



SEINÄJOEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
SEINÄJOKI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

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Market research: cork as a building and decoration material in Finland

Understanding how both Finnish professionals and consumers perceive cork products and what is the material's potential in Finland

Thesis
Autumn 2020
Business and Culture
BBA, Degree Programme in International Business



SEINÄJOKI UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Thesis abstract

Faculty: Business and Culture

Degree Programme: Bachelor of Business Administration

Specialization: International Business

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Title of thesis: Market research: cork as a building and decoration material in Finland

Supervisor: Ville-Pekka Mäkeläinen

Year: 2020

Number of pages: 86

Number of appendices: 10

This thesis was commissioned by APCOR, a Portuguese Cork Association. APCOR works continuously on the promotion of Portuguese cork, a natural and highly versatile raw material, in international markets.

Since the export of Portuguese cork to Finland has not been of a relevant amount, the purpose of this thesis topic was to understand what Finns know and think about cork and how more knowledge could be generated to increase demand and consequently the Portuguese exports. The thesis topic was narrowed down to study cork only as a building and decoration material.

The theoretical background of the study was based on concepts such as consumer behaviour, segmentation, decision making, and market research.

The empirical part of the study consisted of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This part of the thesis was conducted through a survey, taken in the form of questionnaires. The study included two major group of respondents: Finnish companies, also denominated as professionals, and Finnish consumers. The Finnish professionals were further subdivided into those that can potentially utilize cork either as a building material or as a decoration material.

The data collection was implemented through three structured online questionnaires. One targeting Finnish consumers and two tailor-made questionnaires for each of the cork application fields.

Since there were three questionnaires involved in the empirical study, a separate chapter was devoted to each of them to analyse the results. Generally speaking, when it comes to Finnish consumers, there is still a lot more they could acknowledge about cork regarding its main features, benefits, as well as its possible applications both as a building and decoration material. Concerning the professionals, it can be pointed out that it is still not so common for both professional fields to work frequently with cork material, however, the majority responded positively regarding their interest to work with cork in future projects.

¹ Keywords: cork material, environmentally-friendly products, market research, consumer behavior, segmentation, decision-making

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Terms and Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| APCOR | Associação Portuguesa da Cortiça |
| BDM | Building and Decoration Materials |
| B2B | Business to Business |
| B2C | Business to Consumer |
| ITC | International Trade Centre |
| UAS | University of Applied Sciences |

1 INTRODUCTION

When reflecting on how many decisions each individual makes per day and especially when analyzing what is the origin of those decisions there is something that can be pointed out. Most of the decisions that individuals, groups, and organizations make are related to the purchase of products and services. With this being said, the need in understanding what customers want and desire can be a key aspect of any business. For instance, consumer behavior helps to understand not only how consumers make purchasing decisions but also it looks at the various reasons why people acquire certain products or services. These aspects will be looked at in more detail in the third chapter.

Besides, there is a growing demand for more environmentally friendly materials with a positive impact on the planet. According to Geiger and Crowe (2011, 4), the harmful impact of certain products and services has been further recognized and so the emerging generation, which includes both consumers and businesses, is more determined to meet society's everyday needs with a cleaner and greener environment. *They* also point out that different kinds of solutions can be applied to this issue, as an example

“One solution is to introduce innovative products, services, and processes that protect the environment – a process known as eco-innovation. The goal is to reduce environmental impacts and make better use of resources.”

Cork is the bark of the cork oak. It is a plant tissue 100% natural raw material, 100% reusable, and 100% recyclable. It has a range of applications associated with its attributes that no technology has yet managed to compete with (APCOR 2015a).

According to Michalik (2010), a product designer based in New York, cork is an amazing material that has all this potential to perform in ways other materials cannot. *He* summarizes the discussion about the benefits of real cork by stating the following,

“it is not just a material to design interesting objects, which it is, but it is also a model for a different way of thinking about how we use natural materials and it has gotten a huge potential for design, furnishing, objects, interiors, architectures... It has gotten potential everywhere”

To present the thesis topic, the following aspects must be mentioned. Portuguese cork is the key element of this topic. It is a natural material not only used for the production of cork stoppers but also widely utilized in areas of construction, decoration, and design in Portugal, as well as other countries to where it exports (APCOR 2015b).

Portuguese cork has always been of the author's admiration. Firstly, due to its sustainability and versatility combined with its several great features and secondly, due to its numerous ways of use.

The high recognition of this natural material and the fact that, since living in Finland, the author has not seen cork to be a familiar or even an abundant material led to the origin of this topic. This idea can be further seen in the APCOR website (2015c) as on the map the cork's worldwide presence does not mention Finland.

1.1 Purpose and objective

After contacting the Portuguese Cork Association, the following information was provided. According to Gonçalves (2020), Finland is a market that uses cork as a building material, but still with little demand. Since cork is natural and environmentally friendly, curiously, it is not in Finnish preferences. Perhaps it is even an unknown or not so familiar material.

With that being said, the purpose of this thesis topic was to understand what Finns know about cork, as well as, suggest how more knowledge could be generated in order to increase demand and consequently the Portuguese exports.

The main objective of this bachelor thesis was focused on conducting market research through a survey, taken in the form of questionnaires. This approach would enable to collect a set of information about Finnish professional (B2B) and consumer (B2C) sectors regarding their knowledge and potential interest in cork building and decoration products. Thus, two different groups of respondents were selected. One group representing Finnish professionals and one group representing Finnish consumers. Moreover, due to the fact that there are numerous ways on how cork can be utilized, for this specific research only two application fields were chosen. Therefore, this thesis topic was narrowed down to study cork only as a building and decoration materials.

Additionally, the goal of this work is to evaluate the current situation of cork as a building and decoration material in Finland.

1.2 Research questions

The step followed by the recognition of the research problem is the formulation of the research questions. This part must be developed quite carefully and consistently as the entire research project, including the theoretical framework as well as the choice of research methods are driven by the research questions earlier formulated (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 27).

For this thesis the primary research questions included:

- What do Finnish building and decoration materials (BDM) companies know about cork as a material, and in which professional segments cork products could be of greater interest?
- What is the Finnish consumer knowledge of cork products, and what do they valorize the most about cork products?
- How could cork products be further promoted in Finland?

There were also a few secondary research questions, such as:

- Is cork only associated with stoppers or also other products?
- Are there cork products available in Finland? And if so, what kind?
- Has the Finnish consumer ever acquired cork products?
- What could be the reason for low cork imports in Finland?
- Are there any limitations constraints in utilizing cork in Finnish constructions?
- Are there any aspects of cork as a material that would particularly interest B2B segments?

1.3 The necessity of the thesis

The commissioned company itself mentioned that it would be of the association's interest to understand what Finns know about cork and how more knowledge could be generated to possibly increase Portuguese exports. Taking this into account, it can be seen that if the

research and the overall thesis development is well-executed, this study can yield a set of useful data for the association to evaluate this market and hopefully find approaches that will allow the cork to better establish in Finland. Furthermore, with all the information that has been provided so far, it is clear that this is an up to date topic.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

After the introduction part, in which the purpose, necessity as well as research questions are discussed follows chapter two which introduces Portuguese cork. This chapter was chosen to come before the theoretical part, as the author wanted in the first place to familiarize the reader with the cork material itself. This way, anyone regardless of its level of knowledge towards cork would be able to follow the development of this research without any complications. This chapter not only approaches the most relevant aspects related to cork, as well as it introduces the commissioned association and briefly presents the results of a study conducted in Portugal.

The following chapters incorporate the theoretical framework. Thus, chapter three discusses consumer behavior targeting B2C, the Finnish consumer. Consumer behavior enables a better understanding of how consumers perceive products made with cork and especially what do they value the most about this material. Chapter four discusses segmentation, looking into what professional segments are to be considered when it comes to cork as a building and decoration material. Chapter five discusses how in decoration and building businesses cork is seen as a material, approaching this way the decision-making concept. After studying the concepts mentioned above the following step was to evaluate the current situation in the Finnish market. Chapter six introduces the main aspects of market research, followed by chapter seven which starts by examining a previous study conducted in Finland, after which the author gathered existing information about cork availability in the Finnish market. This second part explains in which stores and what kind of cork products can be found in Finland.

Chapter eight regarding methodology, explains the research methods selected for this thesis. Chapter nine presents the results of the empirical study. Lastly, chapter ten discusses the entire research process, presenting the conclusion, discussion, and suggestions for future studies.

2 PORTUGUESE CORK

Portugal is the world's largest exporter of cork, producing more than 60% of the world's cork supply in 2019, a value share that can be seen in Appendix 1. At the end of 2011, cork oak was acknowledged by the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic as the "National Tree of Portugal" (AMORIM 2020b). This classification is directly connected to the positive economic, social, and environmental importance it represents to the country. Moreover, the importance of the cork oak in Portugal has been recognized since the 13th century, when the first laws for the protection of the species appeared. Approximately 23% of the Portuguese forest area consists of cork oaks, which support the country's cork industry.

2.1 What it is and its main characteristics



Figure 1. Collection of pictures demonstrating cork.

As already mentioned, cork is a natural raw material. It is the bark of the cork oak extracted in a specific period of time, furthermore the extraction itself, as seen in the first picture from figure 1, does not cause any harm or damage to the cork oak if done by experts in this field (APCOR 2015d).

The technicalities of the cork harvest, this means, the entire process of extraction of cork is very complex and it requires six stages. For this research, such aspect is not as relevant to know as, for instance, exploring the different usages and applications. Therefore, for anyone interesting to know more in detail about the entire process of extracting and processing cork until it is suitable to be converted in other products, may find that information in the section "cork harvesting" in the APCOR's website (2015d).

Cork is commonly associated with stoppers, illustrated in the second picture (figure 1), but there is much more that can be done with this material, as illustrated in the third picture (figure 1). Even though, cork stoppers and cork floors are the two most representative products within the industry, the capabilities of cork are increasingly being explored by designers, architects, and engineers from the most varied sectors worldwide (AMORIM 2020a). Indeed, throughout all these years, cork has proven to be an extremely versatile material.

Cork incorporates a wide range of intrinsic properties (APCOR 2015a). It is lightweight impermeable to liquids and most gases, elastic, compressible, great thermal and acoustic insulator, slow-burning, antistatic, anti-allergic, and wear-resistant. Additionally,

“The main component of cork is suberin, a mixture of organic acids that coat the walls of the cork cells, preventing the passage of water and gases. The properties of suberin are notable: it is practically infusible and is insoluble in water, alcohol, ether, chloroform, concentrated sulphuric acid, hydrochloric acid, etc.”

This raw material has been promoted not only as a material that adds value through its outstanding characteristics which come along with the future trends, but also it provides an appealing look to products, designs, and constructions. For instance, the visual look or design of an ordinary product such as a bicycle can be easily transformed, and even enhanced, by adding elements made out of cork material. The picture below illustrates this example just described.



Figure 2. Bicycle with cork trims in Porto, Portugal (Story at every corner 2020).

With this in mind, knowing Finland as a country that identifies itself as nature friendly, constantly advancing towards sustainable, environmentally friendly and innovative solutions (Koiviola 2020), the foundation and the relevance of this research study can be this way understood.

2.2 Portuguese cork as material and its benefits

Relatively to the secondary research question “What could be the reason for low cork imports in Finland?”, this has to deal with the data provided by the International Trade Centre, shortly ITC. In 2019, Portugal exported 1 063 430 000€ (Appendix 2). Relatively to Finland, the export value amounted to 5 161 000€, representing a value share of 0.5%, hence ranking 23rd place on the list of importing markets for cork products exported by Portugal.

One of the largest Portuguese industrial companies as well as the world's largest producer of cork is the Corticeira Amorim. Its history goes back to 1870 and with almost 150 years leading the cork sector, the company distinguishes itself by its quality profile, innovation, and exemplary performance (AMORIM 2020c). Moreover, the company recognizes itself as the one who has introduced cork to the world and made cork a global material.

Regarding its internationality, the Amorim is present in five continents. In particular, Amorim Cork Flooring, representing Amorim's Business Unit for Floor & Wall Coverings, is present in 80 countries, exporting mainly to Germany, the United States, and the Nordic countries. According to Portugalglobal (2019, 18-19), foreign markets represent about 95% of its turnover. Concerning its presence in Nordic countries, this is mainly related to its subsidiary Amorim Flooring Sweden A.B. (AMORIM 2020c), as well as, the Cork Flooring brands “Wicanders” (Wicanders 2020) and “Amorim Wise” (Amorimwise 2020), both available in Finland.

While searching for the benefits of cork material and cork products, the author came across a great number of sources and expert's opinions that would describe the plentifulness of beneficial aspects of this raw material. The most comprehensive source was the article published by National Geographic (2018). It not only presents a broad list of aspects but also summarizes each of them in a quite comprehensible way. The foremost cork benefits were included in the table below.

Table 1. Summary of cork benefits.

- Cork and Climate Change**
 - Stripped cork trees absorb 3 to 5 times more carbon dioxide than uncorked trees. Estimates point to around 10 million tons of CO2 absorbed annually by cork oaks in Portugal, not to mention that they are also important oxygen producers.
- Sustainable and Environmentally friendly source**
 - To obtain cork it is not necessary to cut down the tree. Cork is extracted through a specific process approximately every nine years.
- It's Natural, Ecological, Biodegradable, Renewable and Recyclable!**
 - Natural and ecological since it is born in trees. In addition, it is a material that completely biodegrades and can be recycled without producing toxins and pollutants. Its extraction from the cork oaks also does not involve the need to use any toxic material, and it is renewed naturally every decade.
- Respects Fauna and Flora**
 - Cork oak forests, are considered biodiversity hotspots. In Portugal that "forest" is one of only 35 ecological hotspots, alongside Amazonia or Madagascar, playing important roles in soil conservation, water quality and oxygen production.
- Beneficial health properties**
 - Regarding cork stoppers, recent studies have revealed that the contact of the cork stopper with wine can lead to the formation of antioxidant compounds and anti-cancer properties that are thought to have a beneficial action in combating heart and degenerative diseases. In addition, part of the waste from the cork industry is used in the pharmaceutical industry. From these by-products, compounds are extracted that are applied in vaccines and that improve the response of the immune system
- Can be an ally in fire fighting**
 - Cork burns, but slowly and without creating flames. Being of slow combustion, cork does not propagate fire, and the smoke resulting from the burning does not release toxic gases.
- Ability to produce energy**
 - Cork powder is used to produce biomass, which is a neutral energy source in terms of CO2 emissions
- Material suitable for construction**
 - Cork is a very good thermal and acoustic insulation and can be used in coverings where there is a need to reduce heat loss or acoustic insulation. In addition, it is not very permeable to gases and liquids, and extremely durable, flexible, with high compressibility. In addition, it is very light and highly resistant to moisture, so it is very difficult for it to rot.

2.3 Example of cork applications

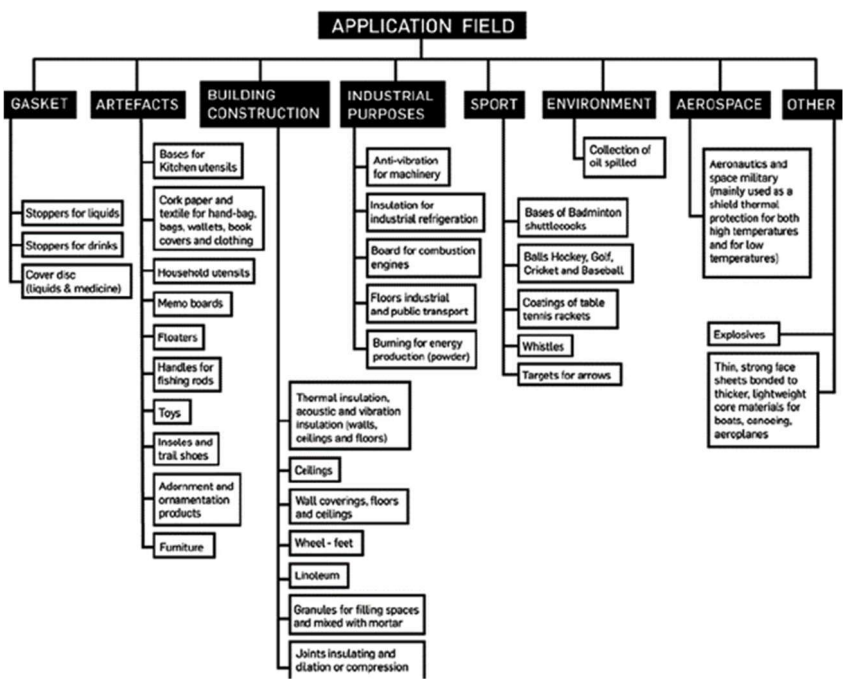


Figure 3. Standard cork products applications (Mestre & Gil 2011, 60).

As represented in figure 3, cork material has been applied to a wide range of spheres already, and due to the continued R&D investments and innovations that have been made through the years, it can be assumed that the application field will be broadened in the future.

“It is the dawn of a new era of discovery, of an even more glorious horizon for cork and its possibilities, as endless as Space” (AMORIM 2020a)

As this thesis is narrowed to building and decoration materials, the description of real-life applications apart from the fields needed for the thesis will not be covered in depth. Nonetheless, two, unlike examples, will be presented so that any reader to whom cork is not so known, could get a better understanding of this particular section.

According to information provided by Amorim (2020b), one example is the aerospace industry. The application of cork in aerospace projects started in the late 1960s, essentially due to its exceptional thermal insulation. Rockets or spaceships when launched into space and consequently, returning to Earth, are subjected to high variation in temperatures. The cork is incorporated into such components that will ensure the safety of the traveling, such as the cone and other parts of the propulsion rockets attached to the ship.

The second example is related to the usage of cork in cinema effects. Cork granules, obtained through the action of various milling processes, have been used in special effects scenes to simulate explosions. This is possible due to its lightness. Movies such as Total Recall, Mission Impossible, Gangster Squad have utilized this technique. Another interesting fact, when bullets are shown to hit something, the particles projected after the impact is usually made of cork.

2.4 Cork as a building material

Cork is being used considerably more in construction and urban rehabilitation. It is a natural material and that is an important advantage to be mentioned when comparing it to synthetic materials. One of the concepts which has gained increasing popularity is that of ‘green building’, which points to the use of materials that are energy efficient and sustainable. Cork material comes along with this concept, thus helping buildings and spaces become more environmentally friendly (Gonçalves 2015). In the attempt of responding to current needs such as comfort and mostly to ecological concerns, cork is used in construction as a material that does not harm the environment.

The main points about utilizing cork in construction, explained in the Construction and decoration materials manual (Manual Revestimentos Apcor 2011, 13-27) will be summarized in the next two paragraphs.

Regarding cork coverings. They are considered one of the most comfortable and recommended options for flooring in any living area. Such a suggestion is supported by cork advantages in terms of thermal and acoustic insulation, as cork can do both absorb the impact of noises and regulate the room temperature. Thus, it becomes a suitable option for any place that aims to provide extra comfort, such as conference rooms, theatres, commercial buildings, hospitals, schools and kindergartens, and many others. Additionally, due to its resistance to humidity, cork is especially suitable for people suffering from allergies and asthma, as it does not attract dust, pollen, or small fibers.

