Abe, introduced a new economic strategy. The goals of the strategy were increased GDP and creation of new jobs by implementing new monetary and fiscal policies, and growth agenda promoting private investments. A year later to support the economic growth, Government of Japan and Bank of Japan introduced a monetary easing policy with a goal of keeping the price stability target at two percent. At the same time, The Japanese Diet also implemented a reform to social security and tax policies. This led to an increase in consumption tax. In 2019 the consumption tax was set to 10%. The Covid-19 pandemic has also influenced the economic situation. Despite the supporting policies set by the government and the Bank of Japan, the pandemic has decreased consumption, exports, industrial production, and corporate taxes. The employment situation has also suffered. Tourism industry has especially suffered from the strict travel restrictions. The economic situation is expected to start recovering gradually when the situation with the pandemic improves. (United States Securities and Exchange Commission 2020, 8-10.)

Japanese culture is a mixture of modernity and old traditions which coexist in harmony. The culture has gotten influences from Asian and Western countries. The country went through three major phases, during which the culture adopted features from different countries. The most common religions in Japan are Shintoism and Buddhism. Most of the population view themselves as part of both religions. Contrary to individualistic western countries, Japan is collectivistic country. The culture emphasises the group over the

individual. Japan is also very hierarchical. People at the top of hierarchy hold more power and elderly people are respected. Since the culture is also conformist, decisions, including business related decisions, need to be accepted by everyone before they are implemented into action. The Japanese terms *honne* and *tatemae* represent the difference between a person's true opinions and opinions voiced out to others. Conformity is accentuated by the homogeneity of the country. Most of the population in Japan is ethnically Japanese, which emphasises the need to fit to the norm. Since the culture is collectivistic, conformative, and homogenic, it is typical that the communication culture is of high context. This means that communication is indirect and non-verbal signs have a high importance in a discussion. Opinions are not voiced directly but rather expressed ambiguously. This is also visible in the language itself. For example, there is no plural form. (Kumagai & Keyser 1996, 1-11.)

Minimalism has been part of the Japanese culture for centuries. The appreciation of minimalistic lifestyle was originally derived from Zen Buddhism and has later been applied to several aspects of life. There are several words and concepts in Japanese, such as *wabi-sabi* and *shibumi*, describing the beauty of simple things. Minimalism as a lifestyle choice got international attention when Marie Kondo published her book about tidying and decluttering. The simplicity is also prominent choice of style in modern Japanese design. (Haimes 2020, 1-16.) Since Lundia Oy's products are minimalistic and of similar style as Japanese design, they fit to the Japanese lifestyle well.

Japan has one of the fastest aging populations in the world. Over 28% of the residents are over 65 years old. Because of the unbalance in the population, the country faces a demographic crisis. This poses threats to the country. Labour force declines, simultaneously declining the manufacturing industry and the whole economic situation. The aging of the population also affects the government's public spending by increasing the health care costs. There are also effects on the education. Schools are closed since there is not enough students. There are also less farmers which has a direct effect on the agriculture of Japan and the population in rural towns. (D'Ambrogio 2020, 1-9.) Aging population brings new needs for furniture and interior design as well. One of these is the increase of smart home technology. (Euromonitor International 2021a, 2-3.)

The phenomenon of demographic crisis is caused by declining fertility and increasing life-expectancy. The government has taken actions to support families and childcare. Japan has also taken part in international cooperation aiming to solve the demographic situation. The immigration policies have been renewed to help the situation with declining work force. However, Japan is one of the strictest countries in the world when it comes to

immigration, so the policy renewals have not improved the situation as much as desired. There is a lot of resistance in the country regarding immigration and foreign workers. (D'Ambrogio 2020, 1-9.)

Japan is a technologically advanced country. In the 1980's Japan became the leader in research and development of technology. Even though the country's situation has changed globally since the advance of China, Korea and other developing countries, it has kept its position as one of the leading investors in technological research and development. Regarding the trade of technology, Japan's situation does not differ from the average situation of developed countries. (Pasierbiak 2013, 12-23.)

Despite Japan simultaneously being a technologically advanced country, there's a contradiction with how little technology is utilised in everyday activities, including business situations. Japanese companies have started digitalisation considerably later than their western counterparts. The global COVID-19 pandemic revealed the lack of digitalisation in several companies. The lack of digitalisation is mainly caused by governmental regulations, which are firmly linked to the industrial environment, and thus hinder digitalisation in private companies. Despite this, the respondents in a study conducted in 2021 answered that main reasons for the lack of digital practices in the respondents' companies were senior management, lack of digital understanding and skills, and organisational culture. Since travelling has been limited during the pandemic, utilising digital methods has been important in sales and international trade as well. Since the level of digitalisation is lower than in most other OECD countries, including Finland, it might affect the global trade between Japanese companies and Finnish companies. (McKinsey Digital Japan 2021, 4-27.)

Japan is formed of several islands. The mainland consists of the four biggest islands. The land area is spread out among several latitudes, and thus, the climate varies in different parts of the country. The southern part has semi-tropical climate whereas in the north, snow is common. Despite the differences among regions, Japan has four distinct seasons. Most of the land area on the biggest island is covered by forests and mountains, making parts of the area inhabitable. Because of this, most of the habitation is concentrated on a geographically small area. Earthquakes are frequent and the country also has volcanic activity. (Chan 2010, 8-9.) As a result of climate change, heavy rainfalls and landslides have increased recently (Ministry of Environment 2018, 1-5).

Regarding climate change and environmental friendliness, Japan has lower carbon intensity compared to the average among other OECD countries. It also has low pollution-

intensity. The country has been able to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions according to The Kyoto Protocol. However, CO₂ emissions have grown faster than in other countries, especially when considering the slow economic growth. The main sources of energy used in Japan are fossil fuels. Renewable energy methods have not seen a rapid increase, and the use of nuclear power has declined after the 2011 power plant shutdown. Recycling and separating waste are common in Japan. Japan has high rate of energy recovery from incineration since it is the most common way to dispose waste in the country. Japan is utilising taxation in their environmental policies. Taxing is used to, for example, limit the use of aviation fuel domestically. Overall, the revenue from environmental related taxes has not seen an increase. Gasoline and diesel taxation is lower than in several other OECD countries. (OECD 2021.)

Same as globally, sustainability is a rising trend in Japan. (World Business Council for Sustainable Development 2019, 1-19). Lundia Oy's products fit into this trend well. They are made of sustainably sourced wood. The products are durable and last long time in use. The company's ethical values are in line with Japan's sustainable goals and policies. (Lundia 2021a.)

Japan's law and legal systems have basis in Germany's and France's civil law system. The modern Japanese law also has influence from the American law and traditional Japanese values. The juridical system in Japan has five different courts out of which the supreme court is the highest. (University of California 2021.) Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Act is used to manage international business in the country. The act aims to develop and further enable international trade in Japan while maintaining security and improving the economic situation of the country. (Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Act 228/ 1949.)

2.2.2 Furniture Design Market

Furnishing of a space is one subcategory of interior design. Furnitures connect the interior space to the people using the space, by offering functions and visual style. Furnishing can be divided into residential furnishing and commercial furnishing. Many commercial facilities have stricter criteria for furnishing and furniture and thus, the variety of furniture available for use in commercial spaces is more limited. (Ching & Binggeli 2012, 318-319). This subchapter covers the furniture design market globally and in Japan.

Globally, the value of furniture market was 510 billion U.S. dollars in the year 2020. The market is expected to grow up to 651 billion dollars by the year 2027. The export and

import values of the furniture market have been steadily growing from 2003 to 2019, apart from a small decrease in 2009. In 2018, home furnishing covered 66,7% of the market, leaving 33,3% for office furnishing. High-end furniture and houseware market fell from 42 billion euros to 38 billion euros between 2019-2020. (Statista 2020, 1-22.)

In 2020 Japan was the fourth biggest furniture market in the world with a revenue of 99 000 U.S. dollars. Japan also placed fifth on the list of leading furniture importers. (Statista 2020, 1-13.) Home furnishing increased by one percent and home office furnishing, stimulated by COVID-19 pandemic and recommendations to work from home, increased by 18%. The sales of kitchen and living room furniture declined because of the pandemic's effects on the economic situation. Bedroom furnishing increased since the government emphasised good sleep on their communications as a part of working from home discussion. Overall, the home furnishing market still increased compared to previous years. E-commerce of furniture increased but the importance of physical stores remained because of consumers' preferences to see the furniture before making bigger investments. (Euromonitor International 2021a, 1-10.)

The market leader of furniture market in Japan is Nitori, covering 16,2% of the market value. The second biggest market share position is held by Panasonic Corp home electronics with 2,7%. The next biggest furniture shares are held by Ikea Japan KK and Ryohin Keikaku Co Ltd, more familiar to consumers as Muji, by 1,7% and 1,2% respectively. (Euromonitor International 2021a, 5-6.) As can be seen from these numbers, lower priced furniture brands are leading the market with Nitori being the most prominent company.

2.2.3 Trends in the Furniture Design Market

This subchapter covers future trends in the furniture design market. The upcoming trends in interior design and furniture industry are part of bigger global trends and changes in the society. Utilising smart technology in homes is on the rise. Japanese consumers have previously been reluctant to implement smart technology to their homes because of privacy and security problems but the recently launched 5G technology helps to overcome these worries. Japan's aging population increases the demand for smart home technology which can be used to help with the daily household activities. (Euromonitor International 2021a, 2-3.) In global research conducted by Euromonitor Official (2021b, 21), 23% of the respondents answered that they want smart technology in their homes.

Online retailing of furniture has been increasing steadily during the past years and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 saw a significant increase in this area of retailing. Online retailing brings the possibility to get the furniture delivered directly to home. This is a feature that the consumers appreciate. However, consumers still prefer to see the furniture in a physical store before making the purchase decision. (Euromonitor International 2021a, 2-3.)

