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Examining Company X's Competitors and Potential Alliance Partners

Overview of cultures

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
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Examining Company X's Competitors and Potential Alliance Partners. Overview of Cultures.		
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<p>The objective for this thesis was to examine the value of researching competitors and potential alliance partners when a company is planning to expand abroad. In addition, one goal was to find out how business cultures differ around the world, and how should a Finnish company consider them.</p> <p>The thesis was ordered by Company X who wanted to find information about their competitors and potential alliance partners. The firm also wanted to know about how cultures may affect international business. In addition, the value of researching competitors and potential alliance partners was examined.</p> <p>The research regarding Company X's competitors and potential alliance partners was quantitative although the details were not uncovered in this work. By searching information from Google, 54 affiliate networks were accepted into the list of potential alliance partners, and 115 other type of potential alliance partners were found.</p> <p>Theoretical information about competitors, alliance partners and cultures were found through literature review. In addition, few informal online sources were used to get confirmation for the theoretical information.</p> <p>The literature review showed that researching the competitors may save time and money, because with enough information about the competitor's products, the company can differentiate their own goods. It also showed that forming an alliance with local party may be requirement in some countries for entering the market, and that alliances may be also needed for financial reasons and for marketing purposes. It also became clear that cultures affect negotiations strongly, and that if one does not study the culture beforehand, it may lead to unsuccessful negotiation.</p>		
<p><u>Key words</u> alliance partners, B2B, competitors, cultures, international business, negotiations,</p>		

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1 INTRODUCTION

According to the 2021 SME barometer, 23% of Finnish small and medium size enterprises do international business. The barometer also reports that those companies which have strong will to grow, more likely operate internationally than other companies. (Suomen Yrittäjät, Finnvera Oyj & Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2021, p. 25) However, probably most firms start their businesses in their home countries. The question is, what should companies do before they expand abroad?

The subject is topical for many startups which typically aim to grow fast, and often they have a goal to operate abroad as well. In some countries, willingness to do international business is even one of the terms for getting startup allowance. (Business Finland, n.d., Enterprise Ireland, n.d.)

This thesis approaches the subject from one company's point of view. Company X is a startup which has customers everywhere in Finland. It started 2017 from one city, and it quickly expanded nationwide. Now it is time for the company to consider expanding once again. There are many matters to consider such as researching competitors, potential alliance partners, and affiliate networks in addition to various cultures around the world.

Even though this thesis talks about cultures of countries, it is important to remember that there are also many "subcultures", and because people are individuals, they do not all behave same way. This means that if this thesis claims that for example Americans negotiate in a certain way, it does not mean that every single American act like that. Reasons for why people act differently may be for example "geographic location, religion or ethnical background." In addition, people in some professions may have subcultures which differentiates them from their fellow countrymen. (Albaum, Duerr & Josiassen, 2017, p. 138, Guirdham, 2005, p.63)

2 RESEARCH SETTING AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

For Company X to get proper knowledge of its possibilities, it needs information about its competitors, potential alliance partners in addition to advertisement affiliate networks.

The purpose for this thesis is to search those potential alliance partners and advertisement affiliate networks in addition to competitors, and make thorough research of them. However, the detailed information will not be published in this thesis because Company X wants to keep its expansion plans in secret. There are only few companies in Finland which operates in same industry, and Company X is only one which could potentially expand abroad. Nevertheless, the information about how many competitors and potential alliance partners were found from each country will be published.

In addition to researching Company X's competitors and potential alliance partners, the importance of knowing the competitors, and the value of having alliance partners will be studied.

The purpose is also to study the importance of knowing cultures in international business. This part will be published since it will not contain any secrets. Even though cultures are important while planning business to consumer marketing, this thesis will not study cultures from that perspective because the information is not needed yet. If the company makes business agreements with the potential alliance partners, the cultures will be then studied more thoroughly by Company X. The firm is planning to use the information of cultures to improve the chances of creating long-lasting relationships with potential alliance partners.

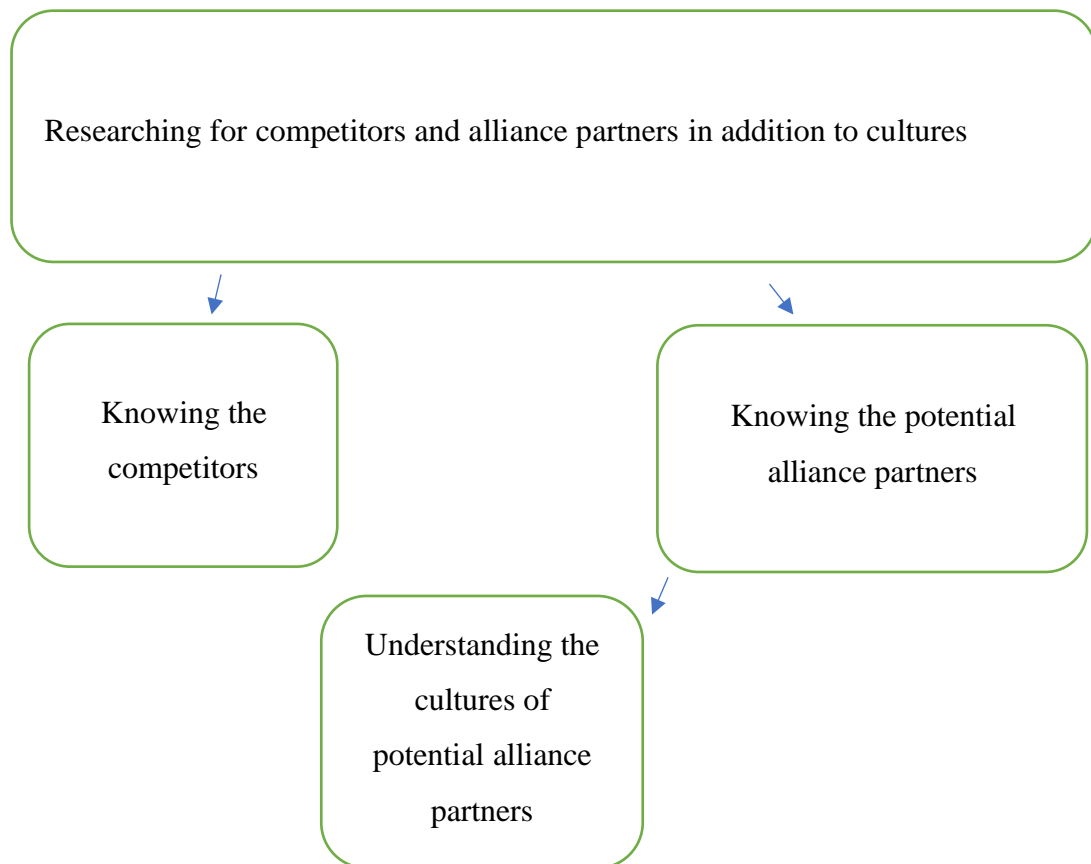
This research is limited because of lack of language skills. Therefore, the research will concentrate on the countries which use similar letters than Finnish. Within those languages, dictionaries will be used for finding the best search words for Google to find information.

In this thesis answers to the following questions will be searched:

1. Why is it important to study competitors?
2. What is the power of alliance partnership when a company is planning to expand to new markets?
3. How do cultures affect when a company is contacting potential alliance partners for the first time?
4. How do cultures affect negotiations and business relationships in the long run?

2.1 Conceptual framework

To find the information that the company needs, the competitors will be searched and studied. In addition, potential alliance partners such as advertisement affiliate networks will be explored because they are crucial for the company's expansion plan. Based on where the alliance partners are located, cultures will be also researched in terms of contacting and negotiating.



3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Before starting a research, a researcher must decide which methods he wants to use in gathering the information and analyzing it. There are three options to choose from: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Quantitative method includes “numeric data” and qualitative method “non-numeric data”. Often research is done by using both methods, and this is called a mixed method. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, pp. 175, 181)

Qualitative research requires the researcher to interpret the information that he gathers, and the research result is normally published in “the form of words”. Usually, the approach that is used is inductive. However, sometimes the research may start with deductive approach. In those cases, theories are tested with qualitative procedures. (Farthing, 2015, p. 151, Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, p. 175, 178)

Quantitative research differs from qualitative research so that it includes “numerical measuring”, and the results are possible to publish in a form of statistics or chart. Even though the information that is studied may have been originally “in the form of words”, the result is published as numbers, and “the approach is usually deductive”. (Farthing, 2015, p. 151, Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, pp. 178)

Mapping the competitors is done so that Company X would know how many of them are in which continent, and one goal is also to find out how much they charge of their services. Mapping the marketing affiliate networks is important so that the best networks could be found. Good network offers collaboration with well-known international brands and Company X is interested in knowing how many of those brands uses the networks. Mapping the potential alliance partners aims to find out their location, contact information in addition to their number of customers. Therefore, mapping these competitors, marketing affiliate networks and potential alliance partners is quantitative research.

In deductive approach theories are tested with existing information while inductive approach theory is build based on the information that is gathered through research. In

deductive approach the researcher already has a theory in mind, and he merely studies to find confirmation to his theory. Typically, in deductive approach, there are lot of literature available while in inductive approach literature may be difficult to find. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, p. 176, Business Research Methodology, n.d.) During their international business studies at SAMK, students learn that cultures play significant role in a long-lasting business relationship. They also learn that alliance partners can play significant role in the success of a business. This means that the literature review is deductive research because it aims to find support for the information that is already known beforehand.

Research includes a philosophical position. In “business and management” it is either positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism or pragmatism. The research regarding Company X’s competitors and potential business partners includes positivism. In positivism the research findings are unquestionable, and they cannot be molded based on opinions or “interpretation”. The method is usually deductive, and the findings are analyzed quantitatively, although analysis can include qualitative methods as well. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, p. 144, Business Research Methodology, n.d.)

Research may have “a descriptive, exploratory, explanatory or evaluative purpose”. Descriptive research aims to get precise information of something, and the research questions usually start with “what, who, where, when or how”. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, p. 187) Because mapping the competitor and potential business partners aims to find accurate information, and the questions are who the competitors and potential alliance partners are, where do they operate and how, it is descriptive research.