Concerning the building of houses or other properties, cork can be applied as insulation in inclined roofs; insulation of flat and metallic roofs; facade insulation, insulation of indoor walls, covering for indoor walls and floors. The materials made of the cork when used in various divisions of a house, for example as shown in figure 4, may contribute to reduce the overall energy consumption. A well-insulated building is, therefore, more energy-efficient.



Figure 4. Illustration of parts of a building to which cork material can be applied (APCOR 2015f).

Besides that, cork has come to be widely used in expansion joints, fillings of airboxes, refrigerator chambers, heating, and air conditioning pipes, and machinery bases for the absorption of vibration and noise (APCOR 2015f).

For instance, at Amorim Cork Composites (2020) the cork application in construction is divided into three areas. The acoustic insulation, in which its solutions represent materials designed with urbanization, acoustic environments, and sustainability in mind. Railway applications incorporate cork-engineered compounds materials for railway systems, such as rail pads, baseplates, under sleeper pads, and ballast mats. Finally, expansion joints present materials specially developed to absorb expansions and the contractions inherent to concrete buildings.

Despite the diversity of applications within the construction field, it is important to highlight that cork as a building material will be delimited in this research. Its interpretation in this thesis was narrowed down to two different spheres. Firstly, it is related to the housing market, which includes small to medium constructions of private houses, mainly family houses, as well as house renovation. Secondly, it includes small to medium-sized public places such as kindergartens, health care centers, offices, etc.

2.5 Cork as a decoration material

“The products made of cork can be used in various divisions of the house, as insulation or as a decorative wall and floor covering element” (Manual Revestimentos Apcor 2011, 19).

This sentence points out the fact that cork can serve as a building and decoration material both at the same time. That is a significant advantage of this material. In other words, cork material can respond to the needs of a market segment that is extremely demanding in terms of both aesthetics and technical performance levels. The decorative side of the material may reflect inspiration from natural elements and make the space extremely comfortable and welcoming (Manual Revestimentos Apcor 2011, 32).

With a global concern regarding environmental issues and a vital call to reduce the use of plastic, designers and influencers increasingly demand sustainable decorative materials. With attention to ecological and natural materials, architects, designers, and decorators made it possible to present cork from new perspectives. Hence, designing a variety of decoration products with different textures, tones, and colors, broadening the possibilities of creating new objects, as well as new environments. The key attributes that provide added value to cork decorations are design, style, trend, and image. The foremost challenge encountered in this

area is the appreciation of creativity devoted to such product categories as furniture, kitchen utensils, textiles, footwear, Hi-Tech accessories, and toys, among many others (Manual Revestimentos Apcor 2011, 38).

In this thesis, there will be also a specific delimitation done in the sphere of decoration. As said before, in some cases, cork can be seen as both building and decoration material. To avoid misperceptions to which application field it belongs decoration material in this thesis will be interpreted in the following way. It targets mostly home décor including furniture, artistic elements, lamps, vases, kitchen tools, giftware, etc.



Figure 5. Example of cork decoration products (corquedesign, [ref. 21 September 2020]).

2.6 Apcor

APCOR, the acronym for Associação Portuguesa da Cortiça, which translated means Portuguese Cork Association. APCOR was founded in 1956 and it is the employers' association of the cork industry that represents, promotes, disseminates, and investigates the Portuguese cork industry.

According to the information provided on the APCOR's website (2015e), the association has about 270 associates, who represent around 80% of the national production and more than 85% of cork exports. Furthermore, it covers the entire cork industry sector, starting with preparation, then processing, and goes all the way to marketing activities. Its main mission is to promote and enhance cork as a raw material of excellence, as well as its products, by creating the necessary conditions enabling the further development of its associates. In this sense, APCOR develops a set of activities, services, and projects, of a national and international character, aimed at promoting and valuing cork, as well as increasing the competitiveness of the sector.

According to the information provided by the Portugalglobal (2019, 10-11). Over the past 20 years, the association has been promoting cork in international markets, communicating cork messages with one voice. This transversal communication of the brand “CORTIÇA | CORK” counts, until today, with an investment of more than 50 million euros in promotion in the various continents. The bet has been placed on the main export markets, but also on the relevant markets for the definition of trends and prescription by consumers. Thus, promotional campaigns have reached important markets, particularly in the world of wine, such as France, Spain, and Italy. Additionally, it also reached large consumers and importer markets, with emphasis on the United States of America, China, and the United Kingdom. The campaigns are focused and adapted to the reality of each market, and APCOR is responsible for carrying out the bridge and coordinating actions around the world.

“We work to represent and promote the Portuguese cork industry worldwide. We are the driving force of an industry of the future that is based on tradition, innovation and sustainability” (APCOR 2015e).

Briefly about a study conducted in Portugal. The decision about implementing a survey not only involving Finnish companies but also Finnish consumers was mainly originated from a previous study conducted in Portugal. To be an exemplary study, APCOR shared with the author a presentation which summarized a research that has been conducted in Portugal regarding Portuguese perception of cork (Serra 2017). This presentation also included interesting figures and statistics concerning both cork stoppers and cork applied to building and decoration materials, shorty BDM.

In addition to the decision of including Finnish consumers in this research study, also the choice of narrowing the cork application field to building and decoration materials was mainly based on the content from the Portuguese study. To put it another way, as it has been mentioned before Finland is a market that uses cork as a building material, from here the researcher concluded that this industry should be better analyzed. Also, the decoration is a quite broad area, as it can be applied to a wide range of objects, products and all kinds of specially designed goods. Taking into account that the concept of building and decoration materials, BDM, was associated with cork in the presentation provided by APCOR, hence the idea of combining building and decoration fields was also thought to be appropriate in the Finnish study.

The main objective of the survey conducted in Portugal was to perceive what is the Portuguese consumer's knowledge about cork. Briefly about the survey's conclusion, three of the questions, which according to the author are relevant to this thesis, will be further analyzed.

Concerning the question "*Besides the cork stoppers, do you know any other use for cork?*", Portuguese associate this material, in the first place, with fashion, accessories, and footwear (99,1%). Second place was shared by construction material; and decoration objects and domestic utility, as both, reached almost the same amount of responses (around 89%). Finally, the third place was taken by the association with jewelry (82,2%).

Regarding the question "*What leads you to buy products made of or containing cork?*", (76,5%) of respondents buy cork products because of their characteristics, followed by design (51,5%).

Finally, "*When you think of cork, with what do you associate?*", (85.4 %) of respondents associate cork with nature, followed by national raw material and environmentally friendliness, representing (80,8%) and (66,5%) respectively. This data will be further utilized to make comparisons with the results acquired through the Finnish survey.

3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

According to Kotler and Keller (2009, 190), consumer behavior is the study of the processes involved when individuals, groups, and organizations select, buy, use and discard products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires.

Consumer behavior is the sum of all perceptions, attitudes, and influences that lead people to make a purchase decision. It is also a marketing concept that determines when, where, how, and why people make a purchase decision. Consumer behavior determines different techniques and ways of studying the purchase decision process. Subsequently, it represents the purchase decision process that consumers go through during and after making a purchase.

3.1 Main factors influencing consumer behavior

Consumer behavior is subject to the influence of several factors. The most common ones recognized by Kotler and Keller (2009, 190-206) will be further discussed.

Personal factors, including age, economic situation, occupation, personality, lifestyle, and values. These are aspects that escape the external forces of society and yet impact on the purchase decision. Naturally, these traits are very particular and more difficult to measure in research and evaluations. Cultural factors involve the whole complex set of ideas, knowledge, behaviors, symbols, rituals, and patterns developed by human beings. Everything we eat, wear, use, and desire is determined by the culture or subculture in which we operate. Social factor includes mainly reference groups, family, social roles, and status. In this case, individuals may belong to the same culture but will have purchasing habits compatible with their stratum, class, and social role. This is because the social circle determines the need and level of belonging or status, which are achieved, in large part, through consumption. Psychological factors include motivation, emotional states, learning, memory, and perception. For instance, the Maslow pyramid which deals with the hierarchy of human needs is a well-known tool for identifying the psychological profile of the consumer. For example, it is not new that advertising is the winner in exploring the human unconscious to activate the desire for certain products and services.

3.2 Consumer purchasing process

In general, this process begins with a need or desire. From here, the consumer goes through different stages until it is time to finalize the purchase. According to the five-model stage presented by Kotler and Keller (2009, 207-2014), the process itself will be discussed below.

Problem recognition: The entire purchasing process begins at the moment when the consumer recognizes a problem for which he wants a solution. This recognition leads not only to the need but also to desire, which is the drive and expectation to own something. These two factors combined create the ideal conditions for the purchase, initiating the decision process.

Information search: After realizing the problem and need, the consumer goes in search of a solution. The time and energy spent on this step depends on the individual's urgency to solve the problem, level of involvement with the need, and type of product or service. Generally, the first source that people look for is their social circle, seeking referrals from friends, family, and acquaintances. In times of social networks, this step has also become digital. There are countless options on the internet, such as Facebook groups, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, forums, which contain numerous reviews of products and services published by users.

Evaluation of alternatives: After that, the consumer begins to evaluate the options available in the market. Certain criteria may be utilized during this stage. The product or service features should meet the consumer's need or desire. There can be benefits of choosing a certain solution over a competitor. Perception and identification with the brand based on its values, aspirations, and market positioning. Consideration of attributes such as price, quality, customization options, support, warranty, etc. All these factors act at this moment, directing the individual's choice towards the most suitable option.

The purchase decision stage: The purchase decision stage occurs afterwards, in which the consumer forms preferences among the choices available during the evaluation stage and further create an intention to buy the most preferred one. At this stage, the consumer makes the payment, receives the product or service, and becomes a customer of the company. This decision can be made thoughtfully, as described in the previous stage, or simply on impulse, depending on the level of involvement with the product or service. This stage is studied more in-depth in chapter five, where decision making is analyzed from the B2B perspective.

Post-purchase stage: Finally, the post-purchase stage involves monitoring consumer behavior from post-purchase satisfaction, post-purchase actions, and post-purchase product use and disposal. Right after the purchase, the consumer experiences the product or service for the first time. This is a decisive moment when a positive experience can mean loyalty, while a negative experience can lead to exchange, return, and even loss of the customer. For this reason, companies must invest in after-sales, offering the appropriate support to the new customer.

3.3 Example of a possible consumer decision-making process

This example is related to cork products. A consumer is renovating the living room in his apartment. During the renovation, the floor needs to be upgraded. The consumer is looking for a flooring material that is durable, impermeable, and acts as a thermal and acoustic insulator. Among the options available at various home improvement retailers and after comparing them, the consumer recognizes cork flooring not only meets the technical requirements but also the consumer values, as cork is natural and environmentally friendly material. The consumer decides to purchase cork flooring for his living room. In the end, the consumer was satisfied with acquiring a warm, acoustic, and ergonomic floor, which is durable, sustainable, and easy to care for.

3.4 Consumer behavior and environmental changes

One of the characteristics of modern consumer behavior is the appreciation of the environment, sustainability, and the correct use of natural resources. It is a fact that today's consumer is more aware of the sustainability challenges facing the world and so the importance of the purchasing choices themselves. Even though awareness exists and it is increasing over time, consumer behavior is still mainly influenced by price, quality, and convenience rather than by the origin of products and sustainable content. Thus, the disconnection between awareness and actual action can still be seen (Consumer 2020, 14).

This fact, for instance, can also be noticed among the Finnish consumers. A survey conducted to examine attitudes and actions of Finns regarding sustainable consumption and choices (Poussa 2017), confirmed that Finnish people value taking good care of nature and there is an emphasis on the responsibility of the individual. Even though people are highly aware of the

issues related to the environment and ecological sustainability, their attitudes and values still move slowly from words to action. It was highlighted that environmentally friendly alternatives must be better and more attractive in order to make people change their choices.

Nevertheless, changes towards a more sustainable consumption are inevitable, and it is believed that with time many consumers will simply adopt sustainable behaviors as the world around them changes. (Consumer 2020, 15).

Consumers are becoming more active participants in the creation of a more sustainable economy and increasingly aware of the broad sustainability challenges facing the world (Consumer 2020, 16).

Additionally, it is predicted that during the next decade the number of consumers incorporating sustainable behavior, including the choice towards environmentally friendly products, will increase. One way of acting sustainably is to make purchasing decisions considering those products and services that have the least impact on the environment. The green consumer is the concept that characterizes consumers that prefer environmentally friendly products, as they believe that each individual is in charge of environmental protection (Boztepe 2012, 7-8).

3.5 Consumer behavior and the case study

Understanding consumer buying behavior, this is exploring how consumers think, feel, and mainly choose which products and services to buy, may become a great competitive advantage. Precisely because customers' needs are recognized and therefore can be better satisfied.

There are various elements of consumer behavior that are related to the usage of cork products. For example, design features, characteristics of the material, environmental issues are some of the most common motives. In this specific study the central focus regarding B2C, in other words, Finnish consumers, is in evaluating consumer behavior from the following perspectives: understand the main reason for purchase decision of those consumers who have already bought cork products previously; as well as understand the reasons why consumers could have a potential interest in acquiring cork products in the future.

The consumer will be able to select one option according to what they value the most about cork material. This evaluation will be conducted during the empirical research intended to test the following hypotheses:

- Technical characteristics preference
- Sustainability/ environmentally friendliness/ ecology preference
- Innovation/ creativity/ elegance preference

The first category is related to the characteristics of the material. Cork has very particular properties. Thus, consumers who buy it due to technical characteristics consider attributes such as insulation properties, lightness, softness, impermeability, etc. The second category considers the possibility of an audience that buys for ecology and sustainability, who is aware that cork is a 100% natural, renewable, and sustainable plant tissue. For instance, the director of the Portuguese company 3DCork, which finds cork to be the ideal material to manufacture distinctive, innovative and design products, claims that the company's business is more export-oriented mostly because these are markets that give more value to the ecological, natural and recyclable components (Pereira 2019). The third category is more related to the appearance of the products and how appealing it is in the eye of the consumer. The consumer may perceive this material as unique and differentiative providing added value, through its individuality, creativity, style, and elegance.

4 SEGMENTATION

The market consists of buyers, and buyers may differ from one another. Market segmentation identifies potential clients in the market according to specific characteristics (Sherlekar, Prasad & Victor 2009, 132). This tool creates subgroups of customers based on data related to demographics, needs, common interests, psychographics, behavior, and so on. After this data has been collected it is used to better understand the target audience. Through segmentation, it is possible to identify and outline different groups of consumers who may be interested in the products or services of certain companies. Additionally, the importance of segmentation is that it allows developing a more specific, assertive, and effective marketing strategy. There are several segmentation benefits, such as to get a better understanding of the consumer behavior, better meet the needs of a specific predefined audience, locate and compare marketing opportunities, increase of competitive advantage in the market as well as building a solid base for possible expansions.

The people-oriented approach and the product-oriented approach are two possible methods for market segmentation (Sherlekar et al. 2009, 134). For this case study, a people-oriented approach was selected, also known as the customer personal characteristic approach.

On one hand, the consumer market is divided into four variables, such as geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioral segmentation. On the other hand, the industrial market, B2B, may require a slightly different approach, as it is subjugated to other variables which will be presented below.

4.1 Industrial market segmentation

Several factors impact the industrial market segmentation:

- Demographic factors: These include the type of industries to which the goods are sold, the size of the company, and the geographical area.
- Operating factors: These take into account technology, user/non-user status, and consumer capabilities, etc.
- Purchasing approach factors: Businesses may have either a centralized purchase function or a decentralized purchasing function. Market segmentation may be

influenced by the purchasing policies of the company, the power structure viz., financial soundness, and technological soundness.

- Situation factors: These are mainly related to the size of orders as they also may vary according to the requirements.
- Personal characteristics: These incorporate features such as values of a company, level of loyalty towards its suppliers, and other aspects of similar matter (Sherlekar et al. 2009, 137-138).

Additionally, industrial segmentation may include a multi-attribute segmentation, this means that industrial companies do not focus only on one segment variable, rather on multiple ones. For example, in the first stage, the segmentation may be done according to the company's size, this is differentiating large customers from small and medium-sized customers. Afterwards, once the customer size has been selected, companies can further be grouped according to their purchase criteria.

There are three strategic options within the industrial market segmentation (Sherlekar et al. 2009, 138-41). Concentrated marketing is a company that concentrates on all available resources in one chosen segment within the entire market. An area in which the competition is low is usually selected in this case. Differentiated marketing happens when a company enters many marketing segments, and in this case, the company is focused on performing well in each segment. In this case, a different marketing mix is required for each segment. Undifferentiated marketing, approach utilized when there is no preference in doing market segmentation. In this case, the business has the same marketing mix which aims at various segments. Moreover, the product or service provided by this business is designed in a way to serve the greatest number of buyers possible. It usually relies on mass distribution and mass advertising.

The segment selected for the market should be measurable, accessible, market-responsive, and substantial. Regarding the steps involved in the segmentation process. There are several steps to be taken to fully go through this process, as it is not enough simply to identify the difference between customer groups. First, there should be an assessment of the difference between one customer group and the other. Second, specific factors and characteristics must be selected and so attributed to every single segment. Third, based on the previous step, customers can now be grouped into segments. Fourth, evaluate whether it is possible to develop a separate marketing program and marketing mix for each segment. Fifth,

understanding which segment would be more suitable for the products or services that the company provides, in other words, finding out the target segment. Sixth, try to estimate the likely levels of purchase by each segment, especially of those that are more relevant. Lastly, choosing those segments which offer higher potential, and which would be more suitable to what the company offers.

4.2 Segmentation approach in the case study

The segmentation concept was utilized in this research mainly to allow the classification of potential industries or professional fields in which cork material is being or could be implemented. Hence, through segmentation, the author sought to find out the most promising segments. Demographic segmentation was mainly involved in this part. To be more specific, the target companies had to belong to industries in which cork material can be utilized. Also, from a geographical point of view, it would be interesting to know how much knowledge companies have about cork depending on which part of Finland they operate.

Regarding B2B customers, the segmentation will be done according to various professional fields to which building, and decoration cork products can be addressed to.

- As a building material: Builders; Building constructor managers; Architects and Building engineers.
- As a decoration material: Product designers; Interior decorators and Interior designers.

The mentioned above professional fields were predefined based on the author's findings before the empirical research. This is to say that after conducting the survey, the possible professionals' fields may suffer changes or vary according to the responses obtained from the questionnaires. These professional segments take into consideration both, individual entrepreneurs as well as companies. In other words, for example, an interior designer can be just a single individual who specializes in this field and works for himself or he can belong to a company specialized in interior designing.

5 DECISION MAKING

At the beginning of this chapter, the decision-making process will be emphasized in the continuation of the fourth stage of the purchase process described in chapter 3.2. Afterwards, a general overview of the decision making concept will be provided. There will be also two subchapters, one discussing decision making related to material selection, this means, when professionals decide which materials they want to work with, whether it is a building architect or interior designer. The other one aims at explaining how decision-making was applied to this case study and so it provides the information needed to correctly interpret the concept in this thesis.

As already mentioned in the chapter indicated above, the fourth stage of the purchase process, more precisely the penultimate stage, is known as the purchase decision stage. At this point, the consumer forms preferences among the choice set during the evaluation stage and further creates an intention to buy the most preferred one. It is important to point out that this chapter regards B2B and for that reason, the industrial market is the one to be better explored.

