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The buying behavior of Danish customers: a case study of Best Western Walram Hotel

Dohmen, Jessica

2013 Laurea Leppävaara

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Laurea Leppävaara

The buying behavior of Danish customers:
a case study of Best Western Walram Hotel

Jessica Dohmen
Degree Programme in Business
Administration
Bachelor's Thesis
December, 2013

Dohmen, Jessica

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Year	2013	Pages	66
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This project-based thesis is concerned with the development of a marketing plan for the case company, Best Western Hotel Walram in Valkenburg, the Netherlands, and will demonstrate the importance of understanding cultural differences in international business. The reason for elaborating a marketing plan was the desire to expand the business activities of the case company to the Scandinavian countries, starting with Denmark.

During the research period, various interviews with the management and Danish tour operators as well as a business trip to Denmark were organized to support the development of the new market and the cooperation with the Danish tour operators. After the research period a series of marketing theories such as the AIDA model, Porter's five forces, a SWOT analysis, etc. have been used to support the marketing plan.

Furthermore, the cultural study provided the management with a clear understanding of Danish business culture and enabled the case company to implement the right marketing strategies to understand the buying behavior of the Danish customer.

Eventually the research was successful and permitted the case company to make important business contacts and succeeded in attracting tour operators to the Netherlands. Indeed, many tour operators have already booked tours for the next season. The management will consider further expansion to other Scandinavian countries.

Key words the Netherlands, tourism, Denmark, culture, marketing plan

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

According to Mitchell (4, 2009) culture is “a set of learned core values, beliefs, standards, knowledge, morals, laws, and behaviors shared by individuals and societies that determines how an individual acts, feels, and views oneself and others”.

Many studies have shown the importance of understanding and managing cultural differences in international business. Indeed, in each culture individuals process information in a different way, which makes it thus challenging for every company that desires to work in an international environment.

Furthermore regardless of the sector a company is working in, a solid understanding of international business culture will enable the case company as well as its co-workers to become more successful. Developing effective solutions, adapting effectively and analyzing different communication styles such as gestures, dress codes and symbols will allow companies to prepare themselves for international business.

1.2 Purpose of the thesis

The main purpose of this research is to develop a marketing plan for the case company, which will be supported by the analysis of the Danish market and its culture and will eventually lead to a possible expansion of the business activities to the Scandinavian countries starting with Denmark. This will allow the company to take a considerable competitive advantage compared to the other hotels of the region of Valkenburg.

1.3 Research approach

The research was completed by undertaking first of all desk research, which consists in “the collation of existing research results and data from published secondary sources for a specific, often unrelated, projects” (Stone & Desmond 2007, 126).

During the research period, the main point of focus will be the Danish culture and the research questions, which are:

- How Denmark and the Netherlands are culturally linked?

- How to attract the Danish tour operator to the Netherlands?
- What are the most effective strategies to adopt?

This thesis will be carried out with the help of the marketing department and management of the case company as well as other implied parties that will contribute directly or indirectly to the realization of this research.

The desk research will be an important section of the research since it will be a fundamental source of information for the marketing department before the organized business trip to Denmark. Indeed the portfolio will give clear and precise information on Danish culture for the case company and will support the marketing department during its first contact with the Danish tour operators.

Secondly the research was completed by using qualitative research methods which is “an approach that allows you to examine people’s experiences in detail, by using a specific set of research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, content analysis, visual methods, and life histories or biographies”. (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2011, 31).

1.4 Theoretical approach

This research will be based on various marketing theories, principles and other literature that will be the basis for the development of the marketing plan for the case company. These theories are Porter’s five forces, the 5C’s, the marketing mix, the PEST analysis, etc. Furthermore an emphasis on cultural insights on the Danish market such as Hofstede’s dimensions, the Lewis model, Schwartz model, etc. will also be provided to the lecturer.

1.5 Framework of the thesis

The research will be divided into six different parts. The introduction will give a clear overview of the current situation of the case company, the purpose of this research and will introduce the research questions that will be examined in this thesis.

Secondly the theoretical background will interpret the different theories that will be used to support the following research and marketing plan. Furthermore, a cultural analysis will show the differences and similarities between the Dutch and the Danish culture, which will support the marketing department for its first business trip to Denmark.

The third part, research approach, will indicate how the research has been conducted and how the data was analyzed. This part will also present the reliability and validity of the results for the thesis.

The fourth part, the marketing plan, will present to the lecturer and the case company the fundamentals needed for the marketing plan: situation analysis, target audience, goals, strategies & tactics and budget breakdown. The marketing plan will support the case company in achieving its marketing objectives.

The fifth part, conclusions and recommendations, will designate the findings of the research and will give the case company, Best Western Hotel Walram a review of the research and its results and recommendations for their future expansion.

Eventually, the limitations of this research and the theoretical linkage of the marketing plan and cultural analysis will be presented.

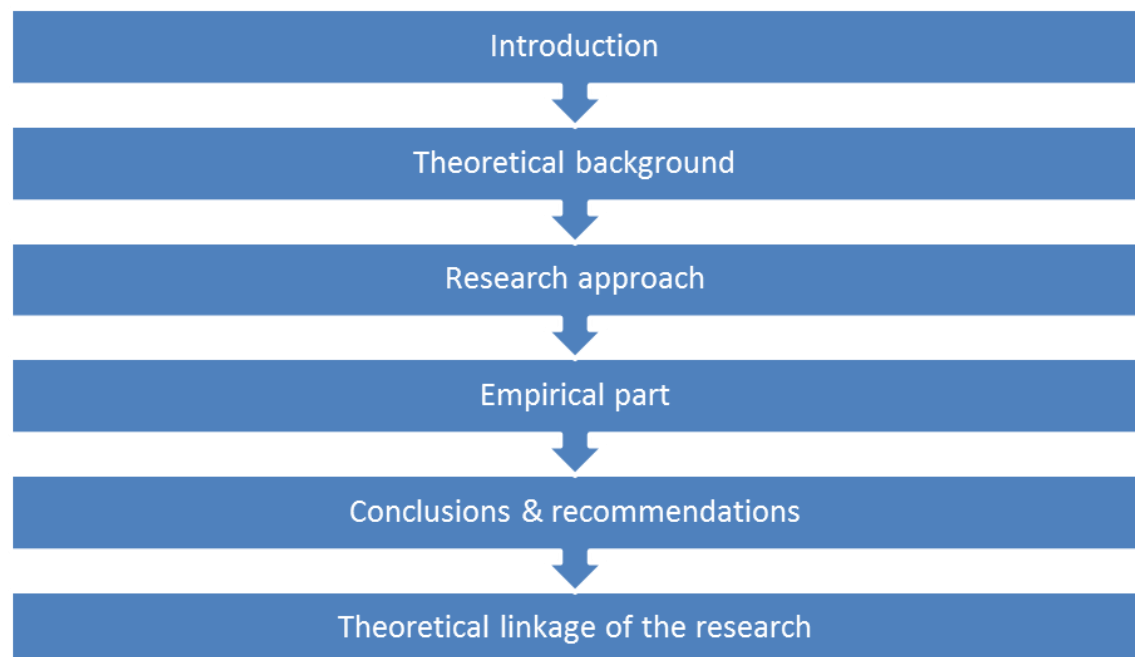


Figure 1: Framework of the thesis

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Cultural analysis

The following chapter of this thesis will be dealing with the importance of understanding and managing cultural differences in international business in the Netherlands and in Denmark throughout various cultural models such as Hofstede's cultural analysis, the Lewis model, Trompenaar's seven (7) dimensions, etc. Further literature will demonstrate the role and the importance of cultural understanding and communication across international business. Because regardless of the sector a company is working in, a solid understanding of international business culture will enable the case company as well as its co-workers to become more successful and in this particular case, increase the chances to enter the Danish market.

According to Moran, Harris & Moran (2011, XI), "learning to manage cultural differences is a means for all persons to become more global in their outlook and behavior, as well as more effective personally and professionally. When cultural differences are understood and utilized as a resource, then all benefit. When they are not, the costs are significant."

It has been proven that a good understanding of different cultures is vital for a company to succeed in its business activities. Indeed what works for one country might not work for another: this situation might lead to misunderstanding in communication and eventually to a loss of the customer. Intercultural communication methods can vary according to cultures since the written language as well as the spoken language may not be interpreted the way it was supposed to be. This is the reason why for the case company it is essential to understand the existing methods and cultures that are implemented in Denmark. (Bowe & Martin 2007, 1)

The following paragraphs will introduce various culture models that will analyze the Danish culture and compare it to the Dutch culture in order to determine the cultural values of Denmark and the best methods to succeed in negotiations for the case company. Therefore Hofstede's cultural dimensions will be used as a starting point for the cultural background analysis.

2.1.1 Hofstede cultural dimensions

Throughout his research of dimensions of national culture, the Dutch Professor Geert Hofstede has demonstrated the importance of cultural elements in today's society in diverse fields such as international economics, communication and cooperation. With means of his study, a clear and precise comparison of the Danish and Dutch culture can be made via his dimensions of national culture: Power Distance (PDI), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS) and Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI). The fifth dimension Long-Term Orientation (LTO) was added in 1991 by Michael Bond. (The Hofstede center 2013).

The following graph will show the five dimensions applied to the Netherlands and the target market, Denmark.

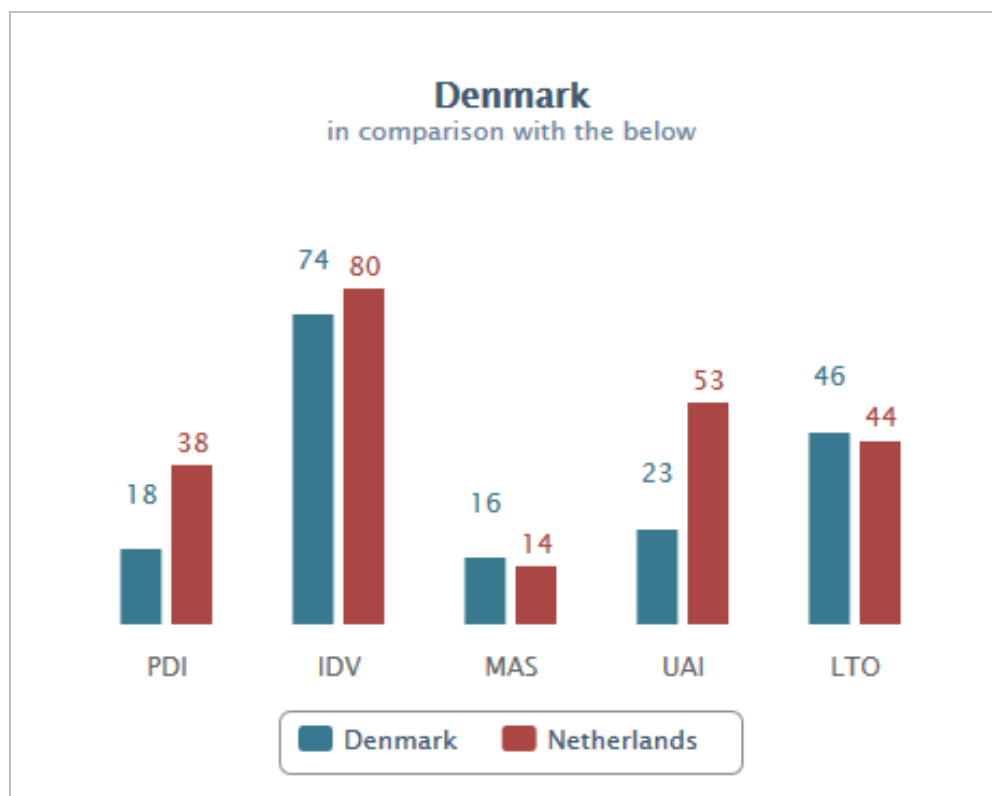


Figure 2: Comparison of Dutch and Danish culture

As can be seen from the above figure, the five dimensions can be analyzed as following:

Power distance: power distance can be defined as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.” (The Hofstede center 2013).

