CREATIVE FREELANCERS´ NEEDS FOR WORKSPACE, NETWORKING AND INTERNATIONALISATION

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ABSTRACT

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deClub, the commissioner of this thesis, is a network of creative freelancers and entrepreneurs who work in a shared office. deClub provides the shared office to work, and possibilities to network and share ideas with like-minded creative professionals. The offices in different countries also enable international networking. The purpose of this thesis was to get more information about the needs of creative freelancers in Helsinki and Breda, where deClub has offices at the moment, regarding workspace, networking and internationalization.

The research was conducted as a quantitative research by sending an online questionnaire to a portion of creative freelancers in the aforementioned cities. The results were then used for the analysis and conclusions were made based on the acquired results. The results were divided into four sections: background information, the need for workspace, the need for networking and the need for internationalization.

According to the results some respondents prefer working from home but there is also a need for workspaces. It became apparent that especially women and respondents in the younger age groups were interested in a more flexible work place option. The respondents found network of like-minded people, meeting space for clients and the location of the office to be the most important things in a shared office.
The majority of the respondents showed interest towards professional networks, and more than half were already a part of a professional network or interested in becoming part of one. People who were already part of some professional networks felt that they had received the help they needed through the networks.
Little more than half of the respondents feel the need to become more internationally oriented and they also use international resources when seeking for help or information. Almost half of the respondents had also been working in an international company prior to their freelancing career and some of the respondents had taken part in international conferences.

The received information gave interesting results. The information acquired from this research can be used as a guideline for deClub in decision making, but due to the relatively low response rate, it may not give an entirely accurate picture of the target group.

Key words: creative freelancers, networking, market research, service design

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the thesis is to gather information about creative freelancers needs for work space, networking and internationalisation. The received results are to help deClub to better respond to the needs of its members.

1.1 Company description

The company this thesis was made for is deClub. deClub provides an international network to support the professional growth and international networking of creative independents. deClub aims to provide these independents with a space to work in and the tools necessary to connect and collaborate with each other, and to make their work known to others. deClub is specifically for creative entrepreneurs, freelancers and other one-person companies working in the fields of, for example, advertising, art, design, fashion, publishing and software development.
deClub wants to support grassroots networking and provide the needed support and contacts to its members. deClub is also aiming to build a pan European network of offices and create and international creative community.

1.2 Background information on the topic

In the spring of 2011, I did my practical training in the headquarters of deClub in Amsterdam. During the practical training I landed with the thesis topic “Creative freelancers´ needs concerning the workplace, networking and internationalization”. The topic came about because deClub wanted to better be able to offer its members what they need. This thesis was conducted by sending out a questionnaire to a random sample of creative freelancers in Helsinki, Finland and Breda, the Netherlands. These cities were chosen for the data collection, because deClub´s first office opened in Helsinki in August 2011 and the second office opened in Breda in November 2012.

1.3 The purpose and objectives of the thesis

The purpose of the thesis is to find answers to the following three topics; if the freelancers feel the need to work outside the home, what kind of networking requirements they have and do they find it important to become more internationally work oriented. From the information received from this research deClub will be better aware of the needs and wants of its target group and be able to develop its services accordingly.

The objective of the thesis is to gather more information on the above mentioned three subjects

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Market research

Formalized market research has its beginning in the 1930s United States when large businesses competing against each other needed a better understanding of customers´ needs and buying habits. Market research has since grown into a vital part of companies´ decision making process providing valuable data in various ways and reducing business risks. (Hague, Hague, Morgan 2004, 2-4, 8)

Igor Ansoff's ‘products and markets matrix’, shown below, demonstrates the many ways in which extensive data, generated from market research, can benefit a business, whether the product or market is brand-new or already existing. The goals of market research can therefore vary from pointing out needs that aren't yet met, to simply measuring and improving customer satisfaction in contemporary markets.

	Existing Markets	New Markets
New Products [or services]	Market research can show the likelihood of adoption of new products [or services]	Market research can show unmet needs and provide an understanding of unfamiliar markets
Existing Products [or services]	Market research can measure customer satisfaction to find out how to maintain a competitive edge	Market research can find new territories for products and services

FIGURE 1 *Ansoff and market research (Hague et al. 2004,4)*

Market research vs. marketing research

Market research and marketing research are often seen as synonyms; however there is a distinguishable difference between these two. *Market research* concentrates on a specific market and is thus a narrower concept, focusing on researching information about customer needs, competition, opportunities and changes in the marketplace. *Marketing research* is a wider concept and can be viewed as a link between the company and customers, market and environment. It provides the company with information that helps in making better marketing decisions. (Juuso, 2009) As an example of whether to use market research or marketing research Oud (2004) gives a simplified example:

- *Marketing research* applies when the information needed concerns company´s own offers (products and/or services) or current customers.
- *Market research* applies when the information needed concerns the market situation, non-current customers or linked offers (products and/or services) which can be competitive or substitute

2.1.1 The range of information obtainable from market research

Most decisions made by companies require information from the market to reduce the risks. Common information requirements fulfilled by market research are:

- *Market size and structure:* gathers information about the value of the market and the units sold, the historical trends and the key consuming segments, competition and it´s shares and the route to market
- *Use of and attitude to products:* focuses on obtaining information about the awareness of suppliers, the attitudes to suppliers and products and how often and in which quantities products are purchased
- *Customer satisfaction:* measures evaluations of customers and occasionally potential customers identifying what they consider to be important factors in influencing their buying decision and how satisfies they are with their supplier on each issue
- *Promotion effectiveness:* focuses on the effect advertisements, promotions and the key messages of campaigns have to the targeted audience
- *Brand impact:* measures awareness and values attached to brands and how the brands influence buying decisions.
- *Pricing effectiveness:* gathers information about ideal prices and price values attached to the features of the offer
- *Product tests/concepts:* focuses on identifying needs that have not been previously met, attitudes to new concepts and products and measures the likelihood of purchasing different products
- *Segmentation:* measures the opportunities for dividing markets into specific groups based on demographics, behaviour or needs

This is not a thorough list but gives a wide variety of examples showing the most common issues researched. Market research can be used to number of in depth topics, whether it is, usually depends on the financial repercussions of the decision to the company and how time-consuming it is to acquire the results. It is unlikely, that time-consuming market research be used for fast paced low-risk investment decisions. (Hague et al. 2004, 8-10)

Several of the above mentioned topics were used in the research done for deClub. Most of the questions in the research questionnaire would fall under categories: *Customer satisfaction, pricing effectiveness, product/[service] test/concept and use of and attitudes to products[services]*

2.2 Customer needs assessment

A business that has a clear understanding of the needs of their customers, can better custom their products/services, compete with other business in the same field, target new customers and identify new opportunities. (Government of the UK: Growing your business, 2012)
The research made for this thesis could best be defined as customer needs assessment. However what really were assessed were not the needs of current customers but the needs and wants of potential customers. The questionnaire was sent to freelancers in the target group, who at the moment when the questionnaire was sent were not customer of deClub. deClub also prefers to use the term members instead of customers, which gives a better picture of the nature of "customers". The members are encouraged to actively participate in networking with other members and be part of creating the pan European creative freelancers network.

The term customer needs assessment is used to define customer needs and wants for products and services. The terms needs analysis, needs assessment, market research and market analysis are all used to describe fairly the same process and the terms are compatible with each other. The aim of the customer needs assessment is to design an effective program, product, or service that addresses the target group's needs and wants (Web portal of U.S. government, Human Dimensions: Needs Assessment. 2009). Needs assessment provides the ground work for planning and action, and helps in clarifying problems and pointing out opportunities. It also assists in prioritizing actions, setting goals for future, providing important data needed in decision making. (Gupta 2007, 20). In addition to the strengths of the needs assessment, mentioned above there are also some limitations to it. The following limitations can apply to needs assessment particularly when using survey or questionnaire as a form of data collections; low response rates, may restrict freedom of response, no opportunity to clarify answers. (McCoy 1993, 23) If the previous things occur the questionnaire may not give an entirely accurate picture of the actual wants and needs.

2.3 Service design

Service design is an approach that combines different methods and tools from various fields of study. It is not a completely new field of study but can be seen more as a new mind set and way of thinking. The service design approach is developing and thus it does not yet have a common definition or specified language. Because of the evolving nature of service design it may even be better that it is not restricted by a single definition. Nonetheless a shared language is undeniably an important part for the future growth of this new approach. (Stickdorn, Schneider &co-authors 2010, 29)

Service design is a customer centred approach that also benefits the organisation. It is a way of gaining valuable information about customers, by putting oneself in the customer´s position for better understanding what is needed from the customer´s point of view and making the services desirable to them while also making the service useful and usable. Stickdorn &Schneider (2010) have collected a variety of quotes defining service design. One of the quotes sums up what service design is in the following way: “Service design helps to innovate (create new) or improve (existing) services to make them more useful, usable, desirable for clients and efficient as well as effective for organisations. It is a holistic, multi-disciplinary, integrative field.” (Stefan 2005) The quote gives a clear definition that helps to understand the purpose and the aim of the service design.

2.3.1 Five principles of service design thinking

As already mentioned, there is no common definition of service design; therefore the five principles of service design are given to help to clarify what service design is and the way of thinking that is necessary for those who design services. These five core principles identify that service design is:

1. *User-centred*, Customers should be the centre of the whole service design process. The intention of services is to meet the customer's needs; in order to actually do this a thorough understanding of the customer is needed. To be able to gather this information the service designer should put himself in the position of the customer and through that gain understanding how the customer experiences the service and what that means in a wider context. In this user centred approach it is vital to have a language that everyone understands and that is the language of the customer who uses the service.
2. *Co-creative,* In order to accommodate the different needs and expectations of the various customer groups, everyone from customer to marketer to manager, needs to be included in the designing process. Co-creation facilitates the flow of ideas between the different stakeholders so that no valuable information will be overlooked.
3. *Sequencing,* It is the deconstruction of a service process so that all the individual elements can be combined into a story like sequence. This can help keeping the interest of the customer optimal at all points of service, from the pre-service period all the way to the post-service period. Sequencing includes the direct customer experience as well as the underlying process invisible to the customer´s first glance. And of course, prototyping and continual customer feedback are of the essence.
4. *Evidencing,* The intangible services should have tangible elements to increase customer loyalty. Keepsakes that customers can take home are an effective way to remind the customer of the service far into the future. An evidence can also take the form of a newsletter, blog or other product in order to inform the customer that the service is still existing and available whenever the customer so desires. Evidencing can help bring the background services into the customers´ awareness and through that result in more appreciation of the service experience.
5. *Holistic,* In service design, it is important to be able to see and acknowledge the bigger picture all the time. Service design thinking is aimed to be as holistic as is

possible. It should take into account the subconscious user experiences at the individual levels of the process, as well as the wider context and environment. Attention should also be paid to the many unique customer paths when dealing with the service, as the sequencing mentioned earlier can always vary from customer to customer. (Stickdorn&Schneider 2010, 34-45).

2.3.2 Service design in practice

When thinking of designing an actual product it´s easy to vision the structured design procedures needed for it, where one step follows another step. To think of the same process for an intangible service seems more difficult, but it is possible to implement a similar kind of structure to service design as well. The iterative process for service design includes steps from one to four; *exploration, creation, reflection and implementation*. This process is called iterative, because although stages from one to four are given in the explanation of the process for designing services, the process is not linear and it is possible that in any stage a step must be taken back or the whole designing process may even have to be started from scratch again. In this case the stages need to be repeated. In making mistakes in the designing process it is important to realise what led to the mistake so that the same mistake is not repeated, however making mistakes is not a bad thing in general, because new and useful things can be learned that way. The four stage structure should be viewed more as a guideline than an actual guide to designing services. (Stickdorn 2010, 124-127)

The four stages explained

Exploration is the stage one. It starts by getting to know the goals and the culture of the company and whether the company is ready for service design process, when this is clear the real problem at hand should be identified. Usually it is an organizational problem which the service designer is trying to communicate from the customer´s perspective to the organization. The service designer then uses various research methods in order to make the mind set and behaviour of everyone involved understood. This part is more about finding where the problem lies and not finding the solution yet. The findings and the hidden structure of the service should then be visualised, this simplifies the intricate process and helps people involved understand that changing services that are not functioning is possible. The second step is *Creation.* This is the step where most of the repetition happens along with the third step reflection. In these two steps making mistakes is not viewed as something that should be avoided at all costs, but it is rather viewed as an advantage at this stage to explore as many mistakes as possible and to learn from them before applying the new concept in action. The earlier the mistakes are made the easier it is to correct them and the cheaper it will be. The cost of realising the mistake after the implementation is considerably higher than realizing in the early stages of the process. In this step solutions should be developed to the problems identified in the previous step. All the stakeholders should be included in this process to guarantee that the solutions achieved are sustainable. Co-creativity between the stakeholders is the key to success. The third step is *Reflection.* This is to test and make prototypes of the solutions found in the previous step and repeating that as many times as necessary to achieve expected results. Making a prototype of an intangible service can be challenging. In order for the customers to get a clear picture of the service, the prototype service needs to be as close to the real service situation as possible. For this, staging and roleplaying is used. It is a very efficient and affordable method to test the service concept, and if it is not up to expectations improvements can be made without much trouble. The fourth step is *Implementation.* In order to implement a new service concept, change within the business environment will be necessary for its future success. Planning, implementing and reviewing change is typically based on a service concept that has survived the former stages, discussed above. In addition to the clear communication of the idea and including the emotional angle of the user experience, employees will prove to be an important factor in the changing process as well. It is wise to engage employees early on in the designing process, since they will be the ones who will assure the success of the implementation in the long run. Inclusion of the employees and two-way communication is of the essence and will result in a much smoother implementation process.

To monitor the success of the change, reviewing the operation will show whether or not an earlier stage needs to be repeated, therefore it can be said that service design is an iterative activity.

A real life example

According to Belmonte and Pérez (2010) Funky Projects created Hello Change, a new way of recruiting people by using service design. Funky Projects is a service design company. They design services and strategic creativity for companies, administrations and organisations with focus on sustainable change. Hello Change is a start-up project by Funky Projects; it is a recruitment service that wants to ensure that the job candidate is right for the employer and the employer right for the job candidate. It is aimed at companies who see employees as people and not just resources.