Briefly about the characteristics that differentiate industrial buyers from consumers buyers (Sherlekar, Prasad & Victor 2009, 157-158). Industrial, organizational or institutional buyer behavior can be described as having more technically qualified and professional buyers, as well as being much more rational, meaning seldom impulse buying. For these buyers, factors such as cost-price analysis, budgetary considerations, specifications of quality, service, and price are usually the ones influencing the buying decision. Reliability, durability, and performance of an item are the key aspects for an industrial buyer. Furthermore, before making a purchase, the industrial buyer gives full attention to the following: the reputation of the supplier; quality performance or efficiency, customer service, and price.

Purchasing decisions include levels of complexity that are unique to organizations and the environments in which they operate. Concerning organizational buying three levels can be identified (Principles of Marketing, [Ref. 27 October 2020]). Timing complexity, which explains that it is quite unusual for the organizational buying to move quickly, rather the decision process, in general, tends to extend for a certain period of time. Thus, there is often a time lag between the marketer's initial contact with the customer and the purchasing decision. Technical complexity, representing the wide range of complex technical dimensions that may be involved in the buying decision, which for instance could be related to the complex technical

specifications of a physical product, services, timing, terms of delivery, and payment. Organizational complexity, which explains the fact that any organization has its way of doing business, including a characteristic way of functioning, as well as a personality and unique culture and so its dynamics of buying decisions. Therefore, there is a huge need for marketers and sales teams to learn about each customer and how to work with them to effectively navigate the product selection process.

As for a general overview of decision making, according to Hudson (2015, 3), decision-making is the form of a human activity aimed to define the best alternatives of actions. Decision-making consists of three stages: information search; definition of alternatives, criteria, individual preferences; and selection of a preferred alternative. Peter Drucker, considered the father of modern management, says that “Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision.” (Goodreads 2020). The decision-making process within the business is the essence of management as it directs problem-solving and determines the best way to achieve the organization's objectives (Jiao, Jiang & Han 2011, 162). Furthermore, it is not an instant action, but a complex process of awareness to be explored and analyzed. Additionally, it is likely related either to the prosperity or decline of an enterprise.

For this reason, decision-making is one of the most important processes within any business. It defines the direction of a business daily, in each management movement, and despite being part of the leaders' routine, choosing the best path is a constant challenge, which involves both risks and opportunities. Due to that, decision-making must occur at all levels of management, such as planning, execution, direction, and control. On one hand, a wrong decision can have such negative consequences as leading to the loss of many clients or even to bankruptcy. On the other hand, a sequence of correct choices may provide greater advantage and subsequently, success in the market.

When making decisions, particularly during the selection process, Hudson (2015, 4) distinguishes two possibilities regarding the number of participants. Decisions that are made by one person, also responsible for the consequences, are denominated as individual decision-making. On the contrary, decisions made by a group of experts based on individual preferences of all members of the group are designated as a group (collective) decision-making. Relatively to the second option, an issue that often may be a challenge is to transform a set of individual preferences to a single collective preference. When it comes to B2B, business-to-business context, buying decisions are usually made in groups.

5.1 Material selection

This research approached the decision-making process concerning raw material that businesses select to work with. Similarly, as discussed in consumer behavior section 3.4, also companies can integrate more sustainable materials strategy into their businesses, and therefore take sustainability and environmentally friendly choices into account. The online article (Consumer 2020, 16) points out that consumer adoption of more sustainable lifestyles is, so far, rather limited. This is to say that most likely sustainable consumption over the next decade will not primarily be driven by consumers themselves. Rather, it will be up to the consumer industries to take the lead in engaging consumers to change their consumption patterns and innovating to meet tomorrow's demands. This is to say that companies are a key player when it comes to the selection of raw material and its further influence on the environment and society, in general.

Factors that influence the selection of raw materials to be utilized in a certain business may vary depending on the industrial field as well as the products and services a certain company provides. For instance, for a construction company, aspects such as strength, skills required and its availability, the life of the material and nature of the project, sustainability reasons, technical features, cost, and maintenance, may influence the selection of a building material (Patel 2019). For a company that designs products for decoration purposes, aspects such as flexibility, aesthetics, functionality, natural material, eco-friendliness, recyclability, and sustainability may be more relevant criteria for the selection of the material. Nowadays, essentially environmental awareness weighs significantly in the selection of this 100% natural and recyclable raw material (APCOR 2015g). Regardless of the factors mentioned above, various other reasons may influence the selection of raw material.

5.2 Decision making applied to the case study

The way decision making should be understood within this case study is as follows. The key issue regarding cork potential in Finland is related to finding the most promising segments in which it could be applied. This is to say that, even though this research involves both Finnish companies and Finnish consumers, the priority is still given more towards the Finnish businesses, as they are the ones who select the raw materials they want to work with. Thus, companies are the ones that can realize cork usage as an option.

A useful set of information for this thesis would be in understanding how cork is seen as a material in Finland. More specifically, how in decoration and building businesses cork is seen as a material, as this thesis topic approaches these two cork application fields. Hence, any information provided on the possible reasons which make or made professionals acquiring cork material, or on the contrary, any information that would reveal possible constraints will be of great value for the research findings.

After this being said, the decision-making concept aimed at being useful to this research in two different ways, depending on whether the professional individual has used or is using cork material already or has no experience working with cork.

If a certain company already uses cork as a material, this means that that business decided to work with that specific raw material. In such a case, it would be of the author's interest to know what the main reasons behind the selection of the material were. A professional individual who has experience worked with cork or who belongs to a company that uses cork might have a clear idea, thoughts, and opinion about the material itself. For this reason, it would be convenient to know what they think and value about cork, as well as, what are the key benefits that differentiate cork from other similar materials, such as timber for example. Additionally, trying to get a better idea about what managerial positions have a bigger impact on the selection of the raw material or that have a decision-making power to consider the usage of cork could be beneficial for future promotional purposes.

Regarding those professional individuals and companies who have no experience working with cork material, they most likely do not have a solid opinion about the material, therefore from them, it would be more appropriate to obtain information about practical influence, awareness issues, and further promotion of cork. For example, could cork material be considered by them; what specific features could influence the decision-making of either wanting to try the material or denying its usage at all?

In conclusion to this concept, another thing can be mentioned. Obtaining the most valuable information from the research to meet the thesis goal, would be possible if taking decision-makers into account. Essentially when selecting the individuals to whom the B2B questionnaires can be forward. This is important to say as they are the key persons that have the most knowledge and so can provide the exact answers that this study is seeking.

6 MARKET RESEARCH

Marketing research is the systematic gathering, recording, and analysis of data about marketing problems to provide useful information in marketing decision-making (Sherlekar et al. 2009, 82).

According to Hague (1988, 19-20), there are four paths a company could look at to expand its business. The first possibility is to seek out more business from its existing customers. Second, seeking expansion by taking its traditional product range into new markets. Third, related to a product line extension, which can be done by looking for ways to persuade existing customers that they should buy different products or services. Four option is to explore the possibility of selling new products to a new range of customers.

On one hand, relatively the case study of this thesis, the first option seems to be suitable, for which, Hague (1988, 19-20), points out customer satisfaction studies to be commonly carried out to identify new opportunities. However, as mentioned when analyzing section 7.1 of this thesis, Puumalainen (2014) concluded in her study that the use of cork and its recognition as a building material is not well-known in Finland. This is emphasized to say that since there is not a solid customer base, and also because the product is still quite unfamiliar in the market, also the fourth path mentioned by Hague (1988) could be a good fit. Cork products are not new in Finland, as they are available to a certain extent. However, assuming that the awareness of corks products is low and there would be a way of increasing interested in them, then there could be a chance to reach new potential B2B customers, as well as B2C.

The content of the previous paragraph aids a better understanding of what is about to be said further. There is not a predefined way on how to conduct market research for this specific topic and its purpose. For instance, the commissioned organization did not provide any set of rules, guidelines, or delimitations about what areas to explore and which areas are not so relevant concerning market research. The researcher, along with the supervisor's help, had to develop a plan for approaching market research from scratch. Thus, the author recognizes its responsibility in selecting those set of variables that will better benefit the conduction of this market research.

According to Hague (1988, 22-24), detailed questions that can be answered by market research can be divided into different areas, such as the market and its structure; consumer needs and satisfaction; product information; price information; promotion information; distribution information; segmentation opportunities. Additionally, he adds

“Think about a problem in your organization that could benefit from market research. Write down the broad aims of the research, the research objectives that must be achieved to meet the aim and some key questions that should be answered by the research”.

Taking all that into consideration, the following approach has been developed for this explicit market research.

The main tool is primary market research, this is, the author directly collects the data and information needed, in this case, through a survey incorporating a set of three questionnaires. One questionnaire collected useful information from the Finnish consumers, which additionally included the consumer behavior concept. The other two questionnaires included the concepts related to B2B, such as segmentation and decision-making and they were tailor-made concerning the purpose of cork material. In other words, two professional questionnaires targeting the B2B sector were developed. One meant to those professionals who could utilize or have already utilized cork as a building material. In the same token, the other professional questionnaire targeting those who could utilize or have already utilized cork as a decoration material.

As a complementary tool, interviews were also considered in this part of the research but only if needed. Thus, they would only be implemented if the data and information obtained from the questionnaires were poor or insufficient to answer the research questions.

7 MARKET RESEARCH IN FINLAND

This chapter focuses on analyzing what is the situation in the Finnish market. The aim was to gather as much information as the author could regarding the presence of cork in Finland, as well as other aspects relevant to this research. In sum, it represents the secondary market research.

One aspect that should be mentioned regarding cork available in Finland is that most of it does come from Portugal. As it can be seen in Appendix 3, in 2019 the value share demonstrates that 83,4% of Finnish imports came from Portugal, and 10,9% from Germany. Such a fact was worth mentioning as one could assume that, perhaps, Finland imports greater amounts of cork material and cork products from some other country than Portugal.

7.1 The study previously conducted in Finland

Besides the study conducted in Portugal, which was mainly targeting the Portuguese consumer, another research was found, but this time conducted in Finland and focused on the construction industry. In 2014, an engineering thesis named “Korkki rakennusmateriaalina”, which translated means cork as a building material, was developed at the Karelia UAS (Puumalainen 2014). That thesis aimed to create an information package about cork, cork products, and its use in construction. The research included a survey which was directed to building industry professionals (Puumalainen 2014, 3). As a result, the exploratory part of the thesis was conducted through a questionnaire. According to Puumalainen (2014, 10), the purpose of the study was to understand how well-known the material was by those working in the professional field. Additionally, it aimed to find out whether low awareness influenced the degree of consideration of cork usage and the application of its properties. Also, the geographical division as well as working life experience were taken into consideration.

The result analyses were based on 28 respondents. Among all the results generated from the study, the most relevant ones for this specific thesis will be listed below:

- Regarding the geographical location within Finland, the responses were very similar regardless of where the respondent came from.
- 57% of the respondents were designers working in the construction industry. The designers were divided into interior designers, engineers, and architects.

- Only 4% of the respondents stated that they knew well cork as a material, 23% knew it fairly well and 73% of respondents knew cork material either poorly or fairly poorly. These results supported the assumption that the awareness of cork material was still low.
- More than 40% of respondents valued cork for its ecological feature. Followed by insulation and versatility.
- Regarding the application of the material to the construction industry, the most valued cork feature was its thermal insulation, followed by sound insulation. Additionally, versatility and ecology were also considered useful.
- Among all the possible cork applications and products, cork floors were the most familiar. On the contrary, the expanded cork and cork granules that are the key component of many cork products were unfamiliar to the participants in the study, consequently, this indicated that cork manufacturing methods are also quite unknown.
- 62% of respondents mentioned they have used cork products at work, in which the most widely used applications of cork products were floors, as surface materials, and base materials. Besides, the cork had been used in insulation, wall constructions, and acoustic solutions.
- 38% of the respondents were not willing to pay more for cork products because of their environmental friendliness.
- Regarding the future of cork in Finnish construction, 85% of respondents were willing to use cork products in their future construction projects.
- The majority of respondents did not think there was enough information about cork products, also almost 58% of respondents stated that cork products are not sufficiently displayed in hardware stores, and around 85% of respondents felt that cork products or information were not sufficiently advertised.
- According to the responses, there seemed to be a general need for a more concise set of information about cork material and cork products. For instance, more information on the cork usage in construction and infrastructures, its insulation capacity, price, as well as further information was sought on the ecological footprint of cork, used specifically in Finland.

It is important to mention that this previous study is far from involving a holistic construction industry approach, meaning that the results concerned only a small sample. More specifically 28 respondents, from the entire construction industry, and therefore it is not possible to make any solid conclusions on the overall awareness and potential usage of cork material in the Finnish construction industry. Nevertheless, this study incorporates a set of useful data and quite a valuable set of results that contributed to the development of this current thesis research. In other words, the previous study certainly provided food for thought and enabled the generation of new ideas and approaches towards this topic and it served as a good foundation for further comparative analysis. In particular, the formulation and selection of questions for this recent study took into account the questions elaborated in the previous research.

Special attention was given to a specific subheading of the thesis which was devoted to the ecological assessment of cork (Puumalainen 2014, 18). The author raised many interesting facts that can be taken into consideration when evaluating the material's potential in the Finnish market.

In the final analysis, the author of the previous thesis concluded that the results obtained confirmed the presumption that the use of cork and its recognition as a building material is not well-known in Finland (Puumalainen 2014, 3). Also, although cork is highly known for its ecological characteristics, this still rose discussion among the respondents, whether the cork is an ecological material if considering that it is transported from warm countries to Finland. Finally, the researcher also pointed out that the Finnish weather conditions will certainly limit the use of new cork products in building construction.

7.2 Companies offering cork products to the Finnish market

This part of the research takes only into account cork products and cork materials that can be bought either in shops located in Finland or online shops which have also their website available in the Finnish language. An interesting fact to point out is that the majority of the companies did mention that the cork products are of Portuguese origin. Also, only a few companies have a physical location, and the ones that have, they sell cork mainly as a building material, especially cork floors. This is to say that other products made from cork are usually available online.

7.2.1 ARTBYCORK (Arkki-Deko Oy)

A variety of cork products is already available in Finland, since 2015, when the first company specialized in cork design was established in Helsinki. As an emerging Finnish brand, Artbycork was founded by a Portuguese audio-visual artist Lina Galrito-Leinonen, who lives in Finland since 2006 (ARTBYCORK 2020a).

“Lina wants to combine the cork material with Finnish minimalist design, providing high-quality cork design products and fashion accessories to the eco-conscious market, looking for sophisticated, stylish, durable, and sustainable options.”

The following product categories are available at Artbycork:

- Women: Handbags, Wallets, and Accessories
- Men: Bags, Wallets, and Accessories
- Footwear: Sneakers and Slippers
- Home

Special attention must be given to the “Home” section as it includes mainly cork products for decoration purposes. Among the several design options that are offered within each subcategory, the following examples can be seen from Appendix 4; a wall design with the Drop Design Block, a wall design with Cork Bricks 3D, a wall design with Primecork Panels, a wall design with Korkstone triangle, and finally cork stools.

These and many other design options, that can be found from the Artbycork website, are currently available in the Finnish market. At the moment, the products can be only obtained through online purchase, because as mentioned on the company’s website only online sales are available since the retail store at Mall of Tripla shopping center had to be closed in May 2020.

In the description box of the artbycork’s Instagram account, there was a link leading to Arkki-Deko Oy webpage. Arkki-Deko is an importer of Muratto cork coverings for Finland and Sweden (Arkki-Deko Oy 2019).

The Arkki-Deko team includes experts in cork material helping with all matters related to wall coverings and cork floors. An example of a reference work found on the company’s website illustrated a wall design that was done in Oodi Helsinki Central Library (Appendix 5).

“MURATTO® is one of the most highly distinguished brands of natural surface design, with Portuguese origin” (Muratto 2017a).

Muratto's innovative cork coverings are known worldwide for their high quality, advanced technology, and design.

7.2.2 Korkkipiste Oy

Korkkipiste, a retail store also located in Helsinki, is an importer of cork meant for interiors. The company was founded in 1983 and so it has been operating in Finland for the longest time (KORKKIPISTE 2019a). According to the information provided in the website, Korkkipiste has a physical location. Korkkipiste imports products from the Portuguese company CorksRibas, which is a Portuguese family business operating in more than 60 countries in five continents.

In the section “Luonto” of the company’s website, the ecological side of Cork is remarked. It is referred that cork is an ecological material, as the cork oak retains a considerable amount of carbon dioxide. As evidence, recent studies show that Portuguese cork forests are capable of sequestering about 4.8 million tons of carbon dioxide. While navigating throughout the company’s website, one important fact must be highlighted. The idea that cork material is environmentally friendly, ecological, and sustainable, is strongly acknowledged and constantly reinforced.

The main product category offered by Korkkipiste is cork floors suitable for both home and public places. There are also few options for wall decoration and five, so-called “other products” (KORKKIPISTE 2019b).

7.2.3 Korkkitrio Oy

Korkkitrio Oy is an importer of Wicanders and WISE cork floors. Both brands come from Portuguese origins. Its team consists of five cork professionals who help with all matters related to cork floors. It works in partnership with retailers across the country, which are mainly paint and hardware stores. According to the website, the company’s retailers are Hartman Rauta, K-Rauta, Kymen Parketti Oy, Netrauta, Par-kettiliike Säkkinen, Rautanet, RTV-Yhtymä, Stark, Taloon.com, Tammer-Lattiat, Värimiehet Oy, Värisilmä (Korkkitrio, [Ref. 12 September 2020]).

During the research it was noticed that stores such as K-rauta, Stark, Netrauta, and Taloon offer mainly cork flooring articles.

7.2.4 Bauhaus

Concerning cork products, the articles available are mainly for floor and only a few for wall covering. The company has its department stores located in Espoo, Oulu, Tampere, Turku, Vantaa, and Lahti (Bauhaus 2020).

7.2.5 Online shops

Pussykka®

The Finnish company that stands for handicrafts, humor, and charity. All products are Finnish handicrafts and are made in Porvoo. Besides, linen and cotton fabric, Pussykka manufactures cork products for its Organic Collection. In this collection, ecological and completely renewable cork has been used as the main material (Pussykka 2020). Examples of products can be found in Appendix 6. No evidence of a physical store was found.

Suomen Urheilu- ja Fitnesskauppa Oy

Pilateskauppa, an online store, offers high-quality Pilates and yoga products as well as clothes. One of its product lines is “Casall Natural Cork”, which combines elegant Swedish design with an ecological, sustainably produced Portuguese cork. In the webpage (Pilateskauppa, [Ref. 12 September 2020]) it is pointed out that Portugal is home to the world's largest protected cork oak forest and cork production, and this tree is also the country's national symbol. Some of its products are represented in Appendix 7.

Korkki Kauppa

During the research, the author recognized this company as having one of the largest cork product portfolios available to the Finnish market. It included thirty-three different categories. In fact, according to the information provided on the website (Korkkikauppa 2019), the company's location is in Poland, but it has online shops for eleven different countries, each in their own language.