Since both countries obtain a low score for this first dimension, respectively 18 for Denmark and 38 for the Netherlands, both can be said to have a low power distance in their culture. This means that managers of companies are leading their employees, encouraging them to take proper initiative and are accessible for their employees. Furthermore the company is working on a first name basis, which will allow the employees to work in an informal atmosphere bases on an egalitarian mindset. (The Hofstede center 2013).

Individualism versus collectivism: this second dimension can be defined as “the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members”. (The Hofstede center 2013).

Both countries have high score for this dimension, 74 and 80, which means that again both countries have the same cultural orientation and thus are individualistic societies: the impact of individualism in business culture can be interpreted by employees working more individually and not identifying themselves as a group. The study also showed that starting to do business with Danes does not require a lot of small talk and making relationships are not required

at the first place. Finally the communication form can be kept very direct since the Danes are known for using direct communication. (The Hofstede center 2013).

Masculinity versus femininity: Hofstede characterizes this third dimension as “what motivates people, wanting to be the best (masculine) or liking what you do (feminine).” (The Hofstede center 2013).

For this third dimension, both countries have again the same orientation. Indeed as well as Denmark as the Netherlands have low scores, respectively 16 and 14; this indicates that both countries are feminine societies. For feminine societies, people are concerned with the quality of life and they show a preference for fewer working hours to be able to spend more time with their family: Danes prioritize the quality of life. Furthermore, the research showed that Danes engage long discussions in business and conflicts are solved after going through a negotiation phase and compromising. (The Hofstede center 2013)

Uncertainty avoidance: this fourth dimension, Hofstede defines the uncertainty avoidance as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these”. (The Hofstede center 2013).

For the first time, a noticeable difference can be noticed between both countries. With a score of 23, Danes tend not to be bothered by any change in their working life or by unforeseen events and so, they are able to work in an environment that does not need a lot of structure and adapt to new situations. (The Hofstede center 2013).

On the other hand, the Dutch prefer to avoid uncertain situations. Indeed rules are needed to keep a certain balance in their working life. Furthermore, a high score for the uncertainty avoidance shows that the Dutch are reluctant to innovation, whereas Danes have a great interest in design and creation of innovation in their lives. (The Hofstede center 2013).

Long term orientation: this last dimension is defined as “the extent to which a society shows a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historical short-term point of view.” (The Hofstede center 2013).

For this fifth dimension, both countries obtain low score. Indeed with a score of 44 for the Dutch and 46 for the Danes, both countries are classified in the short term orientation societies. (The Hofstede center 2013) A short term orientation society can be recognized through various characteristics such as respect for the tradition, fulfilling of social obligations, reciprocation of greetings, favors and gifts, short term profit and personal steadiness and stability. (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel 2012, 192).

2.1.2 Low versus high context cultures

Another way to compare both cultures and so to facilitate business engagement with Denmark is to identify the context both countries are evolving in: low context versus high context. According to Hall & Hall (1990, 6) context is “the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of that event. The elements that combine to produce a given meaning - events and context - are in different proportions depending on the culture.”

In order for the case company to make the business trip to Denmark a success, the hotel needs to find out whether Denmark is a low or a high context culture. The following figure realized by Hall (197, 91) shows the classification of countries according to their context.



Figure 3: High versus low context cultures

The figure above clearly demonstrates that Western countries including the Netherlands and Scandinavia are evolving in low context cultures, which means that inhabitants of both countries put more importance in the meaning of the message, the communication is explicit and direct, there is a need of background information, a low use of nonverbal elements and there is no need to read what the other one means. (Slavik 2004, 135).

2.1.3 Trompenaar's model of national culture differences

The Dutch researcher Fons Trompenaar and Hampden Turner established another way to organize societies in general business and management throughout a research based on a survey where more 30.000 managers from international companies from 55 countries participated. As a result, seven dimensions were created beyond this research and it has been clearly demonstrated that those seven dimensions are classified in three distinct categories: social interaction, relationship to environment and passage of time. (Ahlstrom & Bruton 2010, 56)

The next paragraph will summarize Trompenaar's 7 dimensions and apply them to the Netherlands and to the target country, Denmark.

Universalism versus particularism: for particularist cultures, individuals interpret rules in context; feel obligations towards friends and family and "less attention is given to abstract societal codes". Instead for universalist cultures, rules are rules and might be seen by particularist as inflexible, cold and legalistic (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 8).

According to Trompenaar's case "the car and the pedestrian" (See appendix 1), 90% of the Dutch participants and most of the north Europeans, as well as the Danes would opt for a universalistic system rather than a particularistic social group (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 35).

The following graph will indicate tips for doing business with both social groups.

Universalists (for particularists)	Particularists (for universalists)
Be prepared for rational, professional arguments and presentations that push for your acquiescence	Be prepared for personal meandering or irrelevancies that do not seem to be going anywhere
Do not take impersonal, "get down to business" attitudes as rude	Do not take personal "get to know you" attitudes as small talk
Carefully prepare the legal ground with a lawyer if in doubt	Carefully consider the personal implications of your legal "safeguards"

Table 1: Tips for doing business with
(Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 49)

Individualism versus communitarianism: this dimension indicates to which degree individuals see themselves as individuals or as part of a group (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 9).

Once more Trompenaar's research demonstrated that 65% of the Dutch individuals and 67% of the Danish individuals would opt for individual freedom (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 52).

Neutral vs. emotional: this third dimension expresses the degree to which individuals display emotion, either openly, which represents an emotional society or stay objective in the business approach, which in that case represents a neutral society (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 9).

Trompenaar's study showed that 46% of the Dutch individuals and 34% of the Danish individuals would not show emotions openly, which means that laughing; smiling, grimacing and gesturing are part of the business operations (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 71)

Specific vs. diffuse: specific societies keep work and personal lives separate, which means that relationships are not necessary for doing business. On the other hand, diffuse societies think that relationships are important for business meetings (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 9). The following graph will show the strategies to adopt for businesses when dealing with specific and diffuse societies.

Specific	Diffuse
Be direct	Build a good relationship before concentrating on business.
Focus on people's objectives before you focus on strengthening relationships.	Deal with business on social occasions,
Give clear instructions, processes, and procedures.	Do not turn down invitations to social events.

Table 2: Diffuse versus specific strategies

According to Trompenaar's study "Paint the house" (see appendix 2), the author demonstrated that like most of northern Europe 91% of the Dutch and 89% of the Danish are specific oriented (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 90).

This means that both countries go straight to the point; are object oriented and only after some time both will start a relationship with their business partner (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 91). The strategy adopted by the Dutch and Danish can be seen on the right element of the next picture.

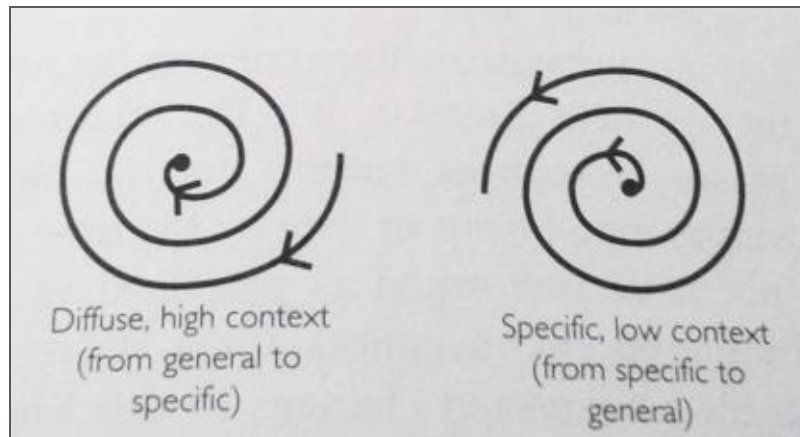


Figure 4: Circling around or going straight to the point

Achievement vs. ascription: this next dimension is dealing with the question whether someone is judged according to their achievements, which is a characteristic of the achievement society, called doing society or according to other factors such as his status that include age, gender, social connections, education and profession, which is a characteristic of the ascription society, called being (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 105).

According to Trompenaar's research "acting as suits you even if nothing is achieved, 49% of the Danes are proven to be more achievement oriented and whereas the Dutch only reached a score of 30% for this research. As a result the Dutch are less achievement oriented than the Danish and more ascription-oriented, which shows that power, title and position are more important (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 108).

Sequential vs. synchronic: this sixth dimension refers to the way individuals look at time. "In certain cultures like the American, Swedish and Dutch, time is perceived as passing in a straight line, a sequence of disparate events". This means that these cultures only give importance to the present and the future achievement and are sequential cultures. (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 10).

Furthermore these cultures keep appointments strictly and schedule in advance and do not run late. (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 143). Trompenaar's study also showed that Denmark is part of the sequential-oriented cultures (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 131.)

Synchronic cultures on the other hand handle more than one action at a time and appointments are not precisely set and schedules are generally subordinate to relationships (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 143).

Internal vs. external control: this last dimension refers to the degree to which people see the nature and its power. For internal oriented cultures, individuals do not believe in luck and see the nature as a machine that can be controlled (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 151). On the other hand in external oriented cultures individuals should act in harmony with nature, often flexible, willing to compromise to keep the peace and focus on the other. (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 159).

Trompenaar's case study evidenced that 73% of the Danes and 74% of the Dutch claimed "to be the captains of their fate". As a result both countries live in harmony with the nature and as such considered as external oriented cultures (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 148).

The following section will show tips for doing businesses with external oriented cultures:

- Softness, persistence, politeness and long, long patience will get rewards.
- Maintaining the relationship is more important

As a conclusion for Trompenaar's dimensions, it has been shown that the Netherlands and Denmark, the target country share many similarities and as such both countries are universalistic, individualistic, specific, sequential and external oriented cultures. Some slight differences have been noted for the emotional versus neutral and achievement versus ascription dimension where the Netherlands appear to show more emotions than the Danes and are less achievement oriented than Denmark.

2.1.4 The Lewis model

This next model presented by Lewis allows managers to understand and to communicate with other cultures.

Born in 1930, Richard D. Lewis is a British linguist, cross-cultural communication consultant, and author. He is currently Chairman of Richard Lewis Communications Ltd. (Richard Lewis communications 2013)

Richard D. Lewis developed the Lewis Model that classifies cultures in three distinct categories: linear-active, multi-active and reactive.

Understanding other cultures will enable the case company to learn how the Dutch culture can be compared to the Danish one in concepts of time and space; promote harmony in intercultural relationships; how their communication styles are reflected in the language patterns they use and learn to adapt to various reactions. (Lewis 2006, 29)

The following figure is presenting the Lewis model and its three culture types.

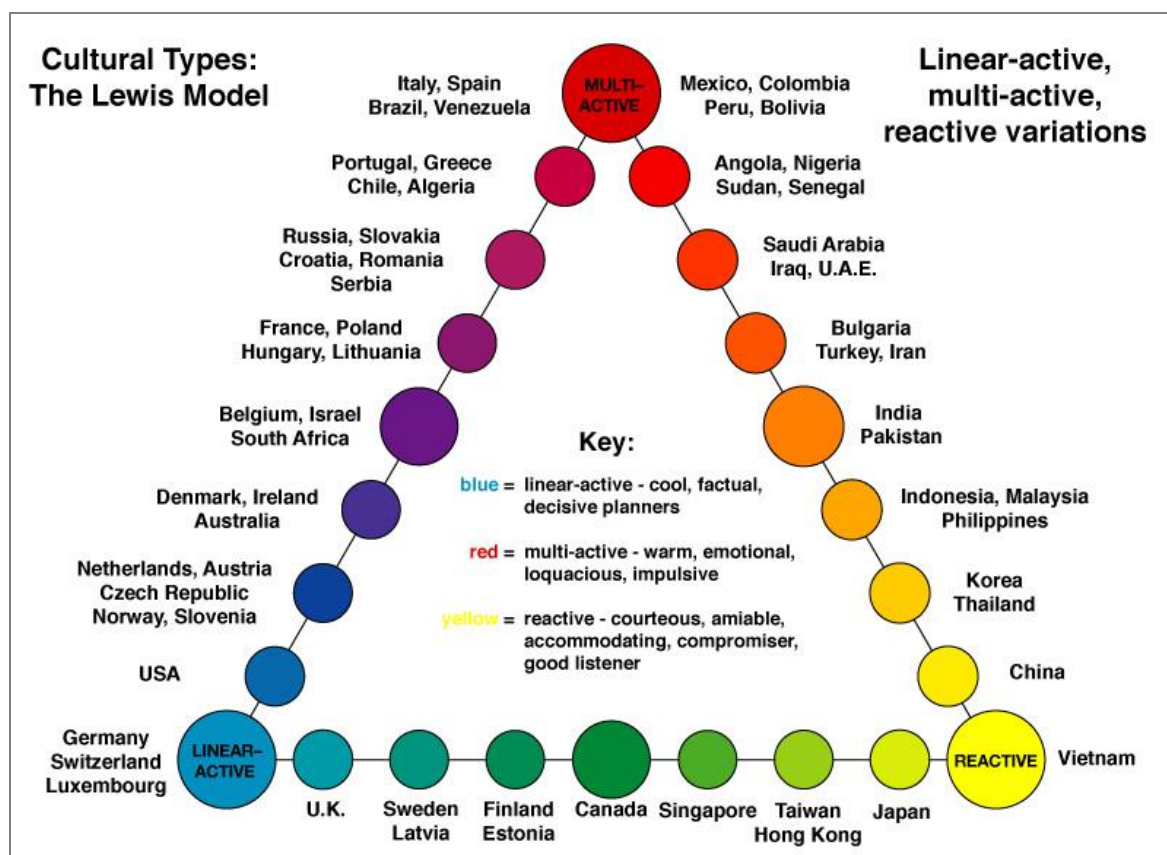


Figure 5: Lewis model, cultural characteristics

(Richard Lewis communications 2013)

The figure above shows that both countries, Netherlands as well as Denmark are classified in the first middle part of the linear-active section, but the Netherlands tend to be slightly more cool and more decisive planners than the Danes. For the case company, this means that both cultures will stick to their meeting schedules, deal with one offer at the time, and tell the truth during negotiations. Moreover in this case the contract is a formal document that once signed will be respected.

The characteristics of linear-active countries are as following: people tend to be task-oriented, highly organized planners and people accomplish their task one at the time. (Lewis 2012, 3). Nevertheless it is important to consider that many cultures are a mix of cultures, but are still set in one category. (Richard Lewis communications 2012).

The following figure will represent the three categories and their characteristics. (Richard Lewis communications 2013)

LINEAR-ACTIVE	MULTI-ACTIVE	REACTIVE
Talks half the time	Talks most of the time	Listens most of the time
Does one thing at a time	Does several things at once	Reacts to partner's action
Plans ahead step by step	Plans grand outline only	Looks at general principles
Polite but direct	Emotional	Polite, indirect
Partly conceals feelings	Displays feelings	Conceals feelings
Confronts with logic	Confronts emotionally	Never confronts
Dislikes losing face	Has good excuses	Must not lose face
Rarely interrupts	Often interrupts	Doesn't interrupt
Job-oriented	People-oriented	Very people-oriented
Uses mainly facts	Feelings before facts	Statements are promises
Truth before diplomacy	Flexible truth	Diplomacy over truth
Sometimes impatient	Impatient	Patient
Limited body language	Unlimited body language	Subtle body language
Respects officialdom	Seeks out key person	Uses connections
Separates the social and professional	Interweaves the social and professional	Connects the social and professional

Figure 6: characteristics of the Lewis classification
(Richard Lewis communications 2013)

The above figure demonstrates how differentiation can be made in the three categories of the Lewis Model. As both countries are part of the linear-active countries, negotiations will be facilitated: both parties will be direct, rarely interrupt the other one, plan ahead and confront with logic. These few mentioned examples of linear-active characteristics will help the case company, Best Western Hotel Walram, to make the adequate steps during their business meetings with the tour operators in Denmark.

When managers take into account the importance and diversity of communication across different cultures, then they will be more likely to succeed in their negotiations. As a result, quantitative and qualitative targets will be reached by the case company. Indeed as a qualitative target, the case company will be furthering the company's brand in Denmark and satisfying its new customers. The increase of the profit of the case company and the increase of the sales for next year are examples of quantitative targets.

2.1.5 Schwartz's theory

The American social psychologist Shalom Schwartz proposed seven (7) dimensions that are present at a cultural level and argued that “there are issues that all societies must confront”. (Clayton 2012, 185).

These seven dimensions are classified into three clear juxtapositions:

- Hierarchy vs. Egalitarianism
- Mastery vs. Harmony
- Embeddedness vs. Autonomy

More precisely the seven dimensions are: harmony, egalitarianism, intellectual autonomy, affective autonomy, mastery, hierarchy and finally embeddedness. The following figure will demonstrate the division of cultures according to Schwartz's dimensions.

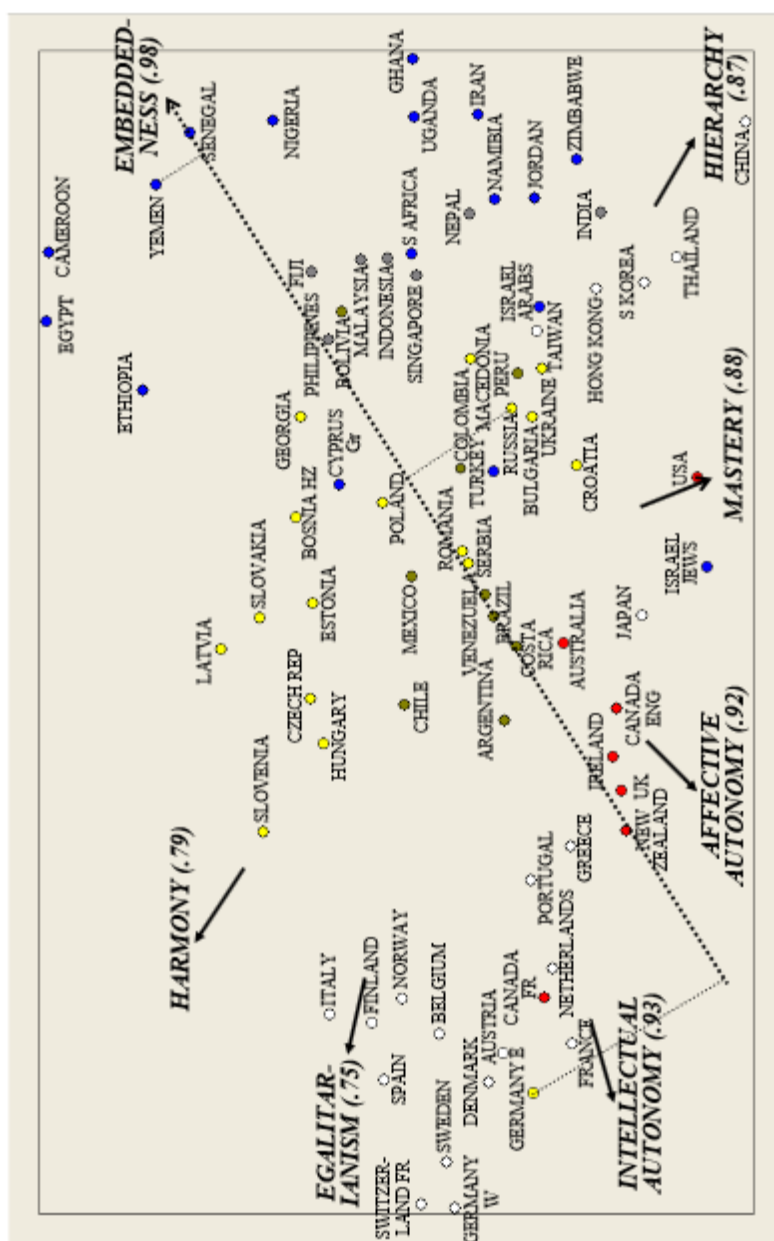


Figure 7: Schwarz's seven (7) dimensions

The figure indicates that Western European countries were mainly in the area around Egalitarianism and Intellectual Autonomy and as such both concerned countries are located at the left end of the graph, directing towards three out of the seven dimensions: the egalitarianism dimensions, the affective autonomy and intellectual autonomy dimension.

According to Usunier, Lee & Lee (2005, 64), in egalitarian societies the well-being of others is essential and where social justice, caring for the weaker members of the society, honesty, sympathy are the key elements.

On the other hand Usunier, Lee & Lee (2005, 64) perceive autonomy as the situation where individuals are viewed as autonomous entities that express their own feelings, ideas and abilities. This second dimension is divided into two distinct dimensions: the intellectual autonomy

and the affective autonomy. The intellectual autonomy refers to the independent pursuit of ideas, intellectual directions and rights whereas the affective autonomy encourages individuals to “pursue affectively positive experience for themselves”. (Van Nispen & Van Stralen 2009, 102)

The graph shows that Denmark tends to be more oriented towards the egalitarianism and the intellectual autonomy dimensions whereas the Netherlands are more oriented towards the affective autonomy and like Denmark, towards the intellectual autonomy. As a result creativity and curiosity are the prime elements in the society for both cultures.

2.1.6 Conclusions on the cultural analysis

As a conclusion for this cultural analysis, the various culture models explained above have demonstrated how the Netherlands and Denmark are presenting many similarities in their business culture and their organization of life. Indeed Hofstede’s dimensions indicated that four out of five dimensions were identical, except for the uncertainty avoidance dimension, where the scores were genuinely different.

Hall’s theory has designated both countries as low context cultures, which means that both countries use direct and explicit messages when communicating.

According to Trompenaar’s dimensions, the Netherlands and Denmark share many similarities and as such both countries are universalistic, individualistic, specific, sequential and external oriented cultures. Some slight differences have been noted for the emotional versus neutral and achievement versus ascription dimension where the Netherlands appear to show more emotions than the Danes and are less achievement oriented than Denmark.

Moreover the Netherlands and Denmark were presented both as linear-active cultures according to Doctor Lewis’ model and thus are designated as decisive planners and as individuals doing one thing at the time.

Finally Schwarz research on cultures demonstrated that again both countries have the intellectual autonomy dimension as a common point, which implies that the Netherlands and Denmark are characterized by the independent pursuit of ideas, intellectual directions and rights.

The following figures will present a summary of the above presented theories and dimensions except of the GLOBE theory, acronym for Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness. This project was built on various cultural studies’ findings such as Hofstede and Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, etc. and aimed to identify the multiple existing cultures and their

similarities as well as their differences in order to “develop an empirically based theoretical framework for the understanding and predicting the impact of specific cultural variables on leadership and organizational processes”. (Branine 2011, 62).

Common Themes	Culture Models					
	Kluckhohn/ Strodbeck	Hofstede	Hall	Trompenaars	Schwartz	GLOBE
Distribution of power and authority		1	1	1	1	2
Emphasis on groups or individuals	1	1		1	1	2
Relationship with environment	2	1		1	1	3
Use of time	1	1	1	1		1
Personal and social control	1	1		1		1
Other themes (see text)			1	2		

Figure 8: summary of the main culture models

The above figure represents a clear summary of the main culture models in which the numbers indicate the number of cultural dimensions from the various models that fit within each theory, with exception of the Lewis model. (Bhagat & Steers 2011)

This supports that the models used previously in this theoretical part of the thesis have all linked together. Indeed, five distinct themes seem to appear commonly across the models: distribution of power and authority, emphasis on groups or individuals, relationship with environment, use of time and personal and social control. This reinforces the results of the analysis of the comparison of the Dutch and Danish culture realized above in this document. Indeed for the case company, Best Western Hotel Walram, the research has a positive outcome on their desire to enter the Danish market. As a result, entering the Danish market for the case company will be relatively fluent, with no critical cultural shock, which will make communication easier for both parties.

2.2 Marketing theoretical background

Cant, Strydom, Jooste & Plessis (2011, 19) define marketing as following: “marketing is a combination of management tasks and decisions aimed at meeting opportunities and threats in a dynamic environment in such a way that its market offerings lead to the satisfaction of consumers’ needs and wants so that the objectives of the enterprise, the consumer and society are achieved.”

2.2.1 Marketing plan

According to Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen (2009, 866) a marketing plan is “a written document that summarizes what the marketer has learned about the marketplace, indicates how the firm plans to reach its marketing objectives, and helps direct and coordinate the marketing effort.”

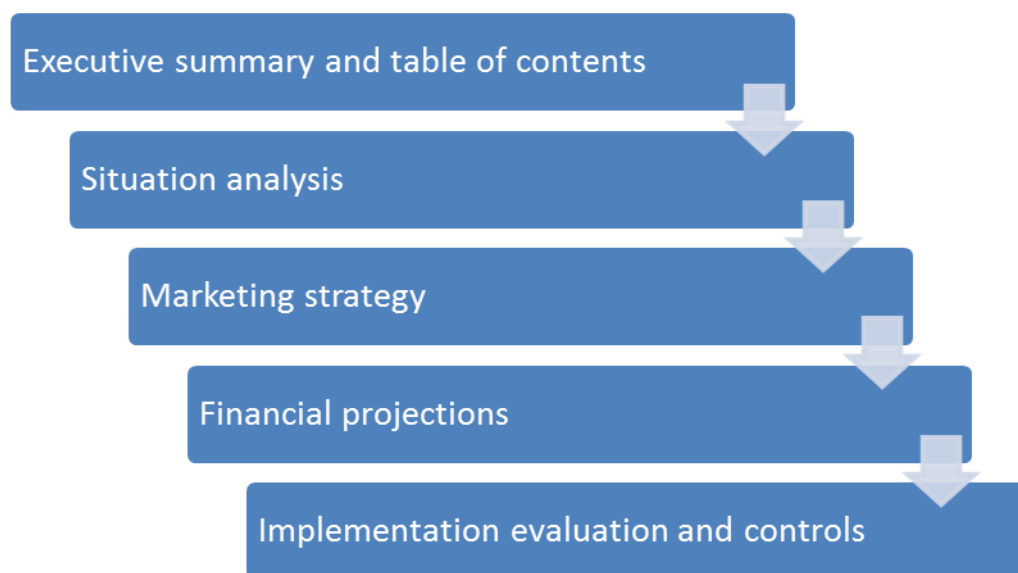


Figure 9: contents of the marketing plan
(Kotler et al. 2009, 109-110)

2.2.2 Executive summary and table of contents

The first element of a marketing plan is the executive summary that will outline the main objectives of the company followed by a table of contents that will present the content of the marketing plan (Kotler et al. 2009, 109)

2.2.3 Situation analysis

The situation analysis will collect internal and external information such as costs, sales, competitors, market, etc. Various methods can be used to analyze the environment such as a SWOT analysis, the 5C's and Porter's five forces (Kotler et al. 2009, 109) and will be presented in the following sections.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis allows companies to determine factors which need to be analyzed when developing marketing and corporate strategy. SWOT is the acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is important to note that strengths and weaknesses are internal factors that are controllable by the company whereas opportunities and threats are external factors that cannot be controlled by the organization. (Lancaster & Massingham 2011, 23).

The aim of a SWOT analysis is to help the case company to observe factors that will influence their operations either in a positive way or in a negative way and help the case company to take the right decision about what to do next. (Kotler, Keller, Robben & Geuens 2007, 38).

The 5 C's

The 5 C's is another tool used by marketers to implement the situation analysis on micro- and macro-environmental elements and stands for customers, competitors, company, collaborators and climate (Kloper, Berndt, Chipp, Ismail, Roberts-Lombard, Subramani, Wakeham, Petzer, Hern, Saunders, Myers-Smith 2006, 402).

Company

- **Goals & Objectives:** an analysis on the mission of the business, the industry of the business and the stated goals required to achieve the mission.
- **Position:** an analysis on the Marketing strategy and the Marketing mix.
- **Performance:** an analysis on how effectively the business is achieving their stated mission and goals.
- **Product line:** an analysis on the products manufactured by the business and the success it has on the market (master class management 2011).

Competitor

The competitor analysis will provide information on the current situation of the competitors and the threats they might represent in the coming future. This analysis will focus on various criteria's such as its positioning, market shares and products (Internet Center for Management and Business Administration 2010)

Collaborators

Elements such as distributors, suppliers and alliances are important for a company since they will support the running of the company (Internet Center for Management and Business Administration 2010).

Customers

A customer analysis will help the company to determine the needs of its customers and can be defined throughout the various elements that include trends, market size and growth, motivation, market segments, buying process, etc. (Internet Center for Management and Business Administration 2010). A more detailed explanation on the buying process will be given in the next paragraph.

Context

The context analysis or also known as the PEST analysis will support the company by understanding its external environment (Master class management 2011). A more detailed description of the PEST analysis will be presented in this chapter.

Buyer behavior

As already mentioned in the five C's analysis the buyer behavior model tends to show the five stages that lead a customer to buy a certain product or service and which elements are influencing the customer. (Masterson & Pickton 2010, 86)

The following figure is giving a general overview of the buying behavior process where each stage of the process will be developed below.

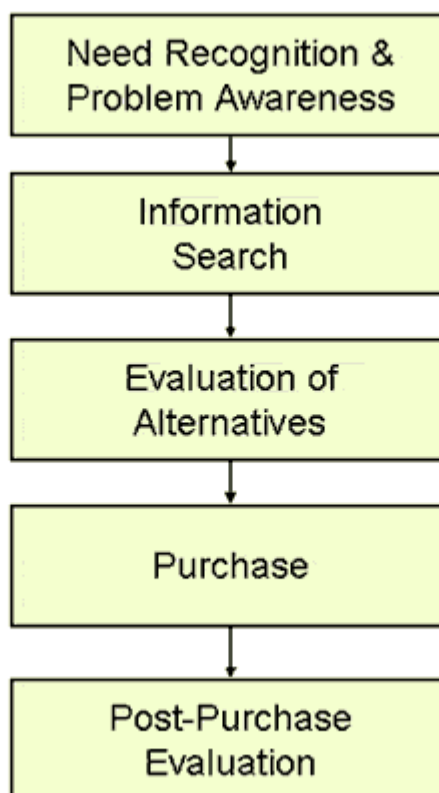


Figure 11: Buyer behavior process

The first stage, need recognition & problem awareness, starts when the customer finds out that there is a problem or there is a need that needs to be fulfilled. The origin of this problem can be a result of internal factors such as the breakdown of a personal item (phone, kitchen tool) or external factors such as advertisements, but the need recognition is not always that clear as mentioned above (Masterson & Pickton 2010, 86).

During the information search stage, the customer is gathering information on the desired product or service. Information can be gathered through various channels such as personal sources (family and friends), commercial sources (advertising, sales people), and public sources (newspapers, television, radio). It is important to note that the level of influence that a source have will depend on the type of source and on the customer himself (Masterson & Pickton 2010, 87).

During the third phase, the evaluation of alternatives, marketers will try to emphasize on the features of the product with promotional material in order to make their product the most attractive. Furthermore, all customers will not look at the product the same way: some will give priority to the brand, some to the price, some to social effect such as the reputation of the product, some to the features, etc. (Masterson & Pickton 2010, 87).

For the purchase phase, the customer selects the product he desires to buy. And again this phase can be influenced by several factors and can lead to the cancellation of the actual

purchase action: impolite sales people, a complicated sales process, out of stock of the desired product or a long queue. Furthermore external sources such as family and friends can dissuade or on the other hand convince the customer to buy the desired product (Masterson & Pickton 2010, 90).

Finally the last stage called post-purchase evaluation is really important to marketers since they need to reassure the buyer about the product or service he just bought so that in the future he will buy it again or recommend it to others. Ways to reassure the buyer are good after sales service; give the customer the possibility to test the product so they know how it will be, reassure the customer through advertisement, etc. (Masterson & Pickton 2010, 91).

Porter's 5 forces model

The next model called Porter's five forces model will help the case company to analyze the main competitive factors, threats and opportunities, that are affecting their industry. Indeed opportunities for bigger profits will arise when the competitive forces will be weaker whereas stronger competitive forces might lead to threats and might depress profits for the case company (Hill & Jones 2010, 42).

Porter also argues that the stronger these five elements are, the harder it will get for a company to raise its prices to make a bigger profit (Hill & Jones 2010, 42). It is also important to take into consideration the fact that the forces of each element can change according to the economic situation of a society (Hill & Jones 2010, 43).

The five forces are exhibited in the next figure.

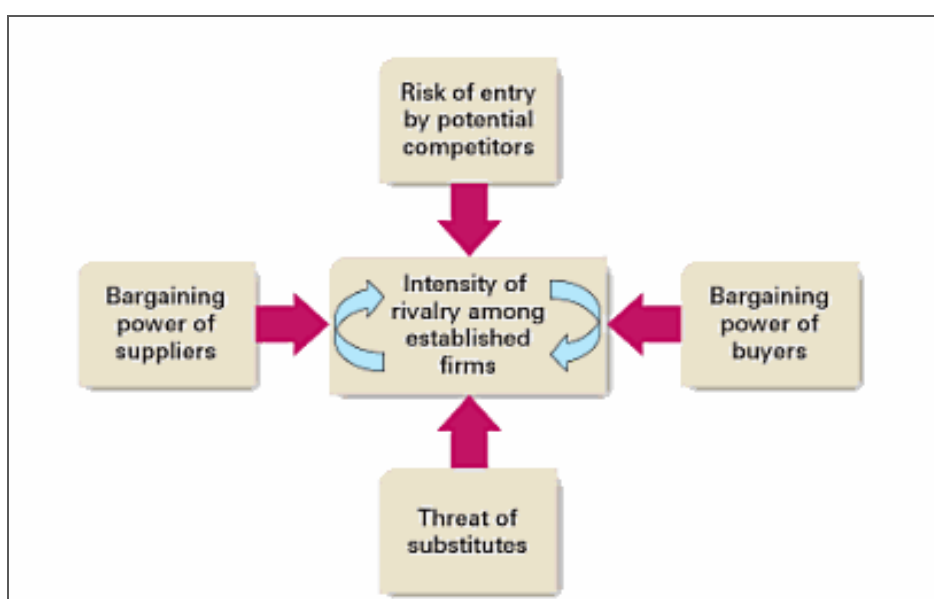


Figure 12: Porter's 5 forces model
(Hill & Jones 2010, 43).

The five (5) forces will be explained under the following paragraph.

Intensity of rivalry among established firms: this first force is dealing with the amount of competitors already existing in the industry. According to Porter's theory, rivalry becomes strong when (Henry 2008, 76):

- Little differentiation between the products sold by competitors
- Competitors are approximately the same size of each other
- Competitors have similar strategies
- Costly to leave the industry, represented by exit barriers

Risk of entry by potential competitors: the threat of new entry by potential competitors is high when it is easy for them to enter the industry. When entering a new market, the smaller the entry barriers, the easier it will be for the new marketers to enter the industry (Henry 2008, 71). The main barriers to enter are:

- capital requirement
- product differentiation
- access to distribution channels
- switching costs
- cost advantages independent of size
- economies of scale

Threat of substitutes: this third element deals with the degree to which customers can buy alternative products that are meeting the needs of the customers. The threat of substitution is high when it is easy to switch to the substitute product, the price of the substitute is lower and buyers are willing to change products (Henry 2008, 75).

Bargaining power of suppliers: suppliers are an essential part of the company's development and provide the necessary products or services to the case company and thus suppliers can gain in bargaining power when (Henry 2008, 74):

- it is expensive to change supplier
- there is no other substitute
- there are few suppliers that offer the needed product
- the industry is not an important customer of the supplier

Bargaining power of buyers: this last element of Porter's 5 forces model is dealing with the degree to which buyers can in some circumstances influence the industry (Henry 2008, 73):

- Switching to another product does not cost a lot
- Substitutes can be found easily
- Buyers are influenced by price changes

PEST analysis

The PEST acronym stands for Political - Economical - Social - Technological and is "a type of situation analysis in which political, economic, socio-cultural, and technological factors are examined to chart an organization's long-term plans" (Business dictionary 2013).

Companies are surrounded by this macro-environment and need to follow the evolution and interaction of each element since they can lead to new threats or opportunities for the company (Kotler et al. 2009, 154).

Factors influencing the PEST analysis are presented in the next figure and will be used to develop the marketing plan in the following chapter.

PEST Analysis Framework



Figure 13: PEST analysis framework
(The financier 2013)

2.2.4 Marketing strategy

The third element of the marketing plan, the marketing strategy will provide explanations on the goals, marketing and financial goals that need to be achieved by the company and will outline the target markets and its positioning strategy with various presented in the next section (Kotler et al. 2009, 853).

Marketing mix

According to McCarthy's research, the marketing activities can be seen as marketing tools, which are divided into four main elements called the 4P's of marketing. These elements are price, place, promotion and product and aim to market a product or a service the most efficient way and need to be seen as one structure that supports the four elements. Later on, three other elements were added by Boden to the marketing mix: process (service process), physical evidence and people. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2003, 17).

The following figure designates the 4P's and their core elements.



Figure 14: the four (4) components of the marketing mix

Product life cycle

For this case, it is important to know how the product will evolve once it has entered the market and what strategies can be implemented during the product life cycle.

The product life cycle theory suggests that there are four (4) distinct stages a product has to go through: Introductory phase, growth phase, maturity phase and declining phase. During those four phases, different strategies need to be adopted in order to ensure the product's success (Cant, Strydom, Jooste & du Plessis 2007, 242).

The figure below designates the four stages of the product life and will be followed by the structure of each stage.

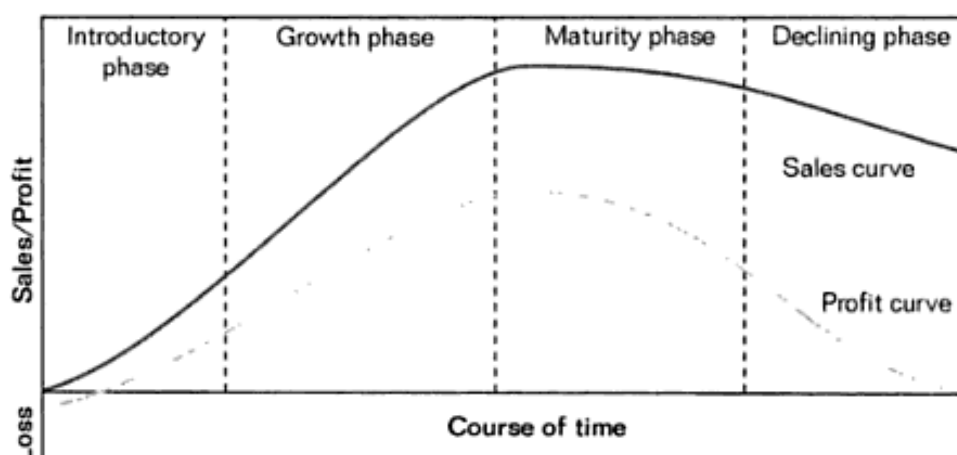


Figure 15: product life cycle
(Cant et al. 2007, 242)

The introductory phase starts as soon as the product enters the market and companies need to take into account that profits might be low due to the fact that the company needs to create the product's image. Marketing campaigns will lead the product to enter the second phase (Cant et al. 2007, 242).

For the second phase called growth phase, there is a considerable increase in sales and profit will also increase due to the decrease in promotion costs (Cant et al. 2007, 242).

Once the product has reached its maturity stage, the company needs to ensure the implementation of other strategies to keep the sales of the product going and can therefore start with price reduction or marketing campaigns (Cant et al. 2007, 242).

Eventually the product will arrive in the last phase, the decline phase where sales and profit will start to decline and where substitutes will gain importance. To counter this effect, the company can modify the product or then replace it (Cant et al. 2007, 242).

AIDA communication model

The AIDA communication model stands for Attention - Interest - Desire - Action and was created in the 1920's by E.K. Strong (Kazmi 2007, 327). This model helps companies to sell their products or services and gives a general understanding of how to target a market effectively. Indeed when a product or service comes on the market, the first step is to attract the attention of the public and is part of the cognitive stage. The methods used to get attention depend on the type of product or service: sponsorship, large promotion campaigns, fairs, etc. (Kazmi 2007, 328)

Once the potential customer is aware of the product, the company needs to get him interested in the product or service by demonstrating benefits and quality of the product or service. This phase is part of the affective stage (Kazmi 2007, 328)

The next step of the AIDA model is the desire and this phase is also part of the affective stage. During this phase the aim is to convince potential customers that they need and want the product or service. (Kazmi 2007, 328)

Finally, the last step called Action, which is part of the behavior stage, should lead potential customers to the act of purchasing the desired product or service. (Kazmi 2007, 328)

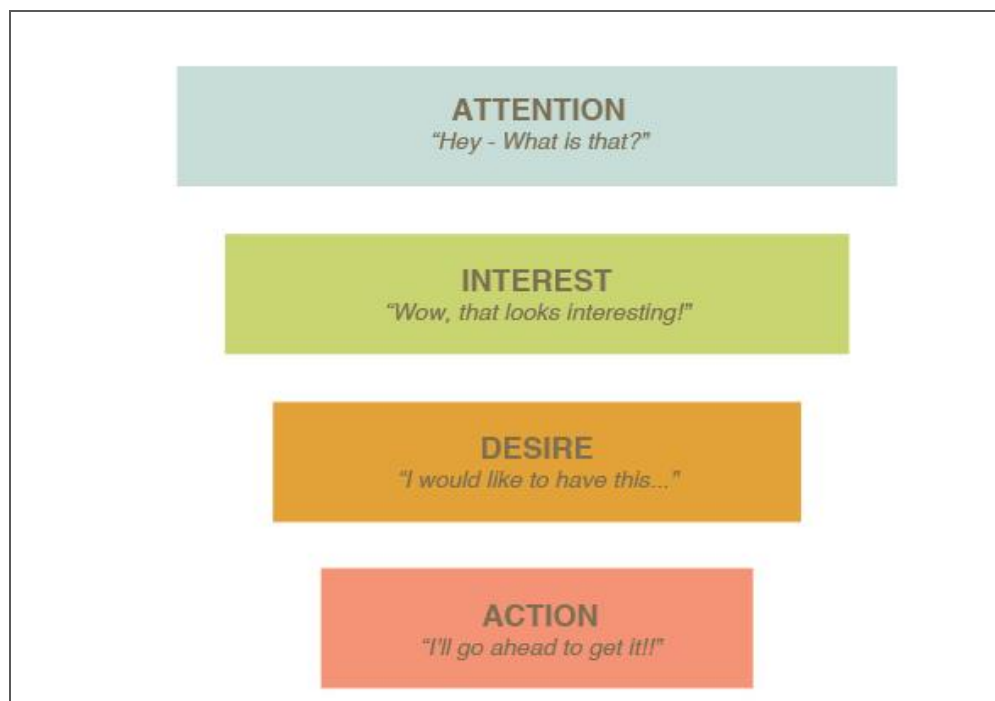


Figure 16: the AIDA communication model

2.2.5 Financial projections

Finally in the implementation evaluation and control phase, the company will verify the implemented strategies as if necessary adapt or change strategy.

2.3 Conclusions of theoretical discussions

First of all the cultural analysis has demonstrated that entering the Danish market will be smooth for the case company as well as for the Danish tour operators since both cultures share many similarities in the presented theories.

Secondly the marketing background has presented in various theories the importance of understanding the needs of customers and the importance of communication in business. Indeed effective communication will allow management to attract potential customers; start a solid business relationship and to be prepared to enter a saturated market.

Furthermore it can be said that the theoretical discussions, the cultural discussion as well as the marketing discussion, are closely linked together. Indeed when building a strategy the case company will have to take into consideration the findings on the cultural analysis related to the Danish buying behavior that will have an influence on the strategy to adapt.

3 Research approach

The main objective of this research is to determine the potential of the Danish market (Danish tour operators) for the case company Best Western Hotel Walram and thus make the hotel a desired destination for the Danish customers.

Through various research methods, information on the Danish culture and expectations of the tour operators will enable management to adopt the right marketing strategies and campaigns.

3.1 Case study

Before starting the research approach, it is important to note that this study is a case study and can be defined as following: a case study is “a process or record of research into the development of a particular person, group, or situation over a period of time” (Oxford dictionaries 2013).

According to Swanborn (2010, 13) the case study refers to “the study of a social phenomenon where using several data sources, the main ones being (in this order) available interviews with informants and (participatory) observation”.

A case study is divided in different chapters:

- Selection of research questions
- Selection of the case and data gathering and analyzing techniques

- Collection of the data
- Analyzing of the data
- Reporting (Swanborn 2010, IX).

3.2 Chosen research approach

Furthermore according to McGivern (2006, 53), several research approaches are available: the descriptive, casual and explanatory research approach.

In order to identify the most appropriate research method for this case, it is important to understand the need of the company, which in this case is to find out the potential of the Danish market. Since the problem is clearly identified and the case company clearly knows where to look for the solution, the descriptive research method will be the most appropriate. Indeed the descriptive research “aims to build a picture - of a market, a set of customers, a social phenomenon, a set of experiences, for example. It aims to identify, describe and in some cases count things” (McGivern 2006, 54). For this specific type of research, secondary data will also be available.

3.3 Interview techniques

3.3.1 Face-to-face interviews

In the beginning of the research, a face to face interview was realized with Ms. Bruls who has been living in Denmark for four years. The theme of the interview was Denmark and its culture and the themes that were approached were the business culture, eating and drinking habits of the Danes, family rituals, hobbies, national sports, etc.

A second face-to-face interview was done with the managing director and the marketing manager before and after their sales trip to Denmark. The information gathered before the business trip was used to prepare an introduction file with the information needed on the Danish culture and information that will be used during the meetings.

The information gathered after the sales trip was used to prepare other tours, packages adapted to the customers' expectations and contracts for the tour operators.

3.3.2 E-mail interview

The E-mail interviews were done as support for the face-to-face and telephone interviews in order to collect extra information on certain themes when needed.

3.3.3 Telephone interview

Finally a third type of interview, telephone interviews, was realized later on during the year with the tour operators during several weeks. These interviews were important sources of information for management about the practices of the tour operators, their expectations and their main point of interests. This information was later on used to implement a tailored approach to each tour operator during the business trip.

3.4 Methodology

Several methods were chosen to realize this research: open discussions, interviews and secondary data that are part of the qualitative research method.

Secondary data refers to material that “already exists and not necessarily made for this particular purpose such as books, articles, recorded archives and all kinds of publications” (Czinkota & Kotabe 2001, 118). Secondary data was used to support the research on Danish culture. Indeed the information gathered in articles and on the internet was used to create the portfolio for the business trip to Denmark and so prepare offers adapted to the Danish market.

It is important to note that each method will lead to a specific type of answers and results to analyze according to the aim of the study (Silverman 2011, 111).

In the following paragraph Merriam (2009, 13) quotes Van Maanen’s definition of qualitative research as:

“An umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world.”

As mentioned above, one of the chosen methods for the qualitative research was the interview. Indeed, the qualitative research interview’s main objective is to understand what the interviewees tell. (Kvale 1996, 31). The interviews will enable the case company to gain ex-

planations and information on unknown data by means of descriptions, experiences and feelings. (Kvale 1996, 33).

A more specific definition for qualitative interviews was given by Kvale (1983, 174): the qualitative research interview as "an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena".

Thus data collection can be done in various ways: telephone, internet and face-to-face interviews.

The following table will present the various interview methods followed by their advantages and disadvantages.

	Time	Place
Synchronous communication	Face-to-face Telephone MSN Messenger	Face-to-face
Asynchronous communication	E-mail	E-mail Telephone MSN Messenger

Table 3: Synchronous versus asynchronous communication

The above table shows the characteristics of the four interviewing methods in qualitative research. Each element has advantages and disadvantages that the case company has to take into consideration.

Indeed due to the asynchronous communication of place, advantages of telephone interviews are:

- extended access to the participants
- reaching individuals that are not geographically close
- cheaper than face-to-face interviews
- questions and subjects can be easily adapted

The disadvantages of telephone interviews are:

- the lack of social contact: no body language
- cultural barriers
- interviewees do not always have time (qualitative social research 2006)

The telephone interviews were realized during different weeks. Indeed in order to keep focus during the interviews, only two or three interviews were done per day.

On the other hand due to the asynchronous communication of time, advantages of email interviews:

- interviewer and interviewee do not need to set a time for the interview
- cheaper than face-to-face interviews
- reaching individuals that are not geographically close (qualitative social research 2006)

The disadvantages of email interviews:

- the interviewer might have to wait before getting the answers back from the interviewee, which can lead to a loss of interest for the interviewee and to a lack of information for the interviewer (qualitative social research 2006)

For face-to-face communications that are on a synchronous communication of time basis, the advantages are as following:

- interviewer and interviewee can directly react to each other and change subject and/or questions

The disadvantages of face-to-face interviews are:

- might be expensive when not geographically close
- takes time when there is a need of travelling (qualitative social research 2006)

To conclude this paragraph, all mentioned interview techniques will be useful to the case company's research to define the expectations of Danish tour operators and their working techniques.

3.5 Sampling

The target group of this research are Danish tour operators that are members of the Danish Travel Agency (Danmark Rejsebureau Forening - DRS), which is a trade association for the Danish travel agencies. The association was founded in 1938 and has since its foundation work to create attractive conditions for travel agencies in Denmark (Danmark Rejsebureau Forening no date).

After data collection, 100 tour operators were part of the DRS. According to the case company's target market, only Danish tour operators that are organizing tours by coach to the Netherlands and Germany could be taken into account for this research, which reduced the number to 31 tour operators.

Indeed many tour operators were specialized in winter holidays, safari tours, US holidays or only selling plane tickets and accommodation. Tour operators going to Germany were also part of the target group because there is a chance that these tour operators would also organize trips to the Netherlands due to the geographical location of both countries.

3.6 Data collection

The data has been collected through the various interviews with contact persons and tour operators (face to face and telephone), open discussions with management after the sales trip to Denmark, media providers and statistics gathered from the Euro Stat web page.

From the thirty-one (31) tour operators that fulfilled the case company's requirements; twenty-five (25) tour operators were interested and willing to participate in the interviews.

The aim of the interviews with the tour operators was firstly to get accustomed to the Danish market and to organize meetings for Mr. Dorren and Mrs. Bosch who were planning a business trip to Denmark later on. Out of the twenty-five (25) tour operators interviewed, fourteen (14) of them agreed on a meeting in their office with Mr. Dorren and Mrs. Bosch, which means that 56% of the tour operators were interested in a partnership with the case company.

Unfortunately it was not possible to realize surveys for these tour operators since it was not allowed by management due to ethical issues. This is the reason why open discussions and interviews were organized instead and thus made it still possible to gather valuable data for the case company.

3.7 Validity and reliability

According to Silverman (2011, 366), reliability and validity are "the technical terms that refer to the objectivity and credibility of research".

For this case, several points need to be taken into account. First of all the language barrier was an element that could bias the results of the interview. Indeed some tour operators had only some basic skills in the English language and so they might not have understood the

questions or used to right words. This is why the questions were repeated or reformulated several times when the interviewee did not understand the message.

Secondly, the ambiguity of the interviews could also bias the end results due to the fact that some responses were not direct, but rather implicit. In that case the interviewee was asked another question or another theme was replacing the question.

4 Empirical study

In this section, a deeper introduction to the case company as well as results of the interviews, desk research and discussions will be presented and sorted by categories so that trends can be explained (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003, 393). The theoretical background on Danish culture was presented in the second chapter and the practical information on Danish cultural heritage will be introduced in this section.

4.1 Introduction to the Best Western group

Best Western Hotel Walram is part of the internationally renowned Best Western hotel chain. The Best Western International group was founded in 1946 by M.K. Guertin and represents today one of the biggest family hotels with more than four thousand (4000) hotels in more than one hundred (100) countries worldwide. Best Western group is an independently owned and operated franchise, but it is important to note that the group is not working like most franchises. Indeed, the group has a non-profit membership association status, which means that each franchisee worldwide acts as a member of the association like a marketing co-operative. All the members are three or four star hotels specialized in private tourism or group leisure as well as business meetings. (Best Western 2013)

In order to keep its standards worldwide the same, the group publishes a list of standards that each hotel has to follow. Each member of the Best Western group renews its membership every year and is allowed to use their independent name after mentioning the Best Western name. As an example for the case company, the full name of the hotel is Best Western Hotel Walram Valkenburg. (Best Western 2013)

Nowadays the Best Western group employs about one thousand one hundred ninety (1190) people, which does not include the hotel-level staff as they are employed by each individual hotel owner and take care of more than three hundred thousand (300 000) guests' rooms across the world. (Best Western 2013)

4.2 Introduction to the case company Best Western Hotel Walram

Best Western Hotel Walram Valkenburg was founded in 1940 and is one of forty-five (45) Best Western Hotels in the Netherlands. The history of the hotel goes back until the 18th century when a farm was built on the remains of the city walls.

The hotel business started in 1940 when the hotel complex was bought by the owner's parents. Until today, the hotel has been rebuilt and renovated several times in order to offer a professional service to its customers. However the original façade of limestone has been kept in its original state and gives a warm welcome feeling to the guests. (Hotel Walram 2011) Best Western Hotel Walram has been part of the Best Western group since for thirteen (13) years and since then has been an independently owned and operated hotel, which gives the case company a series of advantage (Bosch 2013). Indeed when becoming a member of the Best Western group, members are entitled to a shorter contract term than the industry norm, which means that the case company can renew the contract on a yearly basis; the case company is working under an internationally recognized brand name; it allows the company to promote their properties and finally the member owner has a voice in the operation of the company. (Best Western 2013)

4.3 Products and services of the case company

Best Western Walram hotel is a cozy hotel of one hundred and six (106) rooms that can be divided in different categories as followed: single room, 3- star standard, 3-star comfort rooms and 4-star superior rooms (Bosch 2013). In order to diversify its type of customers, the hotel is also offering a few rooms working on a hostel basis. This part of the hotel called Stayinn Valkenburg has its own website and is working with a lower price basis. This way, the hotel has the opportunity to reach a broader range of customers such as students (Stayinn Valkenburg 2012).

The hotel provides modern facilities to its customers including an indoor swimming pool, a sauna, a steam bath and a solarium. Best Western Walram is not only specialized in leisure tourism but also in business meetings. Indeed the hotel has four meeting rooms fully equipped with all the necessary amenities and offers tailored programs that meet the expectations of the business people. (Dorren 2013)

For its leisure guests, the hotel can define two (2) distinct categories: individual guests and groups. For groups, guests have the opportunity to attend different tours organized by the hotel such as garden tours, countries tour (Belgium, Holland and Germany) the famous Christmas markets etc. When needed groups can contact the hotel so that the sales department can organize and offer tailored programs and tours that will meet the expectations of every target group. (Bosch 2013).

4.4 Research results

Results of the various interviews will be presented in the following tables and are organized by categories.

Family values
Family values are an important factor in the Danish culture. Indeed, after work the whole is coming together to enjoy supper around 5.30pm. Danish employees rather prefer to start work early and go home early than start their work later in order to spend more time with their friends/family instead of working overtime.

Table 3: Finnish family values
(Bruls 2013)

Personality
Danes are rather patriotic: when celebrating a national holiday or even a birthday, Danish people love to decorate their place and the birthday cake with the Danish flag. According to Linda, decorating the restaurant with Danish flag would be a key to success for the Danish tourists because it will give them a warm welcome feeling. This will also show that the hotel understands their culture.

Table 4: Personality of the Danes
(Bruls 2013)

Danes on holiday
The favorite holiday destinations for the Danish are “bathing” destinations and like previous years is Spain (16%) the top holiday destination for Danish when going on holiday for a minimum stay of four (4) nights. The list continues with Italy, France, Germany, Sweden, Greece, Norway, Turkey and the US. Even during the recession, people were changing their saving habits and so continued to spend money on their holidays, which destination is considerably influenced by the weather due to the fact that the Denmark has mild summers (Statistics Denmark 2013)
When going abroad, the most used means of transport are by plane (66%), followed by car

(25%) and bus (5%) (Statistics Denmark 2013). This information was important for the continuation of the project since only 5% of the individuals take the bus when going abroad, it was crucial to find a way to convince the future clients to take the bus when coming to the Netherlands.

Unfortunately, statistics (Statistics Denmark 2013) demonstrated that only 2% of the population has chosen the Netherlands as a holiday destination with four overnights or more for the past three years. However, it is important to note that no age category was mentioned for these statistics.

Table 5: Danes on holiday

Leisure activities

Denmark has a wide range of leisure activities to offer due to its rich cultural heritage. According to the Danish statistics center, top activities for elderly (50+) in Denmark are cinemas, historical buildings, theatre, art exhibition/museum and animal parks (Statistics Denmark 2013). Again this information was really useful for management since it was then able to prepare tours that would match the customers' expectations.

According to the tour operators (Danish tour operators 2013) the target market (50+) especially enjoys garden tours, castle tours and boat tours. Again this information was helpful since it allowed the marketing department to create tailored tours for the clients.

Another important fact that also needs to be taken into consideration is that expenditure on recreation, entertainment and travel has stayed stable during the last years even during the economic recession, which shows that Danes value their free time. (Family budget survey 2013)

Table 6: Leisure activities for Danish customers

Furthermore during the telephone interviews with the tour operators, it was important to know their points of interest, so that management could focus on certain themes during their meetings with their clients. The points of interest are presented in the next graph.

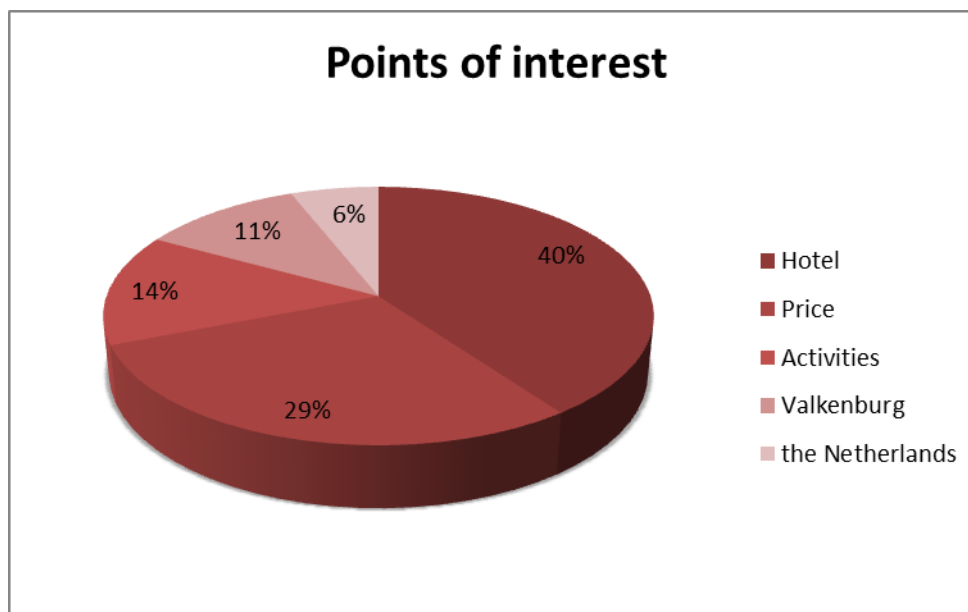


Figure 10: Points of interest for Danish tour operators
(Danish tour operators 2013)

The above figure shows that the tour operators were first of all interested in the hotel followed by the prices, the activities, the region of Valkenburg and finally the Netherlands (Danish tour operators 2013).

Payment habits
Payment habits: Cash and the Dankort (Danish bank card) are the most used payment methods. However, elderly and low income citizens prefer to use cash for their transactions.
Considering the tipping etiquette in Denmark, it is common that the service charges are already included to the bill. This is way customers are not really expected to leave a tip but when a customer got the feeling the service was really good, he can leave a tip ranging from 10% to 15% (National banken 2011).

Table 7: Payment habits in Denmark

Food
The food culture is quite the same in both countries. However, Danish are a bigger consumer of fish products and according to Ms. Bruls (Bruls 2013) the meat quality is not as good as in the Netherlands.
For lunch, employees eat warm dishes served at the canteen/cafeteria, order food from outside or eat the famous smørrebrød (Bruls 2013).
Julefrokost is the traditional Danish Christmas lunch (from 1pm until 6 or 7pm) and is composed of six (6) or seven (7) little dishes and snaps (called Akvavit) between each dish. Danish love to celebrate the Christmas with family, friends and colleagues and therefore this Julefrokost tradition start already in September until February with this celebration (Bruls

2013).
Danish consumers are also known to be keen of bio products: 80€ in average are spent on bio products per person each year, which make them the heaviest consumers of bio products. The Dutch inhabitants spend in average 28€ per person each year on bio products (Ontwikkeling wereldwijde consumentenvraag biologische producten 2006).
The Danes are the biggest consumer of pork meat in the world with almost 70kg pork every year followed by beef, poultry and fish. Most dishes in Denmark are served with potatoes. A popular pork dish in Denmark is the Frikadelle that is served with potatoes, vegetables and thick brown sauce (Danish food culture & culinary heritage no date)
Furthermore the Dane eat the traditional Smørrebrød (open faced sandwich), which is a traditional sandwich. It can be found in many restaurants in Denmark and it consists of buttered rye bread with pieces of meat, fish (herring), different paste, salad dressings and cheese with various toppings such as mushrooms, bacon, gravy jelly, red pepper, cucumber, marinated beetroot, pickled gherkins, onions, fried onions etc. The Smørrebrød is usually served with beer and snaps (Smørrebrød is terug 2012).

Table 8: Food culture in Denmark

Drinking culture
Ms. Bruls could confirm that Danish drink a lot of beer, coffee, snaps, salty liquorice (better known as Salmiakki) and various shots. Danish prefer to drink beer in a big glass (0,4 or 0,5L) with a small layer of foam. It has also been said that people from the countryside drink more than people living in the city (Bruls 2013)
Coffee is also an important beverage in everyday life. According to the Danish Tourism Bureau, Danes consume 8,7 kg per capita per year, which make them the fourth consumer of coffee in Europe. The Dutch occupy the fifth place for coffee consumption (Current worldwide annual coffee consumption per capita 2011).
The Danish are heavy consumers of beer. Indeed Danish drink in average 67.4L of beer per habitant per year, whereas the Dutch drink about 73.9L of beer per year. One of the most well-known brands of beer is Carlsberg (Per-Capita Beer Consumption by Country in 2010 2011)
The World Health Association (WHO) reports that 45 per cent of Danes prefer beer, while 39 per cent, wine; and 16 per cent, spirits. Overall the consumption of alcohol in Denmark, according to WHO, is around fourteen (14) liters per capita per year. (World health organization 2013)

Table 9: Drinking culture in Denmark

Sports
Handball and football are the most popular sports followed in Denmark and when there is a

handball competition on television people gather to watch the game together (Bruls 2013).
Other important sports in Denmark are football, golf, aquatic sports, gymnastics, badmington and equestrian sports (Bruls 2013).

Table 10: Sports in Denmark

4.5 Conclusion on the research results

The interviews and desk research brought important and useful information for the marketing department. Indeed it enabled the case company to prepare tailored offers and thus increase their chances to start a partnership with the tour operator.

However since the tour operators were not yet clients of the case company, it was important to keep the interviews formal, ask the right questions and not be too straightforward in order to avoid upsetting the potential clients.

As a result, a global overview on the Danish lifestyle could be presented to the management of the hotel. This allowed afterwards the personnel of the hotel to prepare dishes for Danish tourists according their eating habits, buy liquorice, organize special tours and decorate the hotel with Danish flags. The aim of the manager was to welcome Danish tourists warmly and make them feel at home.

5 Marketing plan

5.1 Executive summary

Best Western Hotel Walram is planning to enter the Danish market in a mature market. The hotel will be able to compete with other hotels because the hotel will provide a full itinerary service to its customers and has already many years of experience with group tourism. Furthermore the hotel is located in an advantageous location, which will bring more added-value to the package.

The hotel is targeting the elderly (50+) clients via Danish tour operators. Indeed the hotel has decided to adapt its programs to this customer segmentation and thus will offer adapted programs the tour operators that also suit the Danish customers' expectations and culture. The marketing objective is to reach for the coming season 2014-2015 a minimum of forty (40) coaches coming from Denmark with an average of fifty-five (55) individuals per coach. To

compare this number with the English market, there are around one hundred (100) coaches coming each year from England.

The financial projections will not be presented in the following marketing plan since the financial information needed was kept confidential by management of the case company.

5.2 Situation analysis

Hotel Walram, founded seventy-three (73) years ago by family Laheye, is now looking to expand its business and enter the Scandinavian market.

Full tailored itinerary packages, gastronomic and regional food, transportation service, expertise in private groups and the beautiful region of Limburg are the assets of Best Western Hotel Walram.

Coach holidays across Europe are really popular for the main target market of the case company and thus there is a potential that needs to be developed. However the competition is intense in the region of Limburg since many competitors are already working with Danish tour operators and are offering competitive prices.

In order to gain market share in this competitive environment, Best Western Walram will have to plan carefully their strategic marketing, study the Danish culture and evidence its strengths.

5.2.1 Market summary

Best Western Hotel Walram's market consists mainly of international guests (50+), private guests and groups. Another customer segment is represented by business people that are organizing a two or three daylong conference.

The main customer segments are individuals that prefer to book full organized holidays, which means from the departure until the feedback including transportation, dinner and activities.

Specific segments that will be targeted are again 50+ since they are the main focus of this project and afterwards business people, youth groups and families will be targeted in order to diversify the business operations of the hotel. The following table will present each segment with its corresponding needs and benefits that the hotel can offer.

Target segments	Customer needs	Corresponding benefits
50+	Calm activities, equipment for impaired mobility, Tranquility	The hotel has specialized and adapted programs, game nights.
Business people	Up-to date meeting rooms	The hotel has several meeting rooms and can offer attractive packages including catering service
Youth groups	Funny & educational activities, multiple persons room, central located hotel, swimming pool	The hotel is also working on a hostel basis, which means attractive prices for school groups
Families	Family rooms, baby equipment, quite rooms	The hotel can offer family rooms

Table 11: Summary of the target segments, their needs and benefits

The main targeted segment can choose from various programs and themes, type of dinners, duration of stay, etc.

Since tour operators are more and more looking for full packages, it is important to prepare several programs that will suit the different tour operators.

5.2.2 SWOT analysis

Best Western Hotel Walram has several powerful strengths that will help the hotel to gain market share, but also weaknesses that the hotel will have to monitor carefully.

□ Strength: strengths are internal factors, which support the company and allow the organization to succeed in its business operations. These factors are employees, operations, assets and products. For the case company, strengths can be represented by a strong brand name “Best Western”, its good reputation, its expertise gained with English groups and its partnership with Best Western Park hotel Putten. This hotel situated in Putten, Gelderland is also specialized in tours for 50+, offers beautiful sceneries of the Dutch polders and allows groups to spend a day in Amsterdam or at the world famous gardens of Keukenhof.

□ **Weakness:** weaknesses are internal factors that can slow down the hotel's business operations. The factors influencing this category are inefficient company processes and procedures, time pressure, language barriers and miscommunication between the different departments.

□ **Opportunity:** opportunities are elements coming from outside of the company and can help the case company to grow. For Best Western Hotel Walram these opportunities



are a growing interest in Holland as a holiday destination, the creation of new business contacts in Scandinavia, the use of technology that allows the marketing of the hotel and local events such as the Amstel Gold race and the Red Bull Crashed Ice.

Figure 11: Red Bull Crashed Ice in Valkenburg

□ **Threats:** threats are elements coming from outside of the company that could make the business operations harder to achieve. For the case company threats are represented by inflation, new legislation (in the Netherlands or Denmark), new competitors, a change in consumer habits and the weather.

The following figure will summarize the SWOT analysis for Best Western Hotel Walram according to their desire to enter the Danish market.



Figure 12: Summary of the SWOT analysis

5.2.3 PEST analysis

The following graph represents the internal and external forces that will influence and change the company's business environment.

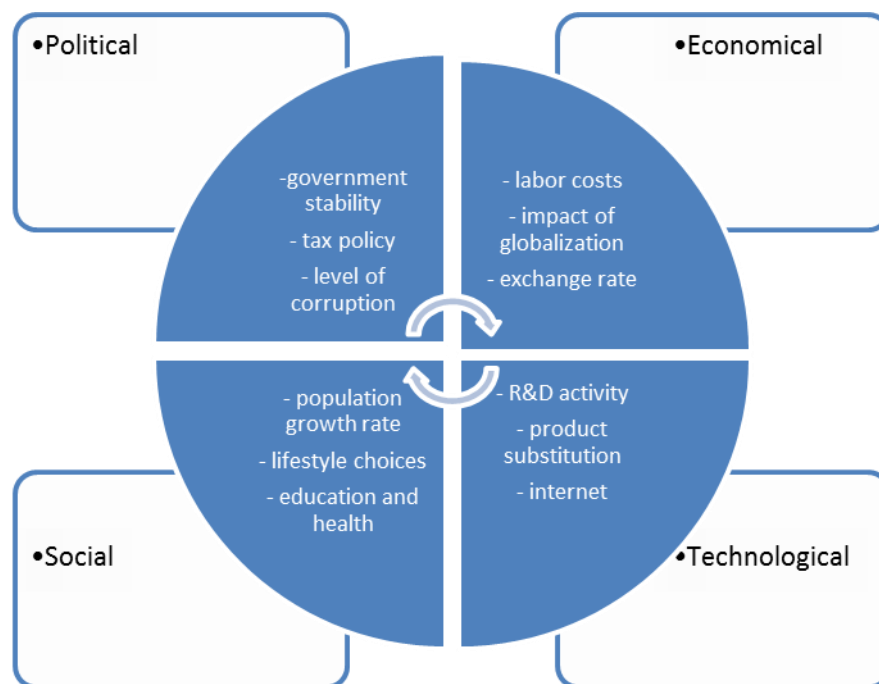


Figure 13: PEST analysis
(Analoui & Karami 2003, 76)

The above mentioned graph shows a clear summary of the PEST analysis for Best Western Hotel Walram. The following paragraph will explain the elements of each category that affect the business operations.

For the political environment, government stability is an important factor in tourism. Indeed during periods of instability, tourists will avoid those countries, which will cause loss for the hotel. The increase of tax may cause a raise in the prices, which makes the product less attractive. Finally the level of corruption is also an element that influences the tourism sector: a high level of corruption might prevent the tourists of going to a specific country whereas a low level of corruption attracts the tourists.

For the economic environment, Best Western Hotel Walram is monitoring the English and Danish exchange rates carefully as well as the labor costs that are influencing the financial aspects of the hotel.

The main social factor that might influence the business operations is the lifestyle choice of the tourists: tourists prefer going on holidays in their own country or prefer going far away and thus go outside of Europe. This means that hotel has to make the Netherlands and the hotel attractive all year round despite of the weather.

Finally the technological environment has led to radical changes in tourism: internet allows nowadays creating reviews about hotels and reading them; book holidays online; contact hotels and exchange easily information with business partners. These changes have allowed companies react faster at the social and economic environment.

5.2.4 Competition

Working with international tour operators, especially from Scandinavia has become more and more popular within the tourism industry in Valkenburg and has thus increased competitive pressure because many hotels offer full packages and competitive prices.

The competitors are:

Seventy-five (75) hotels in and around Valkenburg ranging from one (1) star hotel to five (5) star hotels. When looking at the three star hotels like the case company, there are twenty-three (23) hotels with this star ranking in and around Valkenburg. (Booking.com 2013).

When analyzing the general services offered by the hotels, there is little differentiation between the products and all have more or less the same size.

However only four hotels in Valkenburg are currently working with Danish operators and are offering the same package as the case company (Bosch 2013).

These hotels are:

- Hotel Schaepkens***
- Hotel Scheepers***
- Hotel Botterweck***
- Hotel Palanka***

Despite the strong competition, Best Western Hotel Walram can define a strong strategy, take advantage of the reputation of the Best Western chain reputation and develop a more detailed itinerary service to gain recognition amongst potential customers since Best Western Hotel Walram is the only hotel offering this service that is furthermore included in the package price.

The itinerary service consists of preparing an adapted itinerary for clients by following their requirements such as type of activity, price, style of holiday, time spend per activity, etc.

The hotel will suggest an itinerary to the client and if approved, the hotel will then book the activities; arrange transfer from and to the hotel and deal with the payments.

5.2.5 Product offerings

Best Western Hotel Walram offers the following products & services:

- A high-class restaurant with 3 or 4 course menu
- A cozy bar
- Art gallery Artego
- Breakfast room
- A wellness area with pool, sauna and solarium
- A lounge & reading room with computer
- An attractive enclosed garden
- Spacious parking
- 106 rooms divided in five distinct categories:
 - Standard: two single beds, a television, desk, clock radio and hairdryer. The ensuite bathroom is fitted with a toilet and bath or shower.
 - Comfort: these rooms offer the same utilities but the rooms are larger.
 - Superior: these rooms offer extra comfort; have a bath or whirlpool. A junior suite is also available with shower and whirlpool.
 - Family: superior class rooms with a sofa bed or extra single bed
 - Apartment: own living room, bedroom, hall and kitchen.
- Four (4) meetings rooms with up-to date devices for maximum two hundred (200) participants.
- Various packages: anniversary, Christmas, New Year, Carnival, Eastern, weekend, lazy Sundays, romantic & half board packages, etc.

An example of half board package includes:

- Two (2) night's stay at a standard room
- Continental breakfast buffet
- Three-course dinner daily
- One welcome drink per adult
- One entrance to Holland Casino per adult
- One tourist guide of Valkenburg

Rate: € 114,50 p.p.

5.2.6 Distribution

The products/services of Best Western Hotel Walram will be distributed through various channels. The most important channels are:

- Online travel agencies such as Booking.com, Hotelspecial.nl
 - o Special agreements have been made with these agencies to put the hotel on the top of the web page or amongst the top ten (10).
- Best Western Hotel Walram website
- Travel agencies

5.3 Marketing strategies

5.3.1 Target market

The primary customer segments for Best Western Hotel Walram are middle-to elderly aged people, described demographically by age (50+) that are looking for full organized holidays by coach. Indeed 50+ are considered to be the new epicureans. It is important to note that in this segment only independent and mobile individuals will be taken into account.

5.3.2 Positioning

In relation to product differentiation, Best Western Hotel Walram is positioning its services as the most tailored and valuable for the 50+. The marketing will focus on the itinerary service that allows customers to tailor their holidays according their expectations.

5.3.3 Strategies

The following paragraph will present the marketing mix concept applied to the case company, Best Western Hotel Walram.

□ **Product:** the service is a custom itinerary service adapted to the Danish market, which means that the case company is offering a seven (7) day long program to Danish tour operators for groups up to fifty (50) people that are coming on holiday to Holland by coach and who are visiting every day an attraction of the region of Valkenburg. Examples of attractions and activities available are the visit of a beer brewery, a chocolate factory, a coal mine, caves, castles, gardens, thermal center, steam train tour, Christmas markets, etc. During their stay, breakfast and a 3 or 4 course dinner will be included to the package and portering service can also be added to the package.

Moreover the attractions and day trips can be chosen out of a catalogue by the tour operators. Special evening such as bingo evenings, movie evenings, and karaoke evenings can also be requested by the tour operators. Special packages are arranged during the Christmas period, Carnival period, New Year and the flowering period in Keukenhof for the groups. Bookings can be cancelled up to six weeks before arrival without charges. If bookings are cancelled afterwards, 50% or 100% of the price will be charged.

□ **Price:** the price for the package is calculated per person per night (p.p.p.n.) and depends on the period of arrival of the group, on competitors' prices as well as on the availability of the hotel, which means that the price can vary every day. For groups, the price will range from €30,00 p.p.p.n. to €50.00 p.p.p.n. An extra tax of €1,95 per day per person is added to the final invoice for 2013 and drivers of the coach get to stay for free for every 20 paying guests. 80% of the total price needs to be paid at the latest four weeks before arrival. Moreover special payment terms will be granted to important business partners.

□ **Promotion:** since the Danish market is still unknown, in order to promote the hotel, Mr. Dorren, manager of the hotel and Ms. Bosch, marketing manager organized a business trip to Denmark in May 2013 and visited about fifteen (15) tour operators across whole Denmark. Further visits are planned for the year 2014 as well as newsletters with the latest offers.

Furthermore the hotel will offer a free stay for the guides working with the Danish tour operators in order for them to get to know the region, the personnel and the facilities of the hotel.

□ **Place:** the chosen distribution strategy will be the selective distribution by marketing the hotel/services only by specific tour operators during the first year. Afterwards more distributors will be added in order to cover geographically whole Denmark as well as the main booking websites.

Handouts and the next year's catalogue with the newest tours will be sent to the distributors to support the marketing activities of the hotel.

5.3.4 Marketing communication

AIDA communication model

Attention: for the case company, the best way to attract the attention of the Danish tour operators is to arrange a meeting with each of the tour operators and to introduce personally the hotel, the region of Valkenburg as well as the package, which will also reinforce the brand name, Best Western.

Interest: in this case, the hotel can raise customer interest by focusing on the region of Limburg, its rich history and by demonstrating pictures of the hotel, the region and of the activities.

Desire: for this third step, the hotel will use personal selling in order to convince customers that the proposed service will satisfy their needs.

Action: finally, when the desire has been created, the last step will be closing the deal at the end of a meeting or through an offer that will be only available for a limited period of time. For the case company it will be important to follow up this process in order to keep the prospect interested and make sure that brand recognition has been established.

5.3.5 Implementation evaluation & control

The implementation evaluation and control process will help management to measure the results of the implemented strategy and if needed identify problems and rectify them. In this case, the case company will organize control on the evolution of the partnership with the Danish tour operator, which implies regular phone calls and emails in order to follow up their booking status and other requests. Afterwards follow-up's of monthly sales will also help management to control the success of the case company's strategy.

Finally adjustments can be made in the offers and discussions with the marketing department will help management to adapt their programs and feedback will be needed in order to improve the quality of the service.

6 Theoretical linkage

The broached theories and interviews done with the tour operators, management and Ms. Bruls gave all important and useful information for the case company's desire to enter the Danish market.

Indeed the marketing theories and cultural theories were linked in order for the case company to define the most appropriate strategic plan.

The linkage of this thesis was the cultural aspect that was present throughout all the chapters of the thesis. Indeed the information gathered via interviews, secondary data research and cultural theories that were applied to the target country provided a clear and precise cultural insight on Denmark, which reflected the main emphasis of this thesis.

Therefore the chosen theories and tools met the needs of the thesis and supported the development of the case company's goal.

7 Conclusions & recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

Denmark has the potential to become an important business partner for Best Western Walram hotel and can be the starting point for the expansion of the business operations of the hotel to the Scandinavian market.

Indeed the cultural insight on the Danish market has demonstrated that both countries have many similarities in their culture and evolve in similar business environments. The marketing plan has also shown that the company's environment has been changing in the past years and thus a need to adapt and diversify has emerged.

The cultural research and marketing plan have been useful tools for management in order to prepare the business trip to Denmark. As a result, the Danish tour operators have been really interested about the programs that were offered since they were adapted to the Danish market. A total number of 34 groups have already booked tours either for summer - winter 2013 or for 2014, in particular for the bulb season and the Christmas period.

Eventually the case company will be able to learn more about Danish culture once the customers will arrive at the hotel; participate at the activities and then develop further strategic plans.

7.2 Recommendations

A short-term recommendation that can be given to the case company is to create a tour book that is adapted for a younger target market (children 5 -18 years) and so during the periods with lower booking rates by the elderly, the case company could try to attract school tours. However if this would be the case, it is important not to book school groups on the same dates as the elderly since they wish not to be disturbed and prefer quite hotels.

Furthermore, the case company could prepare surveys for the Danish customers in order to gather more detailed information on customers' expectations and so organize better tours or menus.

To build a long-term customer relationship, it is recommended to visit the Danish operators that are already partners with the case company and to plan a visit to other Danish tour operators that are not yet partners with the case company. Indeed, by meeting the tour operators the case company will be able to present their new programs and discuss new opportunities. Furthermore personal selling will allow management to create a close relation with the tour operator.

Eventually the last recommendation on a long-term vision would be to enter other Scandinavian markets such as Norway or Sweden and then Finland in order to expand its business operations.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: the car and the pedestrian

Dilemma- Riding a car

What right has your friend to expect you to protect him?

1a My friend has a definite right as a friend to expect me to testify to the lower figure.

1b He has some right as a friend to expect me to testify to the lower figure.

1c He has no right as a friend to expect me to testify to the lower figure.

What do you think you would do in view of the obligation of a sworn witness and the obligation to your friend?

1d Testify he was going 20 miles an hour

1e Not testify that he was going 20 miles an hour

The percentage represents those who answered that the friend has no right or some right and would then not testify (C or B+E). (Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 34).

Appendix 2: Paint the house

Case: Painting the house

A boss asks a subordinate to help him paint his house. The subordinate, who does not feel like doing it, discusses the situation with a colleague.

- A. The colleague argues: “you do not have to paint if you don’t feel like it. He is your boss at work. Outside he has little authority.”
- B. The subordinate argues: “despite the fact that I don’t feel like it, I will paint it. He is my boss and you can’t ignore that outside work either.” (Trompenaar & Hampden - Turner 1998, 89).

Paint the house: Percentage of respondents who would not paint the house

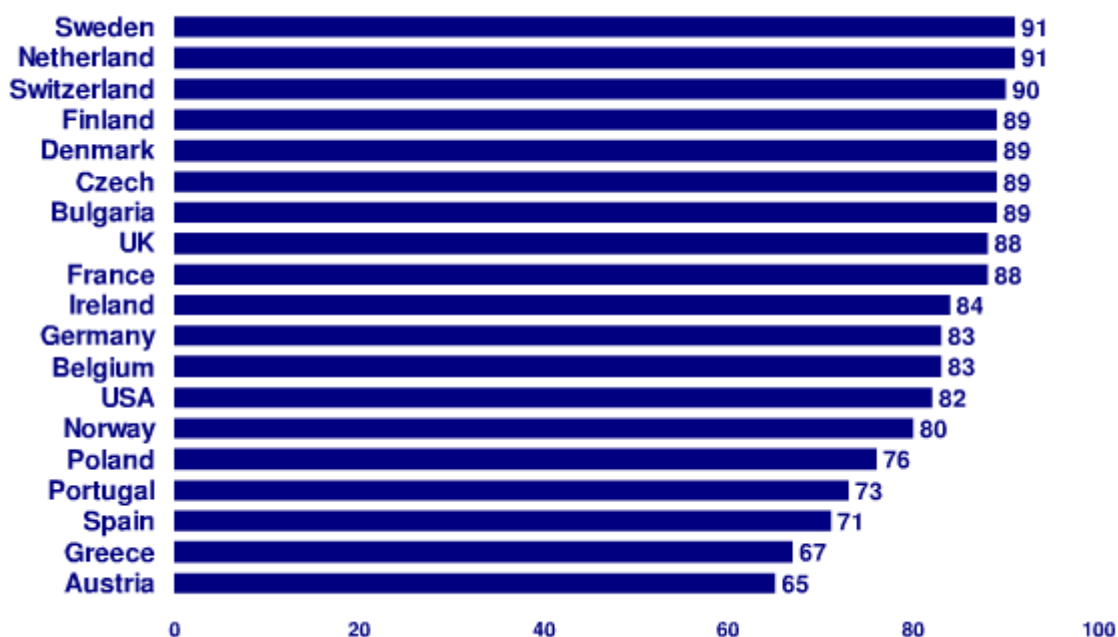


Table 12: Paint the house, result
(Trompenaar & Hampden -Turner 1998, 90).