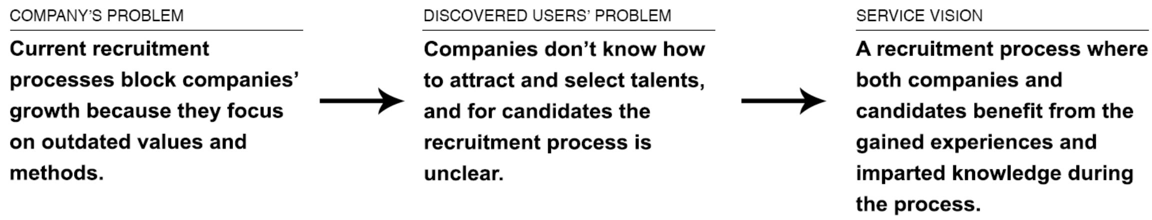

FIGURE 2. Use of service design

Hello Change was born from the need to update the current recruitment process. When people are happy at their job they are more productive, happy employees benefit both the employee and the company. Instead of hiring people only based on the knowledge from CVs Hello Change is taking into account other personal qualities such as charisma, empathy and creativity. Hello Change is a system that allows the new employee to integrate and to become an asset to the company from the day one and they are also taking the responsibility of onboarding, getting the new employee accustomed to the job and the company culture, from the company.

The process of designing this service by Funky Projects is explained by Belmonte and Pérez in This is Service Design Thinking (2010) using the 4 stages approach described earlier. In the first stage which is *exploration* Funky Projects interviewed Companies and Candidates to find out what the problem is. The information they received was that companies although claiming their people to be their most important assets still used old fashioned recruitment processes that lack the knowledge of job candidates attitude and creativity. Job candidates have also become more critical of where they want to work and dedicate their time. It is not just about the big salary anymore. Internet is also changing the way of recruitment through social networks. This is still complicated for many business and they find it difficult and feel they do not have the right knowledge for that. Reflecting on the gathered knowledge, Funky Projects designed a system that is transparent and allows selecting personnel online before the interview stage. It takes into account the candidates creativity and other characteristics that cannot be seen just reading the CV. This benefits both the candidate and the company.

In the next two stages, *creation* and *reflection*, experience was put before processes and technology. This stage started by putting people from different backgrounds, from engineer, to researcher and to creative designers, together to come up with a new structure for work which is flexible and has multiple meanings. After this the research continued with more interviews of candidates and companies to identify the expectations that needed to be met in the service. Other personnel selection services and large companies who had created their own recruitment systems were also studied. First prototype of the service was designed based on using a real recruitment process and its needs. The following step was to design the processes and the technology needed for the service. The team at Hello Change was able to come up with a step-by-step list of what is needed for successful recruitment.

The last stage is *implementation*. Funky projects had decided to open an office in Madrid and the prototype of the Hello Change recruitment service was used to recruit the staff. The first thing that needed to be done in the implementation stage was to establish a common language and communication style that would convey an accurate picture of the company in the particular job offer. This limited the number of unsuitable candidates and caught the attention of the suitable candidates. The pre web casting selection was formed to convey knowledge to the candidates and also give the first glance into the candidates personality to the company conveyed through the candidates´ answers and choices.

Funky Projects also wanted to have their own team, formed from people in various positions, to participate in all phases of the recruitment. Because the team was assembled form people from different parts of the company it enabled most of the company to be involved in the hiring process.

During the online pre selection the research team from Hello Change noticed few things that still needed some fine tuning. One thing was that the use of the submitted information during the web casting should be clarified better and also there should be more options to choose the degree of privacy for the submitted information. The other problem was the activity of the online recruitment was created mostly by only one company member and it was requested that for versatility other people from the company should also create activities.

In order to guarantee that the candidates could evaluate the time they needed for the web casting activities they were made well aware of all the phases of the activities, the planning and the time estimated for those. When the web-casting of the recruitment process was over, the candidates who had made it through that were invited to a workshop where they would have face-to-face interviews, individual exercises and psychometric test. The needs of the company employing were also taken into account while designing the day. The process of recruitment was made very transparent and because of that the candidates knew who their competition was.

In the process of systemizing Hello Change it was turned into a new kind of business, which evolved into a start-up. After applying some business knowledge to Hello Change service, Hello Change was able to take a more of a business direction and it helped the team to turn the project into a system that could be applied in all and by all companies. To achieve this, the team needed to do some redefining to the service. Hello Change also needed to “add systems for review and improvement that can be applied simultaneously within a project without interfering with it.” (Belmonte&Perez[This is Service Design Thinking] 2010, 250-261)

To sum it shortly, by using the four stages process for service design a new kind recruitment system was created. What started as an internal process by Funky Projects evolved into a start-up called Hello Change. Hello Change is a “recruitment system for talent” based on mutual selection by the job candidate and the company. It matches the right people with the right company and also the other way around. Hello Change lowers the risk of hiring people who end up not being suitable for the company.

3 CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

3.1 Research methods

When designing research one of the questions that arise is should the research be quantitative or qualitative. As a simple distinction between these two methods it can be said that quantitative research is usually associated with numerical data and analysis where qualitative research is more to do with words and images and describing these rather than analysing them. Quantitative research is used when wanting to measure comparisons and connections. It is also usually associated with gathering a larger amount of data. (Descombe 2007, 248) Qualitative data is usually gathered using interviews or observing a phenomenon and results in detailed descriptions whereas Quantitative data is often gathered from different questionnaires and surveys and is viewed more scientific. However although surveys are usually associated more in gathering quantitative data, they can also be used to gather qualitative data (Baxter, Hughes, Tight& Malcolm 2006, 63-64 / Descombe 2007, 248)

3.2 Acquiring the data

In the research made for this thesis quantitative method was chosen. With using the quantitative method a larger sample could be gathered from the target group and would give an overall picture of the needs researched. Most of the questions are structured in five point likert scale giving respondents the chance to choose between five options; strongly agree, agree, don´t know, disagree and strongly disagree. There are no open ended questions thus all the questions are closed. Majority of the questions are single choice, therefore let the respondents choose only one option. There are also few questions such as questions nine and fifteen that let the respondents choose more than one option. The results also include some cross-analysis where only part of the collected sample is analysed. Some of the questions have been cross analysed with for example location, gender and age-group.

3.3 Survey

Web survey was used to gather the data. The survey was designed using Google Forms and was sent to freelancers in the target group by email, which contained the link to the survey. The contact details were gathered from various sites containing contact information of freelancers for example *freelancer.info* which is a Finnish site and *freelance.nl* which is a Dutch site. As shortly explained in the theory section the freelancers to send the questionnaire were chosen from creative fields and from Helsinki, Finland and Breda, the Netherlands because the first deClub office to open is situated in Helsinki and the next one to open is located in Breda.

3.4 Limitations to the research

The survey was sent via e-mail to 96 creative freelancers in Helsinki area and 64 creative freelancers in Breda area. The survey was also posted on *freelance.nl* site. A reminder was sent approximately a week later to the same group of freelancers. Getting people to reply to the questionnaire was challenging, even though it was clearly stated that the questionnaire was for a final thesis and would take maximum of five minutes of their time. Responses from Finland were slightly easier to acquire. After sending the questionnaire to freelancers in Breda area with the message written in English only one reply was received. The message was then translated into Dutch and also added to the freelnace.nl discussion forum; this helped to generate a few more answers. The biggest limitation to the study is the low response rate. In total 35 responses were received. Since the response rate was quite low the answers can be used as a guideline, but they do not necessarily give a completely accurate picture of the freelancers needs in all of Finland and the Netherlands.

4 ANALYZING RESULTS

4.1 Basic information about the creative sector

According to an European Commission´s report (2012, 2) cultural and creative industries amount to 3,3 % of the GDP and employ 6,7 million people, which is 3% of the total employment. Even during the economic crisis the creative sector has held its own and done better than many of the other sectors and is considered a high growth sector.

Defining creative industries can be a challenge, because there is no straightforward international definition of what it includes. One example comes from Department of Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) from the United Kingdom that identifies 13 different sectors of creative industries:

TABLE 1. Creative industries in the United Kingdom (DCMS study)

Advertising	Interactive leisure software
Architecture	Music
Arts and antique markets	Television and radio
Crafts	Performing arts
Design	Publishing
Designer fashion	Software
Film	

Source: DCMS 2001

4.2 Background information

The following section gives background information about the respondents including, their gender, age group, location and whether they are currently working from home or not

4.2.1 Gender

The majority of the respondents were men with 66%. Only 34% of the respondents were women.

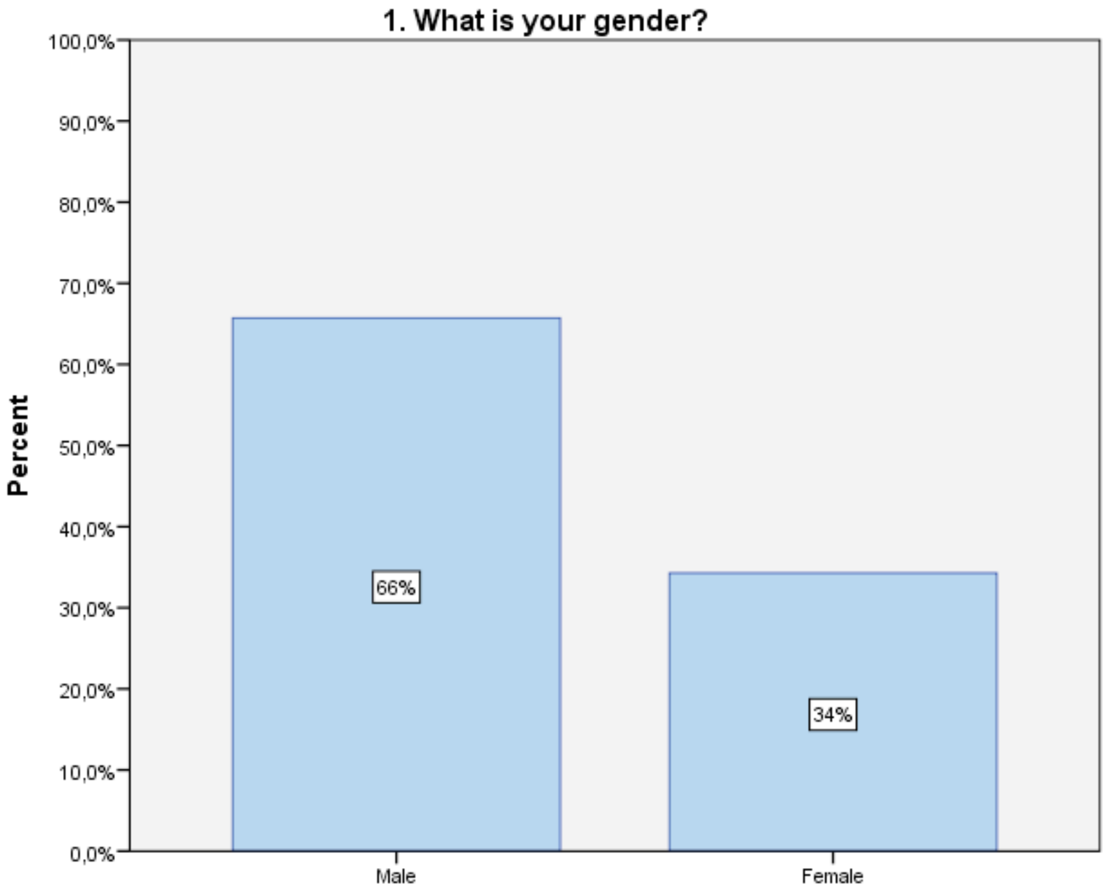

CHART 1. Respondents gender

4.2.2 Age group

Majority of the creative freelancers that responded fell into the age categories 26-30 with 40% and 31-35 with 30%. With only 3% in age group younger than 25 and respectively only 3% of the respondents fell into the age group 36-40. The rest of the respondents 24% fell into the age categories from 41 to 50 and over.

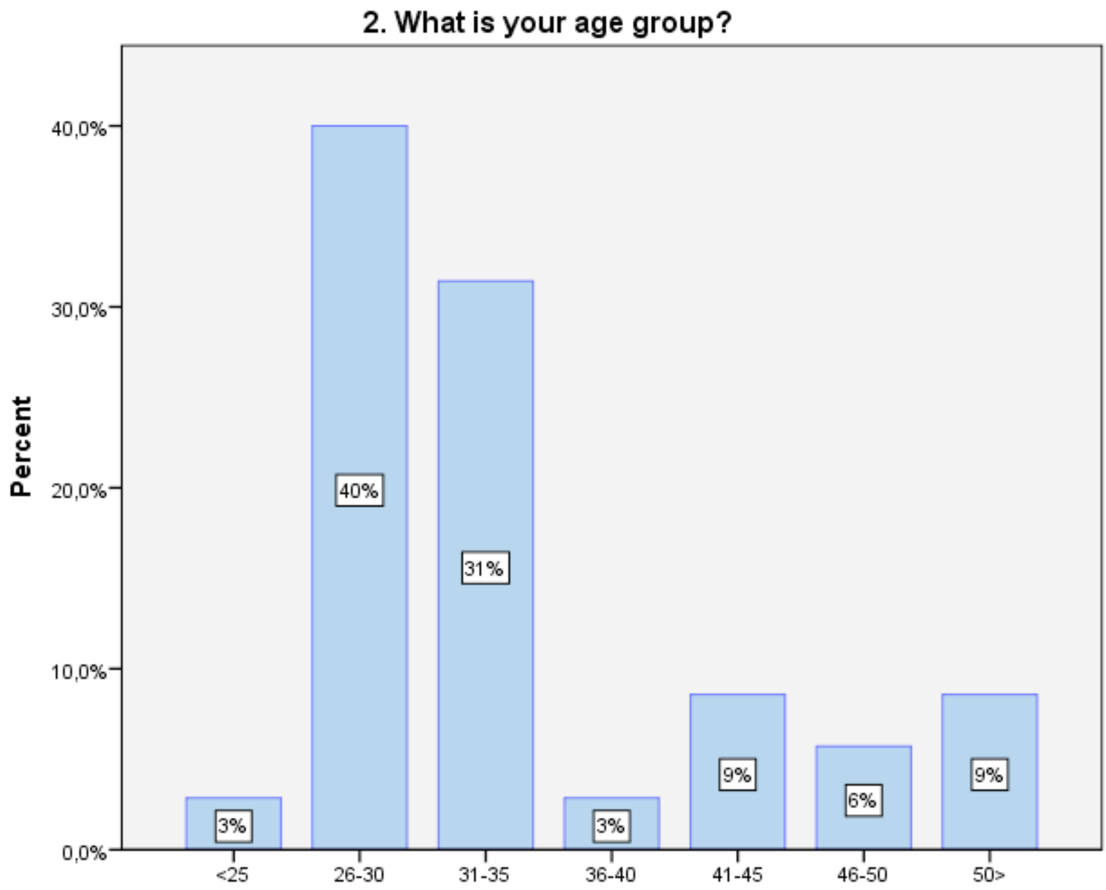

CHART 2. Respondents age group

4.2.3 Location

As mentioned earlier the survey was sent to creative freelancers in Breda, the Netherlands and Helsinki, Finland. The responses from these countries were divided quite equally with only slightly more responses from Finland, 54% and 46% from Holland