KORKKI24.FI

This website, which targets the Finnish market, is owned by KORK.PL S.C., which is also registered in Poland. Besides, it has online stores in six other European countries. It also provided a quite extensive cork products portfolio of Portuguese origin. It also resells to entrepreneurs or individuals who trade cork products in Finland (Korkki24, [Ref. 12 September 2020]).

OMIAKO design

OMIAKO is a Finnish online store specializing in interior design. It sells high-quality, simple, personal, and eye-catching interior design products. All OMIKO products are handcrafted in Finland. Besides the finished products, OMIKO also provides a tailor-made service which consists of making products according to customer's individual wishes (OMIAKO, [Ref. 16 September 2020]).

OMIAKO has a category dedicated to cork products. On the company website, it is mentioned that the material itself is made from responsibly produced Portuguese cork. Some examples of the type of cork products that OMIKO are keychains, necklaces, bow ties, passport cases, cardholders, bags, storage baskets, etc.

8 METHODOLOGY

Before presenting the methodology that will be utilized in a study one must in the first place become familiar with methodological literature (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 6). This means that the researcher must get to know different kinds of methods available and carefully explore those to wisely select the most suitable methods for a particular research study. Under the following circumstances, the combination of having a well-defined thesis topic and acquiring knowledge about exciting methods creates a favorable environment for the process selection itself. In other words, the prior theoretical knowledge is fundamental to elaborate an accurate and viable research study, furthermore, the topic itself must be well understood as the research approach can only be well justified when the purpose and objectives of the study are acknowledged. With this being said, the following paragraphs aim to briefly present the existing types and approaches regarding research methods, which will then be followed by the explanation of the selected approach for this specific study.

8.1 Basic research methods

Concerning research methods. Gathering and analyzing data can be done through two approaches, which are, quantitative research explained as the one dealing with numbers and statistics, meanwhile qualitative research deals with words and meanings (Streefkerk 2019). Moreover, it is also said that the first method is suitable to generalize facts about a topic and it can be done through surveys, experimental research, or observations, while the second one enables to gather in-depth insights about a topic and it can be done through interviews, focus groups, ethnography, or literature review. Additionally, Streefkerk (2019) adds that a mixed-methods approach is also possible, for example, starting the research with a questionnaire will allow to understand the overall trends, and make personal interviews afterward, to better understand the reasons behind the trends.

After briefly presenting both approaches and how they differ from one another, a more in-depth look will be taken to better understand these research approaches, and special attention will be given to the qualitative approach. The reason for that can be justified with what Eriksson and Kovalainen stated in their book (2008, 4), that while most of the books concerning business research cover both, qualitative and quantitative research, there is still information missing on the variety of approaches concerning qualitative research.

According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 5), they differentiate qualitative research as the one focused on interpretation and understandings, whereas dealing with explanation, testing of hypothesis and statistical analysis relates to quantitative research.

For instance, conducting qualitative research through interviews implies understanding, beforehand, the three existing types of interview study classified by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 79-80). They explain that the three types of interview study named as positivist, emotionalist, and constructionist. Each of them necessitates different types of interview questions since each one focuses on different types of research questions.

According to Ayiro (2012, 11-12), there are various types of research, depending on the information and purpose it involves. He defines applied research as the one designed to solve practical problems of the modern world, rather than simply having the purpose of acquiring pure knowledge. Hence, applied research targets problem solving of a certain issue that may affect an individual, group of people, or organization in a practical way. This is the type of research that better suits this thesis, as not only it goes along with the principles of studying in a university of applied sciences, but also as the practical issue under research is in understanding the possible reasons behind the low exports of Portuguese cork to the Finnish market, together with studying the market potential that Portuguese cork has in Finland.

8.2 The chosen methods to conduct the research

The type of data looked-for to be collected *"to understand how both Finnish professionals and consumers perceive cork products and what is the material's potential in Finland "* does not only focuses on understanding the amount of knowledge that there is towards the product in consideration but also the reason why it is like that. Subsequently, more in-depth information is needed.

Taking that into consideration, the approach that the author decided to use in this thesis is the mixed methods approach, as the selection of both provides a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the research problem than either quantitative or qualitative approaches alone.

Quantitative research would allow to understand the prevalence of the cork and the amount of knowledge as well as the amount of usage that there is in general, regarding both Finnish consumers and professionals.

In addition to this wide overview, in particular, the professional questionnaires were developed combining both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions aimed to collect deeper insights from the professionals, especially those who have previous working experience with cork. The responses were sought to obtain more meaningful knowledge which was useful to answer certain research questions. Also, interviews were taken into consideration, this means, that the author thought of the possibility of conducting interviews in case the open-ended questions would not provide enough information. The qualitative research would help to understand more specifically how the professionals perceive cork and what is their opinion about this material. This way, possible limitations or opportunities could be pointed out.

Qualitative research can be divided into nine different approaches. The approach utilized in this research was a case study. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 117-119) a case study emphasis the production of detailed and holistic knowledge, which is based on the analysis of multiple empirical sources. It is a type of research that consists of collecting and analyzing information about a certain individual, group, community, or organization to study its various aspects of life, according to the research subject. In other words, a case study is about examining the phenomena within its context and its purpose is to explore, describe, explain, and evaluate. Furthermore, between two types of case study mentioned by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 118), intensive case study research was the most suitable for this study, since it examines one or a few cases in-depth to understand cause and effect, whereas extensive research uses a large number of cases to determine the characteristics of a population.

In case there would have been a need to conduct interviews. A semi-structured interview was the one considered for this study. This type of interview, quite commonly used, involves an interview guide providing a general idea of what topics and themes should be discussed, however, the wording and order of the questions may vary during the interview. This type of interview would be suitable for this research since the interview topics and questions would serve only as a guide of what the author considered to be useful to know. However, since the professional individuals, being them designers or architects, would be the experts in their field

and they could raise new suggestions and ideas during the conversation, which the author would not have known in advance.

In sum, the combination of both methods is believed to provide greater results and consequently a clearer and more consistent conclusion to the thesis, which is the foremost advantage of this approach (FoodRisC 2016a).

8.3 Structure of the research study

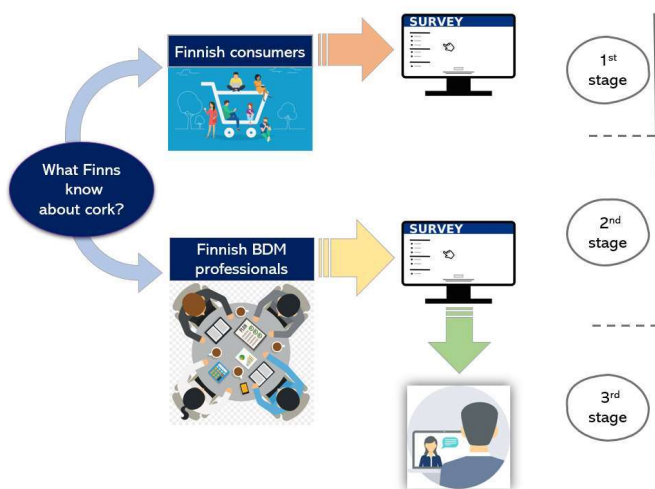


Figure 6. Illustrative explanation of how the empirical research proceeded.

The picture above serves as visual support to explain how this research was conducted. Its purpose is to ease the understanding of the content mentioned in this section. As can be seen, there are three stages that were initially considered for the research study.

The first two stages were carried out using an internet-based questionnaire, through google forms. During the first stage the questionnaire as well as the cover letter (Appendix 8), were sent to Finnish consumers by email and shared through social media pages, such as LinkedIn and Facebook. The author shared the B2C questionnaire in various Finnish Facebook groups related to topics such as interior design, home décor, home renovation, interior design ideas, design and renovation of homes, etc. The questionnaire was published at least in nine Finnish Facebook groups. It is important to mention that in order to reach higher rates of responses from Finnish consumers the questionnaire was translated into the Finnish Language.

During the second stage, both B2B questionnaires, cork as a building material (Appendix 9) and cork as a decoration material (Appendix 10) were sent directly to the professionals email addresses. The researcher utilized multiple methods while trying to search for companies

belonging to the construction and decoration fields to obtain the professional's email addresses. The most relevant websites that enabled to find the most contact information were Interior designers SI ry, which includes 190 members who have graduated as interior designers or interior architects from all over Finland, SIO website, which is a Finnish association of interior designers, as well as, Rakennusteollisuus RT, related to the construction industry.

The questionnaires were designed in a way that they would gather only relevant information regarding the research questions, be easily understood by the respondents, and would allow them to maintain their anonymity.

The third stage was designed as a complementary section which may occur or may not. This stage would be approached only if the results obtained from the B2B questionnaires would be irrelevant or insufficient. Therefore, the author evaluates if there is a need and possibility in conducting professional interviews considering the value of the results obtained during the second stage. During this stage, the aim would be to engage with reflection and supplementary discussions about this topic in study. Thus, collecting professional's personal opinion about cork material, their knowledge and experience in working with the material would be the main issues.

8.4 Data collection

According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 77), data collected for the empirical part of the research can be of two kinds. The primary data, the one collected by the researchers themselves, through interviews or observations. The secondary data, on the contrary, is called existing empirical data meaning that it already exists irrespectively from the action or intentions taken by the researcher. After this being mentioned, the content gathered before conducting the empirical study is a secondary material. This data was collected from English, Portuguese and Finnish sources. Literature sources served mainly for the theoretical and methodological parts.

Previous research studies, product manufacturers' brochures, online magazines, online news, companies' websites, magazines, statistics websites, and other documents, such as PowerPoint presentations, allowed to collect content regarding cork material and the Finnish market analysis.

Based on this secondary material, the author was able to further develop the questions for the questionnaires. The results obtained from the research conducted served as primary data.

8.5 Sampling

From the different types of sampling presented in the table (FoodRisC 2016b) two types can be selected for this research.

Firstly, the simple random type can be applied to the survey that will target the Finnish consumers, as for that stage of research basically each person of the population has an equal chance of being selected. It is, however, important to mention that the survey will be designed for Finnish citizens above the age of 18. Apart from that, there will not be any other limitations to those who are willing to answer the survey.

Secondly, the one that suits the most for the selection of the Finnish companies and individual entrepreneurs is the stratified random. This type divides the study population into separate subpopulations considering relevant and needed characteristics. By doing so, there is a high probability that the key groups are represented in the sample, as well, it is possible to make a comparison among the sub-groups. This type of sampling shows to be appropriate for the selection of the companies and individual entrepreneurs according to their professional category, as this study may allow to segment various professional areas that may be interested in cork products.

9 RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

This chapter presents the analysis of the results of the empirical research. It is divided into four main parts, each of them devoted to the analysis of one single questionnaire out of three that were conducted for this thesis, and the last section summarizes the main findings.

9.1 Consumer Questionnaire

This questionnaire was opened from 28.10.2020 until 16.11.2020 and there were in total 70 responses. The structural result analysis of each question will be further presented.

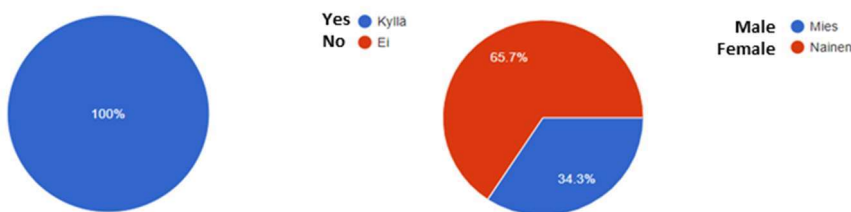


Figure 7. Are you a Finnish citizen? // Respondent's gender.

As the consumer questionnaire was targeted to Finnish individuals therefore the importance of the first question regarding the citizenship of the respondent. This question ensured that everyone taking participation in the survey was a Finnish citizen. Thus, all 70 respondents were stated to be Finnish citizens. Regarding gender, it is showed that the majority were females, representing 65,7% of the respondents.

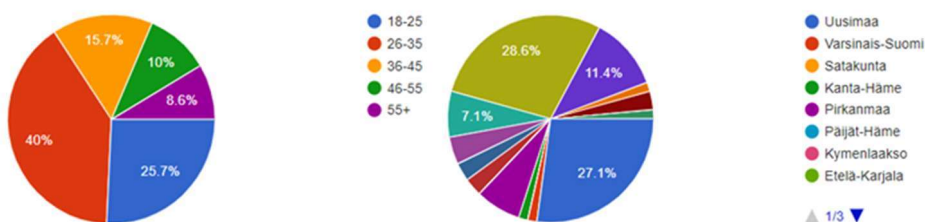


Figure 8. Respondent's age // Respondent's region of residence.

The following two questions aimed at representing whether there was diversity among both age range and region of residence of the respondents. It is believed that the more diversity the more added value it generates to the research conducted, as different kinds of people around Finland shared their knowledge about cork material. The chart on the left shows that all the age groups were represented in this survey. The largest group of the respondents (40%) belonged to the age between 26 and 35, followed by 25,7% of the individuals between age 18 and 25. Therefore, it can be said that the majority of them were relatively young. Concerning

the chart on the right side, almost the same number of respondents were from individuals living in Etelä-Pohjanmaa (20) and Uusimaa (19). In descending order few other regions will be mentioned: Pohjanmaa (8); Keski-Suomi (5); Pirkanmaa (5); Pohjois-Karjala (3); Etelä-Savo (2); Pohjois-Savo (2); Pohjois-Pohjanmaa (2).

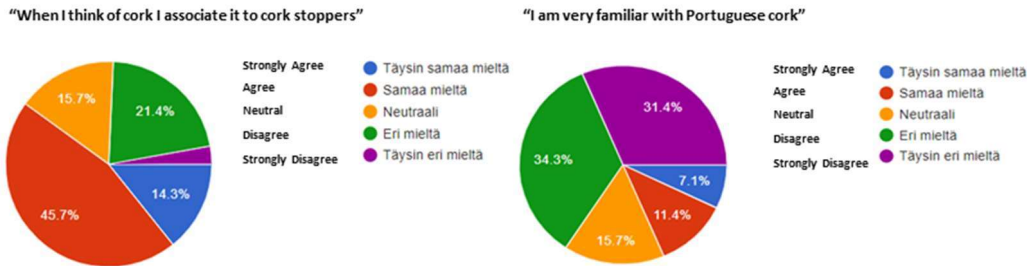


Figure 9. How much do you agree with these statements?

More than half of the respondents associate cork with cork stoppers. More specifically, 45,7% agreed and 14,3% strongly agreed with the statement. However, also 21,4% of the respondents stated that they disagree and even 2 respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Regarding the origins of the cork material, around 2/3 of the respondents were not familiar with Portuguese cork, from which 34,3% disagreed and 31,4% strongly disagreed with the statement.

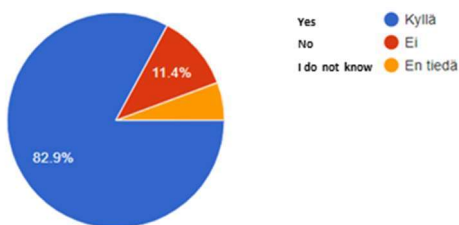


Figure 10. Have you ever been interested in products made with cork?

It is represented that 82,9% of the individuals have been interested in products made with cork, meanwhile, only 11,4% have not been interested at all, and 4 respondents did not know. From here, it is interesting to observe the fact that while most of the individuals said that they have been interested in cork products, also a quite large amount of them was not familiar with Portuguese cork.

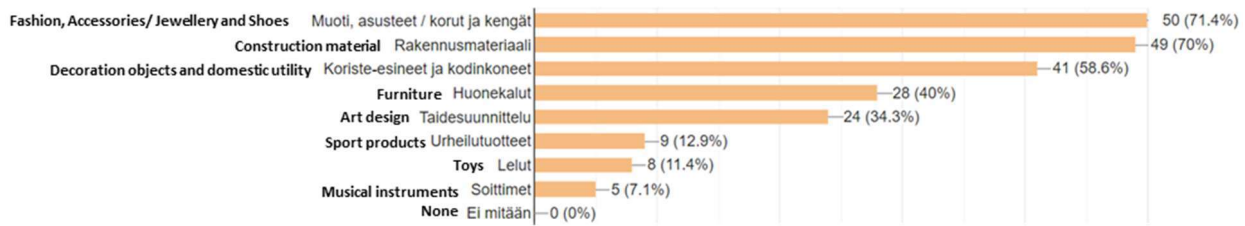


Figure 11. Select up to three application fields you know in which cork can be utilized.

With regard to cork application fields, Finns who participated in the survey knew that cork can be applied to “Fashion, Accessories / Jewellery, and Shoes” (71,4%); utilized as a “construction material” (70%) and as “decoration objects and domestic utility” (58,6%). It is interesting to point out that these results match very closely with those obtained from the Portuguese study, discussed in the heading 2.6.1, in regard to the question “*Besides the cork stoppers, do you know any other use for cork?*”. According to what Portuguese respondents selected, the first place was taken by fashion, accessories, and footwear (99,1%), and the second place was shared between construction material; and decoration objects and domestic utility, as both, reached almost the same amount of responses.

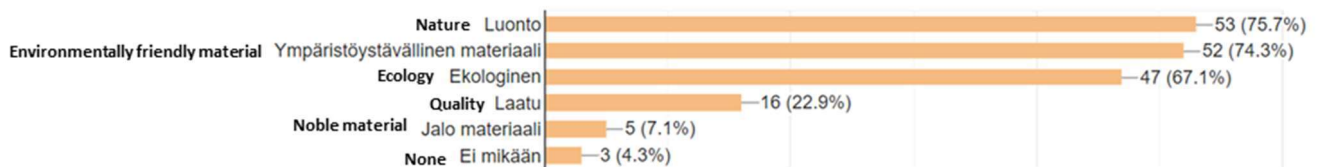


Figure 12. Select up to three concepts you associate cork with.

Finns associate cork mostly with nature (75,7%), environmentally friendly materials (74,3%) as well as ecology (67,1%). Besides the options available and also visible in figure 12, some other associations that respondents highlighted were: “*noiseless*”; “*aesthetics*” and “*warm, semi-soft, mouldable to any shape effortlessly*”.

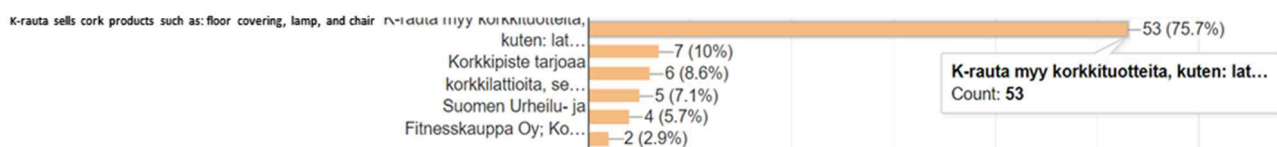


Figure 13. Which of the following facts you already knew?

Among the few options given of stores and online shops where cork products can be bought in Finland, the hardware store “K-rauta” seems to be the most well-known for selling cork products, as it clearly stands out from all the answers. Seven of the respondents mentioned that they do not know any of the available options. There were also few respondents that pointed out other options such as “*Ikea also has available cork placemats for tables*”; “*Yoga*

bricks are sold as cork in many yoga shops” and “the Hakaniemi market hall has a cork bag and accessories store”.

