



The Cultural Clashes of International Business

- a Study of the Swedish and Polish Cooperation

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Abstract

Trade between Swedish and Polish companies is constantly growing, which is why there is an increasing need for a universal strategy for Swedish business people on how to cope with the cultural differences of business. The aim of this dissertation is therefore to establish a strategy that might help Swedish business people when involving in relationships with Polish business people.

We have chosen to use the findings of three recognised researchers and combine their theories into a wider definition of the term business culture. Further, the definition was tested on a group of respondents in order to test its applicability in reality. This resulted in several modified cultural differences of business, which we concluded in a strategy on how to cope best with the existing differences.

Keywords: Business Culture, Cultural Clashes, Strategy

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1. Introduction

In this chapter the background, research questions and purpose of the dissertation will be discussed. Further, aspects that have imposed constraints on the writing process will be described. Finally, the research strategy will be presented through a schematic figure.

1.1 Background

During the past decade several Swedish companies have shown interest in the emerging market in Poland. It is especially after the expansion of the European Union that Poland has become one of the most important markets for Swedish companies doing business abroad. In 2004, Poland had a GDP-growth rate of 5.4%, which confirms that it is a fast growing market with a great potential for future establishments (www.swedenabroad.com). Other factors improving the Polish business climate are the change from a planned economy to a market economy and the entrance into the European Union. All these factors have created an extensive future growth potential within this region. This results in great opportunities for Swedish companies since the favourable Polish business climate opens up a whole new market with many economic cost advantages. In order to be successful in the competitive Polish market in which many wish to participate, it is important to build strong and close relationships.

Today many Swedish companies are exporting their products to Poland or starting up a subsidiary there. Because of the constantly growing market in Poland, we found it important to observe the cultural differences of business that might occur to avoid spilling time, losing money and wasting relationships, as a consequence of bad communication. Our goal was to clarify and present the differences in order to help companies to avoid business cultural pitfalls and costly surprises when doing business in Poland.

As a consequence of the cultural differences of business found in secondary data and primary data we tried to establish a strategy on how Swedish companies could overcome the problems arising from the differences between the Swedish and Polish business culture.

1.2 Research Problem

Our research problem was to find the cultural differences of business that might occur in a Swedish and Polish business relationship. Further on we wished to test the reliability of the differences found in the secondary data on a group of respondents in order to develop a strategy on how to overcome the problems arising from the differences. The strategy will state both differences already to be found in secondary data but also a modification of these resulting from real life experiences. Our intention with this strategy was also to form a “guide” on how to avoid spilling time, losing money and wasting relationships, by dealing with the cultural differences of business in an efficient way.

1.2.1 Research Questions

- What cultural aspects of business do Swedish companies need to consider when doing business with Polish companies?
- When being aware of the cultural differences of business, how should a Swedish company cope with them?

1.2.2 Purpose

The purpose was to evaluate existing differences in the Swedish and Polish business culture and to establish a strategy on how to overcome and cope with them. The strategy is meant to serve as a guide for Swedish business people.

1.3 Limitations

Our empirical study was limited to concern Swedish manufacturing companies within the industrial sector exporting their products to Poland. In the dissertation regard has only been taken to business cultural aspects. The respondents in our target group had to fulfil certain criteria such as; profound experience within the area and a long relationship with their Polish associates.

When presenting the strategy for Swedish business people, we made the assumption that the Polish customer will not adapt to Swedish business culture and that the building of the relationship is dependent on the actions of the Swede.

1.4 Definitions

Below we will define and explain expressions used throughout the dissertation.

<i>Cooperation -</i>	A transaction of goods and money
<i>Cultural differences of business-</i>	Differences in behavioural and psychological aspects between the two cultures in a business context
<i>Long relationship -</i>	A relationship reaching over a period of more than one year
<i>Profound experience -</i>	Interacting and integrating at several occasions with Polish business people
<i>Swedish company -</i>	Headquarters in Sweden
<i>Strategy -</i>	How to best cope with the cultural differences resulting from a Swedish and Polish relationship
<i>Successful relationship -</i>	Repeated contacts with Polish counterparts without any cultural clashes.
<i>Cultural clashes -</i>	Problems occurring from cultural differences of business

1.5 Outline

Chapter 1, **Introduction**: *In this chapter the background, research questions and purpose of the dissertation will be discussed. Further, aspects that have imposed constraints on the writing process will be described. Finally, the research strategy will be presented through a schematic figure.*

Chapter 2, **Method**: *In this chapter the research philosophy, research approach and the data collection process will be presented. Furthermore the case study will be presented.*

Chapter 3, **Business Culture**: *In this chapter we give our detailed definition of business culture based on theories from researchers in the area concerned. This section is setting the scene for the rest of the dissertation.*

