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Introverts in the Business Field

Study of introverts in a line of business where being an extrovert is considered the norm

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This research studies introverts within sales and marketing, a line of business where being an extrovert is considered the norm, through one-to-one semi-structured interviews with two sales and marketing professionals. The base of this research is built from existing literature on the personality typology, the introvert-extrovert continuum, and the theory of sales and marketing, and desired characteristics of a good sales/marketing professional. As the same extrovert-ideal is also shared in most societies, this research explores and discusses briefly the biased idealisation of extroverted personality as well.

The data collected from the interviews provided insights into the individual experiences and feelings of two introverts working within sales and marketing; both of the participants were competent and successful in their jobs, but identified some challenges when comparing themselves with extroverts – the introverted over-discretion and difficulty of being pushy or obtruding compared to extroverts.

The overall conclusion of this research is that the introverts who participated in this study do succeed within sales and marketing, and they have many strengths that can be linked with the desired characteristics of a good salesperson or marketing professional. This research also validates the societies' prejudiced vision of introverts as professionals; as the introvert-extrovert continuum is fluid and traits can be adapted, a specific personality type does not reflect the competence nor the talent one possesses, and therefore associating a specific personality type with a specific line of business is illogical and deceptive. However, more research needs to be conducted in the area of introverts in the business field, but overall the gathered data answered the thesis questions and aligned rather well with the already existing literature.

Keywords	introvert, sales, marketing, personality type, extrovert-ideal

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1   Introduction

The stereotypical businessperson, especially within sales and leadership roles, is considered to be very social, outgoing and energetic – one might say *an extrovert*. Even according to a study by Harvard Business School, the two most important traits to possess in order to thrive in the business world is verbal fluency and sociability; characteristics most commonly appointed to extroverts. The extroverted personality type has been favoured throughout history over the *introverted*, who are thought to be shy and unsocial – forcing the introverted to live in a world of presumptions where being an extrovert is considered more socially acceptable, and therefore compelling the introverted to exhibit extroverted traits in order to succeed under the extrovert-idealisation. (Cain, 2012, Kuofie, Stephens-Craig & Dool, 2015)

During the past years however, the topic of quiet introverts in the loud extroverted business field has been brought up increasingly, and the somewhat misunderstood presumptions of introverts have been discussed by various psychologists and writers. These studies and discussions have given light to the often-inadequate understanding of the introvert-extrovert continuum, and therefore given value to the introverted characteristics and traits which are often wrongly portrayed in most societies.

This research will be taking a closer look through one-to-one interviews to the topic of introverts within a line of business where being an extrovert is considered a norm; what is it like being an introvert within sales/marketing, and are there some aspects which are particularly challenging or easy. The research will use existing literature from personality theory and sales and marketing to shine some light on the topic. Through the combination of the interviews and the existing theory, the societies' extrovert-ideal can also be explored and discussed.

2   Research question

Introverts in the business field – what is it like being an introvert in a line of business which usually entails the need for extroverted traits? What aspects or situations, if any, feels challenging or easy for introverts in their working lives?

In order to answer the research questions, this study will focus on the literature of the personality types; the theory of the introversion-extroversion continuum, and the typical traits, qualities and behaviour of introverts in their professional life. To understand the chosen field, I will review sales and marketing literature, especially regarding the desired qualities and characteristics of a good salesperson/marketing professional. For the research, data collection was done through semi-structured qualitative interviews with two business professionals within sales and marketing who identified themselves as introverts. The collected data was then explored and analysed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

3   The personality types

Before defining the personality types, it is good to go through the differences between temperament and personality. In her book, Cain writes that: ''Temperament refers to inborn, biologically based behavioural and emotional patterns that are observable in infancy and early childhood; personality is the complex brew that emerges after cultural influence and personal experience are thrown into the mix'', and in addition, the author states that ''temperament is the foundation, and personality is the building'' (Cain, 2012:101). Therefore, what makes people who they are is the product of the complex relationship between upbringing and heredity.

The results of psychological and neurological researches have suggested that introversion-extroversion is 40 to 50 percent heritable. However, this doesn't mean that a person's introversion-extroversion is always inherited 40 to 50 percent from their parents – introversion-extroversion can be essentially any mixture from zero to 100 percent nature (genetic) and/or nurture (experience). Brain Magnetic Resonance Image (MRI) can also assess whether a person is, or ''should'' be, more introverted or extroverted – more about this in chapter 3.1. (Cain, 2012)

Although the inborn temperaments (genes, brain, nervous system) influences personality, people still ''can stretch their personalities, but only up to a point'' (Cain, 2012:117). Everyone has a free will, and it can be used to shape their personality (either fully or just in some situations), beyond their genetic profile. But if shaped to an extreme, it can have negative effects on psychological wellbeing as the genetic profile behind one's temperament and personality cannot be changed: ''When one is forced to obtain

a worldview that operated from their underdeveloped function (i.e., introvert leader functioning in an extroverted environment), it can cause conflict and perhaps cripple ones' ability to live up to their full potential'' (Kuofie et al. 2015:2).

''As in all personality research, traits are based on a continuum and personality profiles and typologies do not hold true for all people'' (Kuofie et al. 2015:4). Hence, there are various kinds of introverts and extroverts, and nobody is purely either one. There is also a personality type for the inbetweeners, the ones who do not categorize themselves as either of the two psychological types but have characteristics and qualities from both; the ambiverts. The ambiverts can be described as e.g. outgoing introverts and/or antisocial extroverts, depending on their mood, goals or the situation. As the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung put it; "One can never give a description of type, no matter how complete, which absolutely applies to one individual, despite the fact that thousands might, in a certain sense, be strikingly characterized by it" (Jung, 1923, cited in Kuofie et al. 2015:1). Jung also reminded that psychological typology was only a way to generally describe and understand one's behaviour, and individual differences and uniqueness must not be ignored. Jung also urged to be attentive to one's ability to adapt to situations despite the personality traits (Kuofie et al. 2015). This means that not every definition of attributes, traits or behavioural aspects can be applied to every introvert, ambivert or extrovert, as every human being is a complex individual and behaviour cannot be predicted. (Cain, 2012)

It is worth noting that there is also a difference between a personality trait assessed by the psychological measures and the self-concept, as in what one thinks about oneself. For example, a person could be assessed as an extrovert through their visible, typical traits/characteristics/behaviour, but as the traits are on a continuum and the typologies do not hold true for all people, the same person could identify and categorise themselves as an introvert – despite the typical extroverted traits. Therefore, one's self-concept and the psychological measures of the traits might be quite opposite. For this research, the participants and their data will be through their self-concept and identification, whereas the theory will be through the psychological typology, but with the self-concept and fluidity of the introvert-extrovert continuum kept in mind.

3.1 History

A Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung introduced for the first time the theory of two psychological types – extroversion and introversion – in his book Psychological Types (1921). Jung explained extroversion and introversion in the following way: ''Each person seems to be energized more by either the external world (extraversion) or the internal world (introversion)'' (Jung, 1921, cited in Hunihan, 2020). That is, introverts gain energy from the inner world, as in their own minds, whereas extroverts gain energy from the outer world, like social situations and other external stimulations. External stimulation can be anything from flashing lights to smells, noises and social interactions. However, Jung also encouraged to look at how one adapts to situations despite the personality traits, clarifying the aspect of fluidity and ''preferences'' within the introvert-extrovert continuum. (Kuofie et al. 2015) Such preferences could include an introvert favouring to work in an open-plan office with noise and other, usually considered distractions, instead of their own office, or then an extrovert wanting to work alone in their own, quiet office without any external stimulations which are considered typical for extroverts' preferences. These examples show the fluidity and potential personal preferences of the introvert-extrovert continuum.