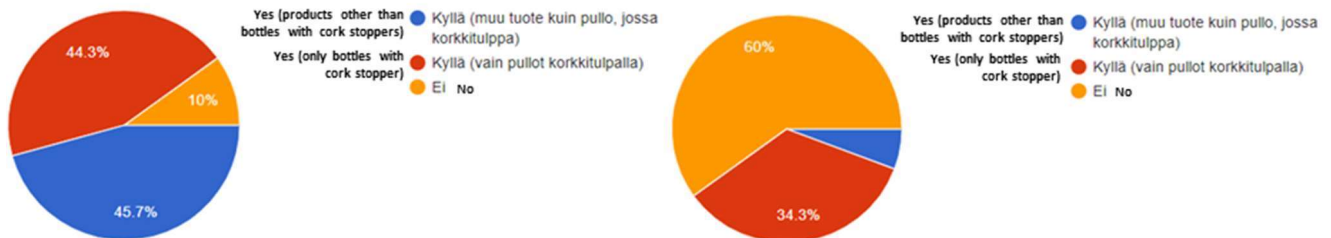


Figure 14. During the previous 5 years, have you bought any cork products in Finland? // During the previous 5 years, have you bought any cork products from abroad or while being abroad?

In Finland, during the past 5 years, while 45,7% of Finns acquired cork products other than cork stoppers, almost the same amount, 44,3%, acquired cork products in a form of cork stoppers, and only 10% of respondents did not acquire any cork products. Within the same period of time, 60% of Finns did not buy any cork products from abroad, and the 34,3% that did, they acquired from abroad bottles that contain cork stoppers.

From the comparison between both charts, it can be pointed out that those cork products different from cork stoppers acquired by the respondents were mainly bought in Finland and not brought from overseas.

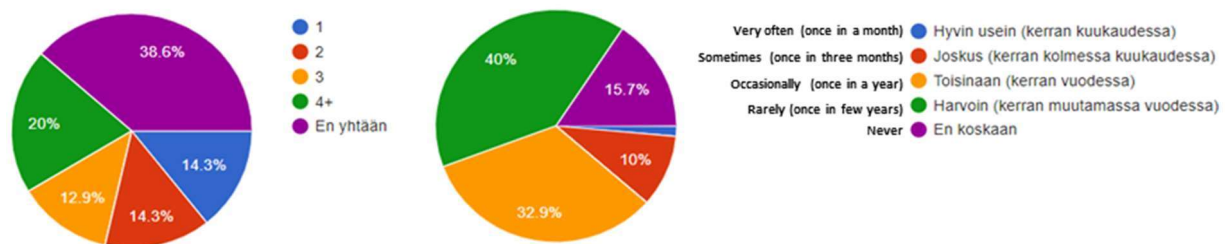


Figure 15. How many cork products do you own? // How frequently do you buy cork products?

More than half of the respondents own at least one cork product. While 38,6% of Finns do not own any cork products, all the other options are somehow close to each other. For instance, individuals owning more than four cork products represented 20%, followed by 14,3% of those owning either one or two cork products.

Regarding the frequency of the purchase of cork products. In the chart on the right, the majority of respondents rarely (40%), meaning once in a few years, and occasionally (32,9%), once in a year, buy cork products.



Figure 16. If you have cork products at home, to which category it belongs?

While 37,1% of the respondents do not have any cork products at home, 41,4% selected “decoration item, such as furniture, artistic elements, lamps vases)” as the category to which they cork products belong. Apart from the options available, many respondents added other categories, such as cork accessories, cork glasses, cork coaster, cork bags, cork element in a musical instrument, yoga bricks, and glass jar with cork lid.

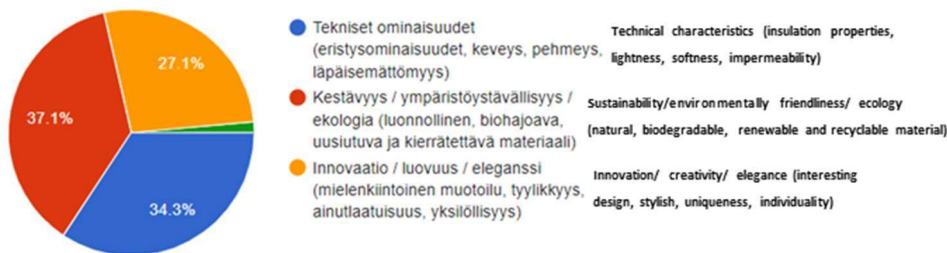


Figure 17. If you buy cork products, or if you would consider buying in the future, what would be the main reason for your preference towards cork?

This question was related mainly to the consumer behavior concept, which was discussed in chapter three. As the chart demonstrates, the responses were somehow distributed evenly among the main three options. As the results do not evidence the primary reason, no major conclusion can be made about the preference towards cork products. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that 37,1% of Finns selected “sustainability /environmental friendliness/ ecology” which somehow comes along with the answer provided on the main concepts associated to this material.

"I am aware of the importance of sustainable consumption and so I do prefer to buy products that are environmentally friendly?"

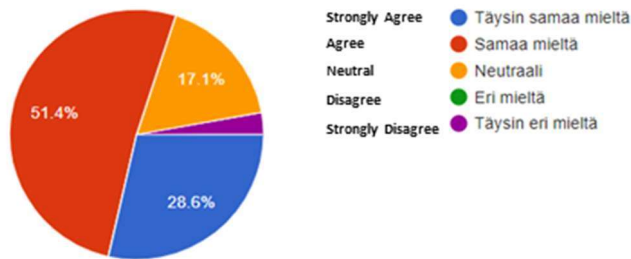
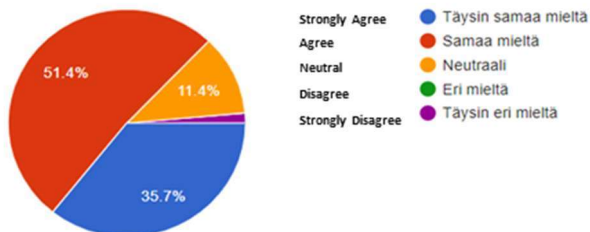


Figure 18. How much do you agree with the statement?

Around 80% of Finns selected the option that they are aware of the importance of sustainable consumption and prefer to buy environmentally friendly products, more exactly, 51,4% agreed and 28,6% strongly agreed with the statement. There was also a neutral position, which was taken by 17,1% of the respondents.

Cork is a natural, environmentally friendly material. It biodegrades completely and can be easily recycled without producing any toxic residues.

"Knowing that makes me more interested in acquiring products that are made with this material"



Cork material acts as acoustic and thermal insulation, meaning less sound and more energy efficiency. Besides it is a durable material and easy to take care for.

"If I would be renovating floors or walls in my house/apartment, I would consider buying cork material"

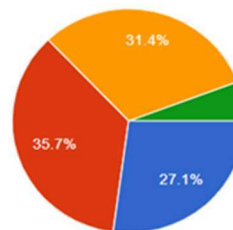


Figure 19. How much do you agree with the following statements?

Concerning the chart on the left, around 87% of Finns responded positively about the sentence presenting the green side of the cork material, 51,4% agreed and 35,7% strongly agreed that that information made them more interested in acquiring cork products, while 11,4% took a neutral position and one respondent to strongly disagree.

Concerning the chart on the right side, around 62% responded positively to the fact that they would consider cork material if they would need to renovate floors or walls at home. A slightly higher percentage of respondents (31,4%) took a neutral position in this question, and four respondents disagreed.

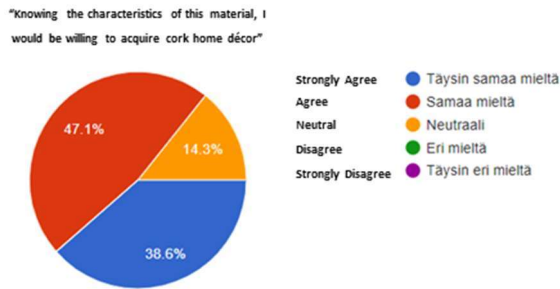


Figure 20. How much do you agree with the statement?

Regarding the willingness in acquiring cork home décor, around 85,7% responded positively. Knowing the characteristics of cork, 47,1% agreed and 38,6% strongly agreed that they would be willing to buy cork home products. An observation of the two previous charts can be made in the following way. If comparing the results from the question about the consideration in buying cork as a building material for walls or floors, and the willingness in acquiring cork home décor, it can be seen that there are slightly more chances in the purchase of home cork décor. However, this can also be explained by pointing out that cork home décor is not as big of a project as buying cork material for walls or floors. Decorations may be small products, easily acquired, and that cost much less than renovating floors or walls, something that is also done quite rarely.

Table 2. If you own products made with cork, where did you get information about the product/s?

| Categories: | Key words that respondents mentioned: | How many respondents mentioned it: |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Online | Internet | 6 |
| | Social media | 2 |
| | Facebook | 1 |
| Through a Company | Seller | 3 |
| | Ikea | 4 |
| | From a shop | 4 |
| Through People | Friends | 3 |
| | Family | 3 |
| Through Bottles | Cork stopper | 2 |
| Through Education | Design field | 1 |

Regarding the open-ended questions, presented in table 2, the majority of respondents mentioned the internet as the primary information channel from where they found out about cork. This table summarizes all the responses given to this question. As can be seen, the other information channel is the various companies themselves. Some respondents mentioned that they simply found cork products while walking in a certain shop, and few of them even specified the store where they found cork products as being Ikea.

Finally, concerning the last question of the questionnaire, in which respondents could freely write about their thoughts and opinions about cork. If summarizing the answers given in the comment section, there can be three main categories outlined. First category belonging to those who have acquired new knowledge about cork while answering the questionnaire. The second category represents those who either still have questions regarding this material, for example, about its availability or environmentally friendly side, or had another idea of the material. The third group is those mentioning the price of cork products, more specifically saying that it is not easily affordable, as well as, mentioning that cork is still not so used in Finland. The most relevant answers to this topic will be further presented:

“Interesting material, little used in Finland”

“I got new information and my interest in cork really rose even further! I am going to compare the benefits of cork in my own crafts in the future compared to other materials!”

“On the contrary, I thought it was a non-ecological material”;

“An interesting topic, I haven’t thought much about cork as a material before and how versatile the material is”;

“It would be nice to know the price, for example, if you used it as a building material, how it differs from the rest and its availability”;

“I guess in cork products, you must also be aware of the responsibility of the manufacturer and the sustainable way of growing cork? Sometimes there was in the media that the cork manufacturers were depriving the forests because of the cork extraction”

“Hopefully it will become more common and you will find products in a cheaper price range. Regarding insulation properties that was new information to me”

9.2 Cork as a building material (B2B Questionnaire)

This questionnaire was opened for responses from 28.10.2020 until 20.11.2020 and there were in total 11 responses. A structural result analyses of each question will be further presented.

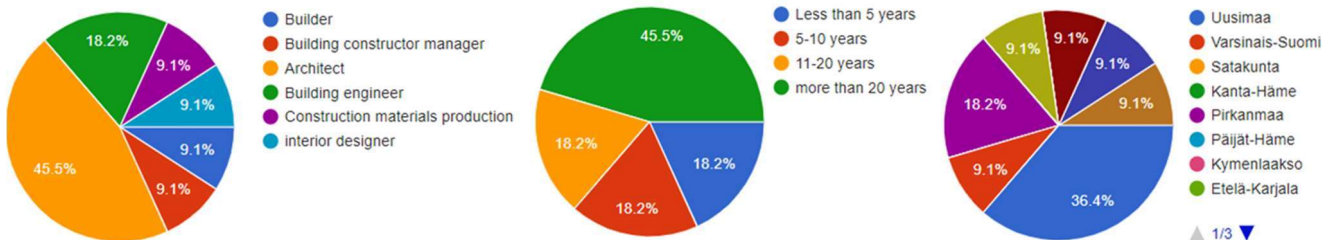


Figure 21. Respondent's professional field // Work experience in the industry field // Business location.

The following three questions aimed at gathering background data about the professional individual answering the survey. The first background data represents the professional field of all the respondents and as the chart illustrates almost half of them (45,5%) were architects.

The second background data provides information on the years of work experience within the professional field. Almost half of the respondents (45,5%) have more than 20 years of working experience.

Lastly, the third background data concerning the location where the professional works or the company's location, the largest group (36,4%) is represented by the region Uusimaa. In descending order few other regions will be mentioned: Pirkanmaa, Varsinais-Suomi, Etelä-Pohjanmaa, Pohjois-Pohjanmaa from the Finnish locations available in the questionnaire, as well as, Finland, UK, Estonia were mentioned in the additional option field.

Regarding the question *“What is the managerial position that makes the decision about the raw material utilized by the company? Who is the person or persons responsible for selecting the materials?”*, the most popular answers were architect/building architect and the client. Since some respondents gave two options, in total “architects/ building architects” was mentioned six times, while “the clients”, was mentioned four times. Two other responses were that the decision is made by the project manager depending on the project, and by the senior management. Therefore, concerning the segmentation concept, discussed in chapter four, architects can be considered as a potential professional segment and subsequently a target group when it comes to the promotion of cork as building and construction material.



Figure 22. Have you heard about cork material?

As the chart illustrates all respondents stated that they have heard about cork material.

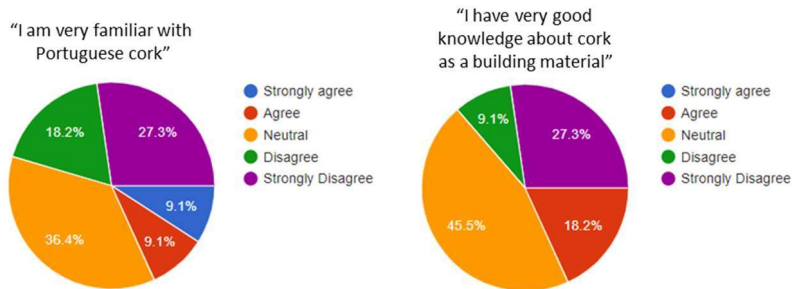


Figure 23. How much do you agree with the following two statements?

Only two professionals responded affirmatively towards the first statement, one of which was familiar and the other very familiar with Portuguese cork. A neutral position was taken by the largest group (36,4) represented on the left chart, while 27,3% strongly disagreed and 18,2% disagreed to be very familiar with Portuguese cork.

Concerning the chart on the right side, the neutral position was taken by even more respondents representing 45,5%, and while 18,2% stated to have good knowledge about cork as a building material, 9,1% disagreed and 27,3% strongly disagreed. Those who either disagreed or strongly disagreed, three were architects and one construction materials production professional. For instance, something that could be mentioned when comparing these results with the previous question regarding who makes the decision about the raw material is that most of the architects, the decision-makers, mentioned in this study to have little knowledge about cork as a building material.

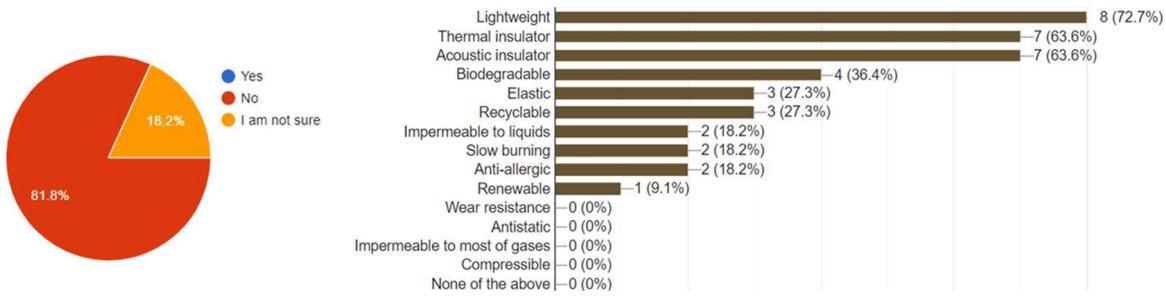


Figure 24. Is there enough knowledge about cork material in Finland? // Select up to three cork features you recognise.

According to the chart on the left side, it is clear that in the respondent’s opinion there is not enough knowledge about cork material in Finland, since 81,8% denied the question.

When it comes to the bar chart on the right side, the respondents related to professions which utilize cork as a building material recognized the most, the feature associated with the lightness of the material (72,7%), followed by both thermal and acoustic insulation properties of the material (63,6%).

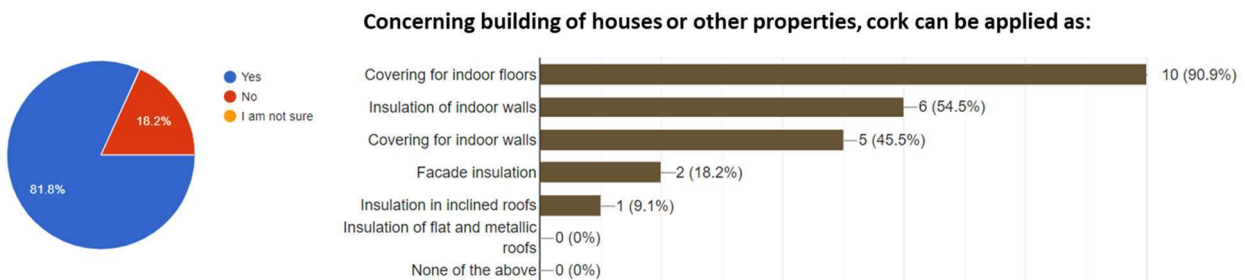


Figure 25. Do you recognise cork as a natural, renewable, and sustainable raw material? // Choose up to three options you know on how cork material can be used.

The chart on the left side shows that 81,8% of the respondents recognize cork as a natural, renewable, and sustainable raw material, while 18,2% denied it.

Concerning the various applications of cork as a building material, the most known ones among the respondents were “covering for indoor floors” (90,9%), “insulation of indoor walls” (54,5%), and “covering for indoor walls” (45,5%) presented on the right-sided bar chart.

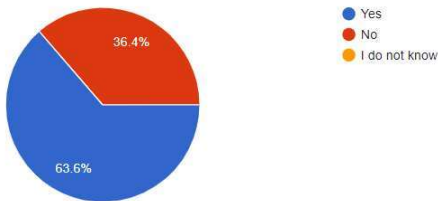


Figure 26. Have you had previous experience in working with cork as a building material?

The majority of the respondents (63.6%) affirmed having previous experience working with cork as a building material. More specifically, about the professional fields of those you have worked with the material: a building constructor manager, a construction materials production, an interior designer, 2 building engineers, and 2 architects.

Regarding the next open-ended question, those respondents who have had experience working with cork as a building material, most of them work with the material only once or twice. The ways the material has been utilized by these professionals:

- Indoors, wall and floor material (mentioned four times)
- Vibration isolation layer under parquet flooring
- Cork veneer in one of the plywood products (Metsa Wood Sonex Light)
- Wall insulation

In regard of the next open-ended question, the professionals who have worked with this material, recognized, in a descendent order, both thermal and acoustic insulation, elasticity, lightweight, as well as environmental friendliness as the key benefits of cork when compared to other natural materials.

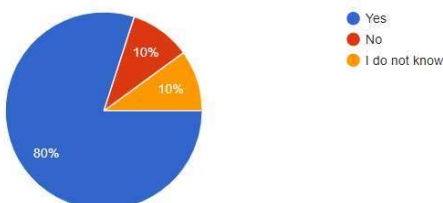


Figure 27. Would you be interested to work with cork in your future projects?