In 2020, working from home became common and Japan was no exception. The sales of home office furniture were on the rise already before the pandemic since the Japanese government had recommended working from home to increase the productivity and efficiency of Japanese employees. The pandemic stimulated the sales of home office furniture even further. Since working from home either part-time or full-time is estimated to stay as a part of a new normal of working practices, the demand for home office furniture is expected to continue. (Euromonitor International 2021a, 1-3.)

In addition to working from home, consumers are spending increasing amount of time at home overall. Consumers desire homes which are multifunctional and where various activities can be performed. In 2020, most activities from working, studying and leisure were moved to consumers' homes. Home-centric living is expected to continue in some extent even after the pandemic. (Euromonitor International 2021b, 26-27.)

Global consumer spending habits influence the situation in interior design market as well. The economic situation in 2020 drove consumers to look for low-cost alternatives but also made consumers more considerate about their purchase decisions. Buying second-hand, reusing, and repairing are current trends. When purchasing new items, consumers prefer buying fewer products with higher quality. Multifunctionality and longevity are other features the consumers appreciate when making purchase decisions. Personal values and engagement with the brand are also important for customers. (Euromonitor International 2021b, 6-8.)

3 Research Methods

In this chapter, the research methods of this thesis are presented. Research design and data collection methods are visualised in detail, sampling is defined, and relevance and reliability are discussed.

3.1 Research Design

This thesis was a descriptive research that used empirical data collection methods (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 25-27). Descriptive research is used for describing a certain situation or phenomena. The research focused on collecting qualitative data cross-sectionally, from current point of time. Qualitative research focuses on finding information from non-numerical data, such as words. Qualitative research was chosen as a method, because of the type of data needed for answering the research question, and the types of informants that are suitable for the topic. (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis 2019, 179-212.)

Figure 2 below presents the design of the research in detail. The research was divided into two different data collection phases: document collection and interviews. From these phases the data was combined and analysed using comparative analysis methods. The analysed data was then used for drawing conclusions and for answering investigative questions of this thesis.

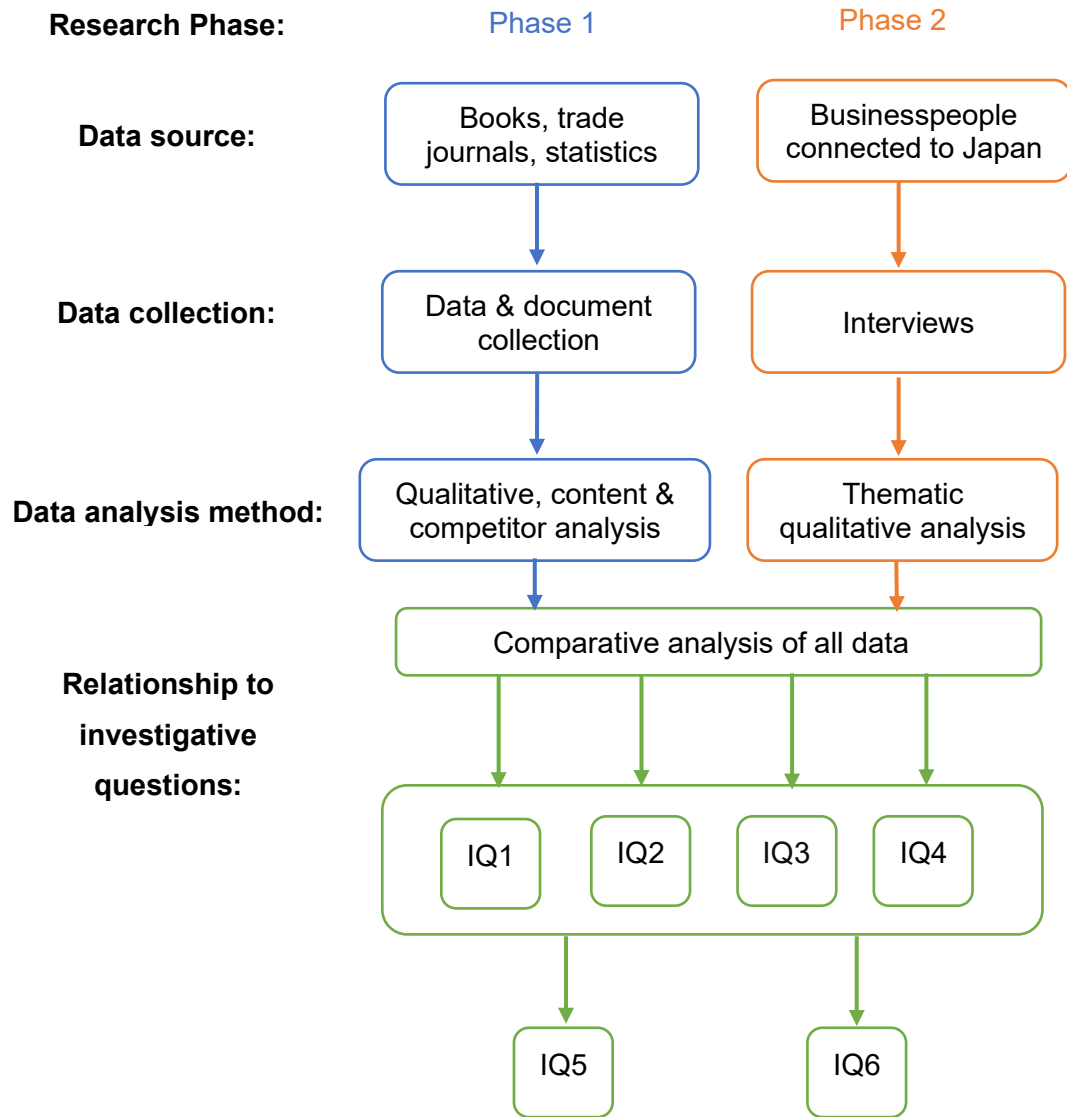


Figure 2. Research design

3.2 Population and Sampling

Population is the target group of which the research intends to find information about. Since conducting research on the whole population can be difficult, the researchers can opt for taking a sample of the population. There are six steps when planning a sample and sampling method for research. (Malhotra, Birks & Wills 2012, 494-496.)

The sampling for this research was done based on non-probability sampling. This means that the author chose the sample based on her criteria instead of letting chance to determine the sample. More specifically, the sample of this thesis represents judgemental sampling where the author judged and chose the sample of the population that best answers the research questions. (Malhotra et al. 2012, 501-504.)

The selection criteria the author used for the interview sample for this thesis was businesspeople, who have experience and knowledge about the furniture market situation in Japan, with special focus on Finnish companies operating in the country. This sample was chosen because these interviewees were expected to have valuable insights on the market situation that cannot necessarily be found from secondary sources. Because of this, the sample does not represent a larger population, but the results of the research can be applied to the industry in question. The interviewees needed to have an interest and enough knowledge about the topic, for them to be motivated to take part in the interview. The number of interviewees was kept low since responses gotten from the interviews were expected to be of high quality.

3.3 Interview Design

The qualitative research part was conducted as semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews have certain main themes, guidelines, and common questions, which help the interviewer to conduct the interviews. However, the interviews and questions might not be identical, but vary depending on the situation. Semi-structured interviews are often used in qualitative research. (Saunders et al. 2019, 437-438.)

The author wrote an interview guide that was used during the interviews. Interview guide is a tool which defines the main topics of the interview and clarifies the structure for the interviewer (Maison 2019, 136). This guide helped to ensure that the data from the interviews is comparable, and that all the interview questions were asked from all the interviewees.

The table below presents the interview questions and their correlation with the investigative questions. The first two questions were opening questions, which were used to orientate the interviewees to the situation before the actual interview questions. Replies to these two opening questions will not be presented so that the anonymity of the respondents will not be compromised. The complete interview guide is attached to this thesis as an appendix (Appendix 1).

Table 2. Interview questions

Opening questions	Corresponding IQ
1. Could you tell me your name and occupation please?	
2. How long have you worked with Finland-Japan business relations or in the design industry?	
Interview questions	
3. What features in a piece of furniture are important for consumers in Japan?	IQ 1

4. What kind of relationship do the consumers in Japan have with home design?	IQ 1
5. How would you describe the characteristics of the furniture market in Japan?	IQ 1
6. How well known is Nordic design, especially furniture design, in Japan?	IQ 2
7. How is the market divided among the different Nordic countries?	IQ 2
8. How would you describe the demand for Nordic furniture brands in the market?	IQ 2
9. How do the Nordic companies usually decide which pricing strategy to use in the Japanese market?	IQ 3
10. What kind of costs are added to the prices of furniture when they are exported to Japan?	IQ 3
11. What are the most popular trends currently in Japan that affect the home design and furniture market?	IQ 4
12. How do furniture brands use these trends in their marketing methods and materials?	IQ 4
13. What is the image Japanese consumers and companies have of Finland?	IQ 5
14. How can the country image of Finland be applied to Finnish brands and products?	IQ 5
15. How have the Finnish brands previously used the country image of Finland in their marketing?	IQ 5
16. What benefits has using the country image of Finland in the brands' strategy brought to the companies?	IQ 5
17. What type of retailers usually select Finnish brands in their product selection?	IQ 6
18. What kind of role do the values of a brand play when retailers in Japan are choosing which brands to engage in business relationship with?	IQ 6
19. How do the Japanese retailers influence the decisions regarding strategical exporting decisions?	IQ 6
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell me regarding this topic?	

3.4 Data Collection

The data was collected in two phases. In the first phase, data was collected from literature, articles, trade magazines, statistics, reliable internet sources, and analysing competitors. The data for phase one was collected between June and August 2021.