3.1 Data collection and analyzes

Primary data is information which is gathered through research to the researcher’s own work. (Institute for Work & Health, n.d.) Since mapping the competitors and potential alliance partners is done for Company X, the information is primary data. Competitors and potential business partners are searched through Google search, and online

dictionaries are used in finding as many competitors and potential alliance partners as possible.

Information about the competitors' geographic areas, publishing platforms in addition to services, customers and prices will be collected. In addition, all the affiliate networks will be listed, with the information of which brands they represent. Information about other potential alliance partners around the world will be also be gathered with their contact information and number of customers.

As mentioned earlier, the details will not be published in this work, but a chart will be shown to inform of how many companies were found from each continent. Some of the price information will be published as well, and this quantitative data will be analyzed by calculating mean which means "average", by mode which is a "number that occurs most often" and by median which is the number that is in the middle if all the numbers are listed in order of magnitude. (Tietoarkisto, n.d.)

Information will be searched through a literature review as well. A literature review may include "a summary of sources" but it usually includes commenting as well. The sources can be "books, websites or journal articles", and in most cases in business field, only recent information is useful. Also, comparing what various sources write about a specific topic is required. (University of North Carolina, n.d.) Information will be searched from various books, articles, and reliable websites. It will be compared and any contradictions between the sources will be brought up.

A literature review requires assessing what is being read, and justified opinions are also expected. Forms of literature reviews can be divided into five different forms.

From these, the review will be theoretical review which means that "existing theories" are introduced and compared. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, pp.76, 78,79) Just like research data, literature sources can be also divided into primary and secondary literature sources. Primary literature source is not published by "a commercial publisher", and it can be provided for example by a government, a university, or a company whereas secondary literature source is commercially published and it is for example a book or a journal. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019, p. 83) This thesis

will include primary literature sources such as universities' or governments' websites. However, most of the information will be from secondary literature sources such as books.

3.2 Reliability and validity

There is a limit for reliability regarding the research of competitors and potential alliance partners because very few countries write their websites in English or Finnish. Even though dictionaries are used in finding information, it may not be possible to translate every word from dozens of websites. In addition, finding reliable information in languages which are written in different letters than Finnish is uncertain.

The information that are found from books, websites and articles are more reliable because they are written by the researchers themselves or by the people who are specialist due to long experience in international business. However, because many books of cultures are written based on people's experiences, it is possible that the authors have interpreted some cultures incorrectly.

4 COMPETITOR RESEARCH

Knowing the competitors is crucial for a company which is expanding abroad. Doing the research before entering new markets can save "time and money", and those companies which do not observe their competitors are in biggest risk to fail. Companies often have something that differentiates them and knowing what that something is for the competitors helps the expanding firm to consider its own "uniqueness". Differentiation is important because customers pay attention to that, and they are attracted by what makes the company unique. Companies can compete for example in "quality, technology, reputation, image or pricing. (Albaum, Durrel & Josiassen, 2017, p. 149, Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen, 2016, p. 26, Ruskin-Brown, 2006, p. 39, 40, 62, Queensland Government, n.d.)

A company should be always aware of its competitors. Therefore, it needs information of how many competitors it has, and what “type” of companies they are. Information such as “products, pricing and marketing channels” are important to know. (Albaum, Durrel & Josiassen, 2017, p. 150)

Researching competitors can be very simple, and it can include for example searching for information from the competitors’ website, or it can include purchasing the competitors’ “products” to test them. Visiting the competitors’ premises, meeting them in “tradeshows”, reading their “reports” and searching actively for articles which are written of them can be also excellent ways to learn about the competitors. After gaining the relevant information, analyzing is crucial, and a company would benefit from assessing how the competitors are different from what it itself is offering. (Queensland Government, n.d., Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen, 2016, p. 93)

One way to get information about competitors is to discuss with their employees. Even though people most likely will not tell everything about their work, they may reveal something that is useful. Following competitors in social media may be also beneficial. In addition, observing who they hire can also reveal the state of the business in addition to where the firm is focusing on. (Michigan State University, 2019)

Information about competitors can be also found by reading “forums, blogs, customer complaint sites,” and other sites where people can tell their opinions about services and products. The services where customers get to rate companies can give valuable information for a company of themselves but also about their competitors. If for example the customers can give from 1 to 5 stars, and the product or service gets only 1 star, the company knows that it is not good, and that the customers can be easily convinced to change the service provider. If the service or product gets 2-4 stars, the customers are quite happy, but they may be willing to try other alternatives. However, if the product or service gets 5 stars, the customers will most likely stay loyal to the company. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen, 2016, pp. 94, 155)

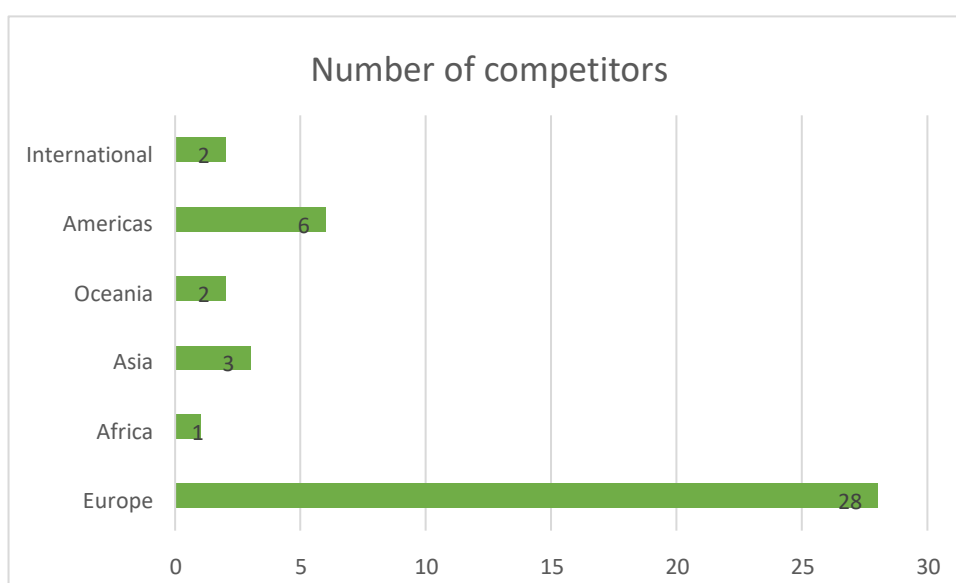
After analyzing the information, the company can decide to use “similar” strategy when entering new market than the competitor has used. This way the company may appeal to those customers which like the competitor’s brand. Another option is operating entirely differently, and through that attract customers. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen, 2016, 192)

4.1 Company X’s competitors

If Company X would decide to expand worldwide, the competitors would compete on reputation and image since Company X is known only in Finland. They may possibly compete on price as well.

Information about the competitors is quite easy to find by checking the companies’ websites and social media. What limits this research is that not all the websites are written in English or Finnish. Some of the information was found by joining the services. Customer satisfaction rating can be found from many companies, and in some cases, it might be possible to find out if they are hiring new personnel.

During this research, 42 competitors were found from those countries which uses same letters than Finnish. Below is a chart which shows where the competitors operate.



21 competitors are rated in websites where consumers get to write their opinions about the service and give from one to five stars based on their experiences. The mean of the grades is 3.7, the mode is 4, and median is also 4. The highest grade is 5 and the lowest is 1.7.

22 firms seem to offer the service for free for consumers, and information about 9 companies' prices were not found. Consumer prices of 11 services were found, and the mean of the prices is 17,60, the mode is 12, and the median is 14. Prices for businesses were not found from any of the websites.

5 ALLIANCE PARTNERS

In alliances companies collaborate with each other to reach a common and “individual” goals but they remain “independent.” The companies may choose to collaborate with other companies as well although contracts may limit on what type of alliances are created. (Slowinski & Sagal, 2003, p. 4, 11, Tjemkes, Vos & Burgers, 2012, p. 3) Alliances in international business may be crucial. Some countries may require a “foreign company” to make an alliance with their “government” if they want to do business in that country. Alliances with “local companies” should be also considered because they know what the local “people” want and need. In addition, branding in the new country is easier if a company has “local” alliances. (Rao, 2010, p. 66)

Other reasons why companies form alliances is that it may open them possibilities to get “access” to new “resources”. This may include “technology”, funds or information. Alliance can also be a step to increase production, and the company may even reach “economies of scale”. Other benefits of alliances are for example that companies have better possibilities in reaching their goals when they connect their resources. Alliances also helps in creating or maintaining competitive advantages. Reputations can be also improved or built by collaborations. (Tjemkes, Vos & Burgers, 2012, p. 4-6, Drummond & Ensor, 2005, p. 194)

However, even though alliances can be beneficial, they may require lot of work and risks as well. As the companies realize the benefits of the collaboration, they may also become vulnerable. To reduce risks, the company must invest time and effort in maintaining good business relationship. The companies may also want to protect themselves by terms of contract, so that they have time to react if the other party chooses to terminate the collaboration. (Tjemkes, Vos & Burgers, 2012, p. 3)

According to management consultants Hughes and Weiss, failing in international alliances is more common than succeeding in them. Their advice for companies is to concentrate on finding good ways “to work” with the alliance partners instead of concentrating on “business plans”. They recommend communicating a lot with how the companies make decisions and how they operate. They also encourage to see “the value” of “differences” instead of trying to mitigate them. (Hughes & Weiss, 2007)

Also, in a survey conducted by McKinsey & Company, business managers around the world replied that the biggest factor for successful international alliance is that the companies’ goals are in concordant. The second biggest factor was good communication. (De Backer & Rinaudo, 2019) Therefore, forming a long-lasting alliance partnership requires that companies make effort to communicate and understand each other.