This question firstly was meant for those who have no experience working with cork, however, perhaps because it refers to future projects and since those professionals who worked with this material did it only a few times they also responded to this question. In total, ten professionals responded, and as it can be seen from the chart 80% of them would be interested to work with cork material in future projects.

Regarding the next open-ended question, four respondents pointed out some possible constraints or challenges in utilizing cork material in the Finnish constructions. Besides constraints such as moisture and humidity, as two professionals mentioned that in their opinion cork is not suitable for moisture exposures, at least for a long time, the other two comments were as follows:

“The industry is overall very hesitant to changes. If something hasn't been used before and there are no ready-made solutions / previous examples, it's hard to convince clients and other designers.”

"Finns don't have so many skills and capabilities in working with this material as it is not so talked about and for that reason, the usage is very little.”

“The Finnish weather conditions certainly limits the use of cork products in building construction”

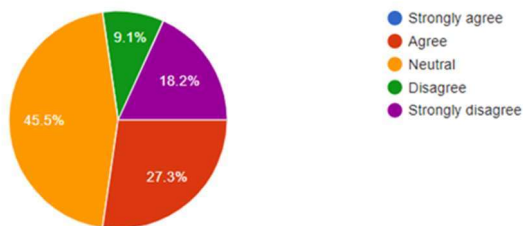


Figure 28. How much do you agree with this sentence?

As the chart shows, almost half of the respondents (45,5%) took a neutral position regarding the statement. The following largest group representing 27,3% of the professionals agreed that the Finnish weather conditions certainly limits the usage of cork products in building construction. However, at the same time, the same percentage of respondents (27,3%) either agreed or disagreed with the statement. Therefore, no concrete conclusion can be drawn from these answers.

Regarding the next open-ended question, which asked the respondents to specify the reason for agreeing that Finnish weather conditions certainly limit the usage of cork in building construction, the answers can be summarized by mentioning that in Finland cork material is not suitable for outside use, as well as, there is little knowledge on how to use the material. Additionally, the most elaborated answers were:

“Our climate is rough. I am not sure if cork would be durable enough for outdoors constructions.”

“I think it is not so suitable for use of outdoors projects, however, it is a great option for indoor walls and floors, for example”

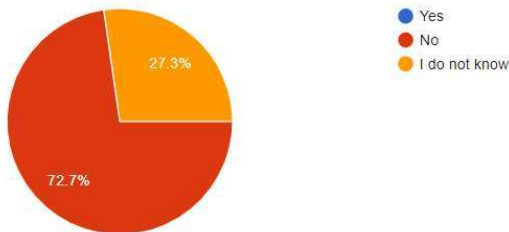


Figure 29. Is there enough information available about cork material in Finland?

The majority of the respondents (72,7%) considered that there is not enough information about cork material in Finland.

Concerning the open-ended question about the information channels, in other words, how the professionals found out about cork, the most popular answer was through social media/technical media. Furthermore, two of the respondents have worked in stores where cork building materials were sold, and two respondents also mentioned that they got to know this material through their co-workers and other architects.

Lastly, regarding the open-ended question *“In your opinion, what could help in raising awareness of cork material in Finland or how it could be better promoted?”*, the most elaborated comments were as follows:

“Marketing campaign to defined small and medium-size companies mainly in architects and designers’ sectors”

“If the material would be better known it would have more potential and so more usage in Finland, I think it should be marketed better in a way of educating people about cork. Also, more advertising showing how to use cork and what can be done with it in the Finnish language could be a good idea”

“More information, RT-kortti, good examples / detail library and proper calculations. Additionally, offer comprehensive construction support and eco/pricing information”

RT-kortti is the most versatile information service and quality system for sustainable construction in the construction industry in Finland. The service has reliable information gathered for the needs of professionals and ready-made solutions. For instance, it provides information on matters such as construction, design, construction, and maintenance (Rakennustieto, [Ref. 21 November 2020]).

If comparing these results to the Finnish thesis discussed in 7.1, it can be said that even after seven years, when the previous research was conducted the situation seems still to be alike. Cork is still not so well-known. The most widely used applications of cork products are still floor and wall coverings as well as insulation. The majority of respondents did not think there was enough information about cork products and most of the respondents were willing to use cork products in their future construction projects.

In sum, it all points out the need to further marketing, advertising campaigns and mostly educating better the Finnish professional about cork as a building material.

9.3 Cork as a decoration material (B2B Questionnaire)

This questionnaire was opened from 28.10.2020 until 20.11.2020 and there were in total 12 responses. A structural result analyses of each question will be further presented. The analyses were conducted in a similar way as in the previous B2B questionnaire.

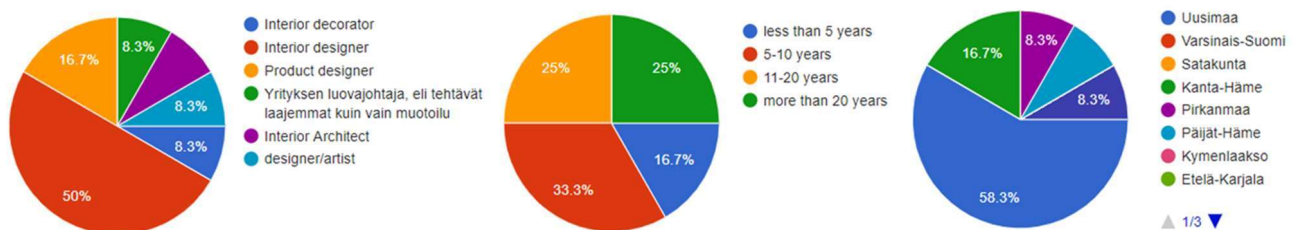


Figure 30. Respondent's professional field // Work experience in the industry field // Business location.

The three first questions gathered background data about the professional individual answering the survey. The first background data represents the professional fields of all the respondents and as seen from the first chart on the left exactly half of the respondents were interior designers. Two product designers, and one individual from each of the following professional fields: Interior decorator designer/artist, interior architect, and creative director, whose tasks are wider than just design.

The second background data provides information on the years of work experience within the professional field. The answers were somehow almost evenly distributed, meaning that there was diversity among the respondent's years of work experience. The largest group (33,3%) had between 5-10 and the smallest group had less than 5 years of work experience.

Lastly, the third background data concerning the business location, equally as it happened in the other B2B questionnaire, the majority of respondents were from Uusimaa region (58,3%). In descending order few other regions will be mentioned: Kanta-Häme, Pirkanmaa, Päijät-Häme from the Finnish locations available in the questionnaire, as well as, one respondent answered that previously the location was Helsinki, but currently it is Canada.

Regarding the question *“What is the managerial position that makes the decision about the raw material utilized by the company? Who is the person or persons responsible for selecting the materials?”*, the most popular answers were either the professional does the decision him/herself or the decision is made by the professional and his/her colleagues. All the interior designers stated that they are involved in the decision-making process. To be more exact, those who own a company by themselves make the decision, however, if there are other colleagues then it will be a group decision. The architect mentioned that the decision is made by the client in cooperation with the facility manager and regarding the product designer, one responded "owner" and the other one mentioned that the decision is made by *“Designer + manufacturer + engineers, etc”*.



Figure 31. Have you heard about cork material before?

Similarly, as the results from the previous B2B questionnaire, also this chart illustrates that all respondents have heard about cork material.

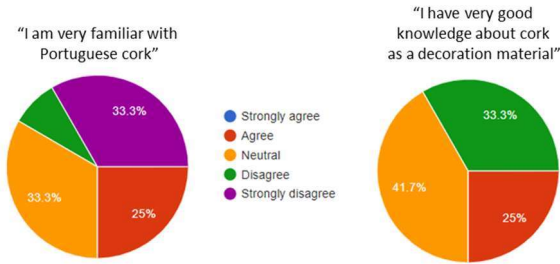


Figure 32. How much do you agree with the following two statements?

25% of the professionals responded affirmatively towards the first statement, 33,3% responded neutrally, another 33,3% strongly disagreed and one disagreed with the statement. In general, the answers show that the professionals are not so familiar with Portuguese cork.

Concerning the chart on the right side, the neutral position was taken again by the largest group of respondents representing 41,7%, followed by 33,3% who disagreed and 25% who agreed to have good knowledge about cork as a decoration material. Those who affirmed not to have good knowledge about cork as a decoration material were two interior designers, an interior decorator, and an interior architect.

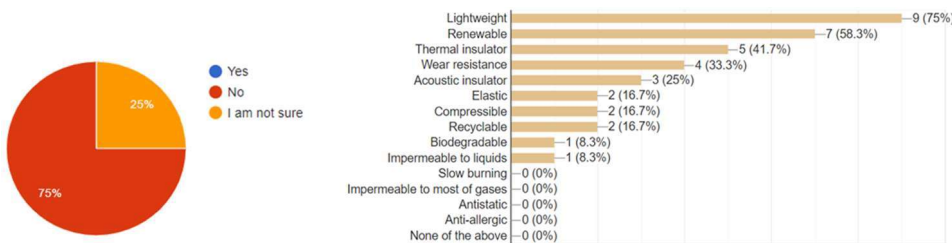


Figure 33. Is there enough knowledge about cork material in Finland? // Select up to three cork features that you recognise.

According to the chart on the left side, in the respondents’ opinion, there is not enough knowledge about cork material in Finland, as 75% denied the question.

When it comes to the bar chart on the right side, the respondents related to professions which utilize cork as a decoration material recognized the most, the feature associate with the lightness of the material (75%), followed by the association of being a renewable material (58,3%) and thermal insulator (41,7%).

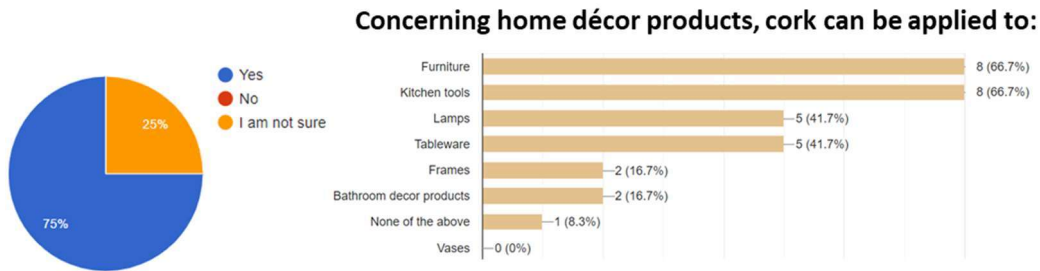


Figure 34. Do you recognise cork as a natural, renewable, and sustainable raw material? // Select up to three options you know on how cork material can be used.

The chart on the left side shows that 75% of the respondents recognize cork as a natural, renewable, and sustainable raw material, while 25% were not sure.

Concerning the various application of cork as decoration material, presented in the bar chart on the right-sided, the most known ones among the respondents were “Furniture” and “Kitchen tools” both representing 66,7%, followed by “Lamps” and “Tableware” both representing 41,7%.

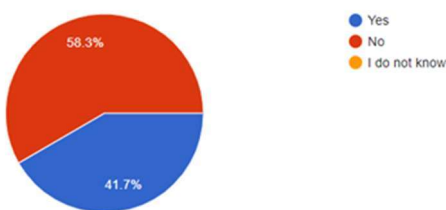


Figure 35. Have you had previous experience in working with cork as a decoration material?

The majority of the respondents (58,3%) stated that they do not have previous experience working with cork decoration products. Regarding those who have the experience, their professional fields were: two interior designers, a product designer, a creative director, and an interior decorator.

Regarding the next open-ended question, those respondents who have had experience working with cork as decoration material mentioned having worked with it only a couple of times, except one interior designer who affirmed working with it few times a year, as floor coverings and wall decoration. The other ways the material has been utilized by these professionals:

- High-density cork (in couple of product design projects)
- Project furniture and some prototyping with cork
- Cork wall decoration
- Interior design with decorative elements from korkki24.fi

Concerning the next open-ended question, the professionals who have worked with this material, recognized, in a descendent order, the softness of the material, lightness, and availability of a wide color range. More specifically, two examples of how these benefits were described:

- *“Soft to the touch, pleasant surface structure, wide color range”*
- *“Softer and warmer feeling compared to wood”*



Figure 36. *Would you be interested to work with this material in your future projects?*

In total, eleven professionals responded, and as it can be seen from the chart all of them would be interested to work with cork material in future projects.

Regarding the next open-ended question, eleven respondents pointed out some possible constraints or challenges that can affect the usage of cork products for decoration purposes in Finland. The most common facts were regarding cork products availability in Finnish stores, price and the fact that it is not well known in Finland. The most elaborated comments were as follows:

“Limited distribution channels, long delivery time, not well known”

“People are afraid it is not easy-care comparing to plastic, wood, glass, etc.”

“Lack of tooling knowledge in Finland. Language difficulties with Portuguese suppliers.”

“Availability of the material in small production. Expensive to source small amounts.”

“Quite high-priced material especially when it is not shipped in bulk.”

“For me as a designer I like to see and touch the materials and products I use for decoration, and since cork products are not so available in stores, I had to order online which is not so convenient and quite costly. The prices are also quite high usually what limits the usage of cork in my interior designs.”

“I could consider using cork décor products to decorate interiors or use cork material in some other professional projects”

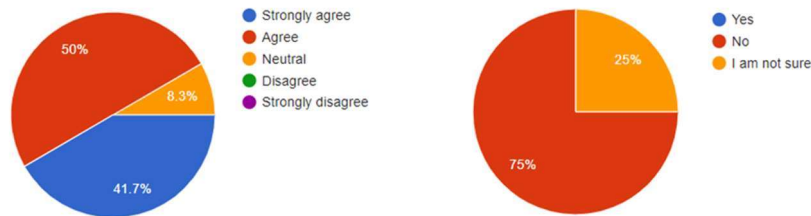


Figure 37. How much do you agree with the statement? // Is there enough information available about cork products in Finland?

As it can be seen from the left-sided chart, 50% of the respondents agreed and 41,7% strongly agreed that they could consider using cork décor products to decorate interiors or use cork material in some other projects. In sum, 91,7% of the professionals responded positively to the statement.

The chart on the right side illustrates that the majority of the respondents (75%) considered that there is not enough information about cork material in Finland.

Concerning the open-ended question about the information channels, in other words, how the professional found out about cork, the most popular answer was through online research, either by chance or while searching for decoration materials. Some examples of what respondents wrote:

“I read once an article but then I forgot about it. I have a basic idea about what cork is but never thought of using it in my work, however now it sounds even more interesting to me and I would certainly like to search more about it.”

“Own research by the internet and direct calls to producers.”

“My own curiosity in learning more about natural materials.”

Lastly, regarding the open-ended question *“In your opinion, what could help in raising awareness of cork material in Finland or how it could be better promoted?”*. More information, increased availability, and further education are some of the keywords encountered among the answers, however, for a better explanation the most elaborated comments will be presented:

“Most have a very limited view on cork, mostly related to flooring - somehow breaking that view should be beneficial.”

“Availability is always the issue.”

“It depends on who you want to “educate”. For the basic consumer, information about the material comes through products, so certainly wider use will increase information. Also, it's always important not to just tell that some material is, for example, recyclable, it's also important to tell “how” to recycle it. For me, recycling cork in Finland is a question mark. Can you recycle cork in Finland? Is it really recyclable in Finland and if so, how is it done from the consumer's point of view (like where do you actually take it)? The consumer has quite a bit to find out about the recycling of all other materials so sharing comprehensive information is vital or else the matter may easily feel like Greenwash.

“Concentrate personal contacts to design producers.”

“Education about the material and its usage in Finland is the key. Portuguese companies selling cork products should provide services on teaching the main aspects related to the usage of cork. Maybe participating in some conferences, trade fairs or by giving presentations in the biggest designer companies, at least.”

“Better marketing, more availability of different cork products and also educating the consumers as they are usually the ones who approve the interior designers that I develop for them.”

“I think it should be better communicated to interior designer at least, so we can get to know better this natural material and also it would be helpful to get information about where to get a different kind of cork products and their pricing.”

“the good benefits and features of the material should be better promoted. I think Finns know very little about cork. There should be more variety in the stores and not only online and also more friendly-prices. Portuguese companies could agree on partnerships and so cooperate with Finnish designers.”

“participating in exhibitions or trade fairs at least in Helsinki so people can see and learn more about different cork products.”

9.4 Summary of the empirical study results

9.4.1 Consumer Questionnaire

After analyzing each question separately, there was also a need to compare various variables to see if any other relevant information could be withdrawn from the responses. Hence, two cross-tabulation tables were developed. The first table looked more in-depth at whether there were differences or similarities between the respondents from the region Uusimaa and Etelä-Pohjanmaa as those were the regions that gathered the most responses.

Table 3. Cross-tabulation between respondents from Uusimaa and Etelä-Pohjanmaa regions.

| Questions from the questionnaire: | Respondents from the region | |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | (11*) Uusimaa (19**) | (13*) Etelä-Pohjanmaa (20**) |
| (6*) "... familiar with Portuguese cork" | | |
| Strongly agreed | 2 | 3 |
| Agreed | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 5 / (19) | 6 / (20) |
| (13*) "Those you own cork products" | | |
| Numbers of cork products owned per respondent | 2;4;4;4;3;4;3;1;4;4;3;1;2 | 1;1;4;4;2;2;1;3;2 |
| (19 and 20*) "Have bought in the last 5 years" | | |
| cork products (other than cork stoppers) from Finland | 11 | 6 |
| cork products (other than cork stoppers) from abroad | - | 2 |
| Total | 11 / (19) | 8 / (20) |
| (16*) "...main reason for your preference towards cork?" | | |
| Technical characteristics | 6 | 8 |
| Sustainability/environmentally friendliness/ ecology | 8 | 9 |
| Innovation/ creativity/ elegance | 5 | 3 |
| (17*) "... I do prefer to buy products that are environmentally friendly?" | | |
| Strongly agreed | 5 | 7 |
| Agreed | 8 | 9 |
| Total | 13 / (19) | 16 / (20) |
| (19*) "... renovating floors or walls in my house/apartment, I would consider buying cork material" | | |
| Strongly agreed | 3 | 7 |
| Agreed | 5 | 7 |
| Total | 8 / (19) | 14 / (20) |
| (20*) "... I would be willing to acquire cork home décor" | | |
| Strongly agreed | 6 | 9 |
| Agreed | 8 | 7 |
| Total | 14 / (19) | 16 / (20) |

Legend:

(*) - Number of the Question from the Questionnaire

(**) - Number of respondents that selected this answer

The main highlights of table 3 will be summarized in this paragraph. The results show that there is no correlation between being familiar with Portuguese cork and the respondent's region. It could be assumed that individuals living near the capital would have more knowledge than in

the other regions, however, that is not proved in this case. From those respondents who own cork products, it can be seen that the amount of cork products owned by the respondents in Uusimaa is double that of those living in Etelä-Pohjanmaa. Respondents from Uusimaa have acquired slightly more cork products in the last 5 years. Etelä-Pohjanmaa respondents have to some extent more preference towards environmentally friendly, and their interest in cork building materials, as well as cork décor products, is slightly higher as well. Regarding consumer behavior, it can be said that Finns are aware of the importance of sustainable consumption and prefer to buy products that are environmentally friendly options. Moreover, knowing that cork products belong to that category, most Finns were interested in acquiring products with this material. When it comes to the reason for cork products preference, as explained in the analysis of question 16, from the consumer questionnaire, it was not possible to conclude on the main reason.