In the second phase, interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted between 10th of September and 28th of September 2021. Because of the location differences and the pandemic situation, the interviews were conducted as Zoom and Teams video-meetings. The languages used in interviews were Finnish and Japanese, the native languages of the respondents. This choice was made to ensure the maximum comfortability for the interviewees and easiness of expressing themselves. The interview design was translated to these languages, and the interview responses were translated to English. The author's language skills enabled her to manage the translations. To ensure

high quality of the translation, the Japanese interview invitation and interview question translations were confirmed by a Japanese native.

The process of data collection started with the author sending invitations to the interviews. In total 13 invitations were sent, out of which the number of interviews conducted was five. The invitation is attached to this thesis as an appendix (Appendix 2). The interview questions were sent to the interviewees before the interview. All the respondents were working or had previously worked in consultant positions with Finland-Japan business relations, most of them specifically in design industry. This insured high quality of the replies despite the low number of interviews. Since all the interviewees were working full-time, the interviews were conducted based on their schedule. The interviewees' work also impacted the length of the interview in some cases. The interview guide was used in all the interviews, so the structure and questions stayed the same across all the interviews.

The table below presents details of the interviews regarding the timing, methods, location, and languages of the respondents. In most of the interviews, the language was Finnish. The location of respondents and the length of the interview varied.

Table 3. Interview details

Date	Interviewee	Location	Language	Interview method	Interview length
10.09.2021	Interviewee 1	Japan	Finnish	Zoom	0:40
13.09.2021	Interviewee 2	Finland	Japanese	Teams	1:08
21.09.2021	Interviewee 3	Sweden	Finnish	Zoom	0:38
22.09.2021	Interviewee 4	Japan	Finnish	Teams	0:26
28.09.2021	Interviewee 5	Finland	Finnish	Teams	0:18

3.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used for analysing the data from phase one. Content analysis is the classic analysis method in qualitative research. The purpose of the content analysis is structuring the gathered data into easily processable format by summarising it. (Malhotra et al. 2012, 307.) The data for phase one was gathered from various high-quality printed and online sources. The data was then summarised for the use of this research.

Integral part of the phase one research and its analysis was competitor analysis.

Competitor analysis means the research and evaluation of the company's competitors in the same market. It can help the company to get a better insight of the market situation in a new area (Barringer & Ireland 2016, 173-188.) The author searched information about competing Nordic brands in the furniture design market in Japan. Emphasis was put on

the competitors' retailers, locations, prices, and product range. The results are presented later in chapter four.

Thematic qualitative analysis was used in evaluating the interview responses. The aim of thematic analysis is to find repeating themes and common points in the interviews. Thematic analysis helps to categorise the data in a systematic way. In this analysis method, the interview responses are first transcribed and then coded based on similar themes. Coding the interviews with keywords helps the researcher manage the data. (Saunders et al. 2019, 644-660.)

In this research, the author transcribed the interview replies in the language used during the interview and after that, translated and summarized the data into English. Each of the interviews was transcribed to their own Word-file. The author highlighted common keywords and themes from the translated transcriptions and analysed the responses with the help of Excel. Finally, the analysed and summarised data with the common themes and keywords was gathered into one file.

The data from phases 1 and 2 were compiled and analysed comparatively. The data was used to answer IQs 1-4 and based on these results; recommendations were given for IQs 5-6. Some of the interview questions also provided direct answers to IQ5 and IQ6.

3.6 Reliability and Relevance

This thesis focused on collecting relevant and reliable data for the commissioning company. The author was committed to writing the research process in detail and with such transparency, that anyone could repeat the research by following the research design of the thesis. The author critically evaluated all the information gathered from the research along with the conclusions. The research was deemed relevant because of the situation with the commissioning company. The results from the research support this view, and expand the relevance to cover the Nordic, especially Finnish, furniture design industry in Japan as a whole.

During the research process, there were various elements that affected the reliability of the research. During phase one, access to the data was a risk for reliability. This was managed by searching for data in Japanese, as well as in English and Finnish. Another risk with the data was the quality. Some issues that can affect the usability of secondary data are the timeliness of data, trustworthiness, accuracy, and nature of the data (Malhotra et al. 2012, 121-123). Reliability and relevance of the phase one data was

assured by selecting the latest high-quality academic sources. The latest information of competitors was checked directly from the company websites.

During the interviews, most common risks for the quality and reliability are, for example, biases, cultural differences, and generalisability. Interviewer's bias means the biases the interviewer has, and their affect to the research design and results. Participation bias describes the bias that comes from the nature of participants of the interview. If the participants are from same or similar organisations, or have similar background, it might affect the reliability and generalisability. (Saunders et al. 2019, 447-451.) The author tried to write the interview questions in a non-bias way. She was not acquainted with the interviewees beforehand, so the interviewer's bias was minimalised. Participation bias was managed by selecting interviewees from various organisations and from both research countries. The effect of cultural or language differences to the reliability of the research was minimal since the author is well acquainted with both Finnish and Japanese culture and speaks both languages. However, there is always the risk of translation mistakes. The risk was managed by the author. She speaks native Finnish, native-level English, and fluent Japanese. The quality of English-to-Japanese translations were further assured by a Japanese native speaker.

The most detrimental risk for the reliability was the access to the interviewees. Since the research topic is very focused, the number of suitable interviewees was limited, and not all the people suitable were willing to take part in the research. The author sent 13 invitations to different people. Out of those people, only five agreed to the interview. The author tried to manage this risk by having a various group of interviewees. The data from the interviews was gathered by following the ethical principles and voluntary of the interviewees.

4 Results

This chapter presents the results of the research part of the thesis. The first subchapter presents the results of the competitor analysis from phase one research. Other parts of the phase one research were presented along with the theory framework in chapter two. The second subchapter covers most of the interview results.

4.1 Phase One Research: Competitor Analysis

This subchapter covers the results of Lundia Oy's competitor analysis in the Japanese market. Nordic furniture design brands, especially Finnish brands, are discussed. The analysis presents the names of the competitors, retailers, location of flagship stores, and prices. Since Finnish furniture design is close to Japanese furniture design, there are many opportunities for the Finnish brands in the market. Both design styles prefer natural materials and simplistic aesthetic. (Leikos & Villberg 2009, 55-58.)

Danish furniture design is well represented by several brands in Japan. There are several other Nordic furniture brands in the Japanese market as well (Interior Supple 2016; Sadamoku Design 2020.) The biggest retailers for most of the Nordic brands are companies Connect, Muse Tokyo, Tabroom and Rigna. They have Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian brands in their selection. (Connect 2021; Muse Tokyo 2021; Rigna 2021; Tabroom 2021.)

Out of the Finnish interior design brands, Artek is well represented in Japan. The company has its own store and online store in Japan. They also have several retailers, both online and in physical stores. In total, the author was able to find 23 retailers selling Artek's products in Japan. The company sells their whole product selection, and original products only available in the Japanese market. The company also sells second cycle products and other Finnish products in their flagship store, which is located in trendy area in Omotesando, Tokyo. (Artek 2021.)

The biggest Nordic competitor in the market is Danish furniture design company called BoConcept. The company utilises franchising in their global expansion (BoConcept 2021a). The company's strategy differs from the strategy of other Nordic furniture brands in the Japanese market. The other brands mainly sell their products through second- or third-party retailers, whereas BoConcept has 18 flagship stores all over the Japan under the franchising licences. BoConcept sells their whole product range in Japan. (BoConcept 2021b.)

The table below presents some of the Nordic furniture design companies in the market. The table is based on two articles presenting Nordic furniture design brands that are sold in Japan (Interior Supple 2016; Sadamoku Design 2020). However, there can be many other Nordic furniture brands in the market that the author did not necessarily find. The table lists competitor brands' home countries, examples of retailers, and information on brands' possible flagship store. The author might not have been able to find all the retailers, which is why the table only presents an example of them.

Table 4. Nordic competitors in Japan

Brand	Home country	Retailers	Flagship store	Location of a flagship store
Artek	Finland	Connect, Finch & Home, Rigna, Mitsukoshi Isetan, Tabroom, FLYMEe	Yes	Tokyo (Omotesando)
Nikari	Finland	Keykilt, 1 st Dog Café, Muse Tokyo	No	
Design House Stockholm	Sweden	Rigna, FLYMEe	No	
Gärsnäs	Sweden	Coad & Materials Co., Tabroom, Muse Tokyo	No	
Källemo	Sweden	Coad & Materials Co., Tabroom	No	
Swedese	Sweden	Ebizu International Co., Muse Tokyo, Scope	No	
BoConcept	Denmark	No retailers found	Yes	18 flagship stores all over Japan
Carl Hansen & Son	Denmark	Finch & Home, Rigna, Mariage Connect	Yes	Tokyo (Sendagaya)
Eilersen	Denmark	Tabroom, Actus, Mariage	No	
Fredericia	Denmark	Rigna, Muse Tokyo, Scandii, Connect	No	
Friz Hansen	Denmark	Finch & Home, Connect, FLYMEe	Yes	Tokyo (Minami Aoyama)
Getama	Denmark	Tabroom	No	
Muuto	Denmark	Tabroom, Rigna, Muse Tokyo, Connect	No	
PP Møbler	Denmark	Tabroom, Rigna, Mariage, Scandii, Connect	No	

Based on the research author conducted, most of the retailers do not have the complete item selection from the Nordic brands. Many of the retailers appear to stock a few items

that fit their product selection the best. The price difference of the products between the home market price and Japan price varies considerably depending on the brand. In some cases, the price in Japan is close to the price in the home market. In other cases, the price in Japan can even be doubled compared to the original price. The author compared the prices with the latest currency rates.

The table below presents examples of competitors' prices in home market and in Japan. The brands presented in the table are the same as in table 4. The author chose one product from each brand that was sold both in the home country and in Japan and compared the pricing. The prices are presented in home country currencies and Japanese yen. The home country currencies in question are euros, Swedish krona, and Danish krone. Despite being Danish, Carl Hansen & Son's price is presented in euros since the author was only able to find official European page for the brand. The prices are found from official websites, Nordic retailers, and Japanese retailers presented in table 4.