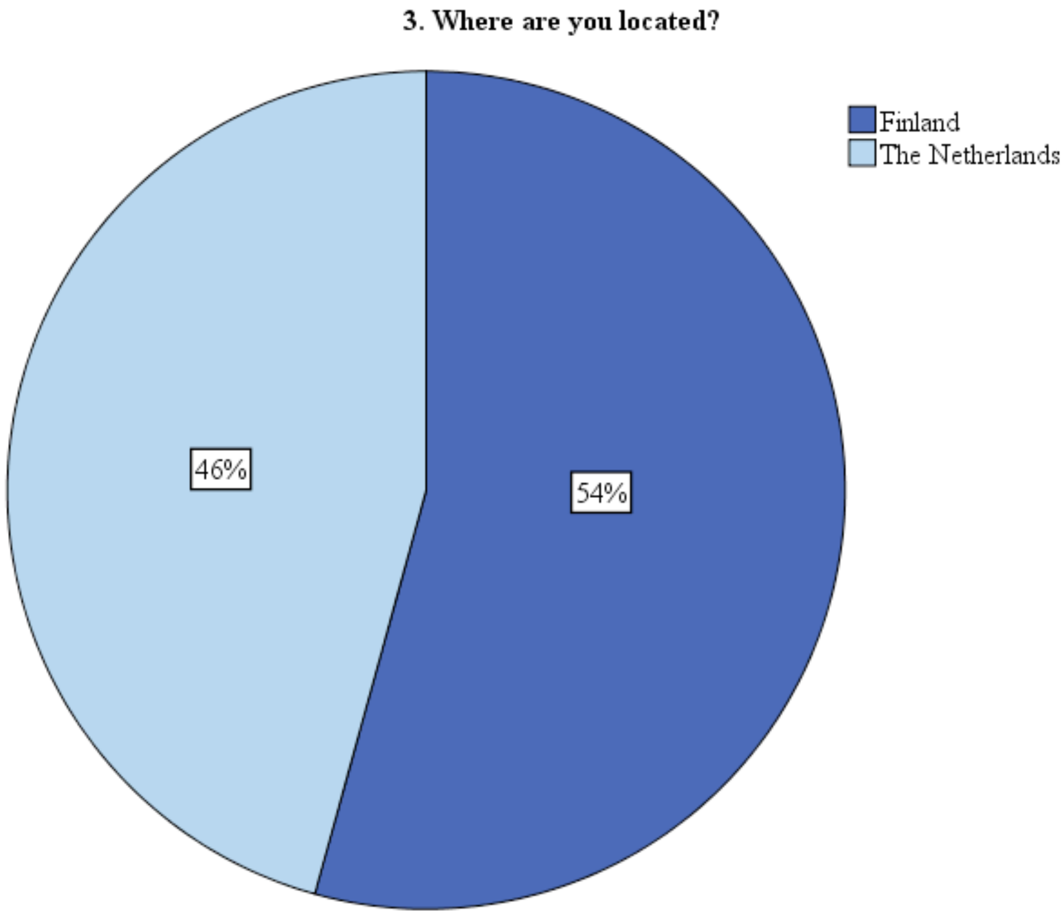

CHART 3. Respondents location

4.2.4 Working from home

Among the respondents working from home was more common than working outside of home for example in a shared office. Currently 60% of respondents were working from home and 40% outside of the home environment.

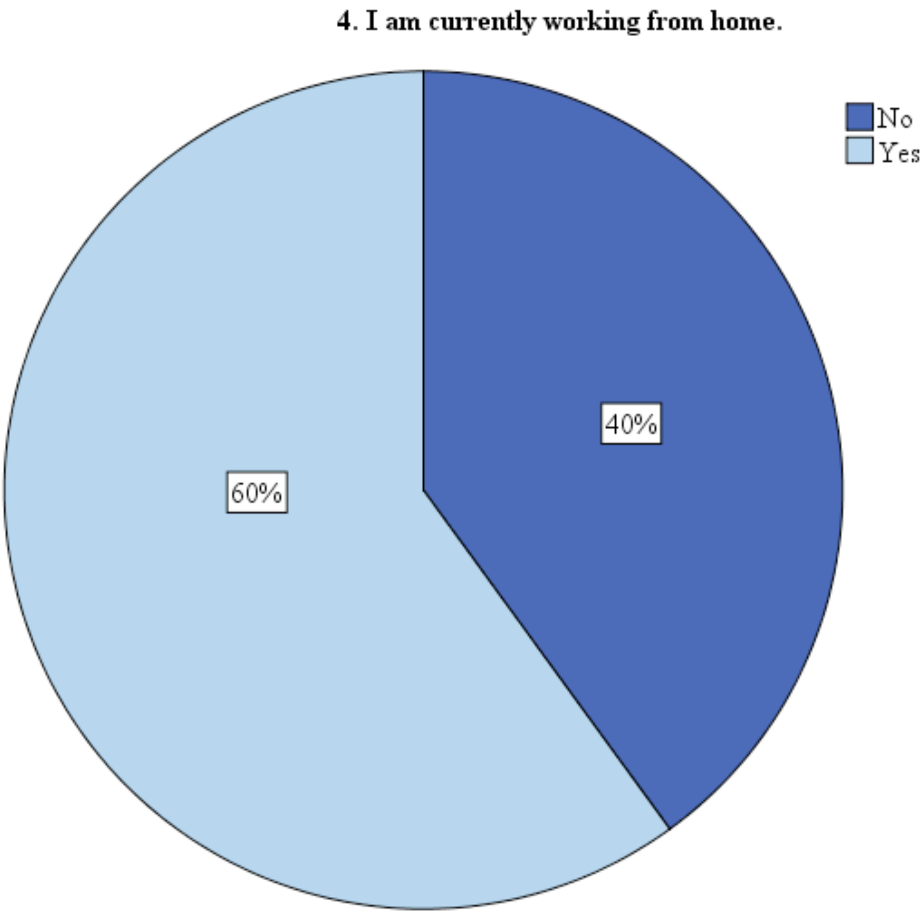

CHART 4. Are respondents currently working from home or not

4.3 The need for office space

This section measures respondents' needs for a more flexible working place option and how for example age and gender affect that need.

4.3.1 Working from home is the best option by age group

The next chart shows how respondents feel about working from home compared to which age group they belong to. 46% of the respondents disagree that working from home is the best option for them out of them 18% strongly disagree. 48% of the respondents agree out of which 15% strongly agree with the statement. From the respondents 9% say they do not know whether working from home is the best option for them or not. The percentage of respondents who agree and who disagree is fairly equal, but difference in the responses lies in the age groups. Within the younger age groups from under 25 to 35 respondents were more likely to disagree with the statement and felt that home was not the best option for them. Almost all the respondents who belonged to the age groups 36 to over 50 years old disagreed with the statement and think that home indeed is the best option for them.

One reason for these kinds of results could be that the younger people, especially the ones just starting their career, would need the support of a network and like-minded people where help would be near when needed. Also the younger people might be more eager to share ideas and interact with other creative freelancers on daily bases and might be more keen to learn how other creative freelancers deal with different things. Another reason for a bit older respondents, in the younger age groups, to feel that home is not the best option for them could be that they have young children at home who interrupt the work and therefore an outside office without unwanted interruptions would be a better option.

The reason why people from the older age groups found working from home to be the best option for them could be that they are already more experienced in their field and are not looking for as much support from others. Another thing is that respondents from those age groups are likelier to have a family of their own already or have an established network and so they get their social interaction from that and do not feel the need to look for it in the working place. Their children are likely already a bit older or might be in school and in that case home can be a quiet place to work during the day.

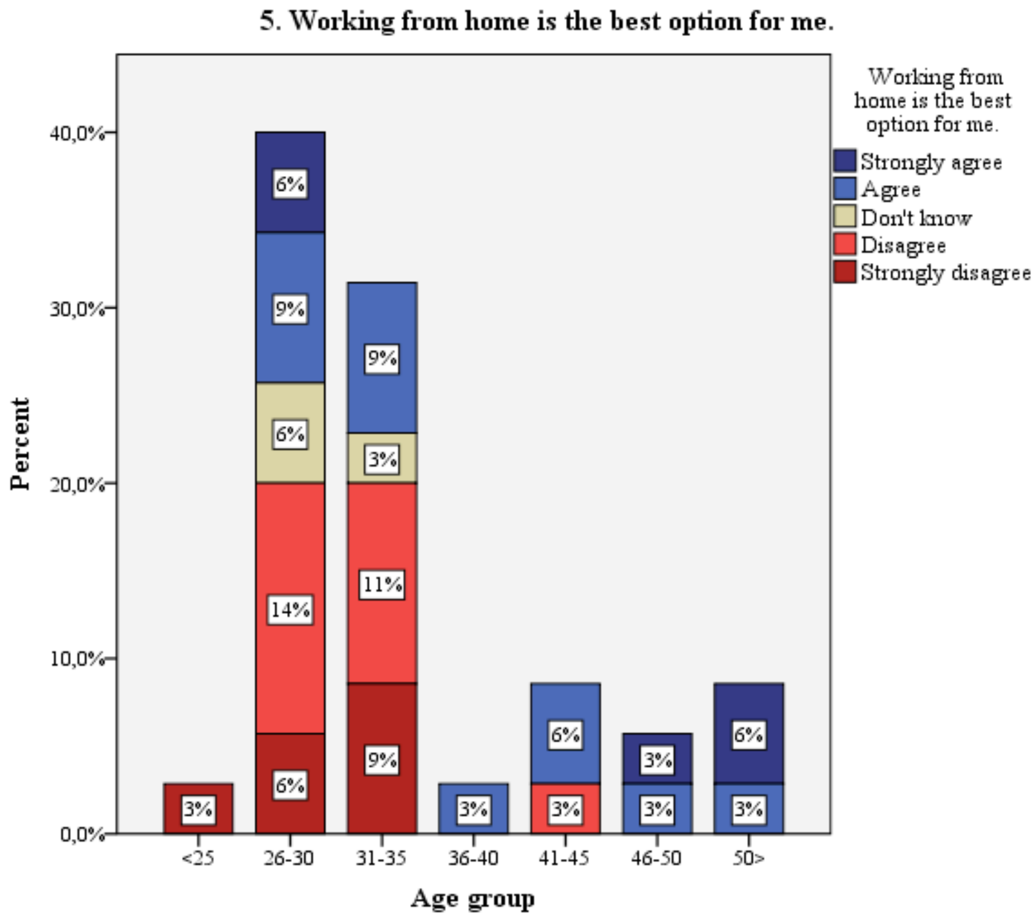

CHART 5. Working from home by age group

4.3.2 Working from home interferes with family life

According to the survey 60 % of creative freelancers said that they agree that working from home interferes with their family life with 9% saying they strongly agree. From the respondents 25% disagreed with the statement from which 11% strongly disagreed. 6% of the respondents felt that they could not say if working from home does interfere with their family life or not.

As shown in the chart 2 in the background section the majority of the respondents, total of 71% are between the ages of 26-35. In this age group it is likelier to have small children than in the other age groups, which could result in 60% of the overall respondents agreeing and 9% strongly agreeing that working from home interferes with their family life. If you do not take the fact that small children could affect this outcome into consideration, other possibilities for this answer are that when working from home, the office is always close by and thus ending up checking work related things even after the "office hours" is possible. This could affect the family dynamics when a person is constantly working with no free time to spend with the family.

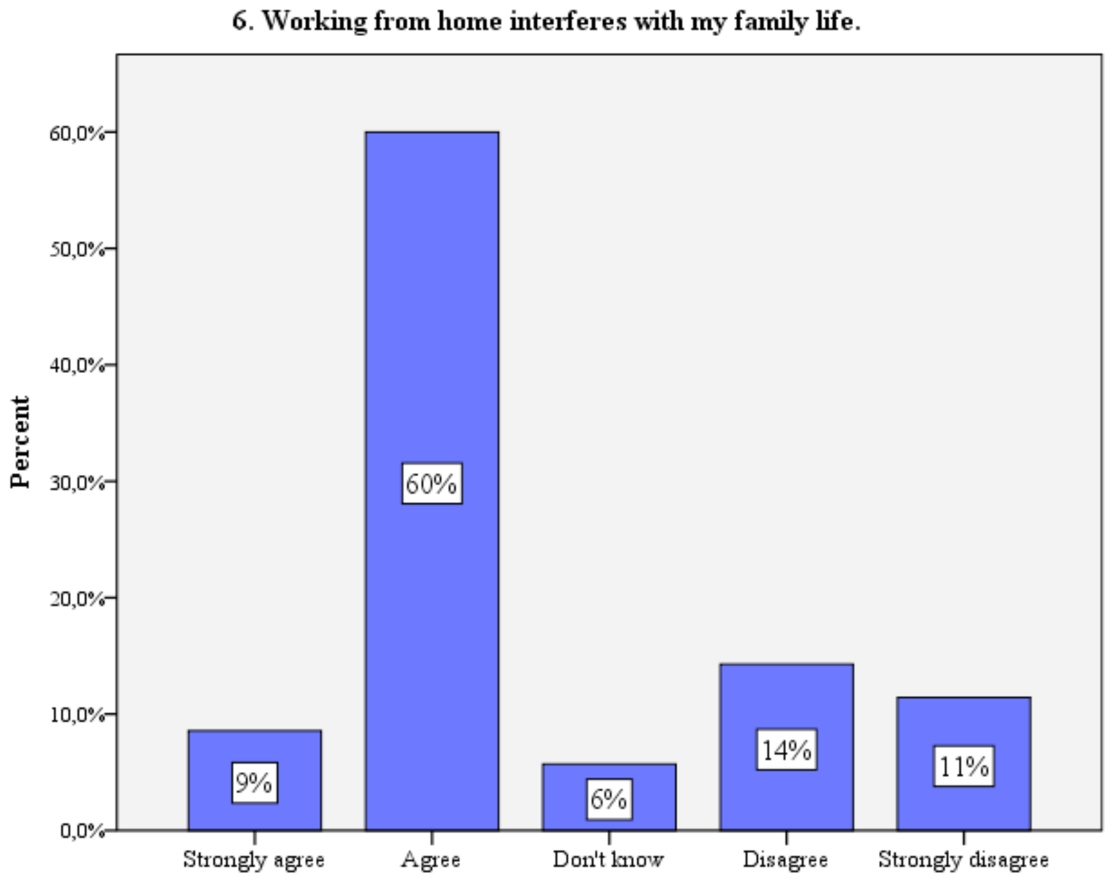

CHART 6. Working from home interferes with respondents´ family life

4.3.3 I feel I am constantly at the workplace

The next chart show if people feel they are constantly at the workplace compared with if they are currently working from home or outside of the home. 49% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that they feel they are constantly at the workplace. Out of the 49%, 35% are working from home. Out of the 6% that strongly agree with the statement everyone is working from home. 34% of the respondents disagree with the statement and do not feel like they are constantly at the workplace, out of them 20% is working from home. 17% of the respondents did not know if they feel they are constantly at the workplace and out of the 17% only 6% were working from home. When examining only the people who are working from home (61%) the majority, 36% agreed or strongly agreed that they feel they are constantly at the workplace.