Table 4. Cross-tabulation between certain variables regarding the consumer's questionnaire results.

| Questions from the questionnaire: | Number of respondents that | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| | (11*) have bought cork products (other than cork stoppers) in the last 5 years (32**) | (13*) "...own cork products" (43**) | (13*) "... do not own cork products" (27**) |
| (6*) "... familiar with Portuguese cork" | | | |
| Strongly agreed | 7 | 7 | 2 |
| Agreed | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 9 / (32) | 9 / (43) | 4 / (27) |
| (16*) "...main reason for your preference towards cork" | | | |
| Technical characteristics | 14 | 18 | 7 |
| Sustainability/environmentally friendliness/ ecology | 10 | 14 | 12 |
| Innovation/ creativity/ elegance | 8 | 11 | 8 |
| (17*) "... I do prefer to buy products that are environmentally friendly" | | | |
| Strongly agreed | 12 | 13 | 7 |
| Agreed | 15 | 22 | 13 |
| Total | 27 / (32) | 25 / (43) | 20 / (27) |
| (19*) "... renovating floors or walls in my house/apartment, I would consider buying cork material" | | | |
| Strongly agreed | 12 | 16 | 3 |
| Agreed | 7 | 8 | 16 |
| Total | 19 / (32) | 24 / (43) | 19 / (27) |
| (20*) "... I would be willing to acquire cork home décor" | | | |
| Strongly agreed | 19 | 23 | 5 |
| Agreed | 12 | 17 | 17 |
| Total | 31 / (32) | 40 / (43) | 22 / (27) |
| (18*) "... interested in acquiring products that are made with this material? " | | | |
| Strongly agreed | | | 8 |
| Agreed | | | 15 |
| Total | | | 24 / (27) |

Legend:

(*) - Number of the Question from the Questionnaire

(**) - Number of respondents that selected this answer

The second table evaluates different questions in conjugation to those individuals who own cork products or have acquired cork products as well as those that do not own any cork products at all. The aim of the second table was in comparing the results between the consumers that own and do not own cork products.

Individuals that own cork products value more its technical features, whereas those who do not have cork products value more its sustainability, environmental friendliness, and ecology characteristics. Interest towards cork as home décor is higher than as a building material in both groups of respondents, those who own and do not own cork products. Additionally, it is interesting to observe that those who do not own any cork products, the majority of them responded that they would be interested in acquiring products made with this material.

9.4.2 B2B questionnaires

Table 5. Summary and main highlights from both B2B questionnaire results.

| Topics discussed in the questionnaires: | Cork as a building material (analysis of results) | Cork as a decoration material (analysis of results) |
|--|---|--|
| a. Decision-maker regarding which materials to use. | Mainly architects and clients | Mainly interior designers |
| b. Have you heard about cork material before? | All respondents answered affirmatively | |
| c. Knowledge about cork as a building/ decoration material. | Only 18% agreed to have knowledge about cork as a building material | Only 25% agreed to have good knowledge about cork as a decoration material |
| d. Is there enough knowledge about cork material in Finland? | 81,8% suggested that there is not enough knowledge | 75% suggested that there is not enough knowledge |
| e. Three most recognised cork features . | Lightweight, thermal and acoustic insulator | Lightweight; Renewable and Thermal insulator |
| f. Do you recognise cork as a natural, renewable and sustainable raw material? | 81,8% stated affirmatively | 75% stated affirmatively |
| g. Previous experience working with cork. | 81,8% had previous experience | 41,7% had previous experience |
| h. Key benefits of this material. | Mainly thermal and acoustic insulation; elasticity and lightness of the material | Mainly the softness, lightness of the material and availability of a wide color range |
| i. Interested to work with this material in your future projects. | 80% stated to have interest | All respondents stated to have interest |
| j. Constraints or challenges that can affect the usage of cork in Finland. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Weather wise it is not suitable for outdoors projects; > Also not suitable for environments which have moisture and humidity; > Finns have lack of skills and capabilities to work with the material; > Lack of information available about cork. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Limited distribution channels, long delivery time and language barriers with suppliers; > Expensive to source small amounts; > Low availability in stores. |
| k. Is there enough information available about cork products in Finland? | 72-75% suggested that there is not enough information | |
| l. Information channels (how did the professionals find out about cork?) | Mostly through social media or through co-workers (for example architects) | Mostly through own research by internet |
| m. Suggestions on how to raise awareness about cork in Finland. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Marketing campaigns focused on small and medium size companies (architects and designers' sectors); > Educating people about the material; > More technical information about cork to support Finnish professionals; > Advertising various ways of cork application. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > More products available in the stores > Educating consumer about cork products > Personal contact with design producers > Participating in exhibitions or trade fairs |

After analyzing each questionnaire separately, it was essential to develop a table that not only would summarize the main findings but also allow to compare the results between both B2B sectors. The main differences, as well as similarities, can be seen in table 5. Each topic is ordered in an alphabetic order to ease the analyses of the information shown in the table. Regarding decision making (row a), even though all the professionals who answered the B2B questionnaires could in fact utilize cork material, potential decision-makers according to the results, were architects and clients for cork as building materials and interior designers for cork

as a decoration material. Additionally, those professionals who have previous work experience with cork did share their opinion about the material in order to get some idea of how this material is seen in Finland, which was the main goal of the decision making chapter. All the professionals who took participation in the survey knew cork or have heard about cork material (row b). Nevertheless, in both questionnaires, there was a considerably small amount of professionals who knew about cork either as a building or decoration material (row c.). Also, in both questionnaires, the majority of respondents consider that there is not enough knowledge about the cork material in Finland (row d). Thus, the decision-maker's level of knowledge is very limited. The majority of respondents recognized cork as a natural, renewable, and sustainable raw material (row f). The biggest difference in results was observed in the question regarding the previous experience working with cork material, as the respondents had more work experience with cork as a building material than with cork as a decoration material (row g). In both cork application fields, the majority of the respondents were interested in working with cork material in future projects (row i), as well as, both agreed that there is not enough information about cork products in Finland (row k). Concerning the information channels (row l) professionals within the building sector found about cork mostly through social media/technical media and also through their co-workers or other architects, whereas within the decoration sector professionals found about cork mainly through online research, either by chance or while searching for decoration materials. The comparison between the results regarding, cork features, key benefits, constraints, and challenges can be seen from the table.

Finally, regarding segmentation, some slight differences between both cork application fields can be seen throughout the result analysis and as well as through the summary in table 5. In general, both cork as a building and cork as decoration material has potential in Finland, however, it must be taken into account that there might be a need of taking a different approach when marketing cork to each of these industrial sectors. For instance, regarding cork features professionals from the second B2B questionnaire recognized in the second place cork as being renewable, therefore this feature is more valuable to consider when presenting cork to the future interior or product designers, for example. Also, the professional fields chosen in chapter four (4.2) seemed to be suitable, according to the questionnaire results. The only professions added by the respondents were construction materials production and interior designer for cork as a building material and company creator, interior architect, and designer/artist for cork as a decoration material.

10 CONCLUSION

This chapter aims to present the final conclusions regarding the research findings, by pointing out the key information that should be taken into consideration after the research study has been conducted. Validity and reliability issues, discussion, and suggestions for future studies are also included in this chapter.

There are still doubts and questions that both professionals and consumers have regarding cork products and the material itself. There is a need to educate the consumer about cork, not only because certain professionals mentioned that the client is the decision-maker regarding the material but also, aspects related to cork's sustainability and eco-friendliness should be further explained to the Finnish consumers. Also, not only the Finnish consumers but also some professionals mentioned that even though they heard about cork, they never thought of using it as they were not aware of its features, benefits, or the various ways of using the material. Generally, even though in all the questionnaires, there were individuals who either bought cork products or had work experience with the material, the knowledge/ awareness about the most popular origin of the material is not so known. This is to say that the majority is not familiar with Portuguese cork. Additionally, in all three questionnaires, it can be observed a quite positive attitude from most of the respondents towards the interest in cork products and cork materials in the upcoming future, which supports the idea that there is potential for cork in the Finnish market.

10.1 Validity and reliability

As already mentioned, the thesis topic selected to be researched is quite vague and it can be approached from various perspectives. Hence, there is not a single tool or way of studying this topic. Nevertheless, the method selected for this particular study showed to be appropriate for the kind of research problem that there was initially, as well as relevant concerning the way the solutions were obtained. Thus, the survey method consisting of three tailor-made questionnaires utilized in this thesis were able to yield such results that would enable to measure the topic itself. Besides, ideally, the research findings would be utilized or considered immediately or during the first year after this thesis has been concluded, as its validity will decline as time goes. This is mainly due you the way business may evolve nowadays. Today perhaps cork is not so common in Finland, however, in a year more Finns might be buying cork products for whatever reasons it is. There might be a chance that in a few years cork gets more

popular in Finland, after that happening findings from this research will not be up to date in those times anymore. However even if reality changes, these research findings may be still be used as a comparison tool, for example. Thus, in regard to validity, the results have the most value in be beginning, meaning from the moment the thesis is published. Hence, later on, its validity cannot be assured.

When it comes to reliability, is it important to evaluate this aspect from the following perspective: "How reliable was the B2B research even though there were not so many respondents?" In this research, the author considered that the results of the B2B study were not about quantity, rather it was about quality. This is, the professionals who participated in the survey were able to share their knowledge by answering the open-ended questions, as well as providing a significant set of information regarding cork. Moreover, throughout the analysis of the B2B questionnaire results, it seemed that the responses were not providing any new information, and so it is believed that there was nothing else significantly important to be found. Additionally, the author of the thesis strived to keep objectivity throughout the entire writing process. The methodology chapter was developed based on peer-reviewed sources, official websites, books, and articles. Likewise, the empirical study, especially the analysis of the results were written objectively, meaning that any observations or conclusions made were based exclusively on the respondent's answers.

10.2 Discussion

Generally speaking, the thesis topic and its main idea were accomplished from the beginning until the end of the thesis writing process. Hence, the research study can be considered as completed successfully. Even though the response rate was hoped to be higher, concerning the professionals' questionnaires, the study was still able to gather relevant results and information needed to answer the research questions. All the answers to the research questions specified in the first chapter are available in the results of the empirical part in chapter nine.

Regarding the B2B questionnaires, these were sent to over four hundred professionals, and yet a total of 22 replied. Some of the reasons that might have been the cause of the low response rate of both B2B questionnaires are as follows. For instance, due to concerns of language barriers which could potentially contribute to a low response rate the decision was to

translate the B2C questionnaire to Finnish. This decision was done also because if a questionnaire is not in the respondents' mother tongue that could eventually make people less willing to answer it. According to the author's opinion, this was a quite good decision, since a large number of people responded to it. On the contrary, the B2B questionnaires were not translated to Finnish, and even though, the English level in Finland is very good, that could still be a possible reason why there were not more respondents. The author believes that if these two questionnaires would have also been translated, they could have made the professionals more comfortable and more willing to answer. Still, it is important to point out that the same was not done with the B2B questionnaires because the author is not fluent in Finnish and so that would have made the entire thesis process much more complicated and time-consuming. This is not to mention that the fact that the author did three questionnaires for this thesis was already a quite challenging task, which required a lot of time and effort regarding the development of questionnaires, forwarding each of them to potential respondents and essentially to make the analysis.

Another reason or potential assumption could be that not so many professionals know about cork and only those that have heard about this material responded to the questionnaire, since the results showed that everyone who participated in the survey had some knowledge about cork material. Also, perhaps the author did not know or had enough professional connections which would have aid in the spreading of the questionnaires to the right target groups. This is to say that, it is possible that the way on how these questionnaires were sent, to the respondents' email, was not the most efficient way after all. These are some of the reasons that the author has thought of, however, there might be several others of which there is no awareness about.

Furthermore, some other challenges were encountered throughout the writing process. Some concerning language barriers, for instance, the author was only able to gather information about cork from Portuguese and English sources. Perhaps more information could have been gathered about cork in Finland if the author had good Finnish skills, as the translator is not always as helpful as it seems. Also, it was quite impossible to reach some professionals due to their busy schedules. Posting the questionnaires in Finnish Facebook groups was not as easy as initially thought. Some groups did not authorize the questionnaire to be posted, and others did not even accept the request to join the group itself.

10.3 Future studies

To some extent, the possibilities with this topic can be seen as endless, as there is still so much that could be researched. For instance, the commissioned company gave some suggestions about aspects that were not present in the questionnaires. As for the consumer questionnaire, there could be added a question about the added value of cork. At the level of cork stoppers, *“we have the perception that consumers are willing to pay more for a wine that is sealed with a cork stopper, precisely because they recognize values in cork and so claim to be willing to pay more to have these values (natural, sustainable, ecological, etc.)”*. This question could be also applied to other products, for example, floors, coverings, etc. In addition to the perception of value, it would be interesting to ask about the willingness to buy, for example, if between two identical products the consumer would buy the cork product. This is if the consumer would eventually buy the product, rather than just affirming it's interest for cork. At the level of architects and people linked to construction, perhaps it would still be interesting to see if they advise the use of cork to their customers. *“We know that seller's advice are essential in this construction market because they largely influence the final consumer”*.

Other things that could be considered: There is the entire logistics sphere that could be looked into and perhaps even the various ways on how to transport cork; or how to create the most efficient supply chain. Someone could do a similar study like this one but conduct it entirely in Finnish, and preferably someone who has a professional network or is an expert either in interior design or construction spheres. Explore more the areas of marketing and promotion, for instance, develop a promotional campaign for a specific cork application field or explore how raising brand awareness through inbound marketing in B2B.

In the author's opinion, this topic still has a lot to be discussed and a lot can be researched to draw more precise conclusions. It is all up to students and companies to find out the next topic to be analyzed concerning cork in Finland.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. List of exporters for the selected product (45 Cork and articles of cork)

Appendix 2. List of importing markets for the product “45 Cork and articles of cork” exported by Portugal

Appendix 3. List of supplying markets for a product imported by Finland

Appendix 4. Examples of products from the “Home” category offered by Artbycork

Appendix 5. Cork Wall design in Oodi Helsinki Central Library

Appendix 6. Examples of Pussykka´s cork products

Appendix 7. Examples of Pilateskauppa´s cork products

Appendix 8. B2C questionnaire (Finnish version with English translation)

Appendix 9. B2B questionnaire – cork as a building material

Appendix 10. B2B questionnaire – cork as a decoration material

Appendix 1. List of exporters for the selected product (45 Cork and articles of cork)

ITC **TRADE MAP - INTERNATIONAL TRADE STATISTICS**
Trade statistics for international business development
Monthly, quarterly and yearly trade data. Import & export values, volumes, growth rates, market shares, etc.

Home & Search Data Availability Reference Material Other ITC Tools More Login English

Product: 45 - Cork and articles of cork Product Group: None
 World Country: All Country Group: None
 Partner: All Partner Group: None
 other criteria: Exports Yearly time series by country Share in value in % Euro

List of exporters for the selected product
Product: 45 Cork and articles of cork

Table Graph Map Companies

Download: Time Period (number of columns): 5 per page Rows per page: Default (25 per page)

| HS4 | Exporters | Share in value in world's exports, % in 2015 | Share in value in world's exports, % in 2016 | Share in value in world's exports, % in 2017 | Share in value in world's exports, % in 2018 | Share in value in world's exports, % in 2019* |
|-----|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| | World | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Portugal i | 62.6 | 62.4 | 61.4 | 63.4 | 61.4 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Spain i | 16 | 16.8 | 18.3 | 17 | 18.7 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> France i | 4.4 | 4.5 | 5.1 | 4.9 | 5.4 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Italy i | 3.3 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 3.1 | 2.5 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Germany i | 2 | 2 | 1.8 | 1.6 | 1.7 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> China i | 1.4 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.3 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> United States of America i | 1.9 | 1.9 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 1.2 |


Source: ITC 2019b

Appendix 2. List of importing markets for the product “45 Cork and articles of cork” exported by Portugal

| Importers | Exported value in 2019 |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| World | 1,063,430 |
| 1. France | 189,275 |
| 2. United States of America | 180,077 |
| 3. Spain | 158,920 |
| 4. Italy | 104,448 |
| 5. Germany | 77,926 |
| 6. United Kingdom | 43,533 |
| 7. Russian Federation | 37,617 |
| 8. Chile | 26,868 |
| 9. Mexico | 23,665 |
| 10. China | 21,300 |
| 11. Australia | 20,450 |
| 12. Argentina | 12,712 |
| 13. Switzerland | 11,266 |
| 14. Netherlands | 10,339 |
| 15. Belgium | 10,145 |
| 16. South Africa | 9,041 |
| 17. Poland | 8,548 |
| 18. Canada | 8,096 |
| 19. Austria | 7,799 |
| 20. Japan | 7,394 |
| 21. Brazil | 6,741 |
| 22. Georgia | 6,199 |
| 23. Finland | 5,161 |




Source: ITC 2019a

Appendix 3. List of supplying markets for a product imported by Finland

List of supplying markets for a product imported by Finland ⁱ
 Product: 4504 Agglomerated cork, with or without a binding substance, and articles of agglomerated cork (excluding ... )

Unit: %

Table | Graph | Map | Companies

Download    Time Period (number of columns): 5 per page Rows per page: Default (25 per page) 1/2

| Bilateral 4 digits | Exporters | Share in value in Finland's imports, % in 2015 | Share in value in Finland's imports, % in 2016 | Share in value in Finland's imports, % in 2017 | Share in value in Finland's imports, % in 2018 | Share in value in Finland's imports, % in 2019 ^v |
|--------------------------|----------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| | World | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Portugal | 91.3 | 89 | 91 | 90 | 83.4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Germany | 2.2 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 1.2 | 10.9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | China | 2.4 | 4.2 | 3.1 | 4.5 | 2.7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Italy | 0.2 | 0.3 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sweden | 1.7 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 0.4 | 0.5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Poland | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Switzerland | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.5 | 0.2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Taipei_Chinese | 0.1 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.2 |

Source: ITC 2019c

Appendix 4. Examples of products from the “Home” category offered by Artbycork



Cork Organic Blocks (ARTBYCORK 2020b)



Cork Bricks (ARTBYCORK 2020c)



Primecork Panels (ARTBYCORK 2020d)



Korkstone (ARTBYCORK 2020e)



Cork Wallpaper (ARTBYCORK 2020f)



Cork Stool (ARTBYCORK 2020g)

Appendix 5. Cork Wall design in Oodi Helsinki Central Library



Source: Murrato 2017b

Appendix 6. Examples of Pussykka´s cork products



Source: Pussykka 2020

Appendix 7. Examples of Pilateskauppa's cork products



Casall Natural
Bamboo Pressure
Point Ball fascia
ball



Casall Travel
Massage Roll
Natural Cork



Casall Natural
Cork Eco Glass
Bottle 0,5L



Casall Natural
Cork Yoga Mat
Bag



Casall Yoga Mat
Natural Cork 5mm



Casall Natural
Cork Pressure
Point Ball



Casall Natural
Cork Yoga Wheel



Casall Natural
Cork Yoga Block
Yoga Brick (cap)



Casall Tube Roll
Natural Cork

Source: Pilateskauppa

Appendix 8. B2C questionnaire (Finnish version with English translation)

Korkki

Hei,

Tarvitsen apuasi kyselyyn, jonka teen opinnäytetyötäni varten. Kyse on korkista rakennus- ja koristemateriaalina!