Table 5. Competitor pricing

Brand	Product	Price in home market	Price in Japan (¥)
Artek	Aalto 60 stool	215 €	¥ 28 600
Nikari	December chair, oak-leather	1 742 €	¥ 363 000
Design House Stockholm	Block lamp mini	1 415 kr	¥ 23 100
Gärnsås	Emma chair	17 525 kr	¥ 330 000
Källemo	Pilaster shelf	5 890 kr	¥ 134 400
Swedese	Tree coat stand 194 cm	8 300 kr	¥ 216 700
BoConcept	Madrid coffee table	7 469 kr.	¥ 171 400
Carl Hansen & Son	Mix chair exclusive	41 300 kr.	¥ 792 000
Eilersen	Tub sofa	6 186 €	¥ 657 800
Fredericia	Trinidad chair	3 986 kr.	¥ 100 100
Friz Hansen	Serie 7 chair	2 944 kr.	¥ 60 500
Getama	GE 290 chair	19 147 kr.	¥ 514 800
Muuto	Enfold sideboard tall	13 495 kr.	¥ 304 700
PP Møbler	PP70 table	46 250 kr.	¥ 1 184 700

4.2 Phase Two Research: Interviews

This subchapter presents the results of the interviews in phase two research. The subchapter is divided based on the first four IQs. The interview questions related to each IQ are presented in the corresponding chapter.

4.2.1 Furniture Design Market in Japan

This subchapter discusses the situation and characteristics of the furniture design market in Japan. Replies to interview questions 3-5 will be covered.

The interviews started by outlining the Japanese consumers' preferences regarding furniture and home design. The interview question three "What features in a piece of furniture are important for consumers in Japan?" got cohesive answers from the respondents. Since Japanese houses are small, small furniture is also preferred. One of the respondents mentioned that even if the house was of a bigger size, because of the way houses are built, the doorways and windows might be so small that getting bigger furniture inside the house can be a problem. When it comes to design, simple and timeless, Nordic style design, is popular. However, colour preferences, such as the colour of the wood, differ from the Northern European preferences. Convenience, functionality, and high-quality are appreciated. For Lundia, this indicates that small and functional products should be selected for the product range for the market in Japan.

Japanese consumers do not have a close relationship with home design (interview question 4). Mainly, the Japanese homes are full of various items and the interior design is not very cohesive. The interviewees presented various reasons for this. One interviewee described:

"Many times, Japanese people don't think about the interior design itself. If they see a product they like somewhere, they might buy it if it feels good in that moment. This can lead to a home with several different design styles and no cohesion."

Sometimes purchase decisions are made based on what other people will think of the product rather than what the person themselves thinks of it. In Japanese culture keeping up the appearances, and the way others view the person in question are considered important. For this same reason, consumers have traditionally spent more money on items that are visible outside of home and to others, such as fashion items. Recently consumers have started to use more money on the interior of their home as well.

Since the houses are small and the living spaces change their function depending on the time of the day, furniture is moved a lot. This emphasises the importance of functionality. The furniture must be easily movable. Though at the same time, the furniture must be easily securable and sturdy, in case an earthquake or some other natural disaster happens. Japan is very prone to natural disasters so laws and regulations regarding home safety are stricter than in Finland. Lundia's products are sturdy (Lundia 2021c), and this should be emphasised in sales to Japan. Japanese houses also have poorer insulation so

the living condition inside the house differs from Finnish housing condition. This can also affect Japanese population's attitude towards home design.

In the answers for the characteristics of furniture market in Japan (interview question 5), there were two bigger patterns. The first one highlights the throw-away mentality that Japanese consumers have of furniture. When it comes to furniture, contemporary consumers rather buy cheap products even though these products would have lower quality. Furniture can also be discarded easily, for example during a move. Price and availability matter to these consumers more than longevity of the product. Because of this, furniture is often bought from so called home centres or hardware stores. Lundia's products were previously sold in this type of store in Japan as well. Stores such as Nitori, Muji and Ikea are also very popular nowadays and came up in the discussions. The popularity of these stores and leading position of low-price brands were also visible in the market share statistics discussed previously in chapter 2.2.2 (Euromonitor International 2021a, 5-6). One of the interviewees explained the situation:

“In Japan, furniture is bought from large furniture store chains such as Ikea, Nitori and Tokyu Interior. Apart from these, many people also buy products from so called Japanese hardware stores, home centres. Rather than thinking about quality or longevity, up until now, many people have bought items based on the price and easy availability.”

At the same time, there's appreciation for design, high-quality, detailed and hand-made products in the Japanese culture. This is the market where Lundia should aim. Many consumers in Japan connect expensive price with high-quality of the product. When buying furniture from higher price range, attention to detail and finishing touches are important. Traditionally, delicate items made with care are considered beautiful. In higher price range, it's important that the brand is already popular and recognisable for it to be attractive to the consumers. Thus, when it comes to Nordic design, brands like Artek are preferred. Lundia has a long history and steady popularity in Finland (Lundia 2021a), which can be an advantage in Japan.

All the respondents agreed that sustainability is a rising trend and affects the future situation in the market. One of the respondents described how the traditional way of appreciating quality and hand-made products is returning to the consumers' minds with the sustainability trend. Japanese consumers have also started to pay more attention to the quality of their living spaces. Part of this stems from the pandemic situation, as supported by the secondary research (Euromonitor International 2021a, 1-10).

4.2.2 Nordic Furniture Design Brands in the Market

This subchapter discusses the Nordic furniture design and brands in Japan. Replies to interview questions 6-8 are covered.

In interview question 6, “How well known is Nordic design, especially furniture design, in Japan?”, all the respondents agreed that it is very well-known. Both companies and consumers alike have a positive image of Nordic design. Especially in big cities, such as Tokyo and Osaka, people recognise Nordic design. There are interior magazines and publications specialised in the topic. One interviewee said:

“With this (Nordic design) the knowledge is focused specifically to big cities such as Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya. In these cities many public places use Nordic design which can be the first touchpoint for many consumers. There are also magazines specialised in Nordic design which have raised the awareness in Japan for many. Recently when you mention a term Nordic design in Japan, many people immediately express that they know about it.”

Despite currently being a trend, there is continuous interest towards Nordic design, which creates continuous demand. For many Japanese consumers, Nordic design items used in public places are the first encounter to the design style. One interviewee mentioned how the movie “Kamome Diner”, or “かもめ食堂” in Japanese, brought attention to Finnish design. The Japanese movie is set in Helsinki and features many Finnish furniture design items. Finnish architecture is well-known in Japan, and that directs customers to Finnish furniture as well. One interviewee explained how the director of Ryohin Keikaku Co Ltd, also known as Muji, likes Nordic design and has raised awareness around it in Japan.

Despite Nordic design being overall well-known, there are some differences between the Nordic countries and design items. Finland and Finnish design are popular but regarding furniture, Denmark is more well-known in Japan. From Finnish brands, Artek is known by Japanese. The consensus during the interviews was that the public is more aware of the shapes and design style, possibly designers of Nordic design, but cannot necessarily name any brands or country differences. The interest in Nordic design is connected to the overall admiration of Nordic countries and their lifestyle. One interviewee described how Nordic design can be enjoyed despite the individual consumer’s financial situation. There are brands both on the lower price range, such as Ikea, and higher price range. Nordic design can also be bought second hand in Japan.

Interview question 7 aimed to find out differences in the market situation among the Nordic countries. According to almost all the interviewees, Danish furniture design is the

most popular and well-known in Japan. The author's competitor analysis supports this. The larger population usually knows Danish design the best. Industry professionals are more familiar with Finnish and Swedish furniture design. Ikea is very popular and well-known among Japanese consumers. Norway and Iceland are less known when it comes to design but there is interest to those countries as well. Out of the Nordic countries, Finland is the most popular as a country. However, Finnish design is not as widely available in the market which might decrease the popularity of Finnish furniture. One of the interviewees suggests that the differences regarding skills and ambition to export between Finland and the other Nordic countries might explain the lack of Finnish brands in the Japanese market. Overall, the consumers are not able to tell the difference between the design from different Nordic countries, unless they are more familiar with the industry.

The interview question eight covered the demand of Nordic furniture design in Japan. The interviewees described how the demand for Nordic design is stable and constant, even in long-term. Japan is one of the most important export countries for Finnish design, including furniture design. One interviewee said:

"I think it (Japan) is continuously the most important export country to the Finnish design. I don't see it as a trend, even though there surely are quieter periods and periods when the demand booms. In my experience there is always demand for it (Finnish design) in there (Japan)."

The interviewees expect the demand of Nordic furniture to increase. This indicates that there will be demand for Lundia in the market in the future. However, one of the respondents described how the financial situation of the country and low salaries affect the purchasing power of the consumers, thus lowering the demand in the market. The phase one research also provided arguments related to the financial situation. The pandemic impacted the financial situation, thus lowering the sales of more expensive furniture, such as living room furniture. The situation also affected the purchase decisions regarding low price range versus higher price range products by directing the consumers towards low price alternatives. (Euromonitor International 2021b, 6-8.)

The interviewees described how most Nordic brands use partner companies which manage all of the brand's business activities in Japan. Usually, the companies do not manage the business in Japan themselves. Some of the partner companies also retail the products themselves. Depending on these partner companies, some of the brands have flagship stores and some not. However, many of the interviewees specified how the opening of a flagship store has been beneficial for the sales and visibility of the Finnish brands in the market. One respondent also mentioned the increase of showrooms and

select shops as a place where design-oriented consumers go to purchase furniture items. Out of the Finnish brands in the market, for example Nikari's products are presented in a Key-Kilt showroom in Shinagawa area, Tokyo (Key-Kilt 2021).

4.2.3 Price Categories in the Market

This subchapter discusses the prices and pricing strategies in the furniture design market in Japan, with a special focus on Nordic competitors. Replies to interview questions 9-10 are covered.

In interview question nine, "How do the Nordic companies usually decide which pricing strategy to use in the Japanese market?", the interviewees explained how Finnish companies do not usually plan price strategies for the Japanese market, but instead add the exporting costs to the original price. As discussed in the previous subchapter, most Nordic companies use partner companies for managing their business activities in Japan. The Nordic companies listen to partner company's suggestions about pricing since it could be interpreted as an insult to not listen to them. However, it is important to find partners who understand that the price in the home market is already of higher price range, which indicates that the price in Japan will be even higher than this. This should also be considered in branding. Finnish products sold in Japan are usually branded as affordable luxury. Trends can also affect the decisions regarding pricing.

When asked about the costs that are added to the furniture price (interview question 10), the respondents described various exporting costs. The exporting model of using partner companies has several layers which adds up to the price of the product. Some interviewees explained that because of this, the final price of the product might be doubled compared to the price in the home market. Profit margin is added to the price. Several interviewees commented that the logistic fees are added to the prices but did not specify who pays for the expenses. One interviewee described the situation this way:

"When it comes to logistic fees, the importing company in Japan takes the responsibility for them, so the choices depend on each company's request. Some prefer sea transfer, some air. These choices are decided in discussions."

The location of the retailer store might also increase the products' price. When Finnish products are exported globally, Finnish VAT is not added to the prices. VAT in Japan is 10%, which is lower than the Finnish VAT. There are no customs fees added to the prices since furniture is part of the EU-Japan free trade agreement. One interviewee mentioned how Finland and Finnish companies are one of the best in Europe at utilising the benefits of this agreement.

The price indications are applicable to case Lundia Oy as well. Expenses related to partner company and retailers must be considered. Logistics costs depend on the contract. Customs fees are not applicable so that limits the increase in the prices.

4.2.4 Current Trends in Furniture Design Market

This subchapter discusses the trends in furniture design and their effect to marketing with a special focus on the market in Japan. Replies to interview questions 11-12 are covered.

Interview question 11 asked about the current trends in furniture and home design market in Japan. According to one of the interviewees, Japanese consumers follow trends and are easily affected by group pressure. There are three large trends affecting the industry in Japan. As discussed previously in chapter 4.2.1, Japanese consumers are starting to pay more attention and invest money in their homes, which directly leads to increased attention in home design and furniture industries. Part of this is caused by the pandemic, which has forced consumers to spend more time at their homes. This view was supported by the secondary research (Euromonitor International 2021b, 26-27). One interviewee described:

“I’ve heard from many that now when Japanese people have spent more time at their home due to Covid-19, they have felt that they want to make their home spaces more cosy and homely. Before the pandemic, home was more like a place for sleeping and time was spent outside of home. Now the Japanese think the same ways as Finnish: my home is my castle. For example, a person might want their favourite furniture in their home.”

The second trend is the increasing awareness of sustainability, which is one of the leading trends globally as well. The impact of sustainability as a trend is not as prominent in Japan yet as it is in the west, but the awareness towards sustainability is growing continuously. This trend has directed consumers to make more conscious choices. According to both the interviewees and phase one research, paying more attention to the high-quality and longevity of the products has increased among consumers (Euromonitor International 2021b, 6-8). Along with the sustainability, the nature and nature related activities have been a trend as well. One of the interviewees described how camping has been popular in Japan recently, and how Japanese people have used camping equipment, such as chairs, inside in their home interior as well.

Third trend that arose in the interviews was more specific for this case study, rather than the whole industry. Finland has recently been very trendy and popular country in Japan.

All things Finnish have gained attention. In Japan, Finland is especially known for equality, nature, sustainable development goals, and as the world's happiest country. Consumers are searching for information regarding Finland. Because of this, Finnish design has also gained popularity. Since Lundia is a Finnish brand with sustainably made products (Lundia 2021a), the trends support Lundia's expansion and demand in Japan.

Interview question 12 "How do furniture brands use these trends in their marketing methods and materials?" was a challenging question for the interviewees. Not all the interviewees were able to answer the question. Those who were able to answer, did not provide as direct answers as what the author had hoped for. The respondents emphasised the use of nature and sustainability in marketing. One of the interviewees indicated that even though many Finnish brands and companies have sustainability in their base values, it is not used enough in marketing communications. This is because for the Finnish people, sustainability and locality are almost self-evident values.

There were two opposite opinions when it came to using Finland trend in the marketing. Couple of interviewees replied that not enough companies use Finland in their marketing materials. As it is a trend country right now, Finnish companies should communicate the Finnishness of the brand more clearly. On the other hand, there was one interviewee who said that Finland is sometimes forced to the brand image. According to this interviewee, especially trends and themes related to sauna, Santa Claus, and aurora borealis are overused. However, the interviewee pointed out that some companies have very skilfully used Finnishness in their marketing by, for example, implementing themes of nature and equality. One of the interviewees pointed out that retailers and partner companies' suggestions regarding marketing should be listened, and social media utilised. Lundia should utilise nature and Finnishness in their marketing in Japan.

Even though both, secondary research, and phase two research discussed the importance of sustainability and increased importance of home because of the pandemic, some of the secondary research's trends did not emerge in the interviews. These trends were utilising smart technology in homes, and online furniture retailing. Increased sales of home office furniture did not emerge directly, but it was hinted by some of the interviewees. In conclusion both phase one and phase two research support that sustainability and investing in home are the biggest trends in the industry in Japan currently.

5 Conclusions

This chapter presents the answers to the research question and investigative questions and concludes the research project. The findings from theoretical framework and phase one research will be compared and discussed together with the phase two interview findings. Recommendations regarding Japan expansion are given to the case company. At the end of this chapter, the commissioning company gives their feedback, and the author reflects on her learning during this research.

5.1 Key Findings

This research aimed to present a comprehensive view of the Nordic furniture design market in Japan. Along with presenting a comprehensive overview of the market, the research question aimed to provide recommendations for the case company Lundia Oy for what to consider when expanding to the market. This subchapter focuses on presenting the key findings regarding the overview of the market via investigative questions 1-4. More detailed answer to the research question along with answers to investigative questions 5-6 are presented in the next subchapter.

Japan as an economic area and its furniture market (IQ1) are among the biggest in the whole world. The market situation is led by brands in the lower-price range, such as Japanese Nitori and Swedish Ikea. There is a certain level of throw-away mentality with furniture among consumers. However, there is also cultural appreciation of hand-crafted, high-quality products and minimalism. Style preferences of furniture in Japan are similar as in the Nordics. Small furniture is preferred in Japan since the houses and living spaces are small. Japan is an island nation prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes. This has an influence on the furniture preferences as well. The furniture must be sturdy and easily securable to the walls to prevent accidents from happening.

Japanese society is going through changes that have an effect to the furniture design market as well. The economic situation of the country has faced challenges during the past years, which has affected the purchasing power of consumers and the demand, especially with products from higher-price range. The rapid aging of the population sets its own requirements on what type of furniture is needed. Despite the lower level of consciousness compared to western countries, sustainability is a growing trend both among the consumers and in the government regulations.

There are several Nordic furniture brands in the Japanese market (IQ2), and overall Nordic design is very well-known. Nordic furniture design is especially popular in bigger

cities and among people with deeper knowledge about the industry. Nordic design can be described as a current trend in Japan and there are magazines focused on the topic. However, the interest towards Nordic, and especially Finnish design has long history. The demand for Nordic products in the market is continuous. Finland is among the most popular countries in Japan, but Denmark is more known for their furniture design. There are several Danish brands which are sold in Japan. Out of the Finnish furniture design brands, Artek and Nikari are represented in the market.

Most of the Nordic furniture brands sold in Japan use importers or partner companies when exporting to the market. The partner companies oversee all the business operations in Japan and manage the retailer network. Most Nordic brands are sold by small retailer companies which are specialised in Nordic design and lifestyle. Some of the more well-known brands are also sold by bigger retailers, such as department stores. Using showrooms to present the furniture has been increasing recently. Depending on the partner company, some of the Nordic brands have their own flagship stores in Japan.

Prices and pricing strategies that Nordic companies use in Japan (IQ3) vary. Mainly, the exporting costs and profit margins are added to the original price. This suggests that the Nordic companies, especially Finnish, use cost-based pricing strategies. The usage of partner companies and multi-level exporting strategy can increase the consumer prices in Japan considerably compared to the home market prices. In some cases, the price might even be doubled. This indicates that there is price escalation when exporting to Japan. However, since the furniture design items are of a higher-price range, it gives the brands flexibility with the pricing. For example, Finnish products in Japan are branded as an affordable luxury, which reflects to their pricing strategies in the market. If the Nordic brand is using and importer or partner company in Japan, the brand should listen to their recommendations regarding prices. Based on the EU-Japan economic partnership agreement, no customs fees are added to the prices. VAT in Japan is also lower than in Finland. These two factors can decrease the price escalation and stabilise the price closer to the home market price.

The research recognised five trends (IQ4) that currently affect the furniture design market in Japan. Investing into the comfort of home and home design was already an increasing trend in Japan before the Covid-19, but the situation with the pandemic accelerated the change. Consumers are more interested in their home than previously. Another trend caused by the pandemic was the increase in online retailing. This can also be seen in the retailers of Nordic furniture. Many of them sell the products online as well. Sustainability is a growing trend, both globally and in Japan. The usage of smart technology in homes is a

trend of the future, which becomes more prominent when answering to the needs of aging population. Finland is currently a trendy country in Japan, which can offer several possibilities for Finnish brands in the market. When it comes to making decisions on how to use these trends in marketing, partner company's recommendations should be listened. Finnish companies should emphasise nature, sustainability, and Finnishness in their marketing, especially while Finland is a trend in Japan.

5.2 Recommendations

This subchapter gives recommendations for the case company Lundia Oy regarding their expansion to Japan. Firstly, answers to the rest of the interview questions are given. Recommendations based on IQ5 and IQ6 are presented. At the end, recommendations based on the whole research are given, and the research question "What should Lundia Oy consider when re-entering themselves in the furniture design market in Japan?" is answered.

5.2.1 Country-of-Origin Branding in Case Lundia Oy

This subchapter discusses the usage of country-of-origin branding in case Lundia Oy. The subchapter starts by covering the replies to interview questions 13-16. After that, recommendations are given to the case company based on the interview replies and previous investigative questions.

Interview question 13, "What is the image Japanese consumers and companies have of Finland?" helped to outline the country image of Finland in Japan. The responses were cohesive. Finland has very positive country image in Japan. One interviewee even described Finland's image as the best out of all foreign countries in Japan. The secondary research in theory framework also supports this. Even though USA and the rest of Europe are admired in Japan, Finland is seen as a country which is refreshing but also similar to Japan at the same time. Finland is mostly known as the world's happiest country, with equality, high education, and sustainable lifestyle. The high education level also reflects to the high skills in design. Finnish products are automatically considered to be of high quality. The connection between positive country image and perceived quality was also supported by discussion in chapter 2.1.2 (Berbel-Pineda et al. 2018, 10).

Moomins, Santa Claus, and the Northern lights are big part of the Finland image in Japan. Nature and its appreciation are also inseparable part of the Finland brand. Finnish and Japanese people are very similar, and Finnish people are liked in Japan. Therefore it has been easy for the interviewees to gain trust and access into business meetings. In both

countries, handcrafts and traditional skills are appreciated. One interviewee described the image of Finnish design in Japan:

“In the Japanese market, the image (of Finnish design) is still Marimekko style: pop, showy and colourful. Whereas in the Finnish market in reality, the colour combinations are more natural or toned and nuanced. There are also many people who like black and white combinations. There is gap between the current trends in Finland and the Finnish trends the Japanese people think and expect.”

Interview question 14 aimed to find out how the image of Finland can be applied to Finnish brands and products. The answers varied. Some of the respondents described how not enough brands use Finland image in their branding. However, one interviewee described how too many companies try to push the Finland image to their brand, even if it would not relate to the products or services. According to this person the Finnishness, and especially concepts related to Santa Claus and sauna, are emphasised too much:

“In my opinion Finland could do better in many things. Sweden and Denmark have been better at this (using the country image). Finnish companies are doing things in a bit rough and old-fashioned way, but there are also some Finnish companies who have done this well and nicely. Overall, it (Finland image) is used too much.”

The usage of nature was proposed as a connecting point between the company branding and Finland branding. The interviewees suggested to use stories of Finland in the product and company images. For example, Finnish nature can be highlighted in the products' raw materials. Some Finnish companies operating in the market also use indirect Finnishness in their branding, such as equality. One respondent described how image of Finnish products in Japan is usually either colourful and pop, or chic and unisex.

Interview question 15 continued the theme by exploring how Finnish brands have previously used the Finland image specifically in marketing. The author was not able to get as direct answers to this question as she had hoped. The interviewees described how the image is used too little. Since the Finland image is not used much, it is hard to describe how it has been used previously. However, the respondents described how bigger brands such as Marimekko and Iittala focus more on indirect Finnishness. As an example, Marimekko utilises the happiness of Finland, and Iittala the design history of Finland and the quality of everyday life. The marketing of these companies is well tailored to the Japanese audience. There are also plentiful of Finnish B2B companies in Japan who use indirect Finnishness, such as values, in their marketing. Since these companies operate on B2B level, the marketing is less visible to the wider audience. Out of smaller brands, the interviewees described how Lapuan Kankurit and Nikari have successfully used locality and nature in their marketing materials. The marketing strategies and their

success partly depend on the partner companies' opinions and activity. With some of the companies mentioned above, the opening of a flagship store in Japan has brought attention, increased sales, and acted as a marketing channel.

Some of the respondents highlighted how the use of authoritative figures or influencers is needed in marketing strategies in Japan. By utilising these strategies, the brands get more visibility, and the validity of the products increases in the eyes of Japanese consumers. The interviewees mentioned how the connections to the Embassy of Finland and the ambassador have previously been used in these situations. Other Nordic countries have, used the visibility and validity provided by the royal houses of the countries. Some also mentioned that the company values and policies could be used. Overall, the companies should focus on the comprehensive picture of the brands and products and not just focus on one aspect of the company, such as Finnishness.

Interview question 16 aimed to find information about benefits that using Finland in branding has brought to companies previously. The companies are able to sell a piece of Finland and intangible values, such as happiness and wellbeing, to consumers. The brands can also increase and emphasise the transparency of the company and synergy with the product and nature. Implementing Finland into the brand story can be a way to differentiate from competitors in the market. Tangible benefits include increased sales and access to new partner companies and retailers. Media visibility can also be achieved.

The author recommends that Lundia Oy utilises the positive country image of Finland in their expansion to Japan. As presented in the theory framework, using COO branding is especially beneficial when entering a new market. As can be learned from the interviews and from other Finnish companies in the market, the closeness to nature should be used in branding and marketing. This can increase the brand equity of Lundia. Since Lundia's products are made of ecologically produced Finnish wood, there are especially good possibilities to connect both the Finnish nature and sustainability to the branding communications in Japan. This strategy is also aligned with the branding of Lundia in Finland. Couple of the interviewees emphasised the importance of stories in branding and their success in Japan. Japanese people are interested to hear stories behind the companies, and thus the author recommends Lundia to create story-based branding and marketing communications for the Japanese market. The stories should connect Lundia with Finland in a natural way. This can help Lundia to leverage the popularity of Finland in Japan.

5.2.2 Considerations for Retailers in the Japanese Market

This subchapter discusses the things to consider regarding retailers in Japan for Lundia Oy. The subchapter starts by covering the replies to interview questions 17-19. After that, recommendations are given to the case company based on the interview replies and previous investigative questions.

In interview question 17 the interviewees replied to the question: “What type of retailers usually select Finnish brands in their product selection?” The consensus was that companies of various size select Finnish furniture products to their selection, but smaller retailers are more common. Connecting point between the companies of different size is the focus on lifestyle. Usually, these companies are also at the top of the price range. As previously discussed, Finnish and Nordic companies use importers or partner companies when exporting to Japan. Often, these companies do not sell the products to consumers directly. The types of companies and reasons for choosing Finnish brands may vary when comparing retailers to partner companies. The situation also differs depending whether the company operates on B2C or B2B level. Interesting point that arose during one of the interviews was that galleries and museum shops also sell Finnish design products in Japan. One of the interviewees also mentioned a retailer called Scope as one of the first retailers of Nordic furniture in Japan who utilized online sales. Scope is also a retailer of Artek (Scope 2021).

The respondents presented some reasons which affect the decisions the Japanese companies make regarding stocking Finnish brands and products. Japanese companies are usually conservative, which in this case means that they want the brand to already be well known for them to select it to their product selection. However, if the brand is not that well known but differentiates from competitors considerably, the popularity of the brand is not as significant. Some recent reasons which might have affected the choice of Finnish brands are sustainability and Finland as an overall trend in the country. The Japanese companies want to achieve a certain level of trust before the business cooperation can begin:

“Based on my experiences, similar base values and persistent efforts in building trust are essential before the cooperation can begin or continue. I haven’t necessarily had similar experiences in any other country.”

Despite the comment mentioned above from one of the interviewees, the consensus was that the company values of Finnish brands are not important to Japanese companies when choosing a partner for business relationship (interview question 18). The overall feeling of the brand and business-related reasons are more important for Japanese. Small

specialty stores might have a set of values which they consider when making decisions. However, products and brands are usually chosen based on what will sell well in Japan. Overall, the importance of values such as equality and sustainability are far behind compared to Finland. One interviewee described how the closeness to nature is connected to the awareness of sustainability:

“Environment where water is valued, picking berries and mushrooms from forest is possible, and there’s an ability to swim in lakes. These are all possible because the nature is clean and beautiful. Therefore, Finnish people are worried about climate change and do not want the nature to be destroyed. Whereas Japanese people live a life where they can’t experience or get benefits from the nature.”

Since Japanese value the connections with Finnish, they listen if Finnish company representatives talk about the importance of values. Nonetheless, the business negotiations should be started with something that interests the Japanese more. One interviewee did describe how Japanese companies should pay more attention to values such as sustainability since they are an upcoming trend. Considering these values in business operations can therefore give cutting edge to these companies.

Interview question 19 aimed to determine how Japanese retailers influence the strategic exporting decisions of Nordic, specifically Finnish, companies. This research has discovered the difference between importer partners and retailers in Japan. Since the Nordic companies do not usually have direct connection with the retailers, the replies to this question, despite the original wording, focused more on the influence of the partner companies. The influence that partner companies have, depends highly on the type of agreement which is made between the parties. If the partner company is representing the Finnish brand in the market, they take care of all the activities in Japan. If the partner company is just importing and reselling to retailers, they can give recommendations to the Finnish companies. Whether those recommendations are considered, depends on the Finnish company. The partner companies have the biggest influence on the pricing decisions. It is important that the Finnish company tells everything about the brand image and product selection to the partner company, so that the brand image in Japan matches the original brand image and that the success is secured. The most selling products are different in Japan than in Finland. Therefore, it is important that the partner company is aware of the whole product range so that they can determine which product would sell the best in Japan.

One interviewee took a different approach to the question and described what type of exporting strategies Finnish companies have regarding Japan. The respondent explained

how Finnish companies have not considered Asia or the differences among Asian countries enough in their strategic decisions. The potential of Asia and Japan as a market area has not been realised. The interviewee says that the companies must properly invest in Japan if they want the country to be a long-term export partner. The interviewee continued by explaining that Danish and Swedish companies have been more successful at exporting to Japan since they have more ambition, skills and courage to export.

When expanding to Japan, Lundia Oy should use a partner company the same way as other Nordic furniture design brands. The author recommends choosing a company, which understands the brand image of Lundia clearly, and offers services that support the image. It is also important to consider the company image of the partner company, so that it matches to Lundia's branding and image. As mentioned in the interviews, Lundia Oy should communicate the popularity of Lundia in Finland clearly to the partner company, so that it can be used as a guarantee of Lundia's quality. Brands that are already popular in their home country have higher possibility to become popular in Japan. The communication styles should be kept in mind during the business discussions even though Finnish people are respected and listened because they are Finnish. Even though values do not matter to the Japanese companies as much as in the Western countries, Lundia should keep the nature and sustainability as a part of their presentation.

With retailers, the author recommends contacting the retailers presented in the competitor analysis. Many of the retailers sell several other Nordic furniture design brands so the author sees a possibility that these companies could also be interested in selling Lundia's products. The retailers selected should be speciality stores and department stores from higher price range focused on lifestyle. Lundia Oy should utilise both, online and in-store retailing in Japan. Showrooms as a possibility to present the furniture to the consumers should also be considered. If the sales and demand for Lundia Oy go well after the first phase of expansion, the author recommends the company to open their own flagship store, so that they are on the same level as the biggest competitor Artek.

5.2.3 Combined Recommendations

This subchapter gives recommendations based on all IQs and research results for the case company Lundia Oy. The focus is on recommendations that were not yet given in chapters 5.2.1 and 5.2.2. The research question "What should Lundia Oy consider when re-entering themselves in the furniture design market in Japan?" is answered.

There are several factors Lundia Oy should consider when re-entering themselves in Japan (RQ). When considering Japan as an exporting country, it is good to consider the economic and political situation since they can influence the demand and easiness of exporting. In this case, the legislation regarding exporting supports Lundia's expansion. Cultural factors such as the communication style and preferences regarding design are important. When choosing a partner company, the desired image of Lundia in Japan should be considered. The research shared some insights on the competitors and their situation in the market. Lundia Oy should think about them when making strategic decisions.

As explained in previous chapters, Lundia Oy should consider the positive effects of the country-of-origin branding in their entry to Japan. Furthermore, Lundia Oy should connect nature to their branding in Japan. Since Finland and sustainability are current trends, there are good prospects for Lundia Oy in the market. One interviewee contemplated if Lundia's products should be aimed at the consumers or for public places. Since there are opportunities in both target groups, the author would recommend aiming for both, B2C and B2B market.

The author suggests highlighting the versatility of the products in the Japanese marketing communications. Japanese houses are small which makes the versatility of a product valuable. Since sustainability is raising awareness, it is good to emphasise that Lundia's products can be adapted to changing home situations. The sturdiness and product durability during earthquakes could be presented. This could attract Japanese customers to choose Lundia's products over cheaper and less durable alternatives.

One interviewee suggested that Lundia should offer building service for the furniture since Japanese consumers do not necessarily know how to build the furniture from components. This could bring added value and profits for Lundia in Japan and increase the customer satisfaction. The products of Lundia Oy can be branded as affordable luxury, which provides flexibility with the costs and pricing. However, it is also good to consider the prices of close competitors such as Artek and Nikari. Overall, the author concludes that there is demand and possibilities for Lundia Oy in the market, as long as market specific factors are considered in the exporting strategy.

5.3 Reliability and Relevance

The chapter 3.6 focused on presenting the risks related to reliability and relevance, and their management methods in this thesis. This subchapter focuses on evaluating the

management of the risks and the level of reliability and relevance of the results of the thesis.

With phase one research and secondary data of theory framework, the author recognized the risks with reliability of the sources. The management of this risk was conducted by selecting sources from high-quality books, official statistics, and company websites. The quality of these sources can be deemed as good and accurate, which increases the reliability and quality of this research. The author did face some difficulties with access to data, but overall, the risk of finding information was not as significant as originally estimated. The data sources selected were mostly published recently, which guarantees the accuracy and topicality of the information.

The second phase of the research included many features which affected the reliability and repeatability of the interviews. The author described the research plan in such a detail, that anyone could repeat the research. Biases were handled by careful planning of the interview structure and questions, and by selecting interviewees who the author did not have personal relationship with. The language and cultural related risks to the reliability were deemed minimal, since the author was fluent in all the languages used and personally familiar with the cultures. However, since the author is not a professional translator, there might be some choices of words for example, that can differ when asked from other people fluent in the languages. English-to-Japanese translations were approved by a Japanese native, which insured the there was no misunderstandings caused by wrong choice of words.

Despite the low number of respondents, the quality of the replies gotten from interviews can be considered high and reliable. All the interviewees have years of experience working with Finland-Japan relations and in the design industry. The interviewees have different backgrounds and connections to different organisations. They are all familiar with the furniture design industry in Japan. Because of these factors, the results from this research can be generalised to the industry and market situation. However, there were some questions that proved to be more challenging to answer to the interviewees and with these questions, the reliability and quality can be lower.

The topic of the thesis was deemed relevant because of the situation with the commissioning company. The research phase also uncovered more information on demand and of the market situation, which indicated that the research was relevant for the industry on a larger scale as well. Since there are many possibilities for Finnish design

companies in Japan, this thesis can also be relevant for them. Overall, the reliability and relevance of this the thesis can be deemed good.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This subchapter gives recommendations on how the topic could be further explored in future research.

The focus of this thesis was the Nordic furniture design market in Japan. However, many interviewees described other design items as well. Based on this, the author suggests that the research could be expanded to include other Nordic design items, such as fashion. This research could be conducted as one larger research or by each design category. It would be interesting to explore the differences of the design categories and their demand in Japan.

The data from interviewees was collected from industry professionals. It would be interesting to change the sample to include Japanese consumers. The opinions and views the consumers have of the topic could be explored further and in more detail. In this case, the data collection methods could also be changed to include quantitative methods, so that the sample of consumers could be larger. Changing the sample and adding another data collection method could improve the quality and add value to the research.

The final recommendation regarding the further research is connected to the country specifications. Despite demarcating the research to include all Nordic countries, the focus of this thesis was very heavily on Finland. With more time to conduct the research, it would be interesting to focus more on the other Nordic countries in the furniture market in Japan. For this, it would also be beneficial to expand the interview sample to include Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, and Icelandic interviewees.

5.5 Commissioning Company Feedback

The finished thesis was sent to the commissioning company before the final evaluation. This subchapter presents the feedback from the commissioning company. The CEO of the commissioning company provided the author with the following feedback via email:

“Suvi Hyytinen has made an extensive study about the Japanese market for Lundia. The cooperation has worked well and Suvi has been very active towards Lundia. The timetable was clear, and the thesis was conducted within the promised time frame. We are very pleased with her work, her study, and the market research. The suggestions, interviews and competitor analysis have also been of great value for

Lundia. Despite the challenging times during the pandemic, Suvi has made a great effort with the interviews and also about the Japanese market, without travelling there. Suvi's extensive knowledge about the market and fluency in Japanese have helped the study to become very accurate and current for Lundia.

Lundia will use the market study as a base for rebranding and for an evaluation of Lundia's current and future market strategy. An expansion in Japan seems relevant and possible, based on the results. The market research was very beneficial for Lundia, and we will use the study for the years to come." (Von Wendt 20 October 2021.)

5.6 Reflection on Learning

Writing the thesis was very interesting and educational project for the author. She was happy to combine her interest in Finnish design, Japan, and business into one project. She learned many new things about branding, global market expansion, and furniture industry. This was the author's first time conducting academic research, and she learned a lot about that as well. The author was also able to deepen her knowledge about Japanese society. She was especially pleased that she was able to use her language skills in the project. The possibility to utilise her skills for the benefit of the case company made the project and work feel valuable and meaningful.

Initially the author had some problems defining the scope and structure of the research. These were managed with careful planning together with the commissioning company. There were no problems with the time management of the thesis process.

Interviews, on the other hand, proved out to be more challenging and time consuming than the author had anticipated. Transcriptions and translations took time. Finding interviewees was a bit challenging and the interviewees were busy, which made scheduling the interviews difficult. The author had hoped to receive more interviews, but some of the interview questions were so difficult that some interviewees declined the invitation after seeing them. Despite the difficulties, the interviews were the most interesting and valuable part of the research for the author. She was able to gather useful and interesting data that was not available through secondary sources. The interview situations were fun, and the author got many contacts and connections through them. The author will continue to keep in touch with the interviewees and the case company representative.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Guide

English

Introduction:

“Hello, nice to meet you. We’ve previously discussed via e-mail, but I would like to introduce myself and the topic again. My name is Suvi Hyytinen. I study International Business at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. I’m conducting a market research of Nordic furniture design market in Japan for Lundia Oy. This research is part of my thesis. The aim of this research is to attain a comprehensive view of the Nordic furniture design market in Japan.”

“If it’s okay with you, we could move to the interview, and I could start recording.”

Opening questions:

1. Could you tell me your name and occupation please?
2. How long have you worked with Finland-Japan business relations?

Interview questions:

3. What features in a piece of furniture are important for consumers in Japan?
4. What kind of relationship do the consumers in Japan have with home design?
5. How would you describe the characteristics of the furniture market in Japan?
6. How well known is Nordic design, especially furniture design, in Japan?
7. How is the market divided among the different Nordic countries?
8. How would you describe the demand for Nordic furniture brands in the market?
9. How do the Nordic companies usually decide which pricing strategy to use in the Japanese market?
10. What kind of costs are added to the prices of furniture when they are exported to Japan?
11. What are the most popular trends currently in Japan that affect the home design and furniture market?
12. How do furniture brands use these trends in their marketing methods and materials?
13. What is the image Japanese consumers and companies have of Finland?
14. How can the country image of Finland be applied to Finnish brands and products?
15. How have the Finnish brands previously used the country image of Finland in their marketing?

16. What benefits has using the country image of Finland in the brands' strategy brought to the companies?
17. What type of retailers usually select Finnish brands in their product selection?
18. What kind of role do the values of a brand play when retailers in Japan are choosing which brands to engage in business relationship with?
19. How do the Japanese retailers influence the decisions regarding strategical exporting decisions?

Closing:

20. Is there anything else you would like to tell me regarding this topic?

"Thank you for your participation. If you have any further questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact me via e-mail."

Finnish

Esittely:

“Hei, hauska tutustua. Olemme jo keskustelleet sähköpostin välityksellä, mutta haluaisin esitellä itseni ja aiheen uudestaan. Nimeni on Suvi Hyytinen. Opiskelen International Business -linjalla Haaga Helia Ammattikorkeakoulussa. Toteutan markkinointitutkimusta pohjoismaisten design huonekalujen markkinoista Japanissa Lundia Oy:lle. Tämä tutkimus on osa opinnäytetyötäni. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tarjota kattava kuva pohjoismaisten design huonekalujen kysynnästä ja markkina-alueesta Japanissa.”

“Mikäli se sopii sinulle, voisimme siirtyä haastatteluun ja voisin aloittaa nauhoituksen. ”

Avauskysymykset:

1. Voisitko kertoa nimesi ja toimenkuvasi?
2. Kuinka pitkään olet työskennellyt Suomen ja Japanin välisten kauppasuhteiden parissa?

Haastattelukysymykset:

3. Mitkä ominaisuudet huonekaluissa ovat tärkeitä japanilaisille kuluttajille?
4. Millainen suhde japanilaisilla kuluttajilla on kodin sisustukseen?
5. Miten kuvailisitte Japanin huonekalumarkkinoiden ominaispiirteitä?
6. Miten kuvailisitte pohjoismaisen designin, etenkin huonekalujen, tunnettavuutta Japanissa?
7. Kuinka markkinat jakautuvat eri pohjoismaiden kesken?
8. Kuinka kuvailisitte pohjoismaisten huonekalubrändien kysyntää Japanin markkinoilla?
9. Miten pohjoismaalaiset yritykset tyypillisesti päättävät, mitä hintastrategiaa käyttää Japanin markkinoilla?
10. Mitä vientikuluja Japanissa myynnissä oleviin huonekaluihin on lisätty?
11. Mitkä trendit tällä hetkellä vaikuttavat eniten kodinsisustus- ja huonekalumarkkinoihin Japanissa?
12. Miten brändit hyödyntävät näitä trendejä markkinointimetoodeissaan ja -materiaaleissaan?
13. Millainen mielikuva japanilaisilla kuluttajilla ja yrityksillä on Suomesta?
14. Millä keinoin näitä mielikuvia voidaan soveltaa suomalaisiin brändeihin ja tuotteisiin?
15. Miten suomalaiset brändit ovat aikaisemmin hyödyntäneet Suomeen liittyviä mielikuvia markkinoinnissaan?

16. Mitä etuja Suomeen liittyvien mielikuvien hyödyntäminen on tuonut näille yrityksille?
17. Millaiset jälleenmyyjät yleensä valitsevat suomalaisia brändejä tuotevalikoimaansa?
18. Millainen merkitys yrityksen arvoilla on japanilaisille jälleenmyyjille, kun he valitsevat uusia brändejä valikoimiinsa?
19. Millä tavoin japanilaiset jälleenmyyjät vaikuttavat pohjoismaalaisten yritysten strategiaan vientipäätöksiin?

Haastattelun lopetus:

20. Onko vielä jotain muuta aiheeseen liittyen, josta haluaisit kertoa?

“Kiitos osallistumisesta. Mikäli sinulla herää kysyttävää, älä epäröi ottaa yhteyttä minuun sähköpostitse.”

Japanese

紹介：

はじめまして。以前話し合いましたが、改めて自己紹介をしたいと思います。私、フィンランドのハーガヘリア大学に所属しております、スヴィ・ヒューティネンと申します。Lundia 社の依頼を応じて、日本における北欧デザイン家具の販売市場調査を実施しております。この調査は自身の卒業論文や Lundia 社の日本事業拡大に役立ております。

よろしければ、インタビューと録音を始めたいと思っております。

アイスブレイカー質問

1. 自分の名前と職業を聞かせてください。
2. 今まで家具業界、またはデザイン業界で、どのくらい務めておりましたか。

インタビュー

3. 日本の消費者にとって、どのような家具の特徴が高く評価されていますか。
4. インテリアデザインに対して、日本の消費者はどのような意見や意味がありますか、または関係を持ちますか。
5. 日本の家具商品市場はどのような特徴がありますか。
6. 家具のデザインにおいて、北欧デザインは日本でどのくらい人気がありますか。
7. 北欧の国々市場占有率で表すとどのような割り当てになりますか。
8. 北欧家具ブランドには、日本でどのくらい売れ行きがあるのでしょうか。
9. 北欧の会社は日本でどのような価格戦略を使っていますか。その価格戦略をどうやって選択して決めましたか。
10. 日本に輸出した家具商品の値段はどのような輸出費用を付け加えて輸出価格を決定しているのでしょうか。
11. 現在日本の家具市場に最も影響を与えるトレンドや流行は何でしょうか。

12. 家具ブランドはそのトレンドや流行はどのようにマーケティングにいかしていますか。
13. フィンランドに対して日本人や日本の会社はどのような意見やイメージを持っているのでしょうか。
14. フィンランドイメージはフィンランドのブランドにどのように取り入れていきますか。
15. 以前、フィンランドの会社はどのようにそのフィンランドイメージをマーケティングで使っておりましたか。
16. その会社にとって、フィンランドのイメージを使う事によって、会社にどのような利益があるのでしょうか。
17. 普段、どのような日本の小売業者はフィンランドのブランドや商品を売っていますか。
18. 北欧ブランドが持つ価値観は小売業者が提携するにあたって、どのような意義がありますか。
19. 小売業者はフィンランドの会社の輸出戦略にどんな影響を与えますか。

終わり:

インタビューのテーマに対して、他のお話したい事がありますか。

取材をさせて頂き誠にありがとうございました。後ほどご質問がございましたらお気軽にお問い合わせください。

Appendix 2. Invitation to the Interview

English

Dear Recipient,

My name is Suvi Hyytinen. I'm a student in the degree programme of International Business in Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki, Finland. I am currently writing my thesis for a case company Lundia Oy. The topic is market research of Nordic design furniture in Japan. The aim of this thesis is to give a comprehensive view of the Nordic design furniture market in Japan, which can help the case company to expand their business activities to the Japanese market.

I am contacting you since I would like to request an interview with you regarding this topic. Your replies to this interview would be utilized in the research part of the thesis. With your permission, the interview will be recorded. All the replies will be handled confidentially, assuring the anonymity of the participants. The interviews will be conducted via Zoom/Teams/other video meeting platforms. The length of the interview is approximately 30 minutes.

I would like to request your availability. If you have any further questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Finnish

Hyvä vastaanottaja,

Nimeni on Suvi Hyytinen. Opiskelen International Business -linjalla Haaga-Helia Ammattikorkeakoulussa, Helsingissä. Olen tällä hetkellä kirjoittamassa opinnäytetyötäni komissiona Lundia Oy:lle. Opinnäytetyön aihe on markkinatutkimus pohjoismaisten design huonekalujen markkinoista Japanissa. Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on tarjota kattava kuva pohjoismaisten design huonekalujen kysynnästä ja markkina-alueesta Lundia Oy:lle, jotta he voivat hyödyntää tutkimuksen tietoja laajentaessaan toimintaansa Japaniin.

Otin teihin yhteyttä, sillä haluaisin pyytää teiltä haastattelua aiheeseen liittyen. Vastauksianne tulotisiin hyödyntämään opinnäytetyön tutkimusosiossa. Luvallanne, haastattelu nauhoitetaan. Kaikki vastaukset käsitellään luottamuksellisesti, ja vastaajien anonymiteetti taataan. Haastattelu tulotisiin toteuttamaan videohaastatteluna Zoomissa, Teamsissä, tai muulla videopalaverialustalla. Haastattelun kesto on noin 30 minuuttia.

Haluaisin tiedustella teille sopivaa aikaa haastatteluun. Mikäli teillä on kysyttävää, älkää epäröikö ottaa yhteyttä minuun.

Kiitos yhteistyöstä.

Japanese

〇〇(会社名だったら)御中

〇〇(個人名だったら)様

日本国内における北欧ブランド家具・インテリア販売市場の調査に関し
インタビューのご協力をお願い

拝啓

時下ますますご清栄のこととお慶び申し上げます。

突然の連絡、失礼いたします。

私、フィンランドのハーガヘリア大学に所属しております、スヴィ・ヒューティネンと
申します。

私はフィンランドの家具デザインブランド、**Lundia** 社の依頼を応じて、日本における北
欧デザイン家具の販売市場調査を実施しております。この調査は自身の卒業論文や
Lundia 社の日本事業拡大に役立ております。

そこで、大変恐縮ではございますが、日本国内の北欧デザイン家具の販売市場に関し
て、インタビューにご協力いただけないでしょうか。インタビューは、匿名とさせてい
ただき、30分程を予定しております。貴重な機会ですので、もしよろしければ、録音の
許可をいただきたく存じます。インタビューは **Zoom**、**Teams** または他のビデオミーテ
ィングアプリを利用して行われています。

お忙しいところ、誠に申し訳ございませんが、ご協力いただけますと幸甚に存じます。
ご質問、ご不明な点がございましたらお気軽にお問い合わせください。

何卒宜しくお願い申し上げます。

敬具

スヴィ・ヒューティネン