Researchers have found support for the hypothesis that the introvert-extrovert personality trait is not only determined psychologically as Jung first suggested, but also biologically. A well-known psychologist Hans Eysenck was first to put these two aspects – psychological and biological – of the introversion-extroversion continuum together in his book, The Biological Basis of Psychology (1967). He believed that the basis of introverts' and extroverts' differences could be found in the brain structure called the ascending reticular activating system (ARAS), which he speculated was the regulator to the amount of stimulation which flowed into the brain (Cain, 2012:123). Eysenck shared a hypothesis in the late 1960s in which he believed that human beings tried to seek 'just right'-levels of stimulation through the ARAS, which balanced between over- and under-arousal/stimulation – therefore, Eysenck believed that the differences between introverts and extroverts are connected to the preferred levels of stimulation: extroverts prefer more stimulation, introverts less (Cain, 2012:122-3).

Advances in MRI technology strongly supported the hypothesis above; the electrical activity in the frontal cortices of introvert's brain is greater than extrovert's. This area is where the problem-solving and thinking is processed. However, when it comes to

emotions, sight-, smell-, touch- and hearing-sensations, the electrical activity, or the stimulation level, is greater in extroverts. This means that extroverts are usually more present in the moment, whereas introverts can unintentionally ''switch off'' and start contemplating and reflecting within their own minds (Jonkman, 2015:52). Cain gave examples of extroverts' and introverts' preferred stimulation levels; ''extroverts function best when engaged in higher-wattage activities like organizing team-building workshops'', whereas ''introverts enjoy shutting the doors to their offices and plunging into their work'' (2012:122).

According to Jonkman (2015), Eysenck researched introversion and extroversion for decades. In addition to the brain activity-hypothesis, Eysenck suggested that the stability of one's emotions is a correlation between positive (stable), or negative (unstable) emotions, and Jung's introvert-extrovert continuum (Figure 1 below). Based on Eysenck's findings, this stable-unstable variable was a critical factor, together with other situational and personal factors when assessing if the introverted or extroverted personality trait was a strength. (Jonkman, 2015)
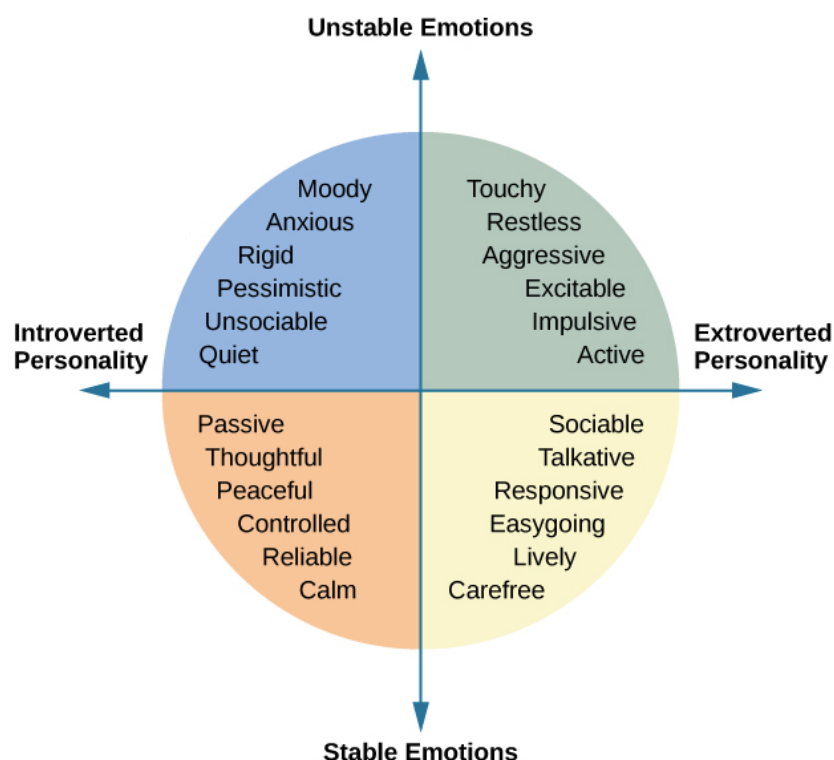

Figure 1. Eysenck's emotional stability-personality model (Bhushan, 2019).

For example, if a person is social and emotionally stable, they enjoy conversations and are interested in people, but if they are social and emotionally unstable, they do not care for other people but *need* them to act as their audience and acknowledge their needs. Eysenck did not include social and cultural influences on his personality theory, nor did he acknowledge ambiverts. However, Eysenck's theory of personality is still widely accepted today, even though the German-born British psychologist was a controversial figure – mainly because of his denial of the carcinogenic effects of tobacco and the insistence that IQ was correlated with race. (Bhushan, 2019, Buchanan, 2011, Jonkman, 2015)

In her book, Cain (2012) writes about the history of the evolution (in 1920-30s) from ''Culture of Character'' to ''Culture of Personality'', in which people started to idolize the entertaining, bold people – the extroverted kind – over the serious and disciplined – the introverted kind (2012:21-24). This switch from introvert- to the extrovert-ideal is still prevailing in most societies, as extroverts are thought to be more socially acceptable.

3.2   Introversion-extroversion

Several psychologists have concluded that one of the temperament traits critical in personality development is the tendency to approach-withdraw, be outward-inward – in other words, the person's position in the introvert-extrovert continuum. This continuum can be found in almost every psychological theory as it relates to how a person processes information, reacts to various situations and people, how much the person prefers outer simulation, and whether the person is energized from the external or internal world. The characteristics that are the most agreed upon in psychology about the differences between introverts and extroverts are the activity/stimulation level, reflection and ability to concentrate. As mentioned, the stimulation levels are perceived differently by different people: something that might feel boring to extroverts might feel relaxing to introverts. At the poles of the continuum, introverts enjoy profound, deep reflection; therefore, introverts draw conclusions deliberately rather than spontaneously – and extroverts are the opposite. Introverts can typically concentrate easily and for a long time, whereas extroverts can find it hard to concentrate on one thing at a time for a long period of time. (Cain, 2012, Jonkman, 2015, Kuofie et al. 2015)

Several research studies support the finding that ''while traits were poor predictors of behaviour in one-off situations, they were, as they should be, very good predictors of behaviour aggregated across many situations'' (Matthews, Deary, Whiteman, 2009;96). However, Matthews et al. (2009;96) also argued that more research needs to be done within characterisation of situations and behaviours to ''identify the important behaviour-modifying elements of situations and enable us to make better predictions about trait expression in different types of situations''. Even though introverts' and extroverts' strengths depend on the situation, and therefore the behaviour cannot be predicted, it is still important to research the introvert-extrovert continuum to broadly understand how introverted and extroverted people see the world and how they interact in social situations. (Cain, 2012, Jonkman, 2015, Kuofie et al. 2015)

When looking at these personality types, it is important to note the term ''preference'' and avoid generalizations and stereotypes. As mentioned, the introvert-extrovert continuum is broad, the division is not simple, and most people have aspects of both traits, but usually, they also have a preference for one or the other. This tendency, however, does not mean that one cannot adopt traits of the less preferred personality type – this can happen in various situations and/or over time. (Kuofie et al. 2015)

3.2.1   Introversion

Introversion is not a well-defined concept (neither is ambi- or extroversion), but there are general characteristics and traits which are usually considered typical for introverts. For instance, according to Jung ''those who are introverted have been characterized as those who prefer solace, are analytical, thinkers, prefer working alone than working in large groups, reflective, reserved, gain energy from ideas and are often exhausted by social situations'' (Jung, 1971, cited in Kuofie et al. 2015:3).