As mentioned in the previous chart having a feeling that they are constantly at the workplace could be due to the fact that when working from home, the office is nearby and checking on work related things can be done at any time. When the office is further away, it is easier to leave the work things behind and concentrate on other things when at home.

CHART 7. Feeling being constantly at the workplace by working from home

4.3.4 I would like a more flexible working place option by gender

The chart below shows the difference of needing a more flexible working place option based on gender. According to the chart 42% of the women strongly agree and 42% of the women agree that they would like a more flexible working place option. Together that is 84% of the women who would prefer a more flexible option to what they currently have. When comparing to the responses of men only 9% of them said they strongly agree with the statement and 30% said they agree. 8% of women and 4% of men said they did not know if they agree with the statement or not. Out of the respondents who said they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement majority was men; 52% of the men disagree and 4% strongly disagree. There was also a small percentage, 8%, of women who were satisfied with their current working place option and strongly disagreed with the statement of needing a more flexible working place option.

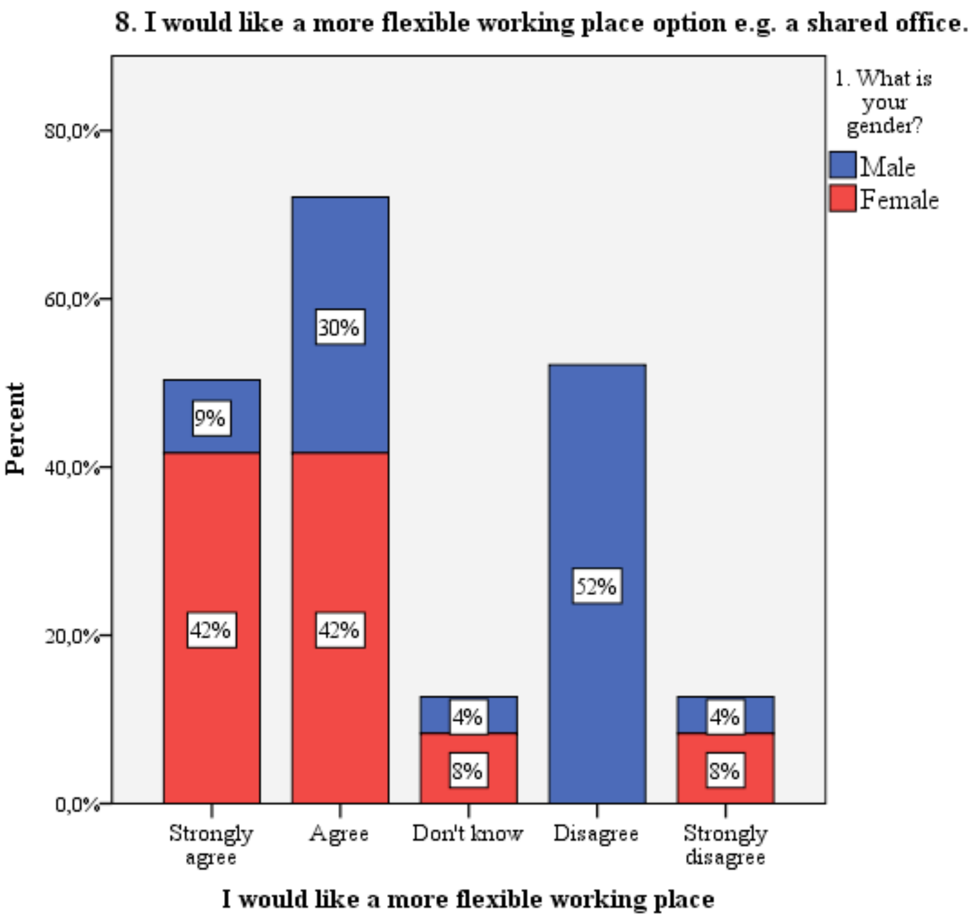

CHART 8. Wanting a more felxible working place by gender

4.3.5 When working in a shared office following things would be of importance to me:

The chart below shows how important respondents find each suggested thing. The chart measures the importance of network of like-minded people, meeting space for clients, flexible accessibility to the office, flexibility of the rental period, copier/printer, professional image and location. The majority of the respondents found each of the things mentioned in the chart important. The respondents were asked to state their opinion for each of the items in the chart. When only looking at the “strongly agree” responses to the statement the three items that seem to be the most important are: the flexible accessibility to the office (51%), network of like-minded people (43%) and the location of the office (40%). When also including the “agree” answers to the statement the three over-all most important things are: Network of like-minded people (83%), Meeting space for clients (83%) and location (83%). As mentioned before, almost all the items were found to be important to the respondents that in mind the “least” important item according to some of the respondents was copier/printer with 23% of the respondents disagreeing with the statement and saying it is not so important in a shared office. Another thing some of the respondents found not that important was the professional image of the office with 3 percent strongly disagreeing and 14% disagreeing with the statement. One reason for 17% of the respondents’ not finding professional image so important could be the interpretation of the question. People can see a professional image to mean a typical business office which can be a bit stiff and they might prefer a more relaxed and creative setting and not thinking that a creative office can also be one with a professional image.

From the items that were deemed to be the most important one was a network of like-minded people. The reason for this could be that working from home can get quite lonely, with no colleagues and not having the same kind of support as when working in an office. According to Kate on The Benefits of Working in a Shared Office (2011) especially for the people just starting their career the help and support they need, can be found in a shared office and it also makes the possibilities to network easier.

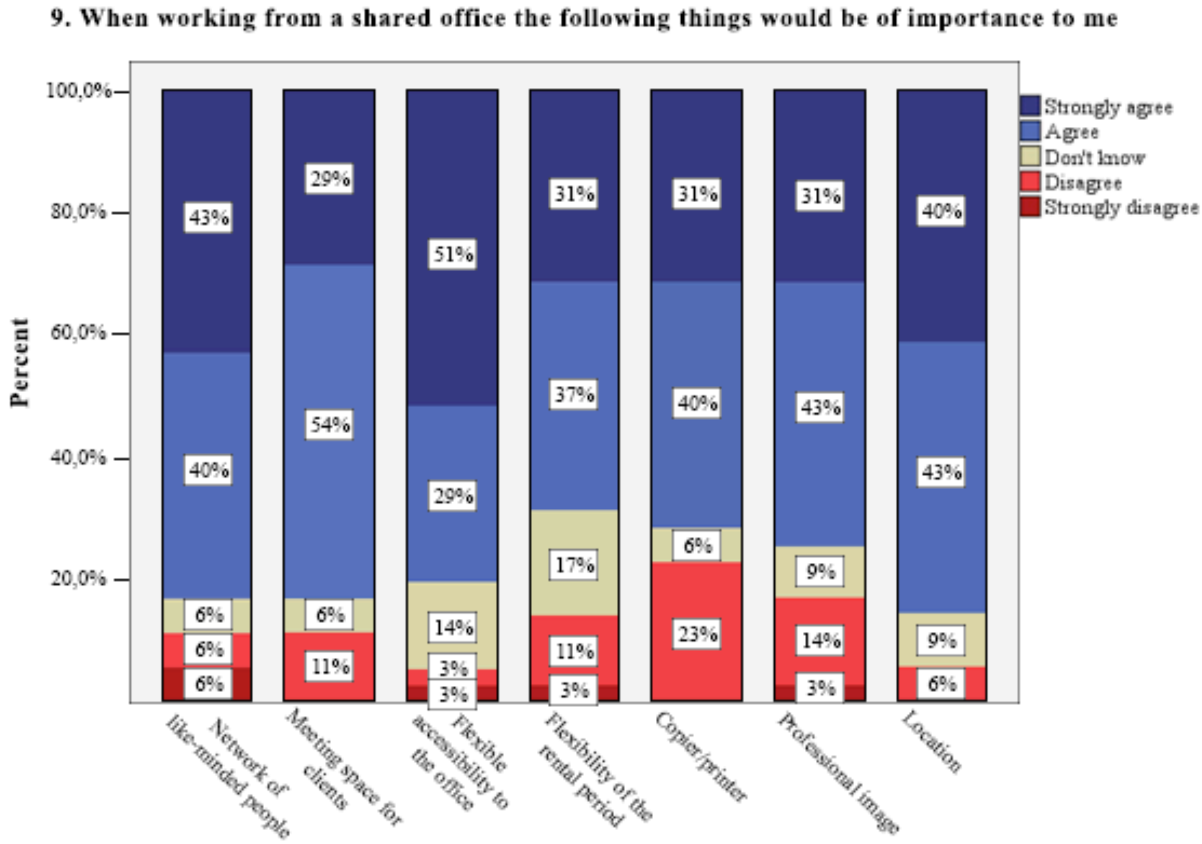

CHART 9. Measuring important things for the respondents in a shared office

4.3.6 When working from a shared office I would prefer to have a permanent personal desk

The Chart (10) below shows how important respondents find having a permanent personal desk when working from a shared office. 66% of the respondents agree with the statement from which 40% say they strongly agree. This could be due to the fact that some freelancers need lots of personal items for their work for example, fabric samples or specific literature that they would like to leave on their desk after they are done for the day, and putting everything away every time they leave the office would be inconvenient for them. From the respondents only 29% disagree with only 3% strongly disagreeing. 6% of the respondents say they do not know whether they prefer a permanent personal desk or not.

Based on these answers a suggestion could be made that a number of the desks in the shared office would be permanent personal desks for those who need them and the other part would be flexible desks for those who mainly work on their computers and don´t feel the need to leave things on their desk after the work day.

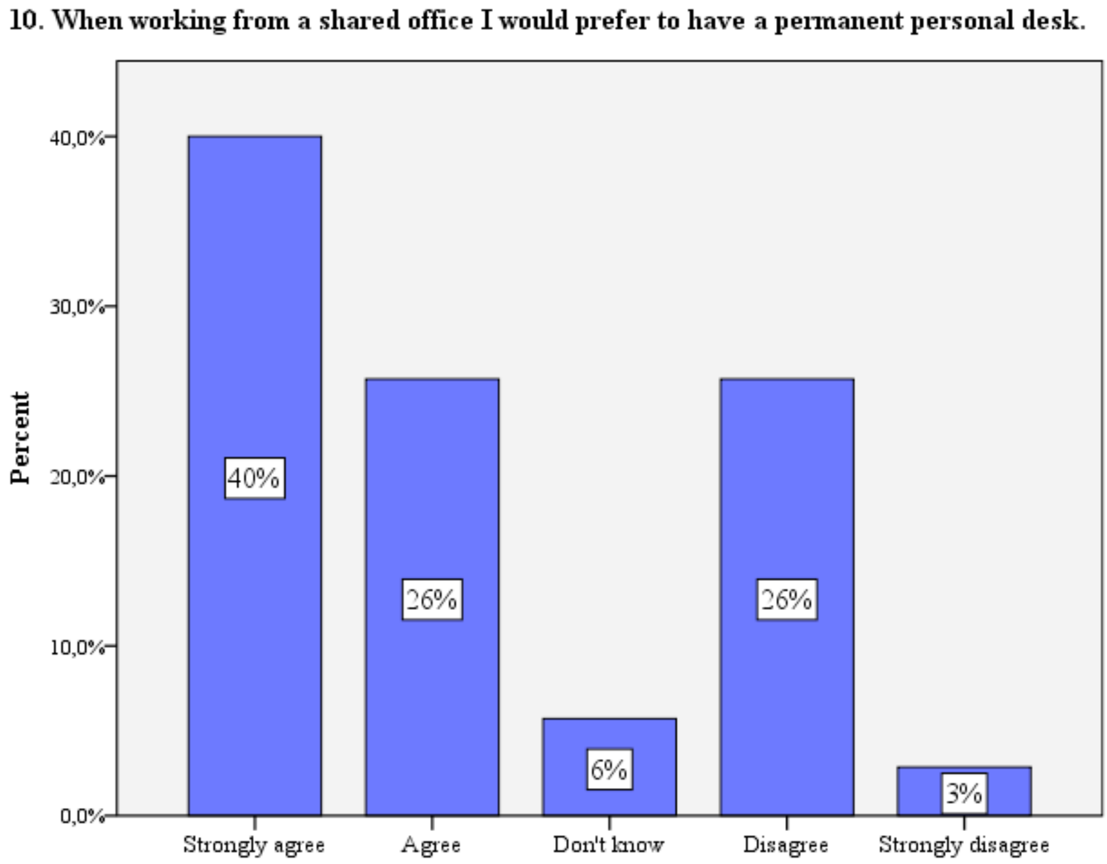

CHART 10. Preference of a permanent personal desk

4.3.7 I would prefer a more private office space compared to a desk in an open office

The chart below shows respondents replies based on their preference for a more private office space compared to a desk in an open office by age group. 64% of the respondents agreed and of those 30% strongly agreed with the statement. The respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and would rather work in an open office setting than in a more private space belong to the younger age groups. Out of the 24% who disagreed or strongly disagreed 21% belong to the age groups from 25 and under to 35. Only 3% belong to the age group 41-45. All the respondents who answered that they do not know whether they prefer a more private office space compared to a desk in an open office, all together 14%, belong to the age group 26-30. Based on the information from this chart it can be said that while the majority prefers a more private

space there are people especially among the younger age groups who do like to work in an open office setting and do not feel the need to have more privacy.
The need for more privacy can be resolved by having space dividers between desks, this gives a feeling of more privacy even when the desks are situated in an open office plan. This is how deClub has solved the issue of having more privacy in the Helsinki office. This question was put on the survey to find out the number and percentage of respondents who do like to have a more private space in the office in order to know how important it is to have a more private option to the open office plan.