Choosing partners requires searching information about potential partners, and then assessing their “strengths and weaknesses”. This step is crucial because the chances that international alliance fails is very “high” due to cultural issues. Other reasons for why alliances may fail are that companies may expect too much of the collaboration, or the parties may not trust each other. (Tjemkes, Vos & Burgers, 2012, pp. 31, 182)

In the process of choosing alliance partner, it is important to list potential partners which would “benefit” from the partnership. Examining their resources is also crucial. When the alliance partnership contract is made, “responsibilities” and duties of each party should be clearly written down. The “partners” should also meet “regularly” to discuss about how their collaboration is working, and to plan how they would like to continue their collaboration. (Randazzo, 2015, p.105, 106)

5.1 Company X's alliance partners

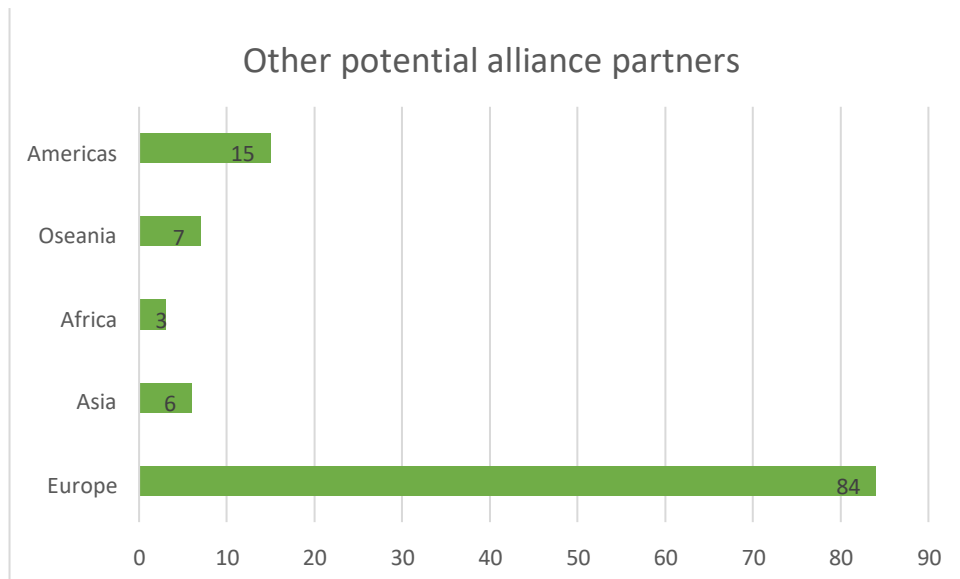
Company X has dozens of domestic and international alliance partners. Some of the domestic partners give Company X possibility to have large number of consumer customers. The partners benefit by getting a service which increases their customers' satisfaction. The service also saves the partners' time and money through digitalization.

The current international alliance partners are affiliate networks which helps Company X to reach international businesses. Some of them are middlemen who negotiate on behalf of their customers. The international partners benefit by getting more companies into their service.

There are at least two kind of affiliate networks. In this thesis affiliate network is a service which connects advertisers and publishers online. Usually, the publishers create the content which includes a link to the advertiser's website, and the payment is based on "sales". According to a study conducted by Forrester Consulting, "81 % of advertisers" and "84% of publishers" use affiliate networks as part of their "marketing". (Kenton, 2021, Forrester, 2016, p.3)

When suitable affiliate networks were searched for Company X, 54 were found around the world. Some affiliate networks were not considered suitable because their niche was gambling which does not interest Company X or their websites were written in some other language than in Finnish, English or Swedish.

During the research, 115 other type of potential alliance partners were found from all around the world. From these, 73% operate in Europe, 5% in Asia, 3% in Africa, 6 % in Oceania and 13% in America. Below is a chart which shows how many companies were found from each continent or area.

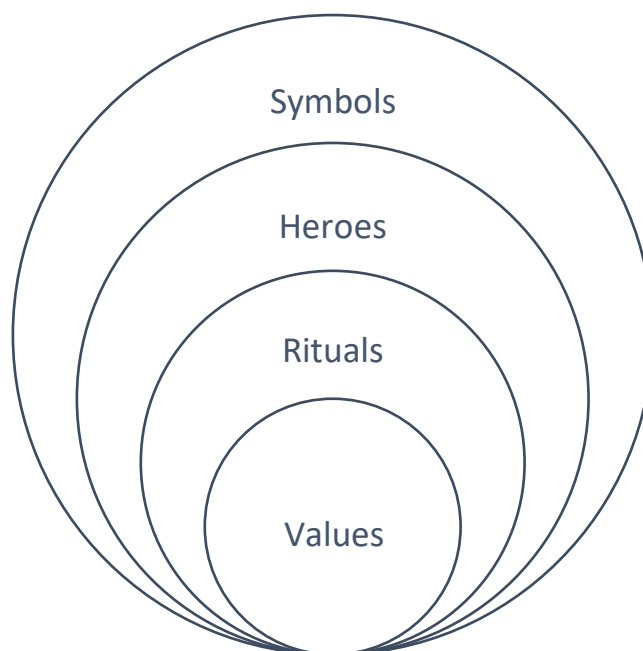


Some companies were not listed for Company X, and they are not included in these figures. There were firms that would interest Company X, but they operate in countries where the language is written in different characters than Finnish, and verification of these organizations' suitability could not be found. In addition, some companies were not considered potentially good alliance partners because of their values.

6 WHAT ARE CULTURES

"Cultures" are something that people "learn". They are not "genetic." Normally, there are no written "rules" which means that people who write books about cultures have interpreted cultures as they see them. (Baldwin, Means Coleman, Gonzáles, ShenoyPacker, 2014, 57, Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p.16)

According to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, "cultures" consists of "values, heroes, rituals and symbols". (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p.18) The following figure shows which of these are shallow and which are more profound.



There are some “words, gestures, pictures and objects” that have specific “meaning” for those people who are from a same “culture”. These are called “symbols”, and they include “words”, coiffure, clothing, “flags” and “status symbols”. It is the outer part of the figure because it is shallowest, and can be sometimes changed quickly. “Heroes” are people or characters who are “highly” appreciated in the culture. They can be even cartoon figures. “Rituals” are acts which are crucial in a “culture” although people could get matters done otherwise as well. “Rituals” include for example how people greet each other, and “social and religious ceremonies”. The most important part of culture consists of “values”, that is to say, how people feel about matters such as cleanliness, honesty, and “moral.” (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p.18-20)

Usunier and Lee’s idea of culture’s composition is slightly different, and gives additional information about the subject. They think that “culture” consists mainly of “language, institutions, material productions and symbolic productions”. In their opinion, “language” impacts on how people behave. “Institutions” includes families, “political institutions” or any “social organization” where obeying “rules” equals getting benefits. “Knowledge” and abilities are increased with the help of “material productions” which includes for example, literature, instruments, “media, food and

clothing”. Symbolism includes spirituality in addition to symbols. (Usunier & Lee, 2005, p.6-9)

The next chapter introduces shortly how cultures affect international business on general level. Chapter 8 explores cultures’ impact on negotiations and from there on, this thesis examines various countries’ business cultures.

7 CULTURES IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

Cultures “affect” many aspects of business. For example, they “impact” on “negotiations, advertisements”, how people are led in a company and even in laws. The depth of relationship between representatives of companies also depends on the culture, and if cultures are not considered while doing international business, feelings may get hurt, and business- and customer relationships revoked. (Albaum, Duerr & Josiassen, 2017, p. 128, 129, Prince & Hoppe, 2007, p. 7)

To have a successful international partnership, both parties should understand that their way to operate is not automatically “best or correct way”. They should also realize that they cannot expect others to “feel, think or act” like they would themselves which means that they should not try to interpret each other’s “behavior”. Getting to know the other culture is important. In addition, trying to change the way they communicate when they are with each other is crucial. However, even though flexibility is vital, “preserving a self-identity” is as well. (Albaum, Duerr & Josiassen, 2017, p. 130, Prince & Hoppe, 2007, p. 11, 12, Kazi, 2015, p. 3)

Local language should be also considered. Sometimes the company’s name may sound similar or even same than some negative word in a local language. For example, when Japanese pronounce the English “word four, it sounds very similar than Japanese word which means death”. (Albaum, Duerr & Josiassen, 2017, p. 133) It may be necessary to change company’s or brand’s name while operating in such country. Therefore, there are lot to consider.

8 MULTICULTURAL NEGOTIATIONS

Cultures impact on negotiations. For example, people in some cultures like forthright approach and very detailed contracts because they want to be prepared for any possible issue. They may also like to proceed quickly to the point of signing the contract. On the other hand, people in some other cultures are not in hurry because they want to “get to know” the other party before committing to anything. For these people, hurrying may mean that the other party is hiding something, and that they are not reliable. Keeping conversations pleasant may be also important as well as “face saving”. It may be also normal to discuss with workmates several times before making decisions. The basic reason for the differences is that people from different cultures have different objectives for negotiations. In some culture “the goal” is to “sign a contract” in the end of the negotiation while in some other cultures “the objective” is to create “a relationship” with the other party. (Albaum, Duerr & Josiassen, 2017, p. 128, 129, Salacuse, 2005, p. 1,3, 4, Moore & Woodrow, 2010, p. 49)

While in one country people are expected to reply straightforwardly to questions, in some other country replying “no” would be disrespectful and they use body language or more subtle verbal signs to say that they are not interested. This may lead to misunderstandings in negotiations. It would be good to learn beforehand what kind of body language is acceptable in the other culture. There are also differences between how much people need “personal space” around them, or whether “direct eye contact” is desirable or not. The meaning of “body language” can also differ as well as what kind of touching is appropriate in a business relationship. Cultures affect also on writing styles. (Prince & Hoppe, 2007, p. 12, 17-19, 21, Salacuse, 2005, p. 3, University of Notre Dame, 2020)

Whether it is acceptable to “show emotions” during negotiations depends also on cultures. In some cultures, showing emotions is “strongly disapproved”. Even positive emotions must be shown moderately. In some other culture “emotions” are expected to be “shown” and if they are not, it is considered “suspicious”. (Salacuse, 2005, p.4, Moore & Woodrow, 2010, p. 51)

There are also differences in how deals are made. In some cultures negotiators want to talk first details such as “delivery schedule and price” while in some other cultures they like to start with more general matters and move towards details after they are clear. In addition, the strategy for negotiating prices differ as well. For example, Americans’ first offer may be “5-10 percent below the goal” and Latin Americans may start with “20-40 percent below” the price that they want. (Salacuse, 2005, p.4, Steers & Nardon, 2006, p. 255) Therefore, it is not enough to learn how people communicate in other cultures but also to learn their strategies.