As mentioned, introverts are energized by their inner world; therefore, their need for outer stimulation, as in, e.g. social contact, is less than for extroverts. This is one of the reasons why introverts are sometimes considered quiet, as they are intensive thinkers and comfortable with observing rather than constantly fully engaging. Being in a social environment with lots of outer stimulation, such as networking events, is energy-depleting for introverts, who then usually need to recharge with a period of rest. Some psychologists have ''characterized introverts as people whose energy tends to expand through reflection and dwindle during interaction'' (Petric, 2019:2). Also, introverts often

do not enjoy having meaningless, superficial small talk with unknown people, because they prefer in-depth interactions and ''prefer to devote their social energies to close friends, colleagues and family'' (Cain, 2012:11). However, this does not mean that introverts are unsocial or ungifted communicators – introverts can enjoy socialization as much as an extrovert does, but they often just need time and privacy to revive from the excessive stimulation afterwards. To an extrovert, this might seem like disengaging, when in fact it is only a re-energizing-phase in order to build the energy to give again. Shyness is also often paired with introversion, which is (necessarily) not accurate – ''shyness is the fear of social disapproval or humiliation, while introversion is a preference for environments that are not overstimulating'' (Cain, 2012: 12). Jonkman (2015:17) writes that introversion should be referred as a ''need'' instead of ''personality type'', as introversion is the need for privacy and solitude. (Cain, 2015, Vien, 2016)

According to a study, introverts are more likely to communicate via social media/email than phone call or a face-to-face interaction, because they might feel that their communication is more effective through written text (Kuofie et al. 2015:9).

Kuofie et al. (2015) mentioned introverts' ''analytical thinking, organized and detail-oriented behaviours, cautious and strong decision making'' as positive traits. Introverts are also usually very observant, which paired with analytical thinking facilitates to sensing and reading nonverbal messages and signs, as in gestures, body language and the tone of voice, rather well (Jonkman, 2015:29). Introverts observe, analyse and think before they speak or act, therefore they spend often more time listening than talking. Introverts can be are also very persistent, they do not give up easily, they stay on task and prefer accuracy, even if it slows down their workflow. (Cain, 2012)

3.2.2   Extroversion

Like introversion, extroversion is not well-defined, but there are traits, characteristics and preferences which are considered to be distinctive for extroverted – for example; ''they tend to be assertive, dominant, and in great need of company'', therefore extroverts are usually very comfortable in social settings, and they prefer talking to listening because they often need to think and process information aloud (Cain, 2012:11). As a result, extroverts are usually characterized as talkative and social. Extroverts also tackle assignments faster than introverts but are short-tempered, hence more likely to quit a problematic assignment earlier than introverts. Extroverts are comfortable with

multitasking, making spontaneous decisions, taking risks and trading accuracy for speed. (Cain, 2012)

As for professions, it is said that ''extroverts might be successful in show business, politics, medicine, teaching and similar professions that demand team-work and interaction with many people'' (Petric, 2019;3). Extroverts usually work well in groups and are good with public presentations due to their enjoyment of social interaction; therefore, they can lack the ability to work well alone or reflect without any outer stimulation. However, as mentioned before, everyone is different, and it is always possible to develop and adopt characteristics and traits on the introvert-extrovert continuum.

4   Introverts in the working life

The topic of introverts in the business world has been brought up increasingly during recent years, but there is not much literature about introverts specifically within marketing but towards sales and management/leadership. However, the existing literature is comprehensive with regards to the typical traits and characteristics of introverts through various researches and studies, which are the base for this research.

In her book (2012), Cain explained that introverts often live under the ''Extroverted Ideal – the omnipresent belief that the ideal self is gregarious, alpha, and comfortable in the spotlight'' (Cain, 2012:6). Cain also pointed out the society's common misbelief that the more vocal people are, the smarter they are perceived, which is an issue also referred by other authors, for example, Vien (2016:2) stated that: ''People may wonder whether you know what you're doing or if you're adding any value, because you don't stand up and tell them why you're here''. This could also be associated with some introverts' career-struggles, as they are usually expected to self-promote to be recognized and/or promoted. Jonkman (2015:219) also writes about the Western society's idolization of sociality, especially when hiring, which then easily leaves behind the introverts, denounced as either shy, condescending or having/showing no ambition or desire to succeed – ''in most professions, a certain kind of personality and competence do not go hand in hand'', and if the recruiter only looks at the applicants' personality traits, tremendous talents will go undiscovered. Another point about career-struggles is made in Kuofie, Stephens-Craig and Dool's paper *An Overview Perception of Introverted*

Leaders (2015), which criticises the society's ideal of extroverted leadership. They write that ''introverted leaders often sit back and consider information before they make decisions and act or speak. They are sometimes mistakenly considered "shy" and are typically thoughtful'' (2015:2). Therefore;

> Given the widespread societal misconception that the most effective leaders are only extroverted, charismatic leaders, much more research and action needs to be taken in order to educate management, employees and the public as a whole that many highly effective and qualified people are being passed over for leadership positions because of common misnomer that introversion cannot equal effective and dynamic leadership. (Kuofie et al. 2015:3)

The paper criticises the society's wrong perception that extroverted leaders are more capable of success than introverts.

In their study, *Failure of Introverts to Emerge as Leaders: The Role of Forecasted Affect*, Spark, Stansmore and O'Connor (2018) took an interesting, deeper angle to the topic of emergent introverted leaders. The research was about the reasons why introverts are less likely to emerge as leaders than extroverts in groups with no appointed leaders. The study found out that introverts make 'affective forecasting errors', as in ''introverts tend to believe (or 'forecast') that acting extroverted will be more unpleasant than what it actually is'', and they ''tend to underestimate the amount of positive affect they will experience as a result of acting extroverted'' (Spark et al. 2018:1-2). This is an important finding, as it implicates the need for more discussion of, and social acceptance towards, introverts, as ''Often highly creative, their [introverts] ideas can be lost in a culture that favours the extrovert'' (Steele, 2012 cited in Spark et al. 2018:9). The study also raised a valid point of why the issue needs more recognition; ''often, for example, an introverted employee will be the most qualified individual for a particular leadership role and consequently should emerge as a leader in such situation'' (Spark et al. 2018:1), but they do not as they are affected by their negative forecasts. If being an introverted leader was more accepted in the society, it would most likely cause the emerge of more introverts, and in turn, have a positive effect within the organisation.

In his article *Successful Selling for Introverts* (1998), Thomas Murphy suggests introverts to emphasize their skills in observing and listening while interacting with customers. He makes a positive point out of introverts' quiet and calm behaviour, ''the very best salespeople spend 70 percent of their time listening, so being quiet is an asset, not a liability'' (Murphy, 1998:2). As introverts are good listeners, they are also great at processing the received information, which is desired from a good salesperson –

knowing the customer's specific need and fulfilling it. According to a study by an American psychologist Adam Grant, when comparing with introverts and ambiverts, extroverts are actually the most unsuccessful within sales – ambiverts were the most successful as they were the best at balancing between talking and listening, and introverts were close seconds (Jonkman, 2015:218).

Jonkman (2015:57-58;77) also discusses about the ''mask'' introverts usually wear in social situations, in order to come across as more socially acceptable and not as introverted as they truly are. There can be various masks for various situations or people – family and friends, colleagues, new acquaintances – which is why many actors/actresses are introverts; playing a role is somewhat natural or rather easy for an introvert. As for other professions, ''it is considered that introverted persons might be successful as artists, writers, scientists, composers, inventors and similar professions where the abilities of strong reflection and independent work are mandatory'' (Petric, 2019:2).

5 Sales and marketing

This chapter will briefly address the theory of sales and marketing, and the characteristics of a good salesperson/marketing professional in order to explore and analyse the desired traits with the typical introvert-extrovert characteristics.

5.1 Sales and marketing

Marketing includes all the activities ''a company undertakes to promote the buying or selling of a product or service'' (Twin, 2020), such as advertising, selling and market research, in order to ''enhance an organization's ability to satisfy the needs and wants of its customers effectively, thereby strengthening its position within the market'' (Verhage, 2013:6). To separate sales from the marketing, one could say that marketing-activities are focused on growing the long-term market share of the company, and on creating potential customer interest, whereas the sales-activities focus on growing the current market share (The Chief Outsider, 2014).

5.2 Desired characteristics

In their paper, Basir, Ahmad and Kitchen (2010) mention that there are various independent variables which contribute to a salesperson's performance, such as personal factors, selling skills, motivation and organizational/environmental factors. As desired factors for a successful salesperson, Basir et al. (2010) found out that especially effective listening and observation skills were valuable communication skills for successful sellers. The paper also refers to empathy and emotional intelligence as strongly correlated with performance. Mayer and Greenberg (2006) also list empathy as one of the two qualities of being a good salesman: the other is (ego) drive. Being empathetic, the ability to sense what someone is feeling, is crucial in sales, as the salesperson needs to sense the customer's reaction in order to adjust to the situation and offer better solutions. Drive and motivation to succeed coupled with empathy enables the salesperson to efficiently sell and close the deal efficiently.

Aja Frost (2019) lists 26 effective habits of great salespeople, among them, are being hard-working and thorough, practicing and preparing ahead of time. Also, building a more personal relationship with the customer is highly beneficial if it is done the right way. The customer needs to feel heard, therefore the salesperson has to observe and be a proficient communicator.

6 Methodology

This chapter addresses the methods used in the research, including the reasoning for the chosen research design, data collection method, analysis and the validity of the research.

6.1 Research design

The methodological approach is qualitative, as the data collection technique and data analysis procedure were non-numerical. Since the research question (chapter 2) focuses on the participants' personal experiences and their understanding of the world as an introvert in the business area, the philosophical approach and method chosen was the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is a qualitative research

methodology, mostly used in psychology, which aim is ''to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world'' (Smith and Osborn, 2007:53) through an idiographic focus, and ''its main objective and essence are to explore the 'lived experiences' of the research participants and allow them to narrate the research findings through their 'lived experiences'.'' (Alase, 2017:9). IPA does not build new theory, however, conclusions can be drawn and compared with the existing literature and theories.

When broken down, IPA is a philosophical approach with ontological, the study of being, and epistemological, as to what is considered acceptable knowledge, assumptions. The ontological aspect is subjectivism, as the research is focused around the participants' perceptions of reality rather than direct reality. The epistemological view is hermeneutics or interpretivism, as the interpretivist philosophy ''emphasises the difference between humans in our role as social actors'' (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012:137). The interpretivist philosophy is then phenomenological, which focuses ''to have the understanding of the 'lived experiences' of the research participants'', and therefore ''it is important for the researcher to put themselves in the shoes of the participants'' (Alase, 2017:12), and try to avoid any pre-conceptions as well as possible. The reason for the researcher to have an open mind and as suspended preconceptions as possible is to "enable participants to express their concerns and make their claims on their own terms" (Smith et al. 2009, cited in Alase, 2017:15).

IPA uses a variety of tools to analyse the data. The chosen research strategy is narrative inquiry, which ''seeks to preserve chronological connections and the sequencing of events as told by the narrator (participant), to enrich understanding and aid analysis'' (Saunders et al. 2012:188). The time-horizon of the research is cross-sectional, which is ''the study of a particular phenomenon at a particular time'' (Saunders et al. 2012:669).

6.2   Interviews

To obtain rich data, semi-structured one-to-one interviews were conducted. The semi-structured interviews are flexible and give the opportunity for the interviewer to ask open-ended questions, which usually produces richer data. This will ''allow the participant to define and describe a situation or event'', as the ''open question is designed to encourage the interviewee to provide an extensive and developmental answer''

(Saunders et al. 2012:391). There is also the possibility to add or change some questions if needed, as the interviewees have various backgrounds and experiences.

As ''research using an inductive approach is likely to be particularly concerned with the context in which such events were taking place, therefore, the study of a small sample of subjects might be more appropriate'' (Saunders et al. 2012:146), the initial plan was to gather data from three to four introverts within the business field through interviews, but in the end only two interviews were conducted. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews, and the participants were asked if they agreed to be audio-recorded through a 30 to 60-minute Skype interview, or if they wished to answer around 20 open-ended questions through an email interview. Both of the participants wished to carry out the interviews via email correspondence. Therefore, email was used to conduct semi-structured one-to-one interviews.

Before the interview, the participants were given a consent form to fill and sign. For ethical considerations, the participants were given a full disclosure of the purpose of the research, advised on their rights to withdraw their participation at any point, and reminded of their right to leave any question unanswered, if they wished. The participants were also guaranteed full anonymity; thus, their names and the companies they work for are not mentioned in the research nor in the transcripts. To ensure each participants' anonymity, the interview data was stored safely and only accessible by me. Also, to eliminate the possible accessibility to the email interview of any organization by the participants' side, the participants were advised to use personal email accounts instead of work/school emails.

To help narrow down the focus of the interview, it is useful to use an interview schedule (Appendix 1). The questions asked were all open-ended and allowed the participants to pursue topics such as the desired work-environment, personal thoughts on e.g. teamwork, and self-reflection. The participants were given five days to read, reflect and answer the interview, with the possibility to reach out any time for any concerns or further questions about the interview/research before, during or after the interview process. To elicit further details and to gain better understanding of the participants' views, subsequent interview questions were asked via email after the first response.

6.3   Interviewees

When thinking about the potential interviewees, it is crucial to make sure that the process of selecting the participants ''is done with the utmost 'carefulness' and integrity, so that the research participants are selected for the right reasons and on the bases of the 'lived experiences' that the participants have purported to have experienced'' (Alase, 2017:17). Also, homogeneous sample is usually used in IPA researches in order to find participants for whom the research question (chapter 2) will be current and significant (Smith, Osborn, 2007:4). Therefore, before sending any inquiries, it was important to define the potential participant; for the participant selection, one's self-concept of the introvert-extrovert continuum was prioritised over the psychological measures; thus, to be a suitable participant, the participant had to consider themselves as more of an introvert than extrovert, and currently work within sales or marketing.

The first inquiry messages were sent throughout March to my already existing networks on LinkedIn in Finland and internationally. Since the participant had to work within sales or marketing, the messages were sent to connections who had sales or marketing related work titles. Thus, the type of sampling used was snowball sampling within a homogeneous group selected by me. In the message (Appendix 2), I explained the reasoning for contacting, the thesis subject and asked to be contacted if the connection did consider themselves as introverts and were willing to be interviewed for the research. There were two interested connections who agreed to be interviewed, but then both withdrew their agreements at the end of March because of drastic changes in their working lives due to COVID-19. This forced me to ask assistance from friends, who then reached out to their networks. This snowball sampling proved successful, as three new potential participants emerged. I contacted the potential participants and asked if they would like a face-to-face interview through Skype, or an email-interview. Two of the participants wanted email-interviews, and one agreed to be audio recorded through Skype. However, the participant who wanted to be interviewed through Skype withdrew his application due to personal reasons on the agreed interview day. There was no time to find a third participant, and since only one participant is enough for the IPA method, I decided to settle on two.

It is worth noting that finding eligible and agreeable participants was difficult and time consuming. This could be because it is estimated that around 50 to 70 percent of the population consider themselves more as an extrovert than introvert - this statistic

combined with my specific line of business-requirement reduces the odds of finding suitable participants. However, as Jonkman (2015:12) stated, it is very likely that the number of people who consider themselves as introverts is greater. Could be that they do not want to come forth as introverts because of society's extroverted ideal, or they simply have illegitimate/inadequate impression or understanding of the introvert-extrovert continuum.

6.4   Data collection

The data collection was done through semi-structured interviews from two participants that identify themselves as introverts and work in the business area. The interview schedule contained 20 open-ended questions (Appendix 1). As mentioned before, both participants wanted to do email interviews; therefore, time was saved from transcribing, but it was most likely more time consuming for the participants. The emails were still treated the same way as one would when gathering data from an audio-recorded interview. The email responses, in addition to my answers/further questions/prompts via email, were copied and pasted for documentation and analysis. The subsequent questions and prompts were asked one to two days after the participants' original answers to better understand the participants' experiences. The email threads were put in chronological order with dates and times. The common language was Finnish, but one of the interviews were conducted in English and one in Finnish. The parts used for the analysis from the Finnish interview was translated into English.

Understanding the appropriate use of email interviews ''maximizes the benefits and minimizes the downsides'' (Burns, 2010:10). Therefore, before conducting the interviews, it was important to acknowledge the advantages and disadvantages of gathering data through email interviews compared to face-to-face/Skype interviews. Email interviews could be considered as surveys (question-response), but through the more extensive interaction (prompts/acknowledgement) it takes it further than a survey (Burns, 2010:9). Through email interviews the participants body language or social cues, such as tone of voice and emotional reactions, are not observable, which affect the understanding and interpretation of the participant's experience, therefore affecting the data. However, via ''written cues, such as bold print, capitalization, punctuation, emoticons and abbreviations'' the email interviewee can ''communicate timing, tone, inflection and mood'' through their answers (Hawkins, 2018:496). The potential for short,

concise answers can be seen as a disadvantage of email interviews, but the possibility is also there with face-to-face/Skype interviews. However, in face-to-face interviews the interviewer is able to control the situation accordingly and react to interviewees social cues and/or ask further questions.

Doing an email interview also means that the participants can answer the questions any time of the day that best suits their schedules. As Parris (2008:7) says, ''use of email allows respondents to have some control over when and where they participate''. As the participants were given five days to answer the interview questions, they had more time to reflect and contemplate the themes and questions, which therefore provides a more considered reply and possibly more rich data. However, this ''time to consider their response might reduce the pressure felt by nervous interviewees, but on the other hand it also loses spontaneity'', which should be taken into account when later analysing the data (Bampton and Cowton, 2002 cited in Burns, 2010:11).

6.5   Analysing the data

When breaking down qualitative data for analysis, it is important to keep in mind all the already mentioned points of the research design in chapter 6.1; the research philosophy and -approach, the strategy and data collection method. As mentioned, the chosen approach is IPA, in which the data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns, recognize relationships, develop categories and get a deep insight into the experience, as viewed by the participants. The analysis is narrative, in which the integrity and narrative value of the data will be preserved. (Saunders et al. 2012)

In accordance to IPA analysis, the collected data is conceptualized as subjective and based on the participants' personal experiences, feelings and sense of the world, which means that the data cannot be criticized nor generalized, but only explored, described and analysed for a conclusion, and then the conclusions can be compared with the existing literature. It is also important to keep in mind that when trying to understand qualitative data through IPA, we must try to "set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things" (Moustakas, 1994, cited in Alase, 2017:13), and try to analyse the data without pre-conceptions – as well as possible, because everyone has preconceived ideas, consciously or unconsciously.

When starting to analyse the data, the first thing to do is to ''read through the interview responses to identify common themes; search for words or phrases that are repeated in the participants' responses'' (Alase, 2017:15). It's recommendable to read through the data several times separately for clarity and to get a better feel of the participant's views and how the subject-matter, introversion, has affected their 'lived experiences' within their business field (Alase, 2017:16). After the data has been thoroughly explored, the recognising of emerging themes can be started. Through these themes, the data can be grouped and clustered according to conceptual similarities. The clustered themes are then morphed into a narrative account of the study – ''this usually involves taking the themes identified in the final table and writing them up one by one. Each theme needs to be described and exemplified with extracts from interview(s), followed by analytic comments from the author'' (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014:13). As the data is gathered from two participant, the aim is ''to respect convergences and divergences in the data – recognizing ways in which accounts from participants are similar but also different'' (Smith, Osborne, 2007:73).

When analysing the qualitative data with IPA, it is also important to take the cultural differences into account; for example, none of the researched literature is from Finnish authors, which means that the cultural differences could affect the evaluation of the data, as ''Finland is a famously introverted nation'' (Cain, 2012:14) and the current literature of the research is from various countries and cultures. This could mean that the findings from Finnish interviewees working in Finland might not be considered as drastic as the same findings might be in the U.S., a country known for its extroverted atmosphere.

Also, the validity and trustworthiness of the data needs to be taken into account. As already mentioned, the collected qualitative data explores the participants' personal experiences, therefore no generalisations nor new theory can be created, but the collected data can be recognised as valid and trustworthy data to explore, as the presumption is that the participants answered truthfully.

6.5.1 Introduction of themes

As mentioned, the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is used to recognise clustered themes from the explored data. Below (Table 1) can be seen the emergent themes, their description and an illustration of each theme with quotations from the participants.

Table 1. Table of themes.

Theme	Description	Illustration
Work environment preferences	Concentration is high in low-stimulating environments; solitude and privacy valued, hence preference for own offices	**Anonym 1**: ''I definitely prefer my own office. Own office is like a 'plinth' for long-term client work.'' **Anonym 2**: ''It is important to have access to my 'own place', where there are no distractions and I can fully focus.''
	Teamwork enjoyable if proficient communication and diligent work ethic are shared values	**Anonym 1**: ''Teamwork is essential in many fields, and personally I like teamwork; at best it's more than the 'sum of its parts'.'' **Anonym 2**: ''I surely enjoy teamwork, but it is a crucial that the team works well together. I usually prefer to work alone, so that I have full control over the final result. My biggest concern in teamwork is that everyone does not give the same amount of effort.''
	Comfrotable expressing own opinions	**Anonym 2**: ''In meetings I usually stay at the background, but if there's opportunity to interact within smaller group sizes I surely take part on conversations, and If there are ideas/propositions which please me, I'm not afraid to support them or voice my opinions.''
Work method preferences	Problem-solving selling, makes use of analytical and listening abilities	**Anonym 1**: ''I don't really 'sell' our services or equipment aggressively, I want to discuss more and find solutions to customer's problems.'' ''It doesn't matter how hard you 'sell' if the customer has no need/use for our services.'' **Anonym 2**: ''I do feel the need to put extra effort at work and when interacting with a customer, so I feel that my 'professional-self' is more outward-oriented version of myself.'' ''I think it's important to listen to the customer, and I think my listening abilities have proved profitable when I'm helping a customer.''
	Decision making: depending on situation; thorough decision-making process, risks' results well-reflected	**Anonym 1**: ''I think it is best to make decisions depending on the current situation; sometimes very quickly with risk, and sometimes decisions require a longer reflection period.'' **Anonym 2**: ''If the decision affects only me, it's usually easy to make the decision, but if it involves other people, I want to make sure that their feelings and needs are taken into account, which then affects the length of the decision period.'' ''I usually want to play it safe and don't

		take risks often, unless if they are thought through well.''
	Communication: emails predrerred; profound communication and documentation, phone calls preferred for 'quick communication'; question-answer, explanation	**Anonym 1**: ''Through the phone I can easily map the prospect's situation, but for further communication I prefer email, because then we are always left with some kind of documentation to return to and make use of in the future if the deal is not sealed right away.'' **Anonym 2**: ''It surely depends on the situation, but if it can be dealt with email, email it is. I hate unnecessary phone calls, but if there needs to be some explanation done then I surely would choose a phone call.''
Self-reflection	Strengths: analytical and listening-abilites	**Anonym 1**: ''My perseverance, calmness and analyticity.'' **Anonym 2**: ''I'm very precise and take time to listen other people's opinions and make sure everyone is heard. I'm very result-oriented and give all of my energy to achieve the set goals. I'm also trustworthy, if I tell you that I'll handle it, I surely will.'' ''My analytical and observant skills are beneficial when working in a team with lots of high-energy extroverts.''
	Challenges: compared to extroverts; over-discretion	**Anonym 1**: ''Perhaps some kind of restraint or discretion in certain situations where the more extroverted would have already started 'selling'.'' **Anonym 2**: ''If there are lots of strong, more extroverted personalities at work, sometimes perhaps I can easily get unnoticed.''

These themes (Table 1) and other findings will be discussed more in-depth in the next chapters.

7   Findings

This chapter reviews the collected data of the interviews, based on the interview schedule (Appendix 1) and the themes (Table 1). The findings have been divided into smaller sections by emergent themes. First will be the discussion of the participants' backgrounds – their work- and educational background, how they ended up in the field, and how/why the participants identify themselves as introverts. This will be followed by a discussion of the participants' experiences and feelings from their working lives, as in

work environment preferences and work methods. Lastly, the participants reflect their strengths and possible challenges as introverts within sales and marketing.

7.1   Backgrounds

The two participants both worked in sales and marketing. The first participant, to be referred as Anonym 1, was an Account Manager and the second participant, to be referred as Anonym 2, worked in retail. Both of the participants were Finns and worked in Finland.

Anonym 1 had over 30 years of experience in marketing related roles, with educational background from various marketing courses and trainings. Anonym 1 recognized quite early his desire to work within marketing, or at the time, ''advertising'', and got familiarized with the field in the 70s through his brother who was a marketing manager in a company. When asked how/why does the participant identify themselves as an introvert, Anonym 1 said that it was a bit harder matter to define but gave a practical example of a situation usually relatable with introverts:

> It has never been easy for me to go to or gravitate towards new groups or acquaintances. I always observe and analyse the situation first, and through that get to know the people. (Anonym 1, 2020)

As for Anonym 2, she had previous work experience from various customer service roles from the last decade and was currently finishing a bachelor's degree from Sales and Visual Marketing. Anonym 2 got interested within the field through the studies but has more interest towards marketing than sales. For the same question about identifying themselves as an introvert, Anonym 2 mentioned some traits that usually are typical for introverts; good listener, don't enjoy being the centre of attention, is comfortable in the background observing but speaks if has something to say, does enjoy company and socializing but does need time to be alone and 'charge batteries' without any interaction with other people.

7.2   Working life and introversion

When asked if the participants felt that their introversion is something that could be seen in their work by their colleagues or customers, Anonym 2 said depending on the situation

but usually no, because she felt that her ''professional self'' is more outward-oriented version of herself. However, if the atmosphere at work was busy and stressful, then Anonym 2 felt that her introverted traits could be more noticeable. Anonym 1, however, felt that his ''own special characteristic'' was surely visible in his work; ''the nature of the job and the industry naturally influences my behaviour'', but when it comes to engaging with customers, Anonym 1 did not feel the need to change his way of working.

7.2.1 Work environment preferences

When asked about the preference of their working environments, both of the participants preferred their own offices over an open-plan office. Even though Anonym 2 does need a peaceful and a quiet environment to fully concentrate, for Anonym 2 an open-plan office would on the other hand be more convenient if the job required a lot of teamwork.

As for teamwork, Anonym 1 stated that working in a team was enjoyable and often a necessity. Anonym 2 preferred to work alone in order to be more in control of the final result. However, if the workload was evenly spread and the team worked well together, then Anonym 2 found teamwork enjoyable.

Regarding meetings and conferences, Anonym 2 usually stays in the background observing and analysing the information but does speak her mind when asked about her opinion or support for some idea or proposition. Public speaking or giving presentations is not Anonym 2's favourite activity, ''but if I'm well prepared and on a right mind-set, there are no issues. Spontaneous presentations might give me slight anxiety at first, but when I'm done, I feel good''. Anonym 1 is actively present in meetings and conferences where he has been registered or asked to be a part of, and public speaking/giving presentations is not a problem.

7.2.2 Work methods

When it comes to selling, Anonym 1 doesn't feel the pressure or need to act more outward-oriented and aggressively ''sell'' the services/equipment, but instead has more of a problem-solving approach where he discusses and listens to the customer; ''it doesn't matter how hard you ''sell'' if the customer has no need/use for our services''. Like mentioned before, Anonym 2 however did feel that her professional-self was more outward-oriented than her true-self, and she did feel the need to put extra effort during

sales activities and when interacting with a customer. Anonym 2 also empathised the importance of listening the customer, thus giving great value to her listening abilities.

Depending on the situation, Anonym 2 preferred emails over phone calls when communicating with customers, as she ''hated unnecessary phone calls'', but if the matter needed some explanation or such, a phone call would be easier. For her work Anonym 2 did not need to make cold calls, as in creating a first contact with a potential customer through an extempore phone call, but if she would have needed to, she would have not felt that comfortable. As for Anonym 1, it depended on the stage of the deal/sale;

> Through the phone I can easily map the prospect's situation, but for further communication I prefer email, because then we are always left with some kind of documentation to return to and make use of in the future if the deal is not sealed right away. (Anonym 1, 2020)

Cold calling, on the other hand, felt a bit problematic for Anonym 1 because customers can nowadays find all the needed information themselves. However, Anonym 1 still tries to find interesting customers through various channels and then suggest solution options from the gathered information via cold calls.

About decision making and risk-taking at work, Anonym 1 said that the decision-making process depended on the situation – sometimes the situation requires quick, risky decisions and sometimes it requires a longer consideration period. Also, with Anonym 2, the decision-making process depends on the situation, but in a different way;

> If the decision affects only me, it's usually easy to make the decision, but if it involves other people, I want to make sure that their feelings and needs are taken into account, which then affects the length of the decision period. (Anonym 2, 2020)

Anonym 2 also mentions that she does not take risks quite often unless they are well thought through, since she usually wants to ''play it safe''.

Both of the participants had the need to 'recharge their batteries' after a workday. Anonym 1 said he enjoyed listening to music to charge his batteries and regain his energy. As for Anonym 2, it ''takes effort and requires quite a lot energy to 'come out' of the introverted shell during a workday'', whose professional-self is always as social as possible. However, Anonym 2 wanted to make a note that she still enjoys her work, even though it is sometimes rather draining. During spare time and after work, Anonym 2

values activities where she can stay quiet, relax and take as much time as needed for her to recharge the batteries. These activities include for example listening to good music, painting and taking long walks. Anonym does also enjoy spending her free time with her friends, whom are aware of her occasional need for her own time, therefore they do not wonder her sometimes quieter and more observing spirit after a long day at work.

7.2.3   Networking

Both of the participants felt that networking was nowadays important throughout all industries. Anonym 1 always attended networking events which seemed necessary, but Anonym 2 did not feel that networking events were for her;

> I feel that my personality is not at its finest while competing over attention. I just don't enjoy that kind of small talk and I find it quite exhausting. I prefer deep and long conversations over quick and superficial. (Anonym 2, 2020)

Anonym 2 did however feel that networking is essential and good practice for ''professional small talk'', especially for people who are just starting their careers.

7.3   Reflection

The last part of the interview constituted around the participants' reflection of their strengths and possible challenges as introverts within sales and marketing.

7.3.1   Anonym 1

When discussing about traits which the participants considered to be their strengths in their work, Anonym 1 mentioned his perseverance, calmness and analyticity. A challenge on the other hand was ''perhaps some kind of restraint or discretion in certain situations where the more extroverted would have already started ''selling''. However, Anonym 1 relied on his problem-solving sales-approach and underlined the importance of maintaining good customer-relationships, since the services and products within the field resemble one another and it is getting harder to differentiate through them, it is important to invest in the customer relationships. Therefore, Anonym 1 mentioned the development of his ''psychological eye'' as for something he would like to keep improving in order to create even more stronger customer relationships.

When asked if Anonym 1 felt that there were any prejudices around being an introvert, or if he ever had experienced struggles when trying to for example gain more responsibility at work, he said that he hasn't experienced any prejudices nor struggles, but might be because he just is not a ''careerist'' by nature – he wants to work in a team and experience success together, instead of only pursuing his own career advancement.

7.3.2 Anonym 2

Anonym 2 named her strengths at work her ability to listen other people, take into account their opinions and be sure that everyone has a voice, her precise, trustworthy and result-oriented work ethic. She also appreciates her analytical and observant side, which proves convenient especially when ''working in a team with lots of high-energy extroverts''. Because of her introverted personality, however, Anonym 2 felt that if there are ''lots of strong, more extroverted personalities'' as colleagues, she might go easily unnoticed by her superiors – and this was something that she'd like to improve in, as in self-promotion and ''taking more space''. Still, Anonym 2 has been fortunate enough with her previous and current employers, and has not faced any career struggles because of her introverted traits, but the opposite; ''I have been lucky enough that all of my previous employers have kept in high value my introverted traits, and always trusted me with more responsibility because of my trustworthiness and analytical capabilities''.

When asked about the possible prejudices against introverts, Anonym 2 mentioned that usually people thought that introverts are ''quite timid and shy by nature'' and that introverts feared public speaking. She also mentioned that some people had thought that introverts do not have own opinions, ''but this might be because of the fact that we just do not express ourselves if we do not feel the need''.

8   Discussion

The aim of the research was to get an insight into introverts in the business world – what is it like being an introvert in a line of business which usually entails the need for extroverted traits, and what aspects or situations, if any, feels challenging or easy for introverts in their working lives. The research was done through semi-structured one-to-one interviews from two sales- and marketing professionals who identified themselves as introverts. The purpose was to get insights into the participants' working life through

their experiences and feelings, and then compare these findings with the existing literature (chapters 3, 4 and 5).

The first, most crucial finding relating to the theory of introvert-extrovert continuum was the validation of its fluidity; both participants identified themselves as introverts, but they still had different insights and experiences. This can relate to the self-concept and fluidity, but also the participants' backgrounds were also diverse: Anonym 1 had over 30 years of experience from the business field, whereas Anonym 2 had only a third of that. Also, the nature and nurture (chapter 3) aspects are unknown, which again affects the diversity of the data.

When exploring the data, the following themes (Table 1) were identified from the participants' answers, as both of the participants somewhat agreed on the following; work environment preferences were aligned with low-stimulating environments (own office), work method preferences (mostly emails over phone calls), and recognized similar traits, such as analytical and listening-abilities, as their strengths in the working life. When comparing the results of the research, there are a lot of similarities between the data and the existing literature, as these themes are also visible in the theory part of the research – introverts usually prefer emails over phone calls, introverts' analytical, observing and listening skills where highly valued in the fields of sales and marketing.

Through these themes, the following conclusions were made:

Conclusion:

Strengths
- Problem-solving, analytical, observing, listening
- Proficient communication skills

Challenges
- Strong, space-taking personalities *(extroverts)*
- Over-discretion
    - Pushing/obtruding is not comfortable *(sales activities, networking)*

Needs
- Low-stimulus environment to be the most efficient
- Down-time *(recharging)*

Figure 2. Note of the data's conclusions.

There are strengths and challenges when it comes to an introvert being in a profession where the environment is usually rather over-stimulating. Both of the participants felt at times drained after a workday and needed to 'recharge their batteries' doing something low-stimulating, such as listening to music. The listed strengths were somewhat similar; analytical, observing and listening skills, in addition to Anonym 2's diligent work ethic and thorough decision-making process. These strengths, if used right and especially within an ideal work environment, result in attentive and proficient results.

The challenges were also similar between the participants, as they both compared themselves with more extroverted people; the participants' over-discretion and difficulty of being pushy or obtruding compared to extroverts felt like a challenge, during sales activities for Anonym 1, and during working life and networking events for Anonym 2. This participants' comparison could also be contrasted with the overall sentiment that extroverts are good sellers as their work methods tend to be rather pushy, and this can be seen as a good trait by some organisations. However, this sentiment is outdated, like the already existing literature (chapters 4 and 5) shows; good salespeople know how to balance their time between listening and talking, and practise more of a consultative problem-solving technique. Empathy, diligent and strong work-drive were also named as desired characteristics for a good salesperson, which are typical traits for introverts overall, but were accurate for Anonym 2 as well.

A profession such as salesperson or a marketing professional requires proficient communication skills; abilities to listen and offer solutions (in-depth interactions), but also the ability to provide some amount of small talk is appreciated (superficial interactions). It is most likely that the superficial small talk which drains the energy out of introverted business professionals, as it requires showing interest in lighter topics with various people – this could be connected to the social, outward-oriented professional-self, which Anonym 2 discussed about, and this was also discussed in chapter 4. The need for such 'mask' can have a negative effect on one's work, if there for example is no time to 'take the mask off' and recover the energy, resulting in stressful, tired or frustrated appearance. Accordance to Anonym 1 however, he did not feel the need to change his personality or put a 'mask' on when interacting with customers. This can be a result of over the years gathered experience and increased confidence, thus could be a possible development for Anonym 2 as well.

However, whatever challenges an introvert might face in a profession usually considered suitable for extroverts, is still not an obstacle for the introvert, as the studies show that introvert-extrovert continuum is fluid, and one can adopt traits from the continuum. For example, if an introvert is not comfortable with giving presentations, one could go for a public speaking class and learn how to deliver a speech efficiently, which then would transform the whole concept of public speaking more comfortable. Another example could be that if the introvert is not participating enough in meetings or such, one could start expressing their thought process aloud, like an extrovert.

9   Conclusion

More research needs to be conducted in the area of introverts in the business field, but overall the gathered data answered the thesis questions and aligned rather well with the already existing literature. However, it is important to remember that as the sample was small and the gathered data only explored two introverts' individual experiences, new theory cannot be generated – but as there are little to no existing data about introverts' experiences within sales and marketing related fields, all accumulated data is valuable. For richer data, the questions in the research could have been more specific, and since the data gathering was done via emails, face-to-face interviews could have given more opportunities to more explore the themes and topics. As a suggestion for further research, there could be a larger sample with more specific questions and perhaps the study could go on for a longer period of time. For comparison, there could also be interviews with extroverts and/or ambiverts.

The overall conclusion of this research is that the introverts who participated in this study do succeed within sales and marketing, and they have many strengths that can be linked with the desired characteristics of a good salesperson or marketing professional. This research also validates the societies' wrongful vision of introverts as professionals; as the introvert-extrovert continuum is fluid and traits can be adapted, a specific personality type does not entail the competence nor the talent one possesses, and therefore associating a specific personality type with a specific line of business is illogical and deceptive. Consequently, societies should move from the extrovert-ideal to 'expertise-ideal', in which the talent and knowledge is appreciated over the personality type, as introverts can be just as talented and competent as extroverts. Deeper understanding of human behaviour, temperament and personality is remunerating not only personally, but

also professionally, as the growing understanding of introvert-extrovert continuum also affects the success and thrive of employees, employers and organisations, who do not regard the wrongful presumptions of introverts and focus on the competence and expertise instead of the personality type.

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Interview schedule

The purpose of this interview is to get the best possible view of your feelings and experiences as being an introvert within your field. Therefore, please feel free to answer as lengthy and detailed as possible and feel free add anything extra to any of the questions. If you have practical examples that come to mind, also feel free to share those.

1. How/why do you identify yourself as an introvert?

2. How or why did you start your career within sales/marketing? Did you 'end up' there, or have you always wanted to be within your current field?

3. Do you feel that being an introvert is something that can be seen in your work, e.g. by your colleagues or customers? How?

4. Do you feel pressure to be more outward in your work? If so, in what kind of ways and in what kind of situations?

5. Do you feel that there are any prejudices against being an introvert?

6. How do you experience customer meetings, negotiations or situations with customers? Are you more outward-oriented version of yourself?

7. How do you usually act in meetings/conferences?

8. How do you feel about public speaking/presentations? Do you give presentations at work?

9. Do you prefer to use phone calls or e-mails to communicate at work, either to colleagues or clients? Why? (If you are a salesperson, how do you feel about cold calling?)

10. How important do you consider networking, and do you often participate in networking events? Why or why not?

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11. How do you experience teamwork? Do you prefer to work in a team or alone? Why?

12. When thinking about your work environment, do you prefer having an open-plan office, or your own private office/workspace? Why?

13. If you need to make decisions at work, bigger or smaller, what is your decision-making process? (Do you ponder for a long time, or do you make quick decisions etc.?)

14. What traits do you consider to be your greatest strengths in your work?

15. When thinking about your introverted personality, do you feel like you have some challenges at work? What and why?

16. Do you get stressed at work? If so, why or in what kind of situations?

17. Do you need to 'charge your batteries' after a workday? If so, why, and how do you do that?

18. Have you ever experienced struggles regarding wanting more responsibility, moving to higher positions (because of your introverted personality)?

19. How do you think you have succeeded in your work? Is there anything you'd like to improve as a working professional? What and why?

20. Anything else? If you want to add anything, please feel free to do so.

Inquiry messages

First inquiry message sent out during March:

Hi there,

Hope you are doing well! I am reaching out because I noticed that you are in sales/marketing.

I am currently working on my bachelor's thesis to get my degree in International Business and Logistics from Metropolia UAS. The topic is "Introverts in the Business World" - a research into what is it like being an introvert in a line of business which usually entails the need for extroverted traits, and I am now looking for participants to interview for the research!

The participants should be in sales/marketing, and identify themselves as more of an introvert than extrovert. The interview would include open-ended questions related to the participant's feelings and experiences in the working life. The interview could be done either via Skype (around 30 to 60 minutes), or via email (answering around 20 open questions). The participant's name or the company they work for would not be mentioned at all, so everything would be fully anonymous. The interviews could be done in English or in Finnish.

Therefore, if you (or you might know someone who does) consider yourself as more of an introvert and would be willing to participate, please let me know and I will give you more information. If you do not see yourself as an introvert and/or you have no interest in participating, apologies for the inconvenience, and I wish you have a very nice week!

Thank you!

Bertta Järvinen

Second inquiry message sent out after the first applicants' withdrawal:

Hi there,

Hope you are doing well! I am reaching out because I noticed that you are in sales/marketing.

I am currently working on my bachelor's thesis to get my degree in International Business and Logistics from Metropolia UAS. The topic is "Introverts in the Business World" (working title), a research into what is it like being an introvert in a line of business which usually entails the need for extroverted traits. Circumstances have changed quite drastically for many in the past couple of weeks due to the current situation, so my interviewees have had to cancel - therefore I am now in a hurry finding new participants to interview for my research.

The participants should be in sales/marketing, and identify themselves as more of an introvert than extrovert. The interview would include open-ended questions related to the participant's feelings and experiences in the working life. The interview could be done either via Skype (around 30-60 minutes), or via email (answering around 20 open questions). The participant's name or the company they work for would not be mentioned at all, so everything would be fully anonymous. The interviews could be done in English or in Finnish.

I am hoping to get two to four interviews for this week, so if you feel more of an introvert than an extrovert and would be willing to participate, please reply as soon as possible and I'll give you more information!

If you do not see yourself as an introvert and/or you have no interest in participating, apologies for the inconvenience, and I wish you have a very nice week! (And please let me know if you think of someone who could fit the requirements and maybe be interested to be interviewed)

Thank you!

Bertta Järvinen

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