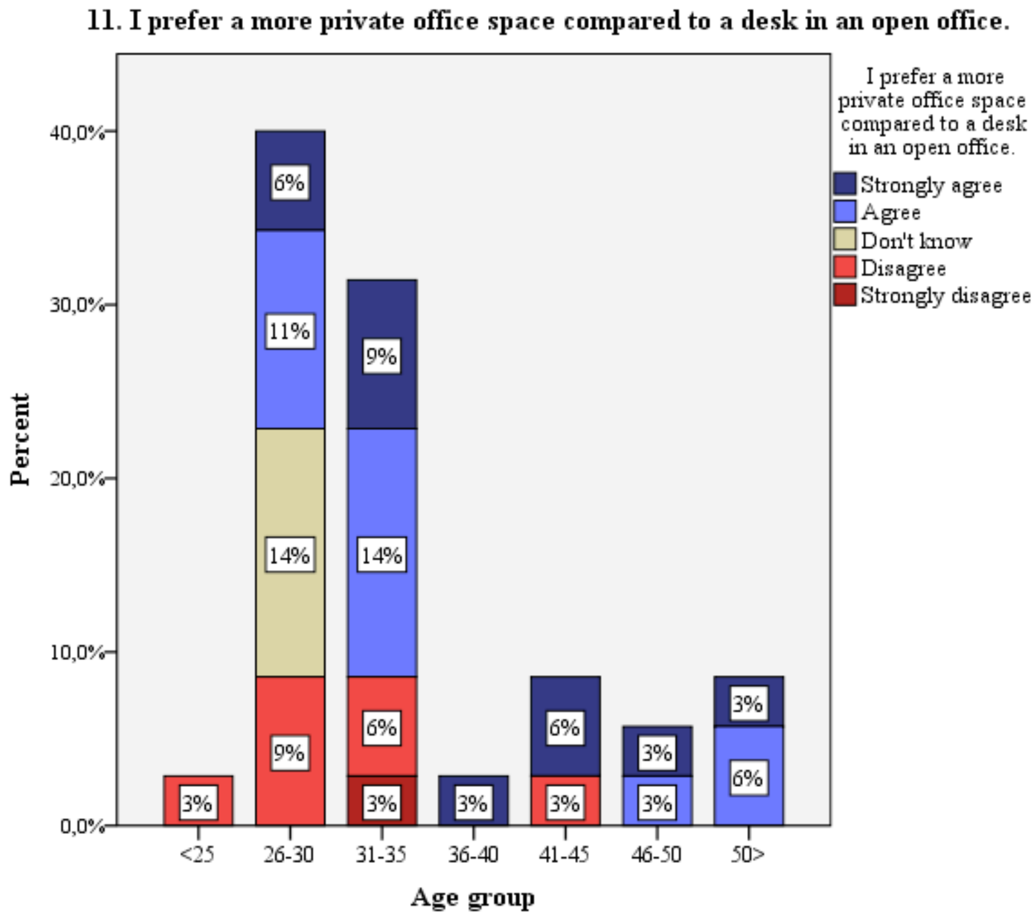

CHART 11. Preference of a more private office space by age group

4.3.8 For a more private office space in a shared office I would be ready to pay:

The chart (12) below measures how much more people would be willing to pay for a more private office space in a shared office. Majority of the respondents, 74%, said they would be willing to pay 25% more compared to the price of a space in an open office.

21% said they would be willing to pay 50% more and 6% said they would be willing to pay 100% more.

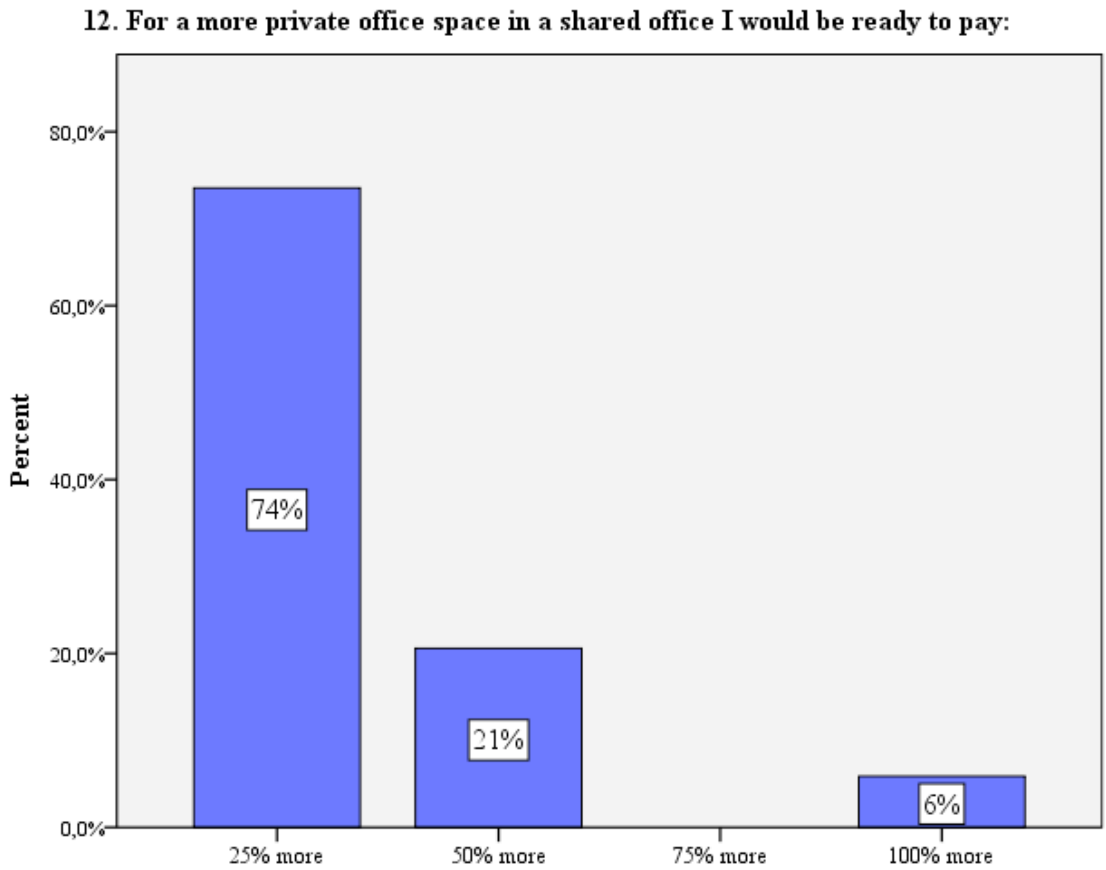

CHART 12. Respondents´ willingness to pay more for a more private space

4.4 The need for networking

The following section measures how many respondents are currently active members of professional networks and whether they find it useful for themselves or not. This section also measures how important respondents find certain things in networks and what kind of sources they use when seeking for help or information.

4.4.1 I am currently an active member of a professional network or community

The following chart shows the respondents replies to the statement; I am currently an active member of a professional network. From the respondents 46% are currently members of a professional network and 37% are not currently members, but would be interested in becoming members of a professional network in the future. 17% of the respondents were not members of professional networks and were also not interested in becoming members in the future.

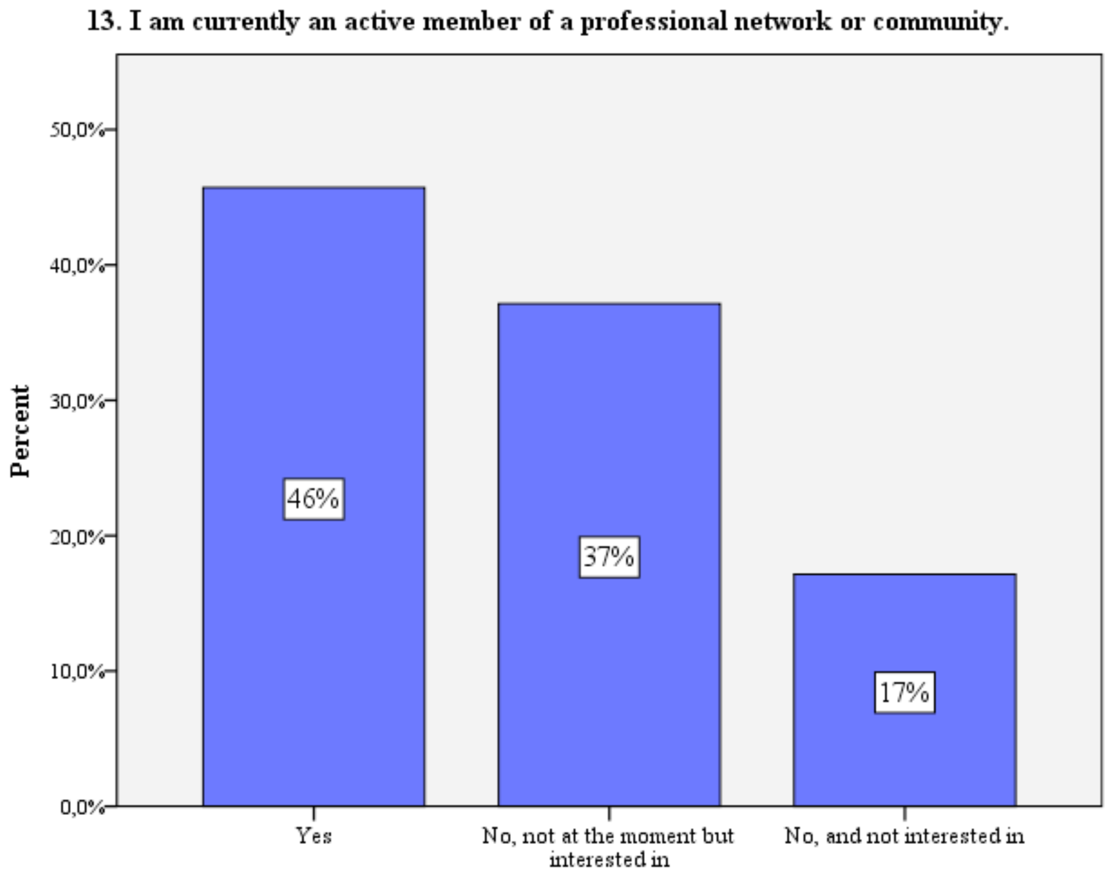

CHART 13. Active membership of a professional network

4.4.2 The network or community I am part of answers to my needs

The chart below shows whether professional networks or communities answer to the needs of the respondents. Only the respondents who replied yes to the previous question answered this question. The majority of the respondents felt that the network or community they are part of does answer to their needs. 13% of the respondents strongly agreed and 63% agreed with the statement. 19% of the respondents did not know whether the network or community they are part of answers to their needs. Only 6% of the respondents disagreed with the statement and felt they have not received what they would have needed from the network or community.

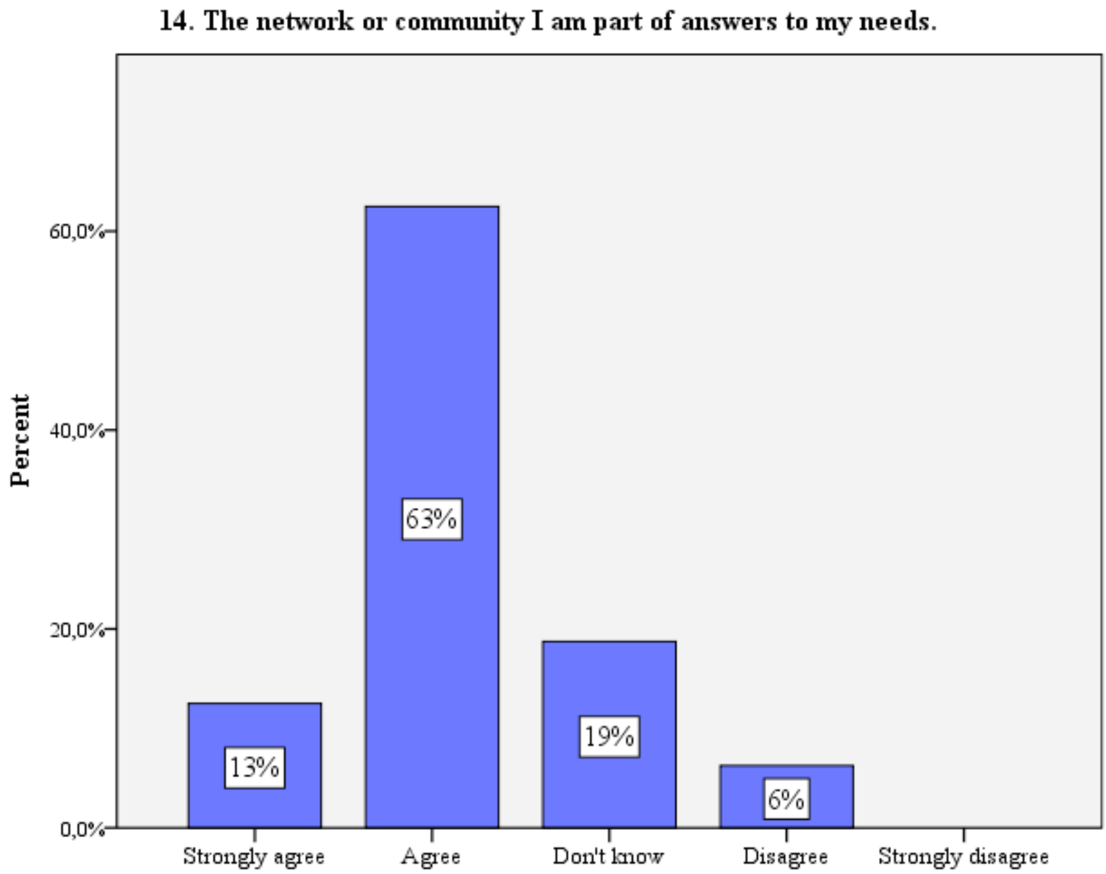

CHART 14. The network or community answers to the needs

4.4.3 I am looking for the following things in networks:

The chart below shows what respondents are looking for in networks and the importance of these things to them. The respondents who answered “No and I am not interested in” to the question 13 “I am currently an active member of a professional network or community” are not calculated in the following chart. The choices respondents were given about what they are looking for in networks were: social support, problem solving support, finding new inspiration, more possible client contacts and collaborators or partners. The majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are looking for each of these things in networks. The most popular thing to be looking for in networks was “Collaborators or partners” with 42% strongly agreeing and 45% agreeing. The option that got the largest percentage of strongly agree answers, 61%, was “More possible client contacts” 23% replied agree to this option. The option that got the largest percentage of disagree and strongly disagree responses was “Social support” with 23% disagreeing and 3% strongly disagreeing.

According to the results, it seems that most of the respondents are looking for each of the alternatives given in the chart. Networks offer a great chance for freelancers to find collaborators or partners and also client contacts, which can be difficult to find without any kind of networks. This could be one of the reasons why these two options scored the highest percentages of what respondents are looking for in the networks.

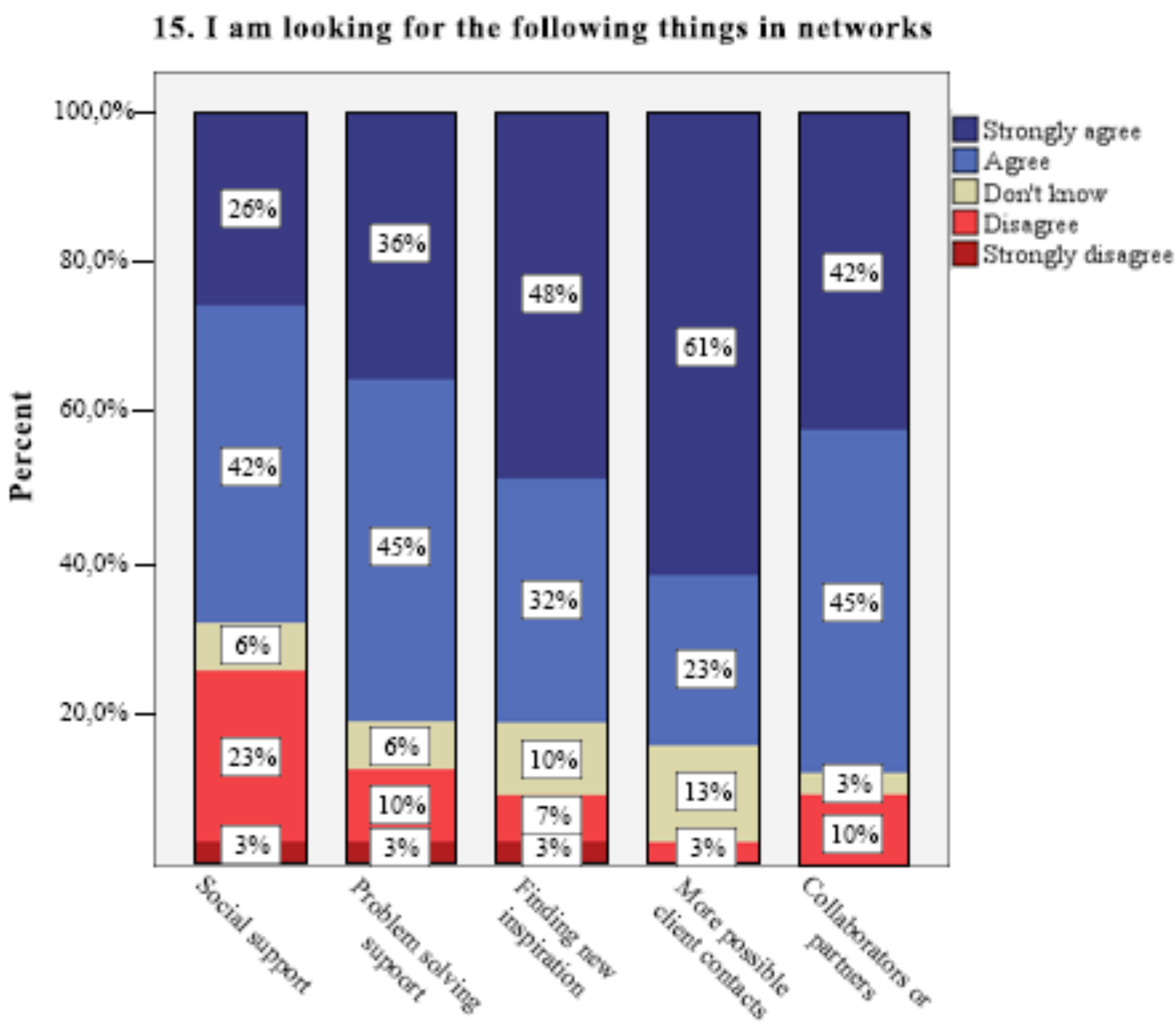

CHART 15. Important things in networks

4.4.4 When I need help in something work related I seek it from:

The chart below shows where the respondents seek help when they need it. Respondents could choose just one or all three of the options that is why the percentage can add up to more than 100%. From the respondents 57% seeks help from their friends, 74% use internet to find help and 54% use the networks they are part of when in need of some help. The possible reason that internet received the largest percentage of responses is that internet is easily available for everyone at home 24 hours a day. The reason for networks getting a slightly higher percentage than friends is most likely that the networks have the professional knowledge and experience that the respondents need and although it might be easier to just ask a friend, if they are not in the same field they may not have the information that is needed. All more in all most respondents used more than one source when seeking help and many used all three of the mentioned sources. It most likely depends on the type of a problem or issue the respondents need help with what source is they use for information.

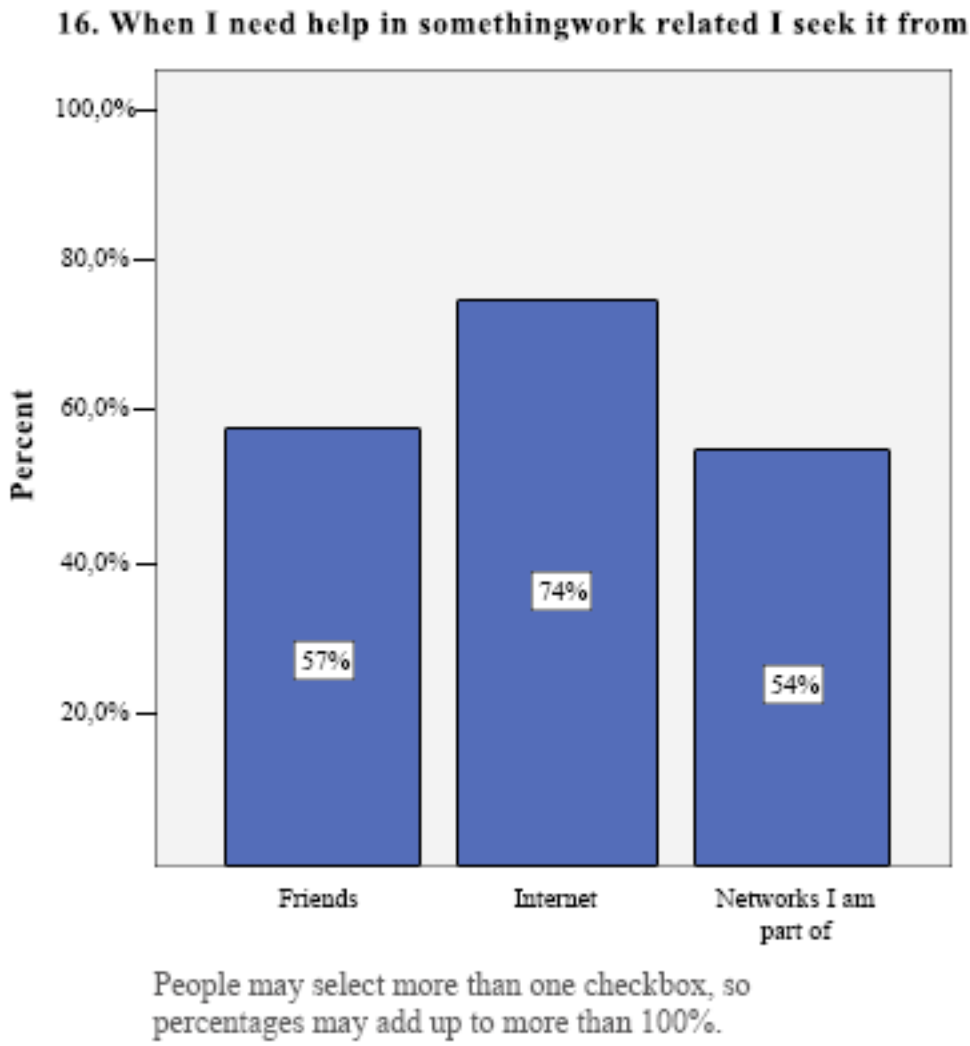

CHART 16. Respondents seek help..

4.5 The need for internationalisation

This section measures the respondents' interest in being internationally involved, and how an international background through education or previous career in an international company affects the answers.

4.5.1 Previous to my freelancing career, I have been working in an international company

From the respondents the majority, 57%, have not been working in an international company prior to their freelancing career. Although the majority had not been working in an international company, still quite a large percentage, 43%, had been working in an international company.

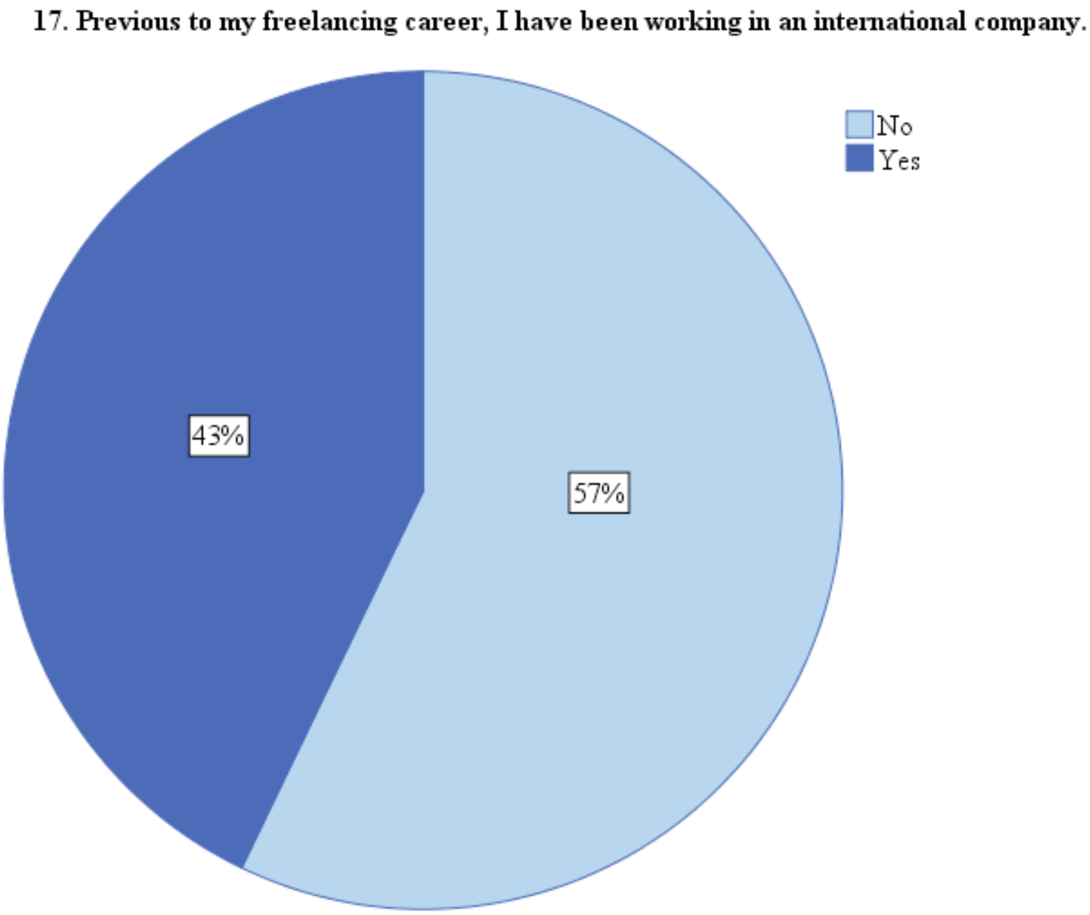

CHART 17. Working in an international company previously

4.5.2 I have an international education

Out of the 35 respondents only 20% have an international education and the majority, 80% do not have an international education.

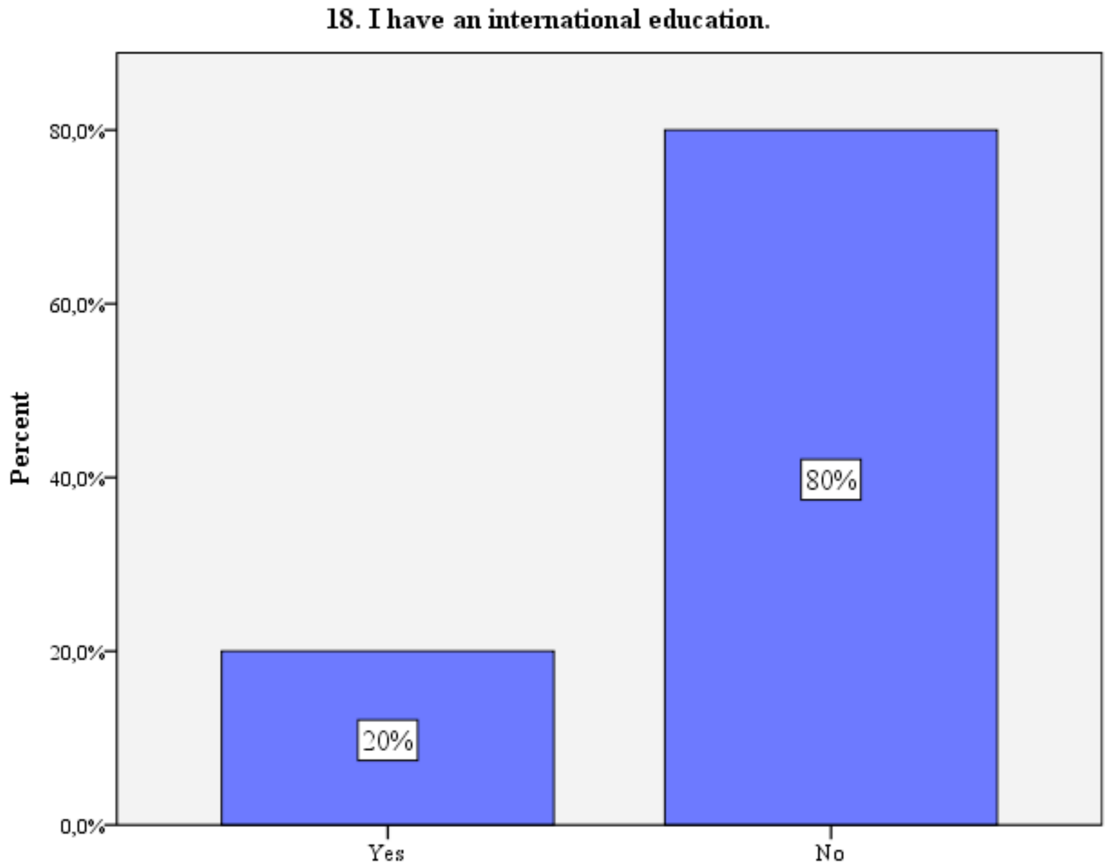

CHART 18. Respondents with international education

4.5.3 I feel the need to become more internationally involved

The chart below shows how respondents feel about becoming more internationally involved. The majority of the respondents 54% said that they agree (34%) or strongly agree (20%) with the statement. Quite a large percentage, 23%, replied that they do not know whether they feel the need to become more internationally involved or not. This could be due to the lack of international networks or the knowledge of how to become more internationally involved. From the respondents 14% disagree and 9% strongly disagree with the statement forming a total of 23%. This could be because of the nature of the freelancing business that the respondents are in or because of a language barrier.

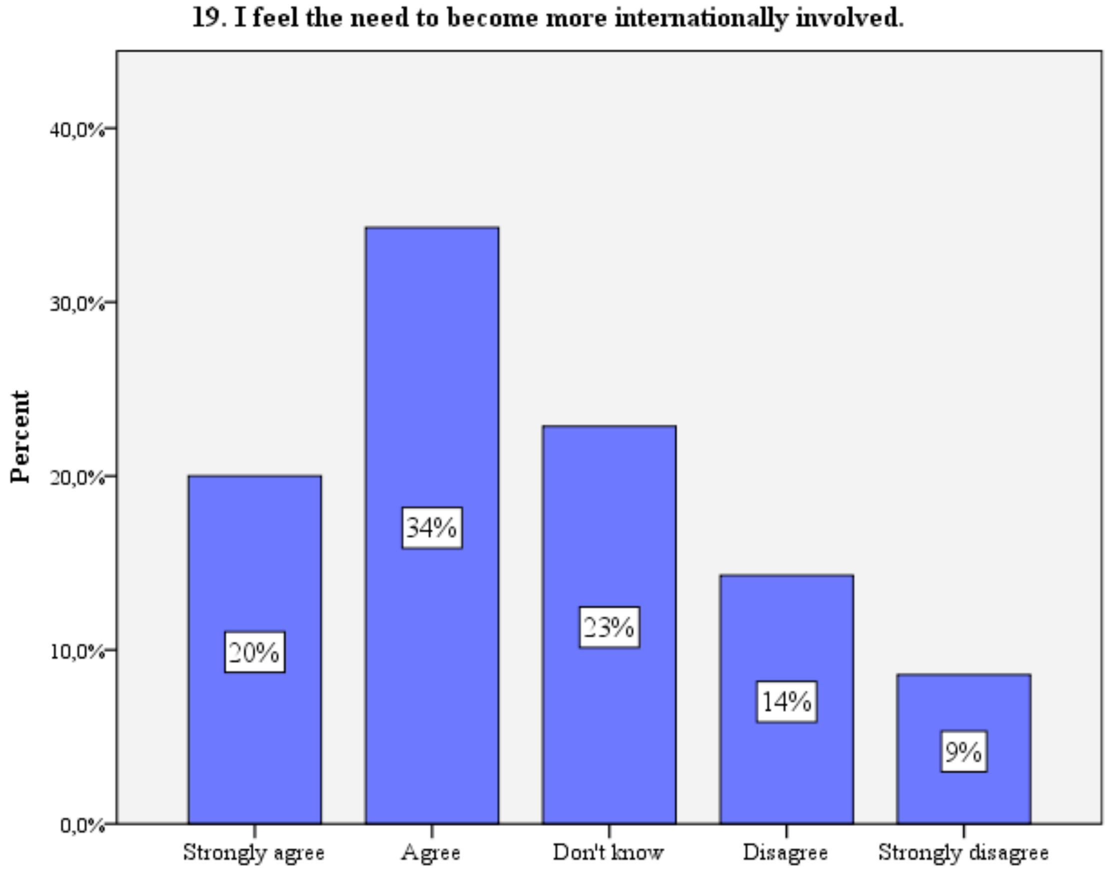

CHART 19. Respondents´ needs to become more internationally involved

4.5.4 When seeking for help/information I also use international resources

The following chart measures how respondents, when seeking help or information, use international resources based on if the respondents have an international education or not. 100% of the respondents who have an international education say that they agree (14%) or strongly agree (86%) with the statement. Most of the respondents who do not have an international education still use international resources. From this group 75% say that they agree (57%) or strongly agree (18%) with the statement. From this group also 7% say that they disagree and 14% say that they strongly disagree with the statement and that they do not use international resources, 4% of the respondents from this group say they don´t know whether they use international resources or not. When comparing these 2 groups together it is clearly visible how an international education affects the person´s information search behavior. Although using international resources was also popular in the group of respondents who had not received an international education the percentage who *strongly agreed* with the statement was 18% whereas the percentage of the respondents who had received an international education was 86%. The difference here could also be due to a language barrier or that percentage of freelancers who had not received an international education and disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (21%) feel that they receive all the necessary information from their national sources and thus do not have the need to look further.

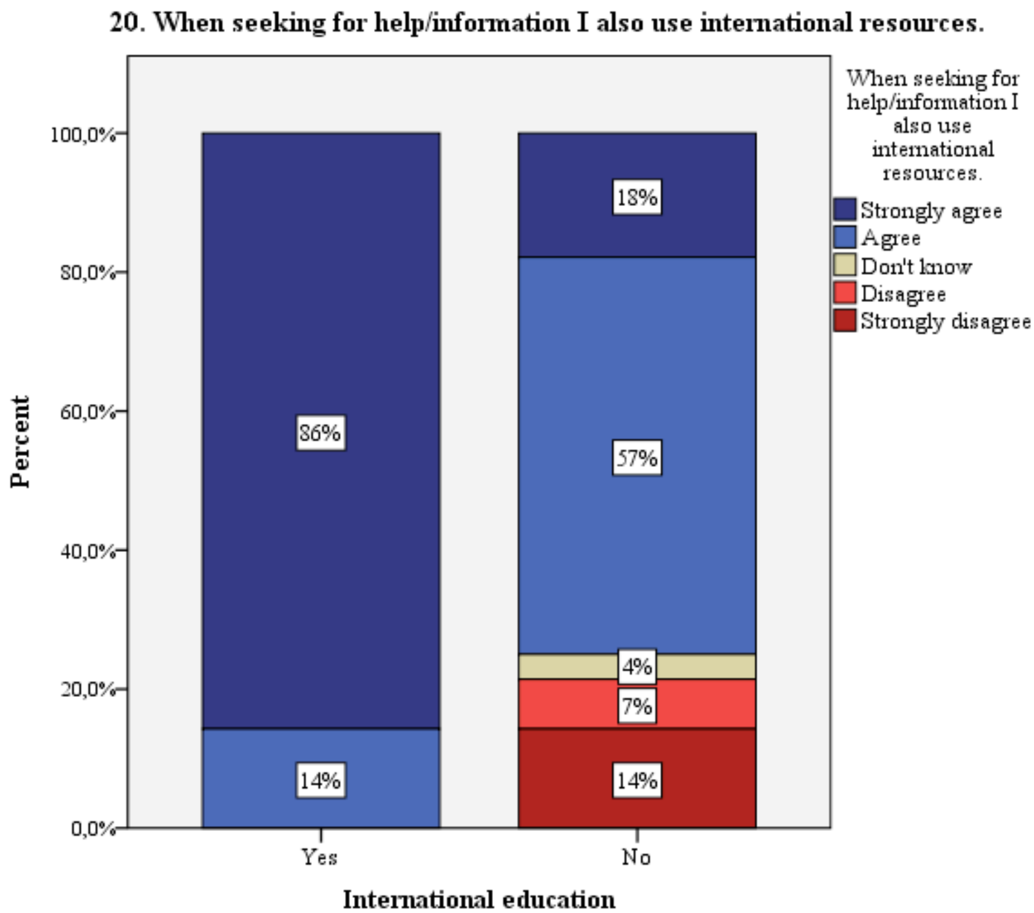

CHART 20. Using international resources by international education

4.5.5 I have taken part in international conferences

The chart below shows if respondents have taken part in international conferences, and how having an international education affects the responses. Out of the respondents who have received an international education 86% had taken part in international conferences and only 14% had not. Comparing with the respondents who had not received an international education considerably smaller percentage, 32%, had taken part in international conferences. The majority, 68%, who had not received an international education, had not taken part in international conferences.

As also seen in the previous chart having an international education seems to affect the international activity of the respondents. The people with international education are far more likely to seek information and knowledge that comes from outside the borders of one´s own country.

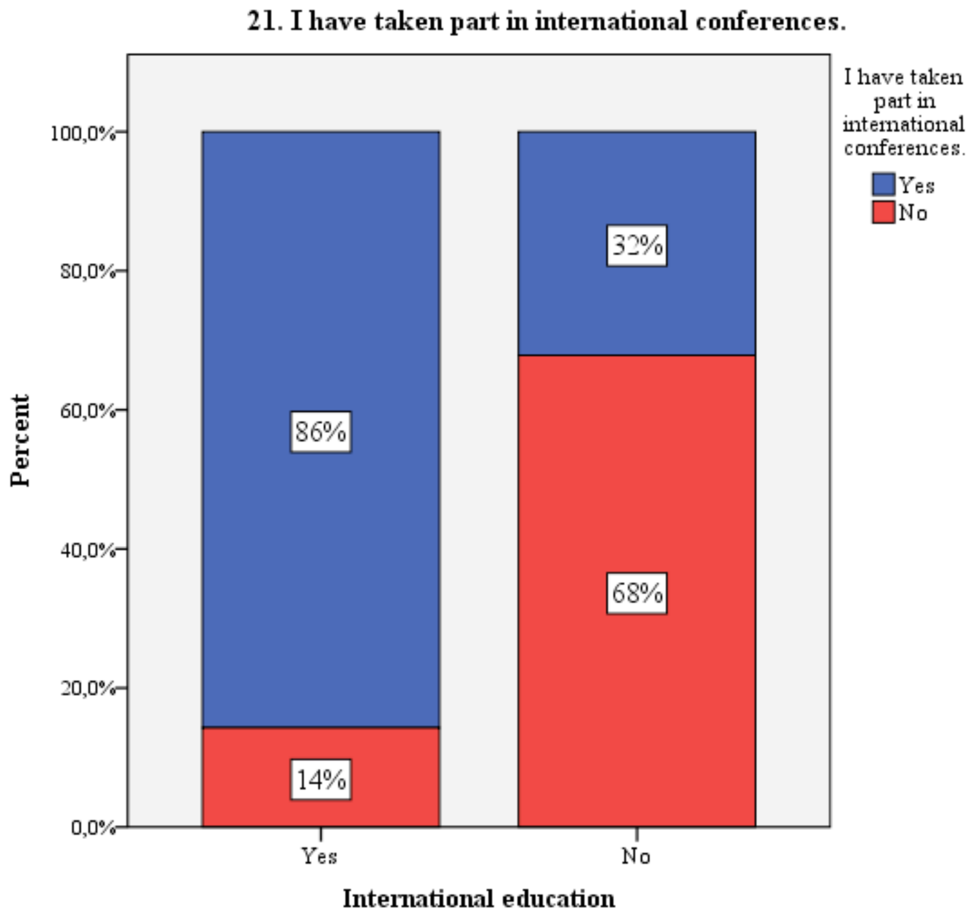

CHART 21. Taking part in international conferences by international education

4.5.6 I am currently part of some linked in communities

The following chart measures what the difference of being part of linked in communities is based on if you are located in Finland (Helsinki) or the Netherlands (Breda). The chart shows a clear difference between these two countries and the number of respondents who are part of LinkedIn communities. 94% of the respondents from the Netherlands are part of LinkedIn communities and only 6% are not. When comparing to Finland only 42% are part of LinkedIn communities. The majority of Finnish respondents, 58%, are not part of any LinkedIn communities.

According to socialbakers.com, which shows statistics of all LinkedIn users such as the number and the total percentage of LinkedIn users per country, the Netherlands has the 6th largest user group worldwide with over three million users which is almost 18% of the whole population. According to the same online source Finland is on the 40th place with a little over 400.000 users which is almost 8% of the whole population.

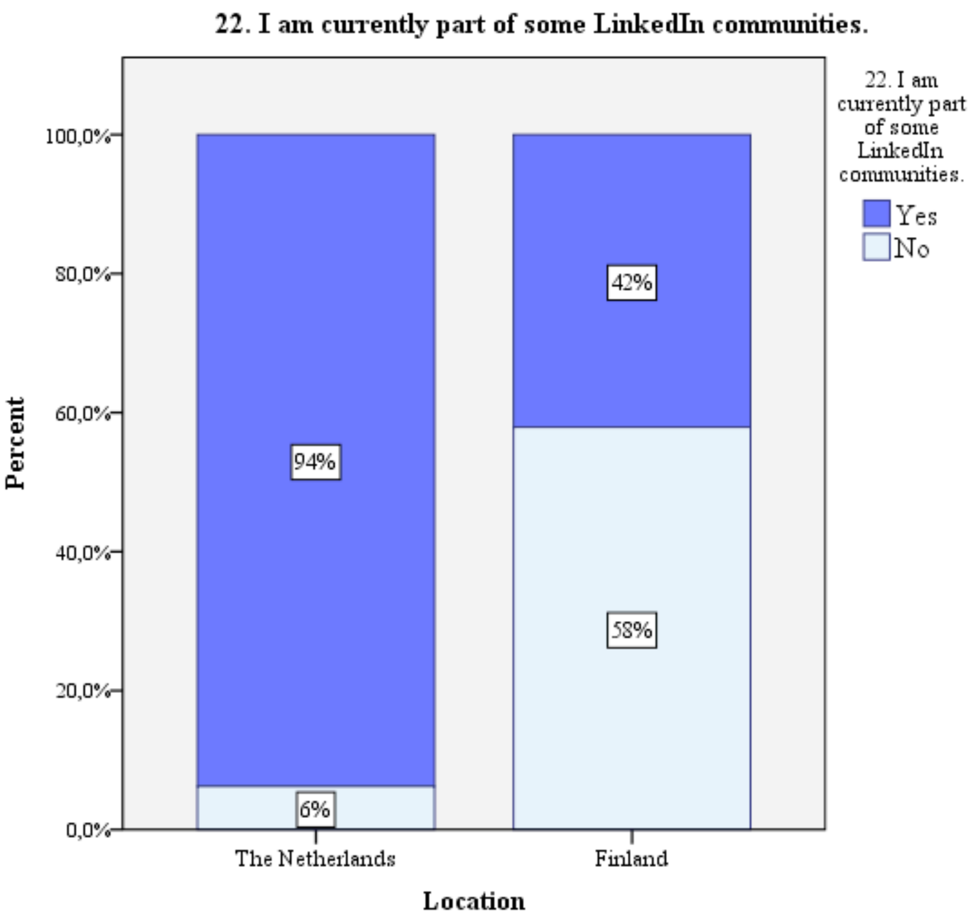

CHART 22. Being part of LinkedIn communities by location

4.5.7 I feel that being part of LinkedIn communities has been beneficial for me

The chart below shows how respondents feel, if LinkedIn communities that they are part of have been beneficial for them. The answers have been divided between Finland and the Netherlands. Only people who replied yes to the previous question "I am currently part of some LinkedIn communities" are counted in the chart below. The majority, 53%, of the respondents from the Netherlands agrees with the statement and finds

LinkedIn communities beneficial, out of those 33% agree and 20% strongly agree. 33% of the respondents from the Netherlands don´t know whether LinkedIn being part of LinkedIn communities has been beneficial to them, and 13% say that it has not been beneficial and disagree with the statement. In Finland only 13% agree that being part of the communities has been beneficial. A large percentage, 63%, say that they don´t know if it has been beneficial or not. 25% of the Finnish respondents disagree with the statement and think that it has not been beneficial for them to be part of any LinkedIn communities.

While the number of LinkedIn users in Finland is rising and people are becoming more aware of the networking possibilities and how LinkedIn could be used for recruitment, it is still a fairly unused medium in Finland. As written in the previous chart the Netherlands is on the 6th place and Finland far behind on the 40th place, thus LinkedIn is in wide use in the Netherlands, this could explain why a larger percentage of the Dutch than of the Finnish respondents feel that LinkedIn is useful for them.

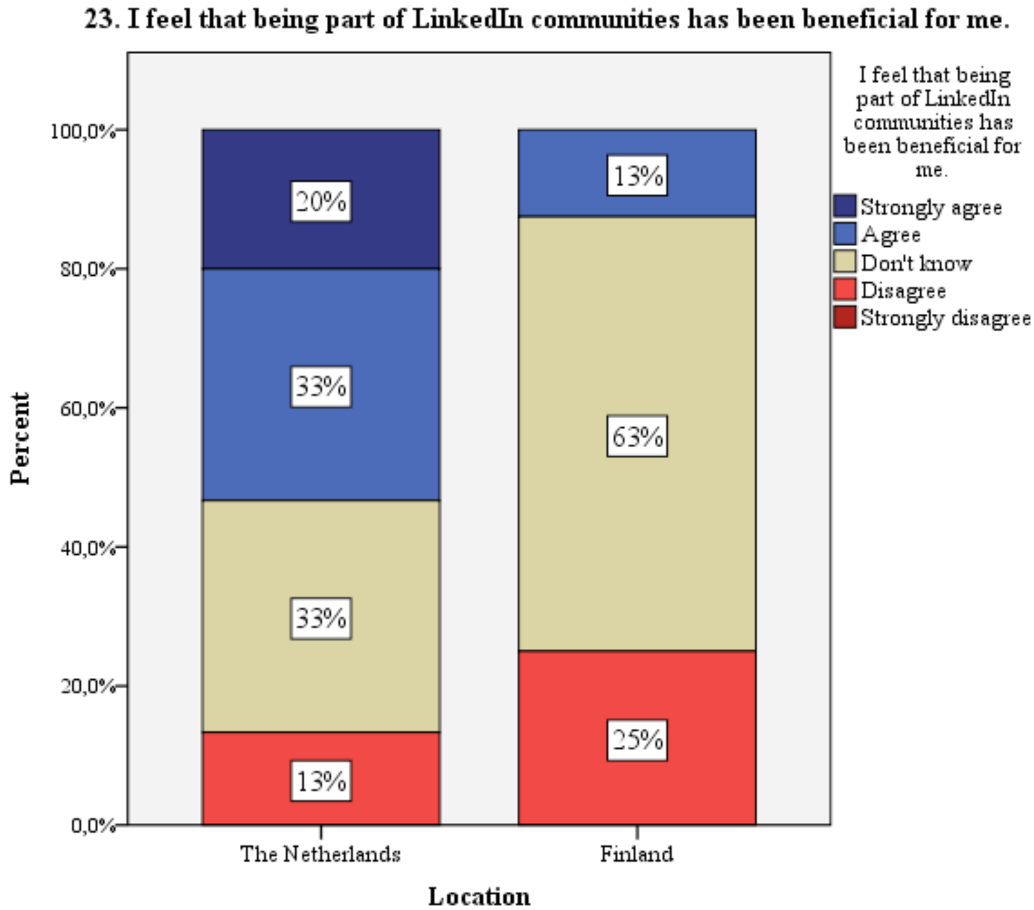

CHART 23. Benefit of LinkedIn communities by location

Disclaimer: Due to rounding up of the percentages, the percentages may not add up to hundred. This does not affect the reliability of the research.

5 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The goal of this thesis was to gather more information about the needs of creative freelancers regarding the workspace, networking and internationalisation in order for deClub to be better aware of the needs of its target group and to be able to use the information when opening new offices. The research was quantitative and was conducted by sending a link to the creative freelancers in the target group. In total 35 responses were received. The analysis of the results were divided into four groups; the basic information, the need for workspace, the need for networking and the need for internationalisation. Some of the results in the latter three groups were cross analysed with the basic information questions such as age, gender, location and if the respondents were currently working from home or not.

When analysing the responses of the need for workspace section it became apparent that majority of the respondents feel that working from home interferes with their family life and almost half of the respondents felt that working from home was not the best option for them. What was surprising was that there was a clear gender difference in wanting a more flexible workplace option. Out of the female respondents 82% wanted a more flexible working place option compared to the 39% of the male respondents who wanted a more flexible option.

Looking at these statistics it is clear that there is a need for workspaces. From the previously mentioned options given to respondents they found the following to be the top three most important things in a shared office: network of like-minded people, meeting space for clients and the location of the office. These are things that deClub has already taken into consideration for the shared offices. Both of the offices that have now opened have a central, easy to reach location. There is also a designated meeting area for clients in both of the offices and the network of like-minded people is the heart of deClub.

Another thing that can be seen from the responses is that majority of the respondents prefer a more private office space compared to a desk in an open office plan. This is an important thing to keep in mind when designing the interior of the office, so that there is also enough privacy for those who need it, but also a place for socialising for those who like shared offices because of their network possibilities. The majority of the respondents, 66% in total would prefer a permanent personal desk in the office. This is also an important thing to consider when planning the interior so that there would be the possibility of a permanent personal desk. This can also be solved (as it has been in the Helsinki and Breda offices) by having personal lockable lockers for members so that they will be able to leave their belongings there after the work day.

The analysis of the need for networking section showed that the majority of the respondents were either an active member of a professional network or community or interested in becoming one, in total 83%. This is an important piece of knowledge since it shows that people are interested in networks and also feel that networks are giving them what they are looking for. 76% of the respondents that were currently part of a professional network or community said that the one/ones they are part of answer to their needs. The aim of deClub is to facilitate the possibilities for networking and to get members to collaborate and share information and experiences with each other. Most of the respondents chose collaborators or partner and more possible client contacts from previously mentioned options when asked which of the following things they are looking for in networks.

When analysing the need for internationalisation section it became apparent that respondents had interest in internationalisation. Almost half of the respondents, 43%, had some international work experience before starting their freelancing career and the majority, 53%, said they would like to become more internationally involved. However only 20% of the respondents had an international education, when cross analysing this with if the respondents also use international resources when seeking for help/information it shows that all the respondents who had international education use international resources, but also 75% of the ones who do not have an international education still use international resource. It shows that the respondents are not only using local or national resources, but taking the extra step of looking further for what they need. This is an important realisation when thinking of deClub, because the aim of deClub is to create a pan European network, where members from different countries could easily network and share knowledge.
In this section also the use of LinkedIn was covered, it was cross analysed with location. According to the research there is a notable difference between Finland and the Netherlands. 94% of the Dutch respondents were part of LinkedIn communities in comparison to only 42% of the Finnish respondents. Out of the Dutch respondents who were currently part of Linked in 53% found it beneficial while only 13% of the Finnish respondents thought the same. This difference can be explained by the popularity of LinkedIn in

the Netherlands. It is widely used in the Netherlands for recruiting and networking purposes while in Finland it is not used as widely used yet and that is why the members in Finland feel they do not get as many benefits of being part of LinkedIn communities as the members in the Netherlands. This knowledge can be used when thinking of channels to reach possible customers, especially in the Netherlands the usage of LinkedIn for marketing and networking could be beneficial.

The analysis of the results gives deClub knowledge about their target groups needs in the above mentioned areas. From the results, it can be seen what creative freelancers in the target group feel about the questions and statements in the survey. The thesis can give useful guidelines when planning for example the interior or the location of the office. It also gives information about how internationally oriented the creative freelancers in the target group are and how they feel about networking. These results can help when planning the services deClub will offer to its members.

As mentioned earlier the research was completely quantitative with no open- ended questions. The research was conducted based on the received 35 responses, the questionnaire was sent to 160 creative freelancers. The response percentage was relatively low, 22%. To get more specific information and responses a further qualitative research could be useful in the future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. The survey

Freelancers´ needs for creative working space, networking and internationalization

You can include any text or info that will help people fill this out.

Basic information

1. What is your gender?

Male
Female

2. What is your age group?

<25
2630
3135
3640
4145
4650
50>

3. Where are you located?

Finland
The Netherlands

The need for a working space

4. I am currently working from home.

Yes
No

5. Working from home is the best option for me.

Strongly agree
Agree
Don't know
Disagree
Strongly disagree

6. Working from home interferes with my family life.

Strongly agree
Agree
Don't know
Disagree
Strongly disagree

7. I feel I am constantly at the workplace.

Strongly agree
Agree
Don't know
Disagree
Strongly disagree

8. I would like a more flexible working place option e.g. a shared office.

Strongly agree
Agree
Don't know
Disagree
Strongly disagree

9. When working from a shared office the following things would be of importance to me:
Answer options: Strongly agree, Agree, Don't know, Disagree, Strongly disagree
Network of likeminded people
Meeting space for clients
Flexible accessibility to the office
Flexibility of the rental period
Copier / printer
Professional image
Location

10. When working in a shared office I would prefer to have a permanent personal desk.
Strongly agree
Agree
Don't know
Disagree
Strongly disagree

11. I prefer a more private office space compared to a desk in an open office.
Strongly agree
Agree
Don't know
Disagree
Strongly disagree

12. For a more private office space in a shared office I would be ready to pay
25% more
50% more
75% more
100% more

The need for networking

13. I am currently an active member of a professional network or community.
Yes
No, not at the moment but interested in (go to question 15)
No, and not interested in (go to question 16)

14. The network or community I am part of answers to my needs.
(If your previous answer was yes)
Strongly agree
Agree
Don't know
Disagree
Strongly disagree

15. I am looking for the following things in networks:
Answer options: Strongly agree, Agree, Don't know, Disagree, Strongly disagree
Social support
Problem solving support
Finding new inspiration
More possible client contacts
Collaborators or partners

16. When I need help in something work related I seek it from
Friends
Internet
Networks I am part of

The need for internationalization
17. Previous to my freelancing career, I have been working in an international company.
Yes
No
18. I have an international education.
Yes
No
19. I feel the need to become more internationally involved.
Strongly agree
Agree
Don't know
Disagree
Strongly disagree
20. When seeking for help/information I also use international resources.
Strongly agree
Agree
Don't know
Disagree
Strongly disagree
21. I have taken part in international conferences.
Yes
No
22. I am currently part of some LinkedIn communities.
Yes
No
23. I feel that being part of LinkedIn communities has been beneficial for me.
(If your previous answer was yes)
Strongly agree
Agree
Don't know
Disagree
Strongly disagree

End of the survey
To receive more information about deClub, please fill in your preferences below.
(Optional)
I would like to be contacted regarding
a workspace
a newsletter
Leave your email address in the field below
(Optional, but required if you wish to be contacted)