One difference between cultures is how decisions are made. In some cultures one person can decide while in some other cultures decisions are made by a team. In the first case, the negotiation teams are usually small and in the second they are often big. There are also differences in where negotiations are held. In some cultures they are held in business premises. In some other cultures they are in outdoor or in a religious place. (Salacuse, 2005, p. 5, Moore & Woodrow, 2010, p. 56)

Risk-taking propensity may differ as well. People in some cultures are more willing to take risks than people in other cultures. Therefore, negotiations should not be hurried, and both parties should have as much time as they want to consider the deal from all aspects. One way to reduce risks is to set “rules” and methods to reduce risks. Making sure that both parties have enough information of each other and the “proposed” deal is also crucial. When negotiating with people who value relationships high, special attention should be given to creating the relationship. (Salacuse, 2005, p. 6, Guirdham, 2005, p.293)

The way cultures view relationships may also differ. For example, in many European cultures it is acceptable for women to form business relationships with men but according to Moore and Woodrow, in Middle Eastern cultures it may not be acceptable. (Moore & Woodrow, 2010, p.10)

Also, how “agreements are confirmed” differ. Depending on culture it may be a “handshake”, having dinner together or “signing a contract”. In addition, in some cultures it is expected that the negotiators spend time together in informal surrounding.

It is normal for them to dine together or to visit each other's homes while in some other cultures work and private life are kept separate. (Moore & Woodrow, 2010, pp. 14, 43, Smith, 2016)

Time perception may differ as well. In some cultures it is important to arrive to meetings in time while in other cultures the agreed time is more like "suggestion" and if they arrive 30 minutes after the other party has arrived, they are not late in their own opinion. (University of Notre Dame, 2020, Wittwer, 2019)

Negotiators should arrange time to explain what they want from collaboration, what they would like to talk about, and what they need or what interests them. The way people do this depends on culture. In some cultures the presentations contain "emotional" content, lot of figures as well as details in addition to background information. In some other cultures, the "background information" is less interesting and the emphasis is in the information that is needed for making the deal. (Moore & Woodrow, 2010, p. 12, Globe Smart, n.d.)

Other matters to consider are for example what people wear to negotiations, are they supposed to give gifts, what are the local "table manners", and other possible "customs and taboos". In addition, knowing how local people greet is crucial. (Mehra, 2014, p.125, Wertheim, n.d.)

Therefore, there are many matters to consider, and information about the other party's culture should be searched before having the first meeting or even before making the first contact. Before examining thoroughly cultures around the world, this next part suggests ways to improve intercultural communication.

8.1 Increasing chances of successful collaboration

There are ways to lessen the chances for misunderstandings. One way is to speak "slowly", and to articulate well. Also, it may be good to consider hiring "an interpreter". Another matter to consider is "the tone of voice" by keeping it respectful. Avoiding "slang" words and "colloquial expressions" is also important. Among all the

possible words, “the simplest and most common” should be chosen. Avoiding putting “labels” on people or cultures is also crucial because they may be offending, for example it may not be appreciated if “Asian cultures” are called “oriental”. It should be also considered that words may be interpreted differently in some countries. For example, in some countries using “word no” is rude, and “body language is used in communicating negative respond.” The risks for misunderstanding can be also reduced by using “written communication such as memos, reports, fax and emails” to support what has been communicated orally. In addition, using pictures or other visual material may also help. In some cultures people prefer face-to-face meetings and may feel that speaking over “phone” or by “voice mails” is disrespectful. (Prince & Hoppe, 2007, pp. 21-23, Moore and Woodrow, 2010, p. 53, University of Notre Dame, 2020)

Remembering people’s names correctly is crucial although it may be difficult because of the language or because the names are so different from what we are used to.

“Titles” can be also “important” to remember. Often titles are used in all other communication except in conversations between “close friends”. It is better to start with “formal” approach and then move towards “informal” style, if it seems appropriate. (Prince & Hoppe, 2007, p. 24, Salacuse, 2005, p. 2)

While trying to learn how to pronounce a new name, it may be a good idea to ask the other person to “say his name more than once”. The person may also like to be called by different name entirely. However, changing the other person’s name without encouragement should be avoided for example Nikita may not appreciate if a Finnish businessman decides to call him Niko. It may make it easier to learn the other person’s name if it can be seen written, and sometimes it helps to “write phonetic spelling” next to the name. It should be asked if it is unclear that which name is the first name, and which one is the surname. Austrian entrepreneur Guerra also advises to use the name in conversation as often as possible. (Prince & Hoppe, 2007, p. 24, 25, Guerra, 2015)

Using humor is risky because it is very easy to offend others, and what is considered funny in one country may not be funny in some other country. If one must use humor, “the safest object is himself”. Also, some cultures do not approve making jokes in business meetings. (Prince & Hoppe, 2007, p. 25, Guirdham, 2005, p. 266)

9 ANGLO-SAXON CULTURES

From now on, the thesis examines more elaborately some of the cultures of Company X's potential business partners, and how they differ from Finnish culture. The cultures that are examined in this work are chosen based on availability of reliable sources.

Many authors who have written books about cultures divides them into clusters based on how much they have in common. Erwan is one of the authors who has divided cultures like that, and this thesis explores the subject based on his divisions although other authors' opinions are considered as well.

9.1 Anglo-Saxon business cultures

Erwan thinks that Scandinavians are similar than Americans, Canadians, British, Germans, Austrians, Swiss, Australians, New Zealanders, and South-Africans, and he calls this Anglo-Saxon business culture. However, Richard Lewis who is also an expert of cultures, thinks that Finnish people are closer to Asians in how they communicate. (Erwan, 2019, p. 13, Lewis, 2005, p. 71)

In their book, Albaum, Duerr and Josiassen have also divided countries into clusters based on their similarity. Finland is in Nordic cluster together with Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Canada, Australia, United States and United Kingdom are in Anglo cluster, and Austria, Germany and Switzerland are in Germanic cluster. (Albaum, Duerr & Josiassen, 2017, p. 138)

Mehra has divided cultures to "low-context or high-context" cultures based on peoples' behavior and thoughts. There are certain common factors among the cultures which belongs to these two groups. "Low-context cultures" are mostly Anglo-Saxon cultures. Communication style in low-context cultures is "direct", and negotiation style is often determined. Anglo-Saxon business cultures are more deal focused than other cultures, and "managers" are allowed to make many "decisions" independently. (Erwan, 2019, p. 19,20, Mehra, 2014, p. 12, 13, 23-25)

According to Erwan, Anglo-Saxon business cultures prefer that in business everything is written down clearly with details, so that everyone knows what their duties are. Therefore, details are discussed thoroughly in negotiations. For Anglo-Saxon cultures time is valuable and it should not be wasted. With Anglo-Saxon cultures, it is important to be on time for “meetings”. The meetings follow formal structure including “agenda, times and minutes”. Others should not be interrupted but raising objections is acceptable. Americans like to make business decisions very quickly, but other AngloSaxon business cultures do not hurry even though they are quite efficient as well. (Erwan, 2019, p. 18, 27, 33, 38, 44, Mehra, 2014, p. 25)

For people from Anglo-Saxon cultures, following rules to the letter is crucial, and honesty and modesty are appreciated. Meetings start on time, and everyone in there are expected to participate discussion. “Agenda” is “followed” conscientiously and people are fully focused on the meetings. (Erwan, 2019, pp. 38, 43,44, Mehra, 2014, p. 22, Gesteland, 2012, p. 357)

For Dutch and Scandinavians, silent moments during conversations are normal and silence may be a way to show respect to other people. Silence after a well thought comment is even expected in some cases. Exaggerating or turning conversations emotional or “rhetoric” is not recommendable. This is what Finns share with many other nationalities which are part of Erwan’s Anglo-Saxon business cultures although American culture is exception in this. Showing how one is feeling whether it is positive, or negative seems to be embarrassing in all Anglo-Saxon business cultures. (Lewis, 2005, p.73, Erwan, 2019, pp. 19, 25, 42, 43, Gesteland, 2012, p. 346)

9.2 Finnish culture

Finns have lot in common with Asians regarding the way people communicate. For example, the people are taciturn, and they consider carefully before putting their thoughts into words. Nevertheless, they seem to be “blunter” than many other people in Anglo-Saxon cultures. Finns think that interrupting someone is rude, and their body language is limited compared to Americans or Western Europeans. When people

disagree about something, instead of trying to make the other party change their minds, they “nod” and “smile”. (Lewis, 2005, pp. 67, 68, Gesteland, 2012, p. 346, Guirdham, 2005, p. 114)

Finns do not use names in conversations as often as “Americans or other Europeans do” which can cause issues because for Americans using first names is important in creating a good business relationship. However, Finnish people do prefer to address people by their “first names” rather than with titles or last “names”. Finns also use “passive” forms and verbs more than Americans and other Europeans, and they feel uncomfortable with long “eye contact”. This may cause others to feel that the conversation is not fruitful. In addition, as Finnish people take time to think before participating conversations or before answering questions, others may think that they do not know enough about the subject to discuss about it. For Finns, it may be difficult to participate international conversations if they cannot adjust to the pace of discussions. (Lewis, 2005, p.74, Erwan, 2019, p. 23, Business Finland, n.d.)

Finns are not eager to comment or ask questions after business presentations. They also may not feel any need to participate conversations. However, they concentrate fully into listening other parties’ comments. This might make people from other nationalities feel awkward. “Haggling” is not common in Finnish business although it seems to be common in many other cultures. (Lewis, 2005, p. 69, Gesteland, 2012, p. 349)

9.3 Norwegian culture

Norwegian style to do business is very similar to Finnish way. People approach potential alliance partners “directly” by “email or phone”, and “business” discussions starts after little bit of small talk. However, discussing with people “face-to-face” is crucial as well. Their communication style is direct although they are more indirect than “Germans and Danes”. Interrupting others while they speak is impolite. Business “lunches” and “dinners” are common. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 331, 333, 335, Lewis, 2006, p. 348) Finns should keep in mind that although Norwegian communication style

is direct, their own style may be even more direct. Therefore, they should consider carefully what they say, and possibly soften their style little bit.

Norwegians are quite “informal” just like Finns, and they are also “punctual”. “Meetings” start on time, and deadlines must be followed. “Business gifts” do not belong to this culture. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 332, 334, Lewis, 2006, p. 348)

Direct eye contact is appreciated in Norwegian culture. People are sometimes called by their last names, and Gesteland recommends that “title” would be used as well unless Norwegian suggest that “first names” are used. European Business magazine also recommends foreigners to use surnames unless Norwegian suggest otherwise. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 333, European Business, n.d.) Finns do not usually use titles. For example, they would not say CEO Mikkonen. Instead, they would call the person by his first name. Norwegian style to use titles may require time to get used to but Finns should embrace it because it is common in many countries.

Norwegians are not comfortable with aggressive “selling”, and that style may lead to unsuccessful negotiation. It is better to keep “presentations” simple and factual. “Offers” should be “realistic” with only little bit room for negotiations. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 334, 336, Magnus Legal, 2020)

9.4 Swedish culture

According to Gesteland, Swedish communication style is direct, and steady gaze is good. However, Lewis encourages foreigners for “diplomacy” instead of straightforwardness. Humbleness is valued in the country, and people are expected to be on time. (Gesteland, 2012, pp. 340, 342, Lewis, 2006, p. 343, Goodman, 2013, p. 205)

According to Gesteland, people should be called “Mr., Mrs. or Miss plus” last “names”, and foreigners should wait until the other party suggests that “first names” are used. However, Lewis disagrees with Gesteland in this because he advises to “use first names”, and he does not even mention other options for “addressing” people.

(Gesteland, 2012, p. 343, Lewis, 2006, p. 343) One may wonder if age affects on whether people should be called by their first names or if Gesteland is just careful with giving advices.

Swedish often invite their business associates for “lunch or dinner”. “Being on time” is important in every situation. “Personal” matters are not discussed with business associates. Therefore, asking about the other party’s family is not appropriate. “Giftgiving” does not belong to Swedish culture. If one wants to give a gift, he should consider it carefully so that it would not be considered as bribe. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 343, Lewis, 2006, 343, Goodman, 2013, p. 205)

Aggressive sales techniques do not work with Swedish. Offers should be realistic with only small room for negotiations. Decision-making process is longer than in other Scandinavian countries because “consensus” is important. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 344, Lewis, 2006, p. 340, 343)

9.5 Danish culture

Danes appreciate having digital meetings, and they are also comfortable with discussing about business over “the phone or email”. They prefer keeping the small talk short and concentrate on business discussions. Their communication style is “direct”, and “first names” are used with everyone including strangers. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 324-326, Lewis, 2006, p. 351, Commisceo Global, n.d)

Punctuality is expected from everyone, and interruptions are inappropriate during “meetings”. “Direct” eye contact is good, and humbleness is appreciated. Business “lunches and dinners” are common. However, sometimes they are for socializing and not for discussing about business. “Business gifts” are not expected, and if one wants to give something, it shouldn’t be anything expensive, so that Danish would not get offended and think that it is “a bribe”. (Gesteland, 2012, pp. 327-329, Lewis, 2006, p. 351, Goodman, 2013, p. 202)

Aggressive sales techniques should not be used with Danish because it makes them feel that the other person cannot be trusted. “Agendas” and schedules are followed, and factual and simple “presentations” are appreciated. Haggling is not part of this culture which must be considered when creating an offer. Although “decisions” are made by the boss, he wants to hear what others think about the subject. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 329, Lewis, 2006, p. 354, 355, City of Copenhagen, n.d.)

9.6 British culture

For the British, showing “a sense of humor” is crucial in successful business relationship. “First names” are used in conversations due to practical reasons although “older people” may prefer to use “Mr. or Mrs. plus” last name. Following “etiquettes and formal rules” are important for the British. When doing business with them, one should concentrate on the goals for the near future (Erwan, 2019, pp. 32, 33, Gesteland, 2012, p. 314, Lewis, 2006, p. 200) Although humor is important for the British, one should be careful not to offend them with their jokes.

Even though Mehra considers British as low-context culture, they appreciate more relationships than people in other Anglo-Saxon cultures. They would like to get to know people before discussing about “business” with them, and they are also less straightforward. “Referrals, recommendations and testimonials” are appreciated, and the person of highest rank in a company should be contacted by a letter or email.

Meeting people in “trade shows” or in the events of “chamber of commerce” are also good option. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 313, 314, Mehra, 2014, p. 29, 105, Cultural Atlas, n.d.)

The British’ “orientation to time” is bit more relaxed than New Yorker’s but they still “expect” foreigners to arrive “on time”. Offers are considered carefully before agreements are made. Therefore, negotiators may have to travel to UK more than once. British are used to “bargaining”, so there should be wide “range” when doing business with them. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 314, Lewis, 2006, p. 198, Goodman, 2013, p. 205)

“Eye contact” should be slightly indirect for British to feel comfortable. Business clothing is formal, although men should not wear “striped ties” because those are normally worn by military personnel, and not by others. Business gifts are not expected but if one wants to do something nice for the other, inviting him to dinner is a good option. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 315, 316, 317, Goodman, 2013, p. 205)

9.7 Irish culture

Irish “business” culture resembles British “business” culture although there are some dissimilarities as well. Creating a bond is important for the Irish, and one should reserve lot of time for it. Modest people have better chances at creating long lasting business relationships with Irish. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 319, 321, Lewis, 2006, p. 204, Cultural Atlas, n.d.)

Irish communication style is indirect except in Dublin area. Direct “eye contact” and “firm handshakes” are positive in this culture. Modest “gifts” are appreciated after finalizing “negotiations” although they are not expected. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 320, Cultural Atlas, n.d.)

“Titles” and last names should be used when one meets someone for “the first time” but usually Irish suggests at some point that people would use their “first names” instead. Lot of entertaining is done in “pubs”. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 319, 320, Cultural Atlas, n.d.)

According to Gesteland, meetings often start little bit late although foreigners should arrive “on time”. However, Lewis and Goodman disagree with him. “Presentations” should be simple and contain only facts although they should also include “ideas” as well. Offers should be realistic and contain very little room for haggling. Vital matters should be discussed “face-to-face”. Negotiations may feel lengthy from Finnish person’s point of view. (Gesteland, 2012, pp. 319, 320, 322, Lewis, 2006, p. 203, 204, Goodman, 2013, p. 205)

9.8 Dutch culture

According to Gesteland, cold calling and emailing is acceptable in Dutch business culture, and people being on time is crucial. However, Lewis' opinion is that Dutch do not react well on "cold calling". "Shaking hands" is expected when meeting someone and when the meeting is over. If there are several people in the room, it is important to "first shake hands with the senior" person and after that with others. First names are used only if the Dutch person suggests it. Dutch are reserved towards strangers, and "may not smile" when they meet business associates. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 363, 364, Lewis, 2006, p. 244, 249, Goodman, 2013, p. 204)

Dutch communicate more straightforwardly than Americans and Canadian. They want people to be honest in what they say, and when a Dutch says "yes" to a proposal, it can be considered as "a commitment". "Business lunches" are common, and the time is used for discussing about "business". (Gesteland, 2012, p. 365, Lewis, 2006, p. 248) "Meetings" tend to be "formal". Presentations should include "facts", and some "bargaining" can be expected. However, Dutch are aware of "realistic" price "range", and they do not want to prolong negotiations unnecessarily. Therefore, the "bargaining range" should be "realistic" as well. Punctuality is crucial because people being "late" even couple of "minutes" makes Dutch to feel that he is unreliable. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 367, Lewis, 2006, p. 247, 248, Goodman, 2013, p. 204) Even though Finns are punctual as well, they may not feel as strongly as Dutch about someone being couple of minutes late. Therefore, Finns must calculate their schedules well, so that they would never be late when meeting with Dutch.

9.9 American culture

For Americans it is acceptable to conduct business negotiations "via email and telephone". Americans are hard negotiators, and they may even use "intimidation and bullying" to get what they want. Best way to handle this type of behavior is to continue the conversation as if nothing unregular happened. (Gesteland, 2012, p.388, Erwan, 2019, p. 26, 42, Mehra, 2014, p. 28)

U.S is such a big country that there are regional differences in the culture. People from New York view time similarly than German but elsewhere people have more relaxed approach towards it. Especially in south people are less worried about being on time. There are also differences in how people communicate due to their origin. (Gesteland, 2012, pp. 387-390, Steers & Nardon, 2006, p. 150)

When “greeting” people, “a firm handshake” is expected as well as looking the other party straight in the eye. Lack of these two actions may make Americans feel that others are “weak” or “dishonest”. Geniality is shown among men by “slapping each other on the back” or by grasping an elbow or “upper arm”. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 391, Mehra, 2014, p.73, 133, BBC, n.d.)

Americans often prefer using “first names”. However, when one meets a new person, it would be wise to “address” him “Mr., Mrs. or Miss plus his last name. “Titles” are rarely used when discussing with other people. Americans are comfortable with talking about “families” and some other “personal” subjects. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 391, Lewis, 2006, p. 181, BBC, n.d)

Oral agreements are made first, and “details” are discussed later. When doing business with Americans, it may be wise to hire a “good” local lawyer because Americans “go to court” easily. Often the lawyer is present during negotiations. When Americans negotiate prices, “the bargaining range” is quite wide. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 392, 393, Lewis, 2006, p. 181)

In “presentations” Americans love “visual” material” in addition to getting the facts. When they want to ask something, they prefer to ask them immediately instead of waiting until “the presentation” ends. Americans are not comfortable with gifts unless it is something modest because they are worried “gifts” have something to do with “bribing”. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 391, 392, Steers & Nardon, 2006, p. 150, Mehra 2014, p. 135)

9.10 Australian culture

For most Australians building a bond before doing business is not important. Exceptions are people in Pacific Rim who would like to get to know the other party before discussing about business. People can be contacted “directly” by email or phone although “tradeshows” can be a good way to meet them as well. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 375, Cultural Atlas, n.d.)

Australians speak less and their body language is more restrained than in some other Anglo-Saxon cultures. They are more “direct” than for example Dutch, Germans and Americans, and intense debates are expected. “Informal” communication is preferred, and status or title are not important. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 375-376, Commisceo Global, n.d.)

In Gesteland’s opinion, Australians are more “relaxed” with “schedules” than people in many other Anglo-Saxon cultures. Their “work pace” is also “slower”. However, several other sources say that being punctual is crucial. Aggressive “selling” does not work with Australians, and “haggling” is not part of their culture which must be considered in negotiations. (Gesteland, 2012, pp. 376, 377, 379, Government of South Australia, n.d., Commisceo Global, n.d.) Therefore, it is best to be on time.

Direct “eye contact” is important since for Australians it means that the person is “sincere” and “interested” in the discussion. “A handshake” should be “firm” because it is a sign of strength for some Australians. In the beginning people address each other with both first and last name. However, Australians may soon suggest that only “first names” are used. “Business gifts” are not expected. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 377, 378, Cultural Atlas, n.d., Commisceo Global, n.d.)

While “thumbs-up” sign is positive in many cultures, in Australia it is indecent and should be avoided. Also, “blowing” one’s “nose loudly” or “sniffing” is impolite. Therefore, if one needs to “blow his nose”, he should go outside of “the room” to do so. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 377, 378) Here one can see how important it is to study cultures before doing international business. Finns would not hesitate to show

“thumbs-up” sign to communicate that business is going well, and some of them would also blow their noses loudly in front of everyone.

9.11 Canadian culture

Cultures in Canada varies depending on whether people are Francophones, Anglophones or New Canadians. New Canadians are newcomers in the country and presumably their cultures are affected by their ethnical origins. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 381, Commisceo Global, n.d.)

Anglophones are “deal-focused”, and their communication style is straightforward. They are slightly “informal”, and they care about people having equal rights. They prefer using “first names” instead of using titles or last names. (Gesteland, 2012, p.381, 382, Commisceo Global, n.d.)

People from Quebec area, which is Francophone, are less informal than Anglophones, and for them creating a relationship with potential business associates is quite important. In addition, they show their feelings more openly than Anglophones, and are bit formal compared to English Canadians. French Canadians are also “hierarchical”, and with them it would be good to address people in the beginning of a business relationship Mr., Mrs., or Miss. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 381-383, Lewis, 2006, p. 193, Commisceo Global, n.d.)

French Canadians are best to meet at “a tradeshow” unless one can find a common acquaintance to make introductions. However, English Canadians can be reached by emailing or cold calling. Both English and French Canadians expect meetings to start on “time”. However, people from French Canadian culture are more flexible regarding agenda and schedule. “Interrupting” others is impolite. (Gesteland, 2012, pp. 381, 382, Lewis, 2006, p. 190, 190, Commisceo Global, n.d.)

“A soft handshake” may be considered as sign of weakness, and honesty is shown by looking the other person straight in the eye. In both cultures, “aggressive” style to sell

is unwelcome, and offers should be realistic. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 383, 384, Commisceo Global, n.d.)

These two groups have “a gift-giving” culture, and “a gift is given after” a contract has been signed. “Gifts” are usually “unwrapped” in front of the giver. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 384, Commisceo Global, n.d.)

9.12 German culture

German communication style is straightforward, and arguments are considered beneficial. Germans may quarrel during negotiation, and they do not hide it. They will also try to find faults from the product or service that is in question. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 359, Mehra, 2014, p. 16, Lewis, 2006, p. 226, 227)

Germans are “deal-focused”, and they express clearly their “expectations” which are “high” and “demanding”. They prefer “formal business relationships”, and using “titles” is important. However, there is one matter that foreigners should know when doing business with Germans. For some of them, lack of smile is normal in business. They feel that “smiles” are reserved for “family and friends” only. (Erwan, 2019, p.38, Gesteland, 2012, p. 357, 358, Lewis, 2006, p. 225, 227)

Meetings start on time, and everyone in there are expected to participate discussion. “Agendas” are “followed” conscientiously, and people are fully focused on the meetings. Negotiators should be well “prepared”, and expect that every detail is discusses thoroughly. (Erwan, 2019, pp. 38, Mehra, 2014, p. 22, Gesteland, 2012, p. 357)

Germans appreciate “history” and details in “a presentation”. “Print” material with thorough description of what is being offered is crucial. The material should contain lot of facts and details. Haggling does not belong to German business culture. Therefore, offers should be “realistic” even though there should be room for negotiations. Gifts are not expected, and food has insignificant role in business. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 360, 361, Lewis, 2006, p. 224)

9.13 Belgian culture

Erwan does not mention Belgian culture among Anglo-Saxon cultures. However, Gesteland sees many similarities between Germans, Dutch and Belgians. Therefore, Belgian culture is introduced in this part of thesis.

Belgium has several official languages. Therefore, international business visitors are expected to speak “English” which is considered “neutral” language. Belgians seem to be slightly deal-focused and little bit relationship focused. Therefore, introduction from a common acquaintance would be good but direct contacting may work as well. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 283, Commisceo Global, n.d.)

There are some differences based on whether a person is Flemish or Walloon. Flemish people speak Dutch and Walloon people French. Flemish people can discuss with their “bosses” informally, and each employee may have his own “responsibilities”. Walloons have more “authoritarian” culture where status matters. (Lewis, 2006, p. 253, Commisceo Global, n.d.)

Light “handshakes” are expected in the beginning and end of meetings, and it is polite to “shake hands with secretaries” as well. Titles are not used when speaking to people but using “Mr., Mrs. or Miss plus” the last name is appropriate. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 284, Lewis, 2006, p. 255, Goodman, 2013, p. 203)

“Politics, Belgian languages” or “personal” life are not good subjects for discussion, and “asking” about the other person’s job description is considered too “personal”. It is better to keep conversations light. Business is done from “8.30 am. until noon”, and from “2 pm. until 6 pm”. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 284, Goodman, 2012, p. 202) When Finns suggest meeting times, they should remember that in many countries, the lunch breaks are long.

Belgian communication style is “direct”, and meetings” starts “on time”. The decisionmaking process varies based on whether the business culture is Flemish or Walloon. In Walloon culture, “the boss” makes “decisions”, and in Flemish culture the power is given to several people. Business “lunches” are common. “Business gifts”

are “opened” straight away but the gifts are not normally part of the culture. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 286, Lewis, 2006, p. 253, Goodman, 2013, p. 202)

10 BALTIC CULTURES

Estonians are “deal-focused” and more “reserved” than other Balts. Their communication style is straightforward, and they negotiate similarly than Finnish. Factual presentations with “figures” work best with Estonians. They do not give “feedback” easily, and precise questions must be asked to get information from them. Being on time is important. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 305, Lewis, 2006, p. 357, 359, 360, Work in Estonia, n.d.)

Relationships matter to Lithuanians and Latvians, and their communication style is indirect. Their behavior is quite formal, and older people are “respected”. Lithuanian and Latvian business culture is quite “deal-focused”. However, “cold calls and emails” may not lead to any further discussion, and it is better to meet people at tradeshows. Only little bit small talk is needed before discussing about business. Arriving late to “a meeting” is not acceptable in Baltic cultures although “punctuality” is not Lithuanians’ strength according to Lewis. Gesteland on the other hand writes in his book that meetings start on time, and “schedules” are important to follow. Agendas are also followed conscientiously. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 306, 307, Lewis, 2006, p. 364, 369, Commisceo Global, n.d.) Here we see a difference between two expert’s experiences. We also see why in work life people should not assume that all people in a country are similar to each other. Stereotyping is not smart but authors who writes books about cultures must do that.

“Negotiation” process might be lengthy in Baltic countries. “Interrupting” others while they are talking is impolite. Lithuanians are bit more “impatient” than Latvians and Estonians, and they may show that during “negotiations”. People are looked in the eye during conversations and “hands” should be kept off from “pockets” while discussing with others. (Gesteland, 2012, pp. 307, 308, Lewis, 2006, p. 365, 370)

Business cards” are given right after the first “handshake”, and if one is in a meeting, “a business card” is given to every participant. People are “addressed by their titles” and last names. “Business gifts” are not part of Baltic cultures, and people usually invite their business associates to a restaurant if they want to entertain them. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 309, Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, n.d., Commisceo Global, n.d)

11 LATIN CULTURES

According to Erwan, France, Spain, Italy, Mexico and Brazil have similarities in their cultures. He calls them Latin business cultures. According to Erwan and Mehra, these are high-context cultures where “bond” between people is important, and where “communication style is indirect”. Having connection with another person includes physical “touching” as well such as “holding an arm”. Spending some time together is also expected, and it is crucial part of building business relationships because without the “bond”, there is no trust. (Erwan, 2019, pp. 45-48, 50, Gesteland, 2012, p. 34, Mehra, 2014, p. 12, 39)

However, Albaum, Duerr and Josiassen divides Latin cultures into American Latin and European Latin cultures. According to them, Belgium has Latin culture, and the cluster of Latin American cultures includes also “Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela”. (Albaum, Duerr & Josiassen, 2017, p. 138) Therefore, we see yet again that there are some differences in authors’ experiences and research results.