Tiedätkö mitä on korkki? Varmaankin olet kuullut korkkitulpista, joita käytetään viinipullojen sulkemiseen, mutta tiedätkö enemmän tästä materiaalista? Olisin kiitollinen, jos voisit jakaa tietosi kanssani!

Osana opinnäytetyötäni olen käynnistänyt verkkokyselyn, jonka tarkoituksena on ymmärtää, kuinka paljon suomalaiset tietävät korkista rakennus- ja koristemateriaalina.

Tutkimus on anonymi ja kohdennettu suomalaisille (yli 18-vuotiaille).

Kiitos etukäteen panoksestasi!

Hello,

I need your help with the survey I am doing for my thesis. It is about cork as a building and decoration material!

Do you know what is Cork? Perhaps you have heard about cork stoppers, the one used to close wine bottles, but do you know anything more about this material? I would appreciate if you could share your knowledge with me!

On the basis of conducting research for my bachelor thesis in International Business at Seinäjoki university of Applied sciences I have launched an online survey, which aims to understand how much Finns know about cork as building and decoration material.

The survey is anonymous and targets Finnish consumers (18+).

Thank you in advance for your contribution!

*Required

1. Oletko Suomen kansalainen? * (Are you a Finnish citizen?)

Kyllä (Yes)

Ei (No)

2. Sukupuoli * (Gender)

Mies (Male)

Nainen (Female)

3. Ikä * (Age)

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 55+

4. Valitse asuinpaikkasi * (Select your region of residence)

- Uusimaa
- Varsinais-Suomi
- Satakunta
- Kanta-Häme
- Pirkanmaa
- Päijät-Häme
- Kymenlaakso
- Etelä-Karjala
- Etelä-Savo
- Pohjois-Savo
- Pohjois-Karjala
- Keski-Suomi
- Etelä-Pohjanmaa
- Pohjanmaa
- Keski-Pohjanmaa
- Pohjois-Pohjanmaa
- Kainuu
- Lappi
- Ahvenanmaa
- Other: _____

5. Kuinka paljon olet samaa mieltä tämän väitteen kanssa? "Kun ajattelen korkkia, yhdistän sen korkkitulppiin" (korkkitulppa on esitetty kuvassa) * (How much do you agree with this statement "When I think of cork I associate it to cork stoppers"(cork stopper is illustrated in the picture))



- Täysin samaa mieltä (Strongly Agree)
- Samaa mieltä (Agree)
- Neutraali (Neutral)
- Eri mieltä (Disagree)
- Täysin eri mieltä (Strongly Disagree)

6. "Minä tiedän, mitä on portugalilainen korkki" * ("I am very familiar with Portuguese cork")

- Täysin samaa mieltä (Strongly Agree)
- Samaa mieltä (Agree)
- Neutraali (Neutral)
- Eri mieltä (Disagree)
- Täysin eri mieltä (Strongly Disagree)

7. Oletko koskaan kiinnostunut korkista valmistetuista tuotteista? * (Have you ever been interested in products made with cork?)

- Kyllä (Yes)
- Ei (No)
- En tiedä (I do not know)

8. Valitse enintään kolme kohdetta, joissa mielestäsi korkkia voidaan käyttää: * (Select up to three application fields you know in which cork can be utilized)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Muoti, asusteet / korut ja kengät | (Fashion, Accessories/ Jewellery and Shoes) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Urheilutuotteet | (Sport products) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soittimet | (Musical instruments) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Koriste-esineet ja kodinkoneet | (Decoration objects and domestic utility) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rakennusmateriaali | (Construction material) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Huonekalut | (Furniture) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taidesuunnittelu | (Art design) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lelut | (Toys) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ei mitään | (None) |

Other: _____

9. Valitse enintään kolme asiaa, jotka mielestäsi kuvaavat korkkia (Jos et ole varma, mikä korkki on, vastaa kuvista saamasi vaikutelman mukaan.

Korkkielementit näkyvät ruskeana / keltaisena): * (Select up to three concepts you associate cork with (If you are not sure what cork is, respond according to the impression you get from the pictures. Cork elements can be seen in brown/yellow colour))



- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laatu | (Quality) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Luonto | (Nature) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ympäristöystävällinen materiaali | (Environmentally friendly material) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jalo materiaali | (Noble material) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ekologinen | (Ecology) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ei mikään | (None) |

Other: _____

10. Mitkä seuraavista asioista jo tiesit? * (Which of the following facts you already knew?)

- K-rauta myy korkkituotteita, kuten: lattiapäällysteitä, lamppuja ja tuoleja (K-rauta sells cork products such as: floor covering, lamp, and chair)
- Artbycork on nouseva korkkisuunnitteluun erikoistunut suomalainen tuotemerkki (Artbycork is an emerging Finnish brand specialized in cork design)
- Korkkipiste tarjoaa korkkilattioita, seinäkoristeita sekä muita korkkituotteita (Korkkipiste offeres cork floors, wall decoration, and other cork products)
- Korkkilattia -brändit, kuten "Wincanders" tai "Amorim Wise" (Cork Flooring brands such as "Wincanders" or "Amorim Wise")
- Pussykka-yritys valmistaa tuotteita korkkimateriaalista luomukokoelmaansa varten- (Pussykka company manufactures products from cork material for its organic collection)
- Suomen Urheilu- ja Fitnesskauppa Oy; Korkki Kauppa; Korkki24.fi ovat verkkokauppoja, jotka tarjoavat korkkituotteita (Suomen Urheilu- ja Fitnesskauppa Oy; Korkki Kauppa; Korkki24.fi are online stores that offer cork products)

Other: _____

11. Oletko viimeisen viiden vuoden aikana ostanut korkkituotteita Suomesta? * (During the previous 5 years, have you bought any cork products in Finland?)

- Kyllä (muu tuote kuin pullo, jossa korkkitulppa) (Yes, products other than bottles with cork stoppers)
- Kyllä (vain pullot korkkitulpalla) (Yes, only bottles with cork stopper)
- Ei (No)

12. Oletko viimeisen viiden vuoden aikana ostanut korkkituotteita ulkomailta tai ollessasi ulkomailla? * (During the previous 5 years, have you bought any cork products from abroad or while being abroad?)

- Kyllä (muu tuote kuin pullo, jossa korkkitulppa) (Yes, products other than bottles with cork stoppers)
- Kyllä (vain pullot korkkitulpalla) (Yes, only bottles with cork stopper)
- Ei (No)

13. Kuinka monta korkkituotetta omistat? * (How many cork products do you own?)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4+
- En yhtään (None)

14. Kuinka usein ostat korkkituotteita? * (How frequently do you buy cork products?)

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Hyvin usein (kerran kuukaudessa) | Very often (once in a month) |
| <input type="radio"/> Joskus (kerran kolmessa kuukaudessa) | Sometimes (once in three months) |
| <input type="radio"/> Toisinaan (kerran vuodessa) | Occasionally (once in a year) |
| <input type="radio"/> Harvoin (kerran muutamassa vuodessa) | Rarely (once in few years) |
| <input type="radio"/> En koskaan | Never |

15. Jos sinulla on korkkituotteita kotona, mihin kategoriaan se kuuluu? * (If you have cork products at home, to which category it belongs)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Korkkiseinät | (Cork walls) |
| <input type="radio"/> Korkkilattia | (Cork flooring) |
| <input type="radio"/> Koriste-esineet (kuten huonekalut, taiteelliset elementit, lamput, maljakot ...) | (Decoration item- such as furniture, artistic elements, lamps, vases...) |
| <input type="radio"/> Minulla ei ole korkkituotteita | (I do not have cork products) |
| Other: _____ | |

16. Jos ostaisit korkkituotteita tai harkitsisit ostamista tulevaisuudessa, mikä olisi tärkein syy korkkimateriaalin valitsemiseen? (If you buy cork products, or if you would consider buying in the future, what would be the main reason for your preference towards cork?)

- Tekniset ominaisuudet (eristysominaisuudet, keveys, pehmeys, läpäisemättömyys)
- Kestävyys / ympäristöystävällisyys / ekologia (luonnollinen, biohajoava, uusiutuva ja kierrätettävä materiaali)
- Innovaatio / luovuus / eleganssi (mielenkiintoinen muotoilu, tyylikkyys, ainutlaatuisuus, yksilöllisyys)
- Other: _____

(Technical characteristics - insulation properties, lightness, softness, impermeability)

(Sustainability/environmentally friendliness/ ecology - natural, biodegradable, renewable and recyclable material)

(Innovation/ creativity/ elegance - interesting design, stylish, uniqueness, individuality)

17. Mitä mieltä olet seuraavasta? "Olen tietoinen kestävästä kulutuksesta ja sen tärkeydestä, joten ostan mieluummin ympäristöystävällisiä tuotteita" *
(How much do you agree with the statement "I am aware of the importance of sustainable consumption and so I do prefer to buy products that are environmentally friendly?")

- Täysin samaa mieltä (Strongly Agree)
- Samaa mieltä (Agree)
- Neutraali (Neutral)
- Eri mieltä (Disagree)
- Täysin eri mieltä (Strongly Disagree)

Kuinka paljon olet samaa mieltä seuraavasta väitteestä: (How much do you agree with the following statements)

"Cork is a natural, environmentally friendly material. It biodegrades completely and can be easily recycled without producing any toxic residues."

18. "Tämä tieto herätti minussa isomman kiinnostuksen hankkia tuotteita, jotka on valmistettu tästä materiaalista" * ("I am aware of the importance of sustainable consumption and so I do prefer to buy products that are environmentally friendly?")

- Täysin samaa mieltä (Strongly Agree)
- Samaa mieltä (Agree)
- Neutraali (Neutral)
- Eri mieltä (Disagree)
- Täysin eri mieltä (Strongly Disagree)

“Cork material acts as acoustic and thermal insulation, meaning less sound and more energy efficiency. Besides it is a durable material and easy to take care for.”

19. "Jos remontoisin taloni / huoneistoni lattiat tai seinät, harkitsisin korkkimateriaalin ostamista? (“Knowing that makes me more interested in acquiring products that are made with this material?”)



- Täysin samaa mieltä (Strongly Agree)
- Samaa mieltä (Agree)
- Neutraali (Neutral)
- Eri mieltä (Disagree)
- Täysin eri mieltä (Strongly Disagree)

20. "Tietäen tämän materiaalin ominaisuudet, olisin valmis ostamaan korkista valmistettuja sisustus-esineitä" (Esimerkkejä kuvasta) * (“Knowing the characteristics of this material, I would be willing to acquire cork home décor” (Examples on the picture)



- Täysin samaa mieltä (Strongly Agree)
- Samaa mieltä (Agree)
- Neutraali (Neutral)
- Eri mieltä (Disagree)
- Täysin eri mieltä (Strongly Disagree)

21. Jos omistat korkista valmistettuja tuotteita, mistä sait tietoa tuotteesta? Toisin sanoen, mistä kuulit korkkituotteista? (esimerkiksi Internet, yritys, myyjä, sosiaalinen media, ystävät .) (If you own products made with cork, where did you get information about the product/s? In other words, from where did you hear about cork products? (for example, internet, company, salesperson, social media, friends....))

22. Kommentoi kyselyä tai lisää ajatuksiasi korkkituotteesta: (Feel free to comment on the survey or add your thoughts about cork product.)

Appendix 9. B2B questionnaire – cork as a building material

Cork as a building material (Opinnäytetyön tutkimus)

On the basis of conducting research for my bachelor thesis in International Business at Seinäjoki university of Applied sciences, I have launched an online survey.

I am doing research work aiming to understand what Finnish companies and individual professionals know about cork as a building material. Additionally, it also aims in understanding the material's potential in the Finnish market.

The survey and its results will be processed anonymously and used only for the result and conclusion parts of the thesis.

Thank you in advance for your contribution!

***Required**

1. Select your professional field: *

- Builder
- Building constructor manager
- Architect
- Building engineer
- Other: _____

2. Work experience in the industry field: *

- Less than 5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-20 years
- more than 20 years

3. Select the company's location (business location): *

- Uusimaa
- Varsinais-Suomi
- Satakunta
- Kanta-Häme
- Pirkanmaa
- Päijät-Häme
- Kymenlaakso
- Etelä-Karjala
- Etelä-Savo
- Pohjois-Savo
- Pohjois-Karjala
- Keski-Suomi
- Etelä-Pohjanmaa
- Pohjanmaa
- Keski-Pohjanmaa
- Pohjois-Pohjanmaa
- Kainuu
- Lappi
- Ahvenanmaa
- Other: _____

4. What is the managerial position that makes the decision about the raw material utilized by the company? Who is the person or persons responsible for selecting the materials? *

5. Have you heard about cork material? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

How much do you agree with the following two statements:

6. "I am very familiar with Portuguese cork" *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7. "I have very good knowledge about cork as a building material" *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. Is there enough knowledge about cork material in Finland? *

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

9. Select up to three cork features that you recognize: *

- Lightweight
- Elastic
- Compressible
- Impermeable to liquids
- Impermeable to most of gases
- Thermal insulator
- Acoustic insulator
- Slow burning
- Antistatic
- Anti-allergic
- Wear resistance
- Biodegradable
- Recyclable
- Renewable
- None of the above

Other: _____

10. Do you recognize cork as a natural, renewable and sustainable raw material? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

11. Choose up to three options you know on how cork material can be used.
Concerning building of houses or other properties, cork can be applied as: *

- Insulation in inclined roofs
- Insulation of flat and metallic roofs
- Facade insulation
- Insulation of indoor walls
- Covering for indoor walls
- Covering for indoor floors
- None of the above

Other: _____

12. Have you had previous experience in working with cork as a building material? *.

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

13. If you answered “yes” in the previous question, please briefly describe how often and with what cork materials/ products you have worked with?

14. If you have experience working with cork as a building material, what in your opinion are the key benefits of this material comparing to other similar natural materials, such as timber., for example?

15. If you have no experience working with cork, would you be interested to work with cork in your future projects, after reading this brief description below?

“Cork is a natural, recyclable, renewable raw material that plays an important role in the reduction of greenhouse gases. Over recent years, it has been gaining prominence in the area of sustainable and eco-efficient construction, mainly due to its thermal insulation, and acoustic and vibration isolation properties.

In addition to its insulation capacity, cork presents a series of other characteristics that make it a raw material that offers a broad field of applications in building construction and rehabilitation.

It is a waterproof, lightweight material with high flexibility and compressibility, resistant to moisture, friction, and abrasion. Using cork improves the quality of buildings, indoor air, and comfort.”

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

16. Are you aware of any constrains or challenges in utilizing cork material in the Finnish constructions? *

17. "The Finnish weather conditions certainly limits the use of cork products in building construction" how much do you agree with this sentence? *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

18. If you agree with the previous statement, please specify in what way it could be challenging to use cork in Finnish building construction?

19. Is there enough information available about cork material in Finland? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

20. If you have known and used cork products, how did you find out about them? (e.g. social media, through a company, friends...)

21. In your opinion, what could help in raising awareness of cork material in Finland or how it could be better promoted? *

22. Feel free to comment on the survey or add your thoughts about cork as a building material:

Appendix 10. B2B questionnaire – cork as a decoration material

Cork as a decoration material (Opinnäytetyön tutkimus)

On the basis of conducting research for my bachelor thesis in International Business at Seinäjoki university of Applied sciences, I have launched an online survey.

I am doing research work aiming to understand what Finnish companies and individual professionals know about cork as a decoration material. Additionally, it also aims in understanding the material's potential in the Finnish market.

The survey and its results will be processed anonymously and used only for the result and conclusion parts of the thesis.

Thank you in advance for your contribution!

***Required**

1. Select your professional field:*

- Interior decorator
- Interior designer
- Product designer
- Other: _____

2. Work experience in the industry field: *

- less than 5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-20 years
- more than 20 years

3. Select the company's location (business location): *

- Uusimaa
- Varsinais-Suomi
- Satakunta
- Kanta-Häme
- Pirkanmaa
- Päijät-Häme
- Kymenlaakso
- Etelä-Karjala
- Etelä-Savo
- Pohjois-Savo
- Pohjois-Karjala
- Keski-Suomi
- Etelä-Pohjanmaa
- Pohjanmaa
- Keski-Pohjanmaa
- Pohjois-Pohjanmaa
- Kainuu
- Lappi
- Ahvenanmaa
- Other: _____

4. What is the managerial position that makes the decision about the materials utilized for decoration purposes? Who decides which materials to use? *

5. Have you heard about cork material? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

How much do you agree with the following two statements:

6. "I am very familiar with Portuguese cork" *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7. "I have very good knowledge about cork as a decoration material" *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8. Is there enough knowledge about cork material in Finland? *

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

9. Select up to three cork features that you recognize: *

- Lightweight
- Elastic
- Compressible
- Impermeable to liquids
- Impermeable to most of gases
- Thermal insulator
- Acoustic insulator
- Slow burning
- Antistatic
- Anti-allergic
- Wear resistance
- Biodegradable
- Recyclable
- Renewable
- None of the above

Other: _____

10. Do you recognize cork as a natural, renewable and sustainable raw material? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

11. Select up to three options you know on how cork material can be used.

Concerning home décor products, cork can be applied to: *

- Furniture
- Lamps
- Vases
- Kitchen tools
- Frames
- Bathroom decor products
- Tableware
- None of the above

Other: _____

12. Have you had previous experience in working with cork as a decoration material? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

13. If you answered “yes” in the previous question, please briefly describe how often and with what cork materials/ products you have worked with?

14. If you have experience working with cork as a decoration material, what in your opinion are the key benefits of this material comparing to other similar natural materials, such as timber, for example?

15. If you have no experience working with cork, would you be interested to work with this material in your future projects, after reading the brief description below?

“Cork is a natural, recyclable, renewable raw material that plays an important role in the reduction of greenhouse gases. It is lightweight totally impermeable to liquids and most of gases, elastic, compressible, great thermal and acoustic insulator, slow burning, antistatic, anti-allergic and wear resistance. Additionally, it is pleasant to touch and has an interesting aesthetical appearance.

Over recent years, it has been gaining prominence in the area of sustainable and eco-efficient designs. The industry is coming to realize that cork is a very resistant waterproof material and of course eco-friendly since its extraction doesn't harm trees as the barks just grow back. Thus, this natural raw material is environmentally friendly.

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

16. Do recognize any constraints or challenges that can affect the usage of cork products for decoration purposes in Finland? *

17. How much do you agree with the statement “I could consider using cork décor products to decorate interiors or use cork material in some other professional projects” (Examples on the picture) *



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

18. Is there enough information available about cork products in Finland? *

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

19. If you have known and used cork products, how did you find out about them? (e.g. social media, through a company, friends...)

20. In your opinion, what could help in raising awareness of cork material in Finland or how it could be better promoted? *

21. Feel free to comment on the survey or add your thoughts about cork as a material:
