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Cultural Factors Affecting Business Between Sweden and Finland

Case Study: Byggmax in Finland

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Abstract

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The main purpose of this thesis is to study cultural factors affecting business between Sweden and Finland utilizing Byggmax in Finland as a case study. The two countries have a long history together, dating back hundreds of years and conducting business has always been a part of it. Even though the two cultures are fairly similar there are some important cultural differences between the two nations.

These differences have been researched through theories such as those authored by Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars, and Richard D. Lewis. The differences can also be seen in different studies by professionals that have experienced both sides of business in the countries. Regardless of the differences the countries also have a lot in common.

The study features a case study of building and DIY materials retailer Byggmax and their entry to the Finnish market. It highlights the cultural aspect and the overall success of the company in Finland. In addition to literature review and the case study this study includes a application of a qualitative research method. Selected groups were interviewed in structured interviews about their view on the company Byggmax and their position in Finland.

The cultural differences between the countries are not too many, but still crucial to make the business work between the nations. Researching and preparing for these will give a potential advantage for companies that want to explore their possibility of entering either country or starting a business.

Keywords: Finland, Sweden, Culture, Cultural differences, Business, Byggmax

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1 Introduction

Globalization has made it possible for people to conduct business and even travel around the globe in just hours. However, doing business internationally requires the company or people to have an understanding of others' cultures. Entering a new market without having the proper cultural perspective will cause a lot of problems. Every country has its set of laws, culture, and rules (Hill and Hult 2018).

Sweden and Finland have a long history together. It dates back hundreds of years and Finland was even a part of Sweden from 1150 to 1809. There has always been a special bond between the countries. In the 1600s when Sweden was looking to expand its empire in the Thirty Years War in Europe many officers in the Swedish army were Finnish, and one of the fiercest units in the army was the Finnish cavalry (BLF n.d.).

There has always existed rivalry between the two nations. However, in modern times it is not on a military level but rather on a social level. The rivalry includes everything from sports, food, sauna, music and technology. In sports the rivalry has always been between the Swedish "Tre kronor" and the Finnish "Leijonat" in ice hockey and the yearly World Championships attract a lot of viewers in both countries. The Finnish Leijonat have been the most successful lately and have won the championship twice in recent years (Reuters 2018).

When talking about Technology there has always been rivalry between the companies Ericsson and Nokia. Ericsson is a Swedish founded company and Nokia a Finnish founded company. The competition of the company that brings out the best, fastest and best working phone has been going on for over a century (Edenholm n.d.).

In 2022 Sweden and Finland took a common decision to apply for the military pact Nato together due to the changing security situation in the world with a joint application. (NATO PA, 2022) With the world situation being as it is, the enhancing of the business between the countries could make doing business even better for both countries (Yle Svenska 2022).

The cultural differences between the countries are not too many, but still crucial in order to make the business work when a Swedish company enters the Finnish market or vice versa. In overall, the cultural differences should not be a threat or a significant obstacle

if they are studied by companies engaging in international trade or other forms of cooperation. However, not studying them properly will make any interaction harder and might even lead to failure (Hill and Hult 2018).

1.1 Research objective and research questions

The aim of the thesis is to research the cultural differences and similarities between Sweden and Finland. Even though the cultures are quite similar there are still crucial cultural differences that affect how business is done in Sweden and Finland.

The research questions for the thesis have been chosen to find answers both about the cultural differences and how crucial they are to take into account so that the two countries could build better business relationships with one another. The following three questions have been researched in the thesis:

- Researching cultural similarities and differences in the Swedish and Finnish culture and business culture.
- Utilize the Byggmax case study to demonstrate how crucial it is to take into consideration the cultural differences when a business enters a new country and culture.
- Interviewing Finnish people to find out how Byggmax is perceived by the Finnish people from a cultural perspective.

The topic was mainly chosen due to the author's interest in both countries. Living as a Swedish person in Finland and experiencing the business life in both countries has sparked the author's interest in the business environment and its similarities and differences in these two countries.

The thesis will include both primary and secondary data. By reading and gathering information for the comprehensive literature review, considering the cultural view and dimensions of the cultural differences between Sweden and Finland the author aims to acquire an extensive view of the topic. The thesis will also include some general

information about the importance of cultural awareness and a general view of culture in the world.

The information acquired about the culture will be gathered by reading literature and articles and conducting a case study. The cultural differences will be shown through theories such as the frameworks developed by Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars and Richard Lewis. The results will be analyzed and presented in various ways throughout the thesis.

The source of primary data will come from the interviews made in the case study. The author will also include a case study regarding the company Byggmax and their entry as a Swedish company into the Finnish market from a cultural point of view.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 The importance of culture and understanding cultural differences

Today it is possible to do fast business with any country in the world regardless of your location. We are living in a world where business leaders, politicians and normal people confront the aspect of globalization on a daily basis. This includes communicating with people from different cultures and countries (Harris and Moran 2004).

Companies choose to leave their home countries for expansion into new cultures and countries in order to increase revenue and profit, and in doing so build up their reputation and sales abroad. Therefore, it is important to understand the importance of the culture in each specific country. Misunderstandings, misjudgments and poor planning can lead to missed opportunities and a failed internationalization (Harris and Moran 2004).

Culture can be described in many ways. One way is how Brooks Peterson describes it in the book *Cultural Intelligence*. Peterson has chosen to describe culture as a tree. Trees have many visible parts, for example leaves and branches. But beneath these in a further look you can find many other aspects of the tree such as the age of the tree within the rings inside the wood, living animals, bark and much more (Peterson 2004: 18).

Depending on the time of the year, the tree changes and some trees drop their leaves, others look almost the same. Trees usually live a long life and withstand a lot of the nature's impact such as wind, rain and other weather conditions on a yearly basis. However, if you look at the tree in a few years' time, most likely you see approximately the same tree (Peterson 2004: 18).

The same goes for culture and human beings. We have the necessities we need daily to survive such as water and food. Our clothing changes depending on the time of the year, so can also the cultural aspects depend on trends and norms (Peterson 2004: 19).

However, if you choose to walk into a forest there will always be different trees. They all have leaves and branches. Moreover, there are different species of trees looking different and acting in different ways. Some of them are better at handling cold than others, some are better at handling heat, but in the end, they are all trees. The same

way there will always be different cultures and people with different nationalities (Peterson 2004: 19).

One of the most important aspects to understand with culture in the business environment is that what is accepted in one country may be completely different and not accepted in another. Taking this into consideration, a lot of research regarding the new business culture is crucial to be able to successfully make the business grow and bypass any problems towards new customers and employees (Twose 2019).

However, no matter how big differences might be between the cultures, the importance of some key values never change. "While it is important to be aware of and sensitive to cultural differences when conducting business internationally, the principles of transparency, trust, and partnership are universal." — Dan Quayle (Quotefancy n.d.).

2.2 The 6 cultural dimensions of Hofstede

When analyzing culture there is one name that cannot go by unnoticed, Geert Hofstede (1928-2020). He was the creator of one of the most recognized studies for the comparison of culture. According to Hofstede the importance of working with an international perspective is crucial to achieve a successful international business (Hofstede 1984: 39-41).

It all started with a survey and the source of the original data came from an analysis of IBM employees between 1967-1973 (Hofstede 1984: 40). During this analysis Hofstede let the employees within IBM answer a survey in 50 different countries. The people asked were all working within the organization. However, the answers differed and showed a big difference in values from the employees (Hofstede and Minkov 2011: 52-53).

Geert Hofstede and his comparison methods are one of the most used tools in cultural differences comparison yet today. The six dimensions are: Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long Term Orientation and Indulgence (Hofstede and Minkov 2011: 52-53). Figure 1 shows the comparison between the values of Sweden and Finland in Hofstede's dimensions. (Hofstede Insights 2022).

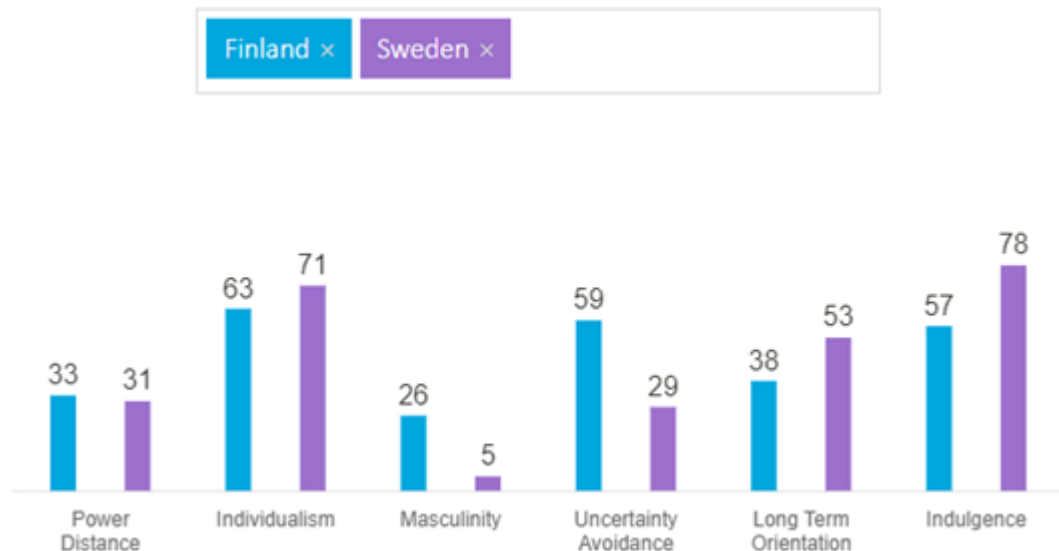


Figure 1 Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede Insights 2022)

2.2.1 Power Distance

The first dimension is power distance. This dimension is grounded in irregularities within societies (Hofstede and Minkov 2011: 51-52). Within societies people have different wealth and power. Most countries see these differences as something positive, mostly since a person with a lot of power might deserve it, such as a political leader (Hofstede Insights 2022).

However, this is not the case everywhere. In some countries with a high number of power distances the level of corruption is high and some of these countries are also dictatorships (Hofstede Insights 2022).

In this dimension both Sweden and Finland are showing low numbers and scoring relatively equal. Finland scored 33 and Sweden scored 31 (see figure 1). This indicates a low level of corruption and a decentralized power within both nations. Equality in both countries is valued highly (Hofstede Insights 2022).

In a country with decentralized power the employees are given a lot of responsibility and the communication is direct and employees expect to be part of planning and to be consulted by their coaching managers. The relationship between manager and employee is usually very good and close (Hofstede Insights 2022).

Moreover, in a centralized power the organization power is just held by a few people and the choices made by employees are fewer. In these organizations people can be supervised and the relationship with the managers is stricter and this leads to employees usually having a distanced relationship with the people in the leading positions (Hofstede Insights 2022).

2.2.2 Individualism

The second dimension is individualism, and it is measuring "I" or "we" of the individual people within the society. In collectivist societies the single goals are not the most important factor but the common goal all together. Family is important and, in a collectivist society, being close and living together with your relatives and family is a big part (Hofstede Insights 2022).

However, in an individualistic society the individual speaks of an "I" over a "we" instead, and education is an important factor to be able to be self-sustainable in life. Sweden and Finland are both individualistic societies. Sweden scored 71 and Finland 63 (see figure 1) which means that education and individualism is an important part of the society (Hofstede Insights 2022).

2.2.3 Masculinity

The third dimension masculinity is a scale of how society is driven and measures masculinity and femininity within a society. In societies there are values connected to different gender roles and how different genders should act according to masculinity or femininity (Hofstede and Minkov 2011: 279).

A masculine society is often driven by competition, achievement and success while in a feminine society the social part is the driving agenda. Equality and quality in daily life are both important factors in a feminine society (Hofstede and Minkov 2011: 279). On this scale Sweden scored a 5 and Finland a 26 (see figure 1). The low scores indicate that both countries lean towards a feminine society (Hofstede Insights 2022).

2.2.4 Uncertainty avoidance

The fourth dimension uncertainty avoidance is an indicator of how a society considers the future. Future is often uncertain and this dimension is measuring how the specific culture is handling the uncertainty. Depending on the values on the scale the culture leans towards different values. A high score on the scale indicates that the people within the society prefer to work for the same employer for a long period of time and that precision, punctuality and working hard are the norm (Hofstede and Minkov 2011: 233).

Finland scores 59 (see figure 1) on this dimension, which indicates that Finnish people and society try to avoid uncertainty in daily life. This means that Finnish people prefer to work for the same employer for a long period of time and working hard is part of their identity (Hofstede Insights 2022).

On the other hand, Sweden scores 29 (see figure 1) and is showing a lower number than Finland. A lower score indicates that the attitude is more relaxed and the schedules are more flexible than in higher scoring countries (Hofstede Insights 2022).

2.2.5 Long term orientation

The fifth dimension, long term orientation, is showing how a society deals with challenges of the present and the future. In countries that score low on this scale the traditions are held very high and changes are not appreciated. On the other hand, a country with a high score wants to prepare for the future and encourage education for a more modern society (Hofstede Insights 2022).

Sweden is found somewhere between both of these scales on a score of 53 (see figure 1). However, Finland's score of 38 (see figure 1) indicates that Finland values traditions and truth more than Sweden (Hofstede Insights 2022).

2.2.6 Indulgence

The last dimension, indulgence, is a measure of satisfaction and happiness within a society. An indulgent society values the needs of individuals. Freedom is an important

part and being able to choose freely and schedule life as a person wishes (Hofstede Insights 2022).

However, in a restrained society the way of freedom is more restrained, and the society is often in more controlled forms and freedom and happiness are more restrained. The Finnish and Swedish society are quite equal, and both are indulgent countries. Sweden scores 78 while Finland scores 57 (see figure 1) on the scale (Hofstede Insights 2022).

2.3 Trompenaars model

Fons Trompenaars' model came into use in the 1990's and is one of the strongest comparison models together with that of Hofstede. In the book "Riding the Waves of Culture" Trompenaars and Hampden Turner identified seven dimensions (Trompenaars and Woolliams 2020 : 26).

The model focuses on values and relationships between countries. The first five dimensions compare the relationship between people while the last two consider time orientation and nature. The outcome of the model gives information about how the countries can conduct business with each other and what to take into consideration (Trompenaars and Woolliams 2020 : 26).



Figure 2: Trompenaars' comparison of Sweden and Finland (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner n.d.)

The model in figure 2 shows the values of both Sweden and Finland on a comparison scale. As can be seen the values are quite similar and the differences between the countries in this model are very few (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner n.d.).

2.3.1 Universalism versus particularism

The first dimension is a definition of how people behave and how people act in different situations. The universalism way is very rule-based, abstract and rules need to be followed closely. In particularism the rules are more flexible and be changed depending on the situation and the people involved (Trompenaar and Woolliams 2020: 28).

Both Sweden and Finland are universalistic countries with similar values as seen in figure 2 (Trompenaars and Woolliams 2020: 28).

2.3.2 Individualism versus communitarianism

The second dimension indicates if the people within the society consider themselves as individuals or parts of a group. In individualistic countries people usually achieve things alone and decisions made in a negotiation are often taken by one sole person. Sweden

and Finland (see figure 2) are both examples of individualistic countries and most of the western world is as well (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner n.d.).

In a communitarian society it is the opposite and people value group-related decisions and decisions are often taken by committees. Some examples of communitarian societies are China and Japan (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner n.d.).

2.3.3 Neutral versus Emotional

In neutral countries people tend to not show feelings and emotions in public or at the workplace when interacting with other people. However, in an emotional country it is the opposite. In these countries showing feelings, talking loudly when being excited are part of daily life (Trompenaars & Woolliams 2020: 29).

Sweden and Finland are both examples of neutral countries according to this scale (see figure 2). Examples of emotional countries are Latin-American countries and in Europe, Italy, France and Spain (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner n.d.).

2.3.4 Specific versus Diffuse

This dimension is an indicator on how well connected the working and private life is. Living in a specific culture means that keeping the working life and private life apart is an important value. People are often extroverts, and they guard their personal space closely and share it only with close friends (Trompenaars & Woolliams 2020: 29).

However, in a diffuse culture it is the opposite and people are often indirect, introverted and working life and private life are connected (Trompenaars & Woolliams 2020: 29). Sweden and Finland are both counted as diffuse countries (see figure 2) (Trompenaars Hampden-Turner n.d.).

2.3.5 Achievement versus Ascription

In an achievement culture the status is based on how well people perform their roles and functions. Status can be reached through education and working position. The higher the level of education and working position the better the progress is in life.

Respect within society is based on what a person studied (Trompenaars and Woolliams 2020: 30).

However, in an ascription society it is rather where you studied than “what”. The status is based rather on who or what a person is and respect can be gained in relations or in a company depending how a person is being viewed. It is very hard to maintain a different status than what a person gets born into. Age, class and gender have very high value in this kind of society (Trompenaars and Woolliams 2020: 30).

Both the countries Finland and Sweden are achievement countries that try to achieve a higher level of education and working position in life (see figure 2) (Trompenaars Hampden-Turner n.d.).

2.3.6 Attitudes with regard to time

This dimension measures how people are handling time. In some countries the future is more important, in some others the present is more important. The values can differ (Trompenaars Hampden-Turner n.d.).

2.3.7 Attitudes with regard to the environment

The last dimension is an indicator how the culture behaves towards the environment, and it can be divided into two factors. The first one is internal dimension culture, in which the individual believes that they can control the outcome of nature. Some examples of these are the USA and Australia (Trompenaars & Woolliams 2020: 30).

In an external environment it is the opposite and people believe in letting things take their own course. Nature should be respected and ultimately decide the outcome of the future. Asian cultures such as China are examples of this environment (Trompenaars & Woolliams 2020: 30).

2.4 Lewis model

The Lewis model was founded in the 1990’s after Richard Lewis had traveled around the world visiting over 130 countries. After studying people’s behavior, he came to the conclusion that cultures can be divided into three dimensions (Crossculture 2019).

These are Linear-actives, Multiactives and Reactive (Crossculture 2019). The names speak for themselves and Lewis explains these well in his book "When Cultures Collide: Leading Across Cultures" originally from 1996 with an updated version from 2006 (Lewis 2006: 30).

Linear-actives are simply doing and focusing on only one thing at a time. In the Multi-actives dimension the focus is not only on one thing but on many aspects (Lewis 2006:30). The prioritization is always changing depending on the importance of the task of that specific time (Lewis, 2006: 35).

The reactive dimension can be found mostly in Asia and they normally listen to the people around them before making a decision (Lewis, 2006: 35). Figure 3 presents certain countries showing their values in the Lewis model (Crossculture 2019).



Figure 3: Countries Lewis Model (Crossculture, 2019)

2.5 Swedish business culture

Geographically Sweden and Finland are neighbors yet there are important cultural differences between these two nations. Swedish culture is very important to a Swedish person and doing business in Sweden requires you to follow some guidelines (Petri 2016).

In the book *Culture Shock! Sweden: A survival guide to customs and etiquette*, the author Charlotte Rosen Svensson writes about the Swedish business culture as flat rather than hierarchical, as compared to most of the western world. A few important factors for Swedish people are punctuality and the value of time. The way of communication is very direct and open (Svensson 1996: 31).

Rosen mentions 10 Swedish values that she claims Swedes value the most. These are the values that have shaped the Swedish people and the business culture in general: honesty, responsibility, justice, humor, happiness, togetherness, meaningfulness, involvement, teamwork, adaptability (Svensson 1996: 31).

At work one's director is one's director but the relationship between the employee and the director is very informal and open. Casual workwear is more than welcome, and a person should never come to work with fancy clothes or talk widely about their economic situation. English is being studied from an early age and Swedish people are not afraid of speaking English (Svensson, 1996: 32).

One of the most important moments of the day at work in Swedish working life is the 'fika' break. 'Fika' is a big part of Swedish culture and it also has a big part in the business life. Explaining 'fika' is quite difficult but it can be compared to a break where the colleagues or business partners usually get together and eat breakfast, a cookie or drink coffee together (Visit Sweden 2021).

An affair can be discussed throughout the day, but it is often during these 'fika' breaks that the deal is sealed. However, daily coffee breaks have a few things to consider. There are a few hidden rules in these breaks, such as a person rarely talks about political matters, money or anything that can cause an argument or serious discussion. However, talking about weather, upcoming events or funny things in general is more than welcome (Visit Sweden 2021).

2.6 Finnish business culture

Internationally Finnish people are described as quiet, introverted and unwilling to start a conversation openly with a new person. Personal space has always been an important factor to a Finn. They are known to make the most of their time and follow deadlines and schedules fully (Business Finland 2021).

The Finnish company normally has a flat organization structure and Finns are hardworking people. They value family and private time, and these are two important factors in a Finnish person's life (Business Finland 2021).

In the book *Finland, Cultural Lone Wolf* (2005) Richard Lewis describes different aspects of the Finnish business culture. The Finnish culture is a combination of the straight Scandinavian culture but is also influenced by different Asian values (Lewis 2005: 75-80).

One of the biggest values that comes across the Finnish culture is equality. Finland gave full political rights to women in 1906 as the first country in Europe. The Finnish people also value logic and determination (Lewis 2005: 75-80).

In the book he identifies 10 values crucial to the Finnish people: sense of separateness, *sisu* (resilience or endurance), honesty, hatred of debt, *luotettavuus* (reliability), shyness and modesty, taciturnity, directness, realism, common sense (Lewis 2005: 75-80).

The most known value of these worldwide is the word *Sisu*. There is no direct translation for this Finnish word to English but the closest word in English is "guts". This word was born during the Finnish winter war and stands for courage, toughness and stamina. The leader during this period Carl Gustav Mannerheim used this word to inspire stamina for his people to stand up against the Soviet Union (Lewis, 2005: 75).

The word was also used after the war, when Finnish people were struggling to pay back debts for war damage. The word can still be found in today's business life and life in general. The word can often be heard when the Finnish lions are struggling in Ice hockey or when a person needs to work harder (Lewis, 2005: 75).

Moreover, another important example of Finnish culture is the Sauna. In Finland traditionally this is a big part of almost every Finn's life. It is a place where people relax and get inner peace (Wood 2017).

However, the sauna does not only come with relaxation. There are also cases of different business meetings being held in saunas. In a Finnish sauna you are normally naked, and this helps to get rid of the hierarchies that might exist between people. This makes it possible for everyone to talk freely about work, without thinking about what position the person has in a company (Wood 2017).

2.7 Language barrier & business opportunities

The Swedish language is an official language in Finland. Many Finnish people understand Swedish but don't want to speak the language. Only a few percent of the Finnish population have the Swedish language as their mother tongue. It is often encountered in business involving Swedish counterparts that Finns must tackle the issue that many Swedish companies want their Finnish contacts to speak Swedish in their business meetings (Yle Svenska n.d.).

However, the Finnish workers feel that they are speaking a second language and are therefore at a disadvantage towards their Swedish customers or suppliers that speak their mother tongue. Speaking Swedish, however, can give their company an advantage to other rivals in the business trying to seal the deal (Yle Svenska n.d.).

After the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, collaboration and cooperation between Swedish and Finnish businesses are more important than ever. The business between the two countries increased at the start of the war after sanctions were implemented towards Russia. The expectation is for the business to increase as long as the sanctions are active (Yle Svenska n.d.)

2.8 The company Nokia from a Finnish perspective

Both Sweden and Finland are known for some of their international companies. In Sweden some of the existing companies abroad are Ikea, Volvo, and H&M. Finland has companies such as Nokia and Kone. These are all examples of companies that grew by internationalizing on a global scale (Henry 2019).

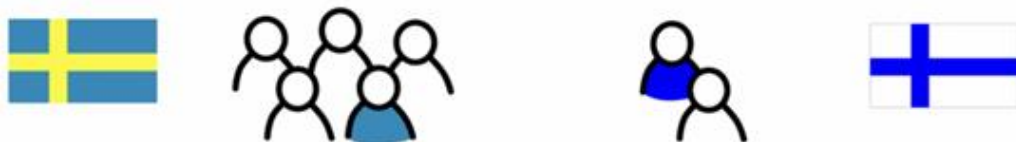
In these companies and their business structures differences can be found depending on where the facility or office is placed. An example of this is Markus Westerlund who writes about differences when he worked in the Finnish company Nokia in Finland (Westerlund 2021).

In the article he acknowledged some differences between the countries and how the people within the organization work differently. In figures 4 and 5 below it can be seen what Westerlund identified as differences between the two countries. There are quite many differences to take into consideration. Some of them stand out more than others. The planning process and the way of dealing with responsibilities is one of them (Westerlund 2021).

Charlotte Rosen Svensson emphasized in her book how important teamwork is for a Swedish person. In his article Westerlund explains that Finnish people rather want action and spontaneity and individual progress (Svensson 1996: 31).

One of the major differences also found in the article is the differences between how Westerlund (2021) explains the relationship between employee and the "boss". In Finland people respect the people in the organization with a higher role and give them the respect of the role (Westerlund 2021).

However, in Sweden it is a bit different. Swedish people still have respect for people in higher positions, but people work more fearlessly towards the people in charge. Sharing opinions and unpleasant information with the supervisors is usually not a problem and is a normal part of the daily routine (Westerlund 2021).



Planning/Participation	Spontaneity/action
Boss has co-workers	Boss authority
Shared responsibility, group	Individual responsibility
Negotiation	Action, activity
Avoiding conflict	Faces conflicts if needed

Figure 4 Values Sweden and Finland 1 (Westerlund 2021)

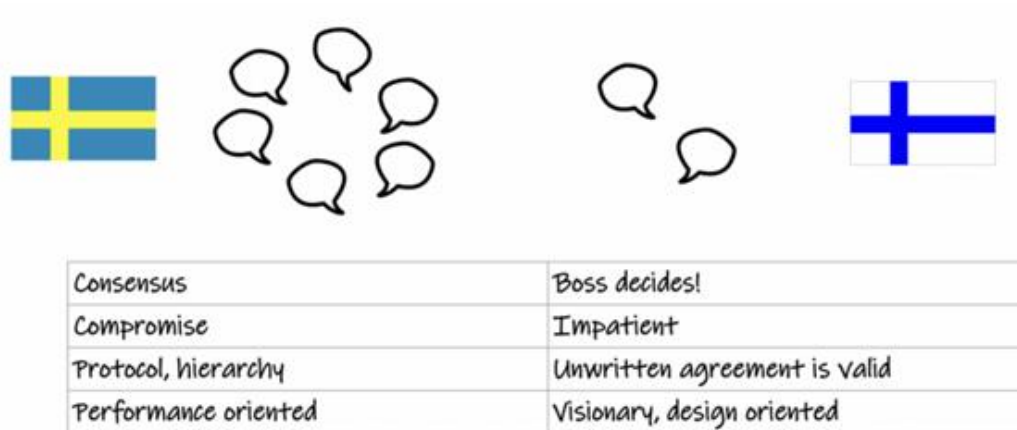


Figure 5 Values Sweden and Finland 2 (Westerlund 2021)

2.9 View of the Swedish business environment

Kieron Brown, a managing director of the London School of English in the Nordic region has been living and working in Stockholm for the past thirty years. He has made the same kind of journey as Westerholm. However, his working journey has been in Sweden (Brown 2018).

During his time in Sweden, he has noticed some important factors in conducting business in Sweden:

1. First names
2. Management by meetings
3. Polish your planning skills
4. Expect long decision processes
5. Learn how to "fika"
6. The art of Swedish small talk
7. Punctuality is essential
8. Work/life balance is taken seriously (Brown 2018).

Similar to Rosen Svensson in her book *Culture Shock! Sweden: A survival guide to customs and etiquette* (Svensson 1996) Kieron has found the Swedish 'fika' as an important part of the Swedish business culture (Brown 2018).

Kieron also acknowledges that formality in the way one speaks or writes is different from a lot of cultures. Using a simple 'Hej' in a formal email or when talking to a boss rather

than using Mr or Ms is a normal way of talking and writing at work in Sweden (Brown 2018).

2.10 Finland as a location for Swedish companies

It is not only the strategic location of Finland that attracts companies from Sweden. Finland being one of the most important business partners to Sweden and also one of the leading countries in the world in innovation, technology and education makes it an attractive possibility for Swedish companies for expansion (Business Sweden n.d).

The Swedish government sees opportunities in the business between the two countries. The organization Business Sweden is owned by the Swedish government. Their main purpose is to help Swedish companies expand their business abroad. With over 50 offices around the world and being active in Finland since 1974 they help Swedish companies with economic support, market analyses and strategic advice of the market in the country (Regeringen 2022).

Business Sweden and their country manager of Finland office Christian Weckman states some main advantages and challenges for companies entering the Finnish market. He mentions the good reputation of Swedish companies internationally. Swedish business structure is similar to the Finnish which makes it easy for the Swedish companies to find a place in the Finnish market (Business Sweden n.d).

However, he also mentions a few challenges. One of them is the Finnish language. He gives the advice for companies to use local expertise to help getting settled with documentation and general market adaptation. These are the aspects that Business Sweden is there to help out with (Business Sweden n.d).

3 Case study: Byggmax in Finland

3.1 Introduction to Byggmax

In this part of the thesis the author will research how the cultural differences between Sweden and Finland affect the entry of a Swedish company into the Finnish market. The author has chosen to research the Swedish company Byggmax and their journey of expansion to Finland (Byggmax 2022).

Byggmax opened their first store in Sweden in 1993 and their business idea has always been to be the cheapest and the best alternative for home carpenters (Byggmax 2008).

Their main motto is: "All home carpenters should be able to realize their building dreams, at least we at Byggmax think so. Whether it's indoor, outdoor or garden projects. "That is why all the Byggmax stores work towards the same mission statement: to give these home carpenters both advice and the opportunity to do so" (Byggmax 2008).

Today Byggmax has over 200 stores in Sweden, Finland, Norway and since July 2022 also in Denmark. The company has 1200 employees and a revenue of 7.6 billion SEK by the end of 2021 (Byggmax, 2022).

Byggmax in Finland in the year 2022 is still relatively small compared to some competitors. They see their main competitors to be Motonet, Tokmanni, Puulo and Bauhaus. They also see K-rauta and RTV as competitors but on a different level due to them focusing mainly on professional customers (Byggmax 2021).

They currently have 51 employees in Finland split over 1 office and 9 stores with 66% men and 34% women. All the revenue of the company is reported in SEK. However, the purchases in Finland are mainly due in the EURO. This means that the company is exposed to a low value of the Swedish Crown right now (Byggmax 2021).

3.2 Byggmax international expansion

The company's expansion started internationally in 2007 when they opened a store in Norway. In 2008 Byggmax continued their expansion to Finland. The recession in 2008 was one of the main reasons that Byggmax chose to expand to Finland (Byggmax 2008).

The recession was to Bygghem's advantage and when people were struggling with their economy, Bygghem stood up well with their strategy of cheap construction products with good quality and price (Bygghem 2008).

This was also reflected in the company's marketing and public relations: "We welcome a recession. When the Swedes and Finns start to turn their pennies, the companies that can offer good quality at low prices are the winners" says Magnus Agervald, Vice director in 2008 (Bygghem 2008).

With the expansion to Finland, Bygghem saw a great opportunity. At their opening in 2008 they were one of the first to use inventory balance and prices on all their wares online. The company had worked hard in Sweden to set up an internet-based web shop which ended up being a great success in Sweden (Bygghem 2008).

Bygghem is very well known for their internet shop and delivery policy. Bygghem has a policy that a customer can order online before 14.00 and already have the order the next day as long as the wares are in storage (Bygghem 2008).

The expansion started out as a success and Bygghem had as many as 12 stores around Finland by the end of 2016. However, today there are only 9 stores around the country. In 2017 they had an update to their strategy in Finland and closed stores in Pirkkala, Jyväskylä, Seinäjoki and Oulu and at the same time Bygghem opened a new store in Riihimäki (Bygghem 2021).

3.3 Bygghem strategy

The main reasons for the changes to the strategy are part of the new Bygghem strategy of placing stores more strategically both from a logistics and profitability point of view. This reconstruction of the strategy and business in Finland led to 11 people losing their jobs. Bygghem now has the majority of their stores in southern Finland (see figure 6 below) (Bygghem 2017).

The strategy plans got updated and from 2017 this is how Bygghem's strategy plan looks like:

- "Strong Bygghem brand, which holds the low-price position
- Unique store format - with self-service and close to the customers

- Strong e-commerce position
- Lowest costs in the industry
- Ability to deliver steady growth
- Strong culture of cost awareness and entrepreneurship” (Byggmax 2017).



Figure 6: Most Finnish stores are in the south (Byggmax 2017)

The organization Byggmax has also changed. In 2021 Byggmax chose a new path for their marketing strategy to reach out to more people. They have chosen to use a turnkey supplier called Bluebird Media to take care of their marketing in Sweden, Finland and Norway (Bluebird Media n.d.).

Previously Byggmax has had different companies managing different types of marketing. However, from 2021 Bluebird Media is responsible for their marketing on all platforms (Bluebird Media n.d.).

3.4 Byggmax and Covid

During Covid, while many companies were struggling, the construction business had years with good revenue. The revenue for 2019 and 2020 looked good in overall for Byggmax. Especially during mid 2020 Byggmax showed very strong numbers and the business was doing well. People spending time at home and having time for renovation due to not being able to attend their jobs and go to the office are some of the main factors for this (Direkt n.d.).

During this period there was a wave of "home fixing" throughout Europe. This meant that people spent a lot of time fixing different small and big renovation objects in their homes. For a company like Byggmax this was very good, and the revenue went up over 30% in May 2020 compared to May 2019 including all Nordic countries. "We also benefited from our position as Nordic price leader with stores close to customers and a strong online presence", according to CEO Mattias Ankarberg 2021 (Direkt n.d.).

In 2022 the world started to go back to normal after the Covid. The ending of the "home fixing" wave has shown in the numbers of Byggmax, and sales has decreased compared to both 2019, 2020 and 2021. In the analysis from Swedbank they estimate the construction business to have lost between 15 to 20% in sales in 2022 compared to 2021 (Aktiellt 2022).

4 Research method and data collection

4.1 Qualitative research and Quantitative research

To acquire data for the thesis two main research methods can be used. According to Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad (2010: 6-7) the quantitative approach relies on numbers and statistics, whereas the qualitative approach relies on subjective assessment of behavior, opinions, and so on (Krishnaswami, Satyaprasad (2010: 6-7).

As part of the qualitative approach, discussions, group interviews, and in-depth interviews are used to gather data. Respondents will be able to give in-depth responses through interviews, as they will be able to express themselves more freely (Krishnaswami, Satyaprasad (2010: 6-7). Therefore, the author will use a qualitative approach to collect the data for this study.

4.2 Interview structure and background of the questions

The interviews for the thesis have been done face-to-face and only with one person at a time. The questions used have been thought through carefully to fit both professional people in the construction business and people with no experience in the construction business as interviewees from both these groups were selected to answer the questions.

The main goal with the interviews was to research how well the brand Byggmax is currently doing in Finland taking the cultural aspects into consideration. There are different questions regarding the culture, marketing success and general opinion about Byggmax in Finland.

With the selected questions the author seeks to get a clearer view of how well known their brand and stores are in Finland and how Finnish people perceive Byggmax in general.

Therefore, the following questions have been used:

1. Have you heard about the company Byggmax? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?
2. Have you ever visited their internet site?
3. Have you ever seen any commercial for Byggmax anywhere including social media?
4. What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?
5. What do you think a Swedish company like Byggmax should take into account when conducting business in Finland?
6. What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?
7. How do you perceive the name Byggmax? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)
8. What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

4.3 Interviews

The author conducted interviews as a qualitative research method for the thesis. The aim was to conduct structured face-to-face interviews with different individuals. The individuals, which are included in this survey, have been chosen carefully from many different perspectives. Some of these perspectives are age, gender and profession. The author chose interviewees from different age groups and genders.

With Byggmax targeting both professional customers and ordinary consumers the interviews have been conducted with respondents within different positions and experience within the construction sector. All respondents are Finnish citizens and have been living in Finland for the majority of their lives.

The first group of respondents are Finnish people with no experience in the construction profession. However, in the second group all respondents have experience from the professional construction business.

The following groups were interviewed:

Group 1

- Male 27
- Woman 27
- Woman 30
- Male 89
- Woman 62

Group 2

- Male 45
- Male 39
- Woman 34
- Male 61
- Woman 21

5 Significance of the findings in the interviews

The author found out some key points in the conducted interviews. One of the biggest points to take out from these interviews is how the majority of the respondents see service as one of the most important aspects for a company to provide to the customers. This result came up in both interviewed groups - the professionals within the construction business and ordinary consumers needing material for a renovation or some other smaller project. Service is an important factor for Finnish people and cannot be forgotten.

The importance of the name is also something that regularly showed up in the interviews. Having either a Finnish or an international name would help Bygghuset to build confidence among the Finnish audience according to the results of the interviews. This result highlights the language as an important cultural aspect to consider when a company enters the market of another country and culture.

Bygghuset as a company seems to also have failed in their brand and marketing strategy since almost all respondents knew about the company but had never visited the stores. This factor can be connected to the locations of the stores, or it can be just a failure to reach out to the potential Finnish customers and convey their brand values to the Finnish target audience.

In overall the respondents seemed to be positive about Swedish companies entering Finland. Some opinions being shared in the interviews were that it creates competition in the Finnish market which in return keeps prices down. Swedish companies coming to Finland also bring jobs into the Finnish market.

The significance of the findings defines the meaningfulness of the results of the conducted research and shows the benefits for the case company. Bygghuset could learn more about their customers through the analysis of the study presented by the author and, as a result, build a brand strategy that takes into consideration the important aspects of the Finnish culture.

6 Reliability and validity

When researching there is an importance to provide quality and collect correct data. Therefore, reliability and validity are important factors in a thesis. To gain reliability for a research one factor is to research a subject and find repeatability of the same information throughout the research. This gives an indication that the information is reliable and adds validity to a thesis since the data is credible and authentic. (Zikmund et al. 2010: 305)

The author chose to interview people to find out about the Finnish perspective regarding Bygghem status in Finland. There is a risk that enough people were not interviewed to get a proper result from the whole population of Finland. The author's idea was to provide an indication of how Bygghem is doing in Finland.

If the number of the respondents is relatively low, it might not give a completely truthful image of the situation. Therefore, conducting an internet survey where the respondents would be Bygghem's current and target customers and having a significant number of answers would give more reliable results for the research.

The interview questions were asked mainly in English, but due to the lack of knowledge in English that two of the participants had, the questions were translated and asked in Finnish. The questions were clear and straight and there were no challenges for the interviewees to understand them throughout the interviews.

7 Conclusion and suggestions

On the surface Sweden and Finland seem very similar culture wise. The history between the countries is long and they are also neighboring countries. When conducting business, two of the major key points to consider are communication and culture.

The theory part of the thesis has gone through three different theories regarding the cultural differences between the countries. These are Hofstede, Trompenaars and Lewis. The theories have indicated both differences and similarities in the Swedish and Finnish business cultures.

Regardless of what theory is chosen the countries seem to be close to each other culturally. Therefore, conducting business between the countries should be relatively easy. However, there are cultural aspects that need to be considered and researched properly if a business wants to maximize their success in the chosen country of entry.

The most important similarities culturally between Sweden and Finland are that both countries are individualistic countries and both nations value equality, punctuality, and trustworthiness. Both countries also have a low power distance and people are on a first name basis. This is a value that might differ from many other European countries.

The most important cultural differences between the countries are that Swedes usually want everyone included into the conversation and let everyone talk about their opinions. In Finland the communication is more direct, and employees are more individualistic when compared to a Swedish employee. Swedish people are normally more extrovert and Finnish people more introvert in their way of being.

During the thesis a case study of the Swedish company Byggmax was presented. The case has been following Byggmax and their history together with the expansion to the Nordic countries and especially to Finland. The case study showed interesting results in the form of Byggmax business view in Finland and the analysis of the interviews.

The study included interviews about the Finnish view on the Swedish company Byggmax. These interviews gave many good indications of Byggmax status in Finland. Swedish and

Finnish people have a lot of similar values. However, the differences in the values need to be considered and the author believes that Byggmax could have researched better before their entry into the Finnish market.

One aspect that needs to be considered in the reliability of the research is that only ten people were interviewed. However, the interviews give an indication that Byggmax has improvements to make to be able to fully access the Finnish market and get better results from the Finnish market.

Service is one of the keywords to take away from the interviews since it is an important factor for Finnish people. Byggmax has stated in their strategy change that they prioritize both self-service and being close to the customers.

However, the service seems to be inadequate in at least some of their stores according to the interviewees. Therefore, one of the main problems with their establishment in Finland might be the lack of service to the customers and that and they should try to become a more service-oriented company in Finland to gain more success.

A few years ago Byggmax closed some stores in Finland. According to the company this was done to get a more logistics wise and a more profitable strategy. The remaining stores in Finland are now all located in the southern part of the country. Three out of four stores that was closed in their repositioning of stores were all part of mid-north Finland. (Jyväskylä, Seinäjoki and Oulo).

It is hard to draw a conclusion why their entry into central and north Finland failed and there can be many reasons to it. One reason might have been a failure in their brand and marketing strategy and not being able to reach out to the people outside the bigger cities in the south.

Another reason can be that the locations of the stores have been chosen poorly. The author believes that this must have been a failure for Byggmax and their entry to Finland. This also led to eleven workers losing their jobs. Hiring a new partner company, that is culturally aware, to take over the company's branding and marketing might be a step in the right direction.

After completing the case study and research about Byggmax it is still not clear to the author what kind of segment Byggmax fully leans towards. They are not targeting construction professionals as their main segment nor only regular customers. It is unclear who they are targeting as customers. For future research the author would conduct interviews inside Byggmax and their personnel to get a better view of the situation.

There is currently an unstable situation in the world. The world is encountering war, high inflation, and other crises. This has led to difficult times for many businesses. Byggmax has managed to have good revenue for the past years and especially in 2020 when they had a record year. This was mainly due to the Covid wave. People had to stay home and started to renovate and fix different home projects.

With the world going towards tougher times Byggmax could see this as an opportunity similarly to what happened in 2008 with the recession. However, the author believes that this time it will be a lot harder for Byggmax to achieve the same results as back then, mainly because many people had so much free time during Covid that they managed to fix most of their projects.

Conducting business internationally is a challenge and requires research on the cultures involved in the business operations. However, the author believes that the business between Sweden and Finland will bloom in the future and the companies will start taking the culture into consideration increasingly. This in turn will lead to more successful cooperation between the countries and more successful businesses.

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Appendices

Interview questions

The interviews contained two different groups

Group 1 no experience within construction

- Male 27
- Woman 27
- Woman 32
- Male 89
- Woman 62

Group 2 experience within the construction business in one way or another

- Male 45
- Male 39
- Woman 34
- Male 61
- Woman 21

The following questions was used in the interviews:

1. Have you heard about the company Byggmax? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?
2. Have you ever visited their internet site?
3. Have you ever seen any commercial for Byggmax anywhere including social media?
4. What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?
5. What do you think a Swedish company like Byggmax should take into account when conducting business in Finland?
6. What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?

7. How do you perceive the name Byggmax? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)
8. What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

- ***Interview 1 with male 27 no experience of construction business:***

Have you heard about the company Byggmax? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?

Answer: I have heard about it but never visited any of their stores. I have not seen any store close to where we live otherwise, I might have gone.

Have you ever visited their internet site?

Answer: No, I have never visited their site.

Have you ever seen any commercial for Byggmax anywhere including social media?

Answer: Yes, I have seen it once or twice on Facebook. Other than that, no.

What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?

Answer: I have been working in Sweden for a few months and I noticed some differences. The major difference was the way Swedish people like to talk way more at work than we Finnish people. I think Finnish people rather go straight to work and work hard rather than "chatting" nonsense at work. I do also believe that Swedish people like more fancy items and stuff and Finnish people like it more basic and practical.

What do you think a Swedish company like Byggmax should take into account when conducting business in Finland?

Answer: Location is the key. When we need construction equipment, we go to the closest store regardless of brand. Selection needs to be applied to the Finnish market.

Style and design need to be followed and adjusted to the Finnish market. Marketing culture wise is quite far away from each other and needs to be considered.

I do believe Byggmax should have two different stores, one for professionals and one for normal consumers. Byggmax should take in consideration different logistic options like renting a lorry for the car to take material home. Should apply different services for customers such as advice on building and help with different problems that a customer might have regarding building related questions.

What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?

Answer: I don't believe there are any differences to Finnish companies as long as they add value to the Finnish market. I do believe it is a bit weird that Swedish companies often have cheaper prices in their stores in for example Rusta and now Jula opening when you compare it to for example Tokmanni. I find this weird because I have feeling Finnish companies usually follow Swedish companies in many different aspects.

How do you perceive the name Byggmax? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)

Answer: Certainly, should have been a Finnish name when entering the Finnish market.

What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

Answer: Nails, screws and other equipment for our apartment. We are currently not renovating anything so there is no need for any other construction equipment.

- Interview 2 with Woman 27 no experience from construction business:

Have you heard about the company Byggmax? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?

Answer: I have heard about Byggmax but I have never visited any of their stores. However, I know that they are located pretty close to where I live.

Have you ever visited their internet site?

Answer: No, I have never visited their site.

Have you ever seen any commercial for Byggmax anywhere including social media?

Answer: Yes, I have seen their commercials in both Facebook and TV commercials.

What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?

Answer: I do believe that Finnish people are hardworking people. I do think Swedish people don't work as hard as us Finnish people.

What do you think a Swedish company like Byggmax should take into account when conducting business in Finland?

Answer: One of the biggest aspects a company should take into consideration to me is that Finnish people want service. Regardless of which store we visit we always want service.

What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?

Answer: I do believe Swedish companies often have cheaper wares than Finnish companies. One example is Ikea, which is known for cheap prices but also has good quality. I think it is good with Swedish companies here.

How do you perceive the name Byggmax? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)

Answer: I do think they should have chosen either an international name or Finnish name. I think this is Important to get into the finish market.

What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

Answer: I have never really visited a construction store, but I guess I would buy construction equipment.

- ***Interview 3 with Woman 32 no experience from construction business:***

Have you heard about the company Bygghmax? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?

Answer: I have heard about the name. However, I have no idea what kind of business or company it is.

Have you ever visited their internet site?

Answer: No

Have you ever seen any commercial for Bygghmax anywhere including social media?

Answer: Yes in TV.

What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?

Answer: I think the cultures are the same and there are no big differences.

What do you think a Swedish company like Bygghmax should take into account when conducting business in Finland?

Answer: Customer service is one of the most important factors for me. If I go to a company, I want to be sure I get the help I need.

What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?

Answer: I don't see any differences between the companies. For me they are all the same.

How do you perceive the name Bygghmax? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)

Answer: They should have a name that fits the Finnish market and the tongue of speaking. Bygghuset is not a name I like at all; it might fit Swedish speaking people in Finland but not the general population.

What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

Answer: No idea.

- ***Interview 4 with Male 89 no experience from construction business:***

Have you heard about the company Bygghuset? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?

Answer: No

Have you ever visited their internet site?

Answer: No

Have you ever seen any commercial for Bygghuset anywhere including social media?

Answer: No

What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?

Answer: The only main difference is the language other than that I think that the culture might be better in Sweden.

What do you think a Swedish company like Bygghuset should take into account when conducting business in Finland?

Answer: Have cheaper and better-quality products than in Finland.

What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?

Answer: I think it is good to have Swedish companies here in Finland. It gives competition to our market and keeps prices balanced. It also gives job opportunities to the Finnish people.

How do you perceive the name Byggmax? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)

Answer: I don't speak or understand Swedish so well, but I do think it has something to do with building or construction.

What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

Answer: I would buy anything I need for a project. I moved not so long to an apartment but before that I lived in a big house and then I also needed material for different projects.

- ***Interview 5 with woman 62 no experience from construction business:***

Have you heard about the company Byggmax? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?

Answer: I have heard about the name yes but I have never visited.

Have you ever visited their internet site?

Answer: No

Have you ever seen any commercial for Byggmax anywhere including social media?

Answer: Yes, quite regularly on TV.

What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?

Answer: Is there even a big difference between the cultures? The stores are different such as Rusta and Ikea. In Swedish stores such as Ikea and Rusta the stores are built

so you have to go around the stores fully to reach your items, in Finnish stores you can go straight to it without having to walk around the whole store.

What do you think a Swedish company like Bygghuset should take into account when conducting business in Finland?

Answer: I don't actually have any good answer to this question, so I pass.

What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?

Answer: I think it is good since we are neighboring countries.

How do you perceive the name Bygghuset? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)

Answer: I think it is a fitting name for their Business and I don't see any need to change it.

What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

Answer: I would buy anything I need for a project. I moved not so long to an apartment but before that I lived in a big house and then I also needed material for different projects.

The people getting interviewed from now on all have experience within the construction business in one way or another.

- Interview 6 with Male 45 with experience from construction business:

Have you heard about the company Bygghuset? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?

Answer: I have both heard about and visited their store a couple of times.

Have you ever visited their internet site?

Answer: Yes

Have you ever seen any commercial for Bygghmax anywhere including social media?

Answer: Yes, both on TV and on social media.

What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?

Answer: Hard to say but when I was doing some construction work in Sweden a couple of years ago I didn't really see any difference at all. However, I noticed that it is a lot more international people working in Sweden than in Finland. There were many different nationalities in Finland itf is mainly Finnish or Estonian that I have seen.

What do you think a Swedish company like Bygghmax should take into account when conducting business in Finland?

Answer: Apply to the Finnish market and take Finnish brands into their store. I think it is very important for Finnish people to shop Finnish brands in this business.

What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?

Answer: Good! I like to eat Swedish meatballs at Ikea during lunch haha. Nah but to the serious note I do think it is good for competition and it normally keeps prices down on different items.

How do you perceive the name Bygghmax? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)

Answer: I am not the best at Swedish, but I do think it means something with construction. However, I do think perhaps a Finnish name would fit better.

What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

Answer: Since I am working and have been working with construction most of my life I would plan a project and then go into a construction store. So these items can differ

from project to project. I do want a store with a big assortment, good prices and high quality.

- **Interview 7 with Male 39 with experience from construction business:**

Have you heard about the company Bygghmax? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?

Answer: Yes, many times. I visit Bygghmax a few times every month depending on my position.

Have you ever visited their internet site?

Answer: Yes

Have you ever seen any commercial for Bygghmax anywhere including social media?

Answer: Hm, not what I can think about. I might have seen it in TV but I am not sure.

What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?

Answer: Hard to say, I think in Finland the culture is more manly than in Sweden but I don't know if this is true or not but it is just what I think. I have never visited Sweden, so it is hard to give a full opinion on this question.

What do you think a Swedish company like Bygghmax should take into account when conducting business in Finland?

Answer: Service 100% I have been working in construction for the past 15 years and I have led my own company. I don't really care about prices as long as I get the service I want. If a product costs 5€ or 8€ it has very little meaning if I just get the help and service, I need.

I have been shopping in the same store for past years (K-rauta) because of the service I get there. The times I have visited Bygghmax is because it has been the closest store to the project I have been into recently. The times I have visited Bygghmax I have felt that their service is lacking to some of their competitors.

Maybe it has something to do with culture between the countries, but I do believe that is so important to maintain customers. I have not really understood what kind of segment that Byggmax wants because I am quite sure it is not towards us professionals at least but maybe to regular people.

What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?

Answer: Competition, the prices in Byggmax is good with the same kind of service as Finnish competitors they could have easily been a lot bigger here.

How do you perceive the name Byggmax? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)

Answer: Bad I dont like it at all. I do believe having a Finnish name would have helped them here.

What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

Answer: Anything I would need for a project regardless of the position I am at and what kind of renovation I would do.

- Interview 8 with Woman 34 with experience from construction business:

Have you heard about the company Byggmax? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?

Answer: Yes, however I have never sat my food in one of their stores.

Have you ever visited their internet site?

Answer: No

Have you ever seen any commercial for Byggmax anywhere including social media?

Answer: Never

What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?

Answer: Hm. Hard question I think the cultures are pretty similar, but I think perhaps Swedish people are more open minded than we Finnish people. With that I mean that Swedish people are easier to connect to than us Finnish people. However, I dont really have a good answer to this and I have no idea if this is true or not.

What do you think a Swedish company like Bygghuset should take into account when conducting business in Finland?

Answer: I adapt to the Finnish market. I always try to shop Finnish wares regardless of if it is meat or construction products. This is an important factor for me.

What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?

Answer: Good! Brings competition and job opportunities to Finland. If I would point out anything negative it might be the logistic and sustainable part of it. I would guess a company such as Bygghuset has not adapted fully to the Finnish market and still transport a lot of Swedish products to Finland in different ways.

How do you perceive the name Bygghuset? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)

Answer: No real comment about their name. I think it is an ok name for a company. Obviously, it has worked in Sweden

What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

Answer: I would buy anything I need for a project. I moved not so long to an apartment but before that I lived in a big house and then I also needed material for different projects.

- **Interview 9 with Male 61 with experience from construction business:**

Have you heard about the company Byggmax? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?

Answer: Yes I have heard about it and also visited it on few occasions.

Have you ever visited their internet site?

Answer: I have actually never visited their internet site, no.

Have you ever seen any commercial for Byggmax anywhere including social media?

Answer: I think I saw an advertisement on social media, but I am not sure which social media it was or can't remember when it was.

What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?

Answer: Hm, are there even any differences between the countries? Perhaps we are patriotic in Finland if you compare the two. I think we really like our country, and I am not sure a Swede is doing the same. I think it has to do with our war history and the winter war I think it brought our people closer to loving our flag and country.

What do you think a Swedish company like Byggmax should take into account when conducting business in Finland?

Answer: Follow Finnish norms, as I said on the previous question, I think our country is very patriotic and requires for example Finnish products.

What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?

Answer: In general, I think it is good since it brings our countries closer together. In the situation we are currently in, I think it is important that we as a country stand close to each other.

How do you perceive the name Byggmax? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)

Answer: Swedish company Swedish name I don't really know it does not bring any kind of image to my head.

What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

Answer: Construction products haha. I don't have any specific product that I would go after unless I specifically need that product. Everything required for a renovation.

- Interview 10 with Woman 21 with experience from construction business:

Have you heard about the company Bygghem? In case of yes, have you ever visited one of their stores?

Answer: Never heard about the company or visited.

Have you ever visited their internet site?

Answer: No

Have you ever seen any commercial for Bygghem anywhere including social media?

Answer: Never heard, read or seen any commercials with Bygghem.

What do you think are the main differences in the Finnish and Swedish culture?

Answer: No idea, food maybe? We also have saunas. I am not sure if Sweden has so many saunas in Sweden? Other than that, I think we are quite similar people. We have once been the same country, so I guess it is not so weird haha.

What do you think a Swedish company like Bygghem should take into account when conducting business in Finland?

Answer: Not really sure what to answer on this question but perhaps just do a big check on the Finnish market and try to adjust to it?

What do you think about Swedish companies in Finland in general?

Answer: No idea I have been to Ikea and I drive a Volvo but other than that I don't know.

How do you perceive the name Byggmax? What kind of images does it bring to your mind? (Language as a cultural factor in Swedish companies' conducting business in Finland)

Answer: Does not really bring any images to my head. Adjusting to the Finnish market might require changing it

What are the categories of items you as a customer would buy in a construction store?

Answer: The items I need at that time, I guess. I would buy items required for that specific project or renovation.