11.1 Brazilian culture

“Tradeshows” are the best places to meet people unless a well-respected person can do the introductions. “Meetings” are usually held at the company’s premises, and only 1

or 2 meetings for the day should be booked because the meetings tend to be lengthy. Talking about business starts when Brazilians feel that they know people well enough. “Interruptions” are normal “during meetings”. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 245, 247, Cultural Atlas, n.d.)

Brazilians often use only first names or if they tell their last name also, one can call them Mr., Mrs. or Miss with the family name. One should be talkative to get Brazilians’ trust. Personal matters are acceptable topic, and one should ask about the other party’s family. Usually, it takes “two to three” trips to Brazilia before they are ready to sign the deal. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 245, Lewis, p. 543, 545, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, n.d.)

During negotiations, everything is discussed thoroughly, and unrealistic “expectations” are common. Showing emotions during meetings is normal and expected. All the information should not be given at once and concentrating in the most important aspects is important. Brazilians prefer relaxed “meetings” which are “well” organized. According to Erwan, schedules are “flexible”, which might be challenging for a Finn who likes to have his calendar full of meetings. However, Gesteland tells that in “southern part of Brazil”, people prefer to start meetings on time. According to Lewis, “agendas” are not followed, and interruptions are normal. (Erwan, 2019, pp. 54-55, Gesteland, 2012, p. 246, Cultural Atlas, n.d. Lewis, 2006, p. 542, 543)

Direct “eye contact” is positive in Brazil. Brazilians’ communication style is direct during “negotiations” which are lengthy. A seller should be prepared to lower his offer quite a lot. Having lunch or dinner together with the other party is recommended. However, according to Gesteland “the restaurant” should be one of the best in the city. On the other hand, Lewis warns not to “flaunt wealth or power”. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 246, 248, Lewis, 2006, p. 545) This raises the question of what is behind the differences between Lewis’ and Gesteland’s experiences? Are they due to their different job descriptions? Perhaps they met such different type of people in Brazil.

Business “gifts” belongs to this culture, and “gifts” such as “art books, specialty jam or high-quality chocolate” are appreciated. It is normal for Brazilians to “ask for

favors”, and they expect others to comply. “Status” is important for Brazilians, and “it depends on family background, education and social class”. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 246, 248, Lewis, 2006, p. 542, Cultural Atlas, n.d.)

11.2 French culture

Since relationships are important in France, contacting people for the first time by email or phone may not be successful. It is better to meet people at “tradeshows”.

Direct “eye contact” is positive, and people are “addressed as monsieur, madam or mademoiselle” without using their names at all. For French, having a lunch or dinner together with a business associate is important. However, the actual business is done elsewhere. Sharing a meal is purely for building and strengthening the bond. (Erwan, 2019, p. 57, Gesteland, 2012, p. 277, 279, 281, Lewis, 2006, p. 261)

French are not the most flexible people on earth, and according to Erwan they make decisions very quickly although Gesteland disagrees with him. French should be listened carefully, to give them a chance to explain “what they want”. Skillful debaters and persuaders are appreciated. “Important” matters are discussed “face-to-face”. (Erwan, 2019, p. 58, Gesteland, 2012, p. 278, 280)

Feelings have important part in business and changes are often opposed. The first reply to any request is usually “no” or “it is not possible”. However, it is said quite automatically, and it does not mean that the matter cannot be discussed upon. After getting “no” as a reply, it is good to ask reason for it, and show appreciation for their point of view. Asking for their suggestion is also recommended. Business “gifts” can be given but not “on first meeting”. “The gifts” should not be expensive or anything with “a logo”. (Erwan, 2019, p. 59, Goodman, 2013, p. 203)

With French, well built “models and theories” are important as well as “analysis”. In addition, “facts” must be easy to track down. The structure of meetings is flexible, and meetings are often lengthy and formal. Big “decisions” are not usually made during them, and if arguments arise, they are often heated. (Erwan, 2019, p. 60, Gesteland, 2012, p. 280, Lewis, 2006, p. 257)

Salespeople must “speak French” if they want to succeed. However, language errors and strange “accent” are easily forgiven. Emails should be written in impeccable French, and all the publications and marketing material must be “professionally translated”. Titles are important, and managers expect to meet foreigners in high position. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 277, Mehra, 2014, p. 14, Lewis, 2006, p. 256)

11.3 Italian culture

In Italy, “titles” are important, and they are used when discussing with managers. Personal networks are relied upon rather than public officers. Families have important roles in businesses. Because relationships are so important, business cannot be discussed before Italian feels that he knows the other party. Therefore, business lunches and dinners are common. (Erwan, 2019, p. 62, Gesteland, 2012, p. 287, Mehra, 2014, p. 25)

Business “gifts” may be given to “senior” managers, and they should be stylish and high-quality items. Italians like to talk about personal matters with business associates. Discussing a lot helps in bonding, and it is crucial to ask about Italian’s family members’ health. (Lewis, 2006, p. 265, Goodman, 2013, p. 204) From Italian’s point of view, Finns probably appear quiet people. Therefore, Finns must try their best to talk a lot about themselves, and to ask personal questions from Italians as well.

Italians’ communication style is quite “indirect”, and they like “personal” and “emotional” point of view in business presentations. In this culture, people like to touch each other a lot, and foreigners must be mentally prepared for that so that they would not appear “cold or unfriendly”. Looking straight in the eye, is a sign of interest. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 289, Mehra, 2014, p. 72, Lewis, 2006, p. 264)

Italians make quick decisions, and they are bold. Feelings and dramatism are present in “negotiations”. According to Lewis, meetings often start “20-45 minutes late” depending on city although “sellers” should always be on time. However, Goodman writes in his book that Italians are punctual, especially “in the north”. Meetings are

formal but “agenda, schedule and minutes are flexible”. Italians should feel like they are winning in negotiations. Therefore, offers should be little bit higher than what one has in mind for a final price. Discussing with people “face-to-face” is crucial, and interrupting others in a middle of sentence is normal. (Erwan, 2019, p. 64, 65, Gesteland, 2012, p. 287, 288, Lewis, 2006, p. 263, 264, Goodman, 2013, p. 204)

11.4 Spanish culture

Business cultures in Spain differ depending on area. In all “regions, younger” professionals are more informal and open minded. They are also often willing to discuss in English. “Face-to-face” meetings are important, and relationships matter especially in Castile. When meeting “older” people, formal behavior is a way “to show respect”. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 291, 292, Lewis, 2006, p. 269)

Catalonians’ communication style is straightforward while other Spanish try to avoid saying “no” when they refuse something. Direct “eye contact” and “firm handshakes” are positive signs in this culture. Business gifts are not common. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 292-294, Mehra, 2014, p. 72, Goodman, 2013, p. 205)

Spanish businesspeople are often inflexible, and they have many demands. Confrontations are not avoided. Spanish managers may use even “bullying” to get what they want. In this type of case, it is best to act as if nothing has happened and concentrate in what is “positive”. The structure of meetings is formal, and one should not spread discussions outside of “the agenda”. However, length of the meeting is “flexible”. It is the manager who makes decision even though his team members do participate discussions actively and with heated emotions. Meetings often start late, and interruptions are normal. In addition, bargaining is not uncommon. (Erwan, 2019, pp. 74, 75, Gesteland, 2012, p. 292, 294)

According to Lewis, Spaniards pay less attention to “a presentation” and “more” on who is giving it. They want to be sure that they choose a good person to collaborate with. It may take several days after a meeting for them to determine whether they want to make a deal or not. One should be comfortable with talking about personal matters

with Spaniards, and food has very important role in creating the bond. “Business lunches and dinners” are popular although the length and time depend on region. Castilians are not comfortable with discussing about “business” while they eat but Catalonians feels differently about it. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 294, Lewis, 2006, p. 271, 272)

12 ASIAN CULTURES

There are some common characteristics in the cultures of Japan, China, Indonesia, India, Korea and Thai. Erwin calls this culture type Asian. In Asia, long-term impacts of business to their community are often more important than quickly earned money although “profit” is important as well. However, Albaum, Duerr and Josiassen disagree with Erwin because according to them, Japan’s and India’s cultures are very different from any culture in the world. In Mehra’s opinion many Asian countries have highcontext-culture. (Albaum, Duerr & Josiassen, 2017, p. 138, Erwan, 2019, p. 78, Mehra, 2014, 22, 28)

Before any business decisions can be made, “business relationship” must be built and maintained because Asians do not like to do business with strangers. Therefore, it is important to accept invitations to “social gatherings”. However, according to Gesteland, younger generation of Indians require less bonding, and the getting to know process is quicker. (Erwan, 2019, p. 83, Gesteland, 2012, p. 34, 136, Mehra, 2014, p. 122)

Feelings are not usually shown except in India and Korea. Before decisions are being made, all group-members participate discussions, and normally reaching “consensus” is requirement for making a deal. (Erwan, 2019, p. 83, Mehra, 2014, p. 122)

Asians do not commit easily to any agreement, and the negotiation process may be quick or slow. “Policies and rules” are not important, and some may even consider them “optional”. Also, the word “no” is rarely said in these cultures, and people prefer

using other expressions such as “maybe” or “we will think about that”. (Erwan, 2019, p.83, Gesteland, 2012, p. 34)

In Asian cultures, a person does not make errors, groups do, and clashes happen when people do not feel respected. “Sharing a meal” is important in creating and maintaining “a relationship”, and occasionally, people even eat from “the same plate”. (Erwan, 2019, p. 84, Mehra, 2014, p. 122)

12.1 Indian culture

According to Erwan, for Indians, “yes” does not always mean that they agree to do something. It may even mean “no” if it is said shyly. For a foreigner to accept “yes” as agreement, he should get more than “yes” from the other party. There should be explanations on how the company is committing to the plan. However, according to Gesteland, Indian business culture is changing, and the “younger” generation has more “direct” approach. In Erwan's opinion when someone is wagging his head to all directions, it is a sign that he is listening intensely. Nevertheless, Gesteland writes that it means “I guess so” or “maybe”. (Erwan, 2019, pp. 99, 102, Gesteland, 2012, p. 135. 137)

In India, individuals have more value than groups. The country is very bureaucratic, and time is not viewed like in Anglo-Saxon cultures. Setting strict deadlines is pointless because people do not often keep them. (Erwan, 2019, pp. 100, 102, Gesteland, 2012, p. 135, Mehra, 2014, p. 145)

Indians are “formal in behavior and communication”, and age and titles matter. In addition, creating “a relationship” is crucial. People are usually “addressed” by their surname, and people’s religions may affect this part of communication. “Business lunches and dinners” are common, and they are conducted in best hotels and restaurants. (Erwan, 2019, p. 100, 102, Mehra, 2014, p. 144, 146, Lewis, 2006, p. 437, Gesteland, 2012, p. 138)

“Negotiations” are often lengthy, and every detail is discussed thoroughly. Handshake is a normal way to start a meeting in “New Delhi, Chennai, Calcutta and Mumbai” but in many other cities people prefer “namaste or namaskar gesture”. In addition, many businesswomen feel awkward with shaking hands which should be kept in mind. “Negotiations” are important to be conducted “face-to-face” instead of via digital connection. Saying “no” should be avoided, and it is better to do like the locals do and say “yes” shyly. (Erwan, 2019, p. 103, Gesteland, 2012, p. 137, 139, Lewis, 2006, p. 436)

12.2 South-Korean culture

Koreans are different from many other Asians because they do not cover their emotions, they are individualists, and they show determination. They also appreciate straightforward approach in communication, and for them “yes means yes and no means no”. However, according to Gesteland, people still try to avoid saying simply “no” because they do not want to hurt the other party’s feelings. Even though there are many differences between Koreans and other Asians, there are also common factors such as importance of relationships and importance of “saving face”. (Erwan, 2019, pp. 118, 120-122, Gesteland, 2012, p. 203, Mehra, 2014, p. 57)

“Cold contacting” might not lead to anywhere, and usually businesspeople are introduced to each other by a common acquaintance. Bonds between people who have studied in a same educational institute or in a same city are strong. Koreans are willing to take “risks”, and it is usually the manager who makes decisions. Older people are respected even if the age difference is small. (Erwan, 2019, p.121, 122, Gesteland, 2012, p. 201)

Negotiations proceed normally swiftly although details are also crucial. The decision makers may not participate negotiations, and therefore it would be good to prepare for them a short “summary” of what is being offered. “Agenda” and schedule “are flexible”, and the goal for meetings is to have results. After the negotiation, it is normal to have some drinks together with them, and it is acceptable that everyone gets little bit tipsy. (Erwan, 2019, p. 122, Lewis, 2006, p. 508)

According to Gesteland, Koreans may “smile” when they are “angry” or when they “disapprove”. It is normal to give business presents, and when “an object” is given to another person, it is done with “right hand”, and an object is “received” by using “both hands”. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 204, Lewis, 2006, p. 508, Asialink Business, n.d.)

Greeting includes “bowing” and looking the other party straight in the “eye” for few seconds. Usually after this comes “shaking hands”. According to Gesteland, people are usually addressed by their last names. If a person’s last name is “Park”, he is called “Mr”., Mrs. or Miss “Park”. However, Lewis writes in his book that Koreans do not like to use “names” at all, and that they prefer to call people by their “titles”. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 205, Mehra, 2014, p. 72, Lewis, 2006, p. 507)

12.3 Filipino culture

Filipino business culture has not been mentioned in any of the clusters that was introduced earlier. However, it is discussed in this part of thesis since Philippines is located in Asia. Bonding is important for Filipinos as well, and the business culture is “hierarchical”. The view of time is flexible, and good way to start a business relationship with them is to start discussing with them in a trade show. Another way to start business relationship with them is to ask to be introduced to them by one of their business associates. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 181, Cultural Atlas, n.d.)

Filipinos communicate in indirect way, and they dislike answering “no” to business associates. When they mean to say yes, they “raise their eyebrows or jerk their heads upwards”, and when they mean no, they “jerk their heads downward”. Negotiations rarely start during “the first meeting”. In Filipino culture as well, “sharing a meal” is a good way to get to know the other party, and they also like “to golf” with potential business partners. Even in a stable business relationship, it is always important to discuss about what is happening in the other party’s life before starting “the business” conversation. Asking about their “families” is crucial. Just like in many other Asian cultures, in Philippines as well, community is more important than a person. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 181, Lewis, 2006, p. 478, 479, Cultural Atlas, n.d)

People are “greeted” by shaking hands, but the handshakes are not firm. Elderly people are respected, and “saving the face” is crucial. “Negative” feelings should not be shown, and one does not hear “the word no” often because it is not polite. Others should not be interrupted and speaking loudly should be avoided. Presents should be given to strengthen relationships although they should not be opened in front of the givers. In addition, one should “refuse to accept a gift twice before taking it”. (Gesteland, 2012, p.182, 184, Lewis, 2006, p. 477-479, Cultural Atlas, n.d.)

Looking Filipinos directly in the eye can make them feel awkward. “Pointing” someone or something is rude, and it is better to use other ways to signal “directions”. “Status” is important, and “titles” are used when addressing people. If the person does not have a title, it is proper to use the surname with Mr., Mrs., or Miss before it. (Gesteland, 2012, pp. 183, 184, Lewis, 2006, p. 477, Cultural Atlas, n.d.)

12.4 Turkish culture

Turkish culture has similarities with Israeli and Greek cultures. According to Erwan Turks communicate in a straightforward way. However, Mehra writes in her book that Turkey has “high-context culture”. Perhaps in this case Mehra is thinking about other features of the culture such as importance of the community and family, and not only the communication style. In Turkey business is done with familiar people which means that creating and maintaining “relationship” is vital. In addition to community, “hierarchy and seniority” are important as well. Potential alliance partners can be met at “tradeshows”, and “firm handshakes” are expected. (Erwan, 2019, p.165, Albaum, Duerr & Josiassen, 2017, p. 138, Gesteland, 2012, p. 233, Mehra, 2014, p. 12, 25)

“Titles” should be used when discussing with people. Relationship building starts with “cup of coffee or tea” while people discuss about other matters than business. Turkish politics should not be mentioned, and “history, religion and society” must be respected. Having lunches and dinners together is part of their culture. (Erwan, 2019, p. 166, Gesteland, 2012, p. 236, Lewis, 2006, p. 394)

Negotiations may be lengthy but after decision is made, people act quickly. According to Erwan, “meetings” starts on time, and they follow “formal” structure, but the schedule is flexible. However, in Lewis’ opinion, Turkish people are not punctual. Haggling is important part of Turkish culture, and sellers should keep this in mind when doing business with them. Small “business gifts” are appreciated. (Erwan, 2019, p. 166, Gesteland, 2012, p. 235, 237, Lewis, 2006, p. 391, 393)

There are many matters to consider regarding the culture when doing business with Turks. “Direct eye-contact” is positive, and the bottom of one’s “shoe” should not be “facing” anyone. Therefore, it is recommended to “keep one’s feet on floor”. “Left hands” should not be used for “touching people or to passing objects”. If one must “blow his nose during a meal”, he should go to do so in private. (Gesteland, 2012, p. 235, Mehra, 2014, p. 72)

13 CONCLUSION

Literature review showed that studying competitors can save company’s “time and money”. Without the research, the firm does not know how their products or services are different from what others are offering. Knowing the competitors’ “products, pricing and marketing channels” can help the company to make wise decisions regarding how the firm itself wants to approach these matters. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen, 2016, p. 26, Albaum, Durrel & Josiassen, 2017, p. 150) Through the research that was done for Company X, the firm got overview of their competitors and what they offer. With the information that they gained, they can now decide the most potential countries for their expansion, and the best strategies to do that.

Alliance partnerships may be crucial when a company is planning to expand abroad. It may be requirement in some countries to have “local” partners so that firms could operate there. Having local alliance partners can be also beneficial because they know the local “people”, and they know how to best do the marketing. Forming alliances can also enable companies to increase their “resources”. Getting access to “technology”,

information, reputation, funds, increase in production and competitive advantage are all excellent reasons for why companies seek alliance partnerships. (Tjemkes, Vos & Burgers, 2012, p. 4-6, Rao, 2010, p. 66) Alliance partners are indeed important in many cases, and in Company X's case they are vital.

Cultures may impact negotiations strongly. For example, in some cultures a lot of time is spent with "getting to know" the other party before contracts are signed while in other cultures negotiations are completely factual and decisions are made quickly.

While Finnish way to communicate is "direct", many other cultures' style is "indirect", and this should be considered or otherwise feelings will get hurt. Presentations are influenced by cultures as well since in some countries it is supposed to be emotive, and in some other countries only facts and details matter. There are also differences in whether "direct eye contact" is positive or negative and whether people are expected to "show emotions" or not. For Finns it is normal to start conversations "via email or telephone" when approaching someone for the first time, but most cultures are relationship centered, and businesses are not done with strangers. This means that people need to be introduced to each other by a common acquaintance who is highly respected person. Other option is to meet people at tradeshow where people can start getting to know each other. (Albaum, Duerr & Josiassen, 2017, p. 128, 129, Gesteland, 2012, p.181, 388, Salacuse, 2005, p. 1,3, 4, Moore & Woodrow, 2010, p. 12, 51, Prince & Hoppe, 2007, p. 18, 19, University of Notre Dame, 2020,)

Therefore, cultures should be considered carefully when Company X is planning strategies for contacting and negotiations. Separate strategy must be done for each culture, and if the culture is relationship centered, a company should be prepared to meet the potential business associate face-to-face in an event to start the conversations, and a lot of time should be reserved for bonding. The person who is representing Company X abroad should recognize possible differences in communication and cultural related expectations, and ponder how to cater them.

This thesis was written to help Company X in its internationalization plan but it could help other companies as well. Every firm that is thinking about expanding abroad should consider competitors, possible alliance partners and cultures among many other

matters such as taxation and laws. Time should be reserved for profound research before any decisions are made, and little bit of open-mindedness is required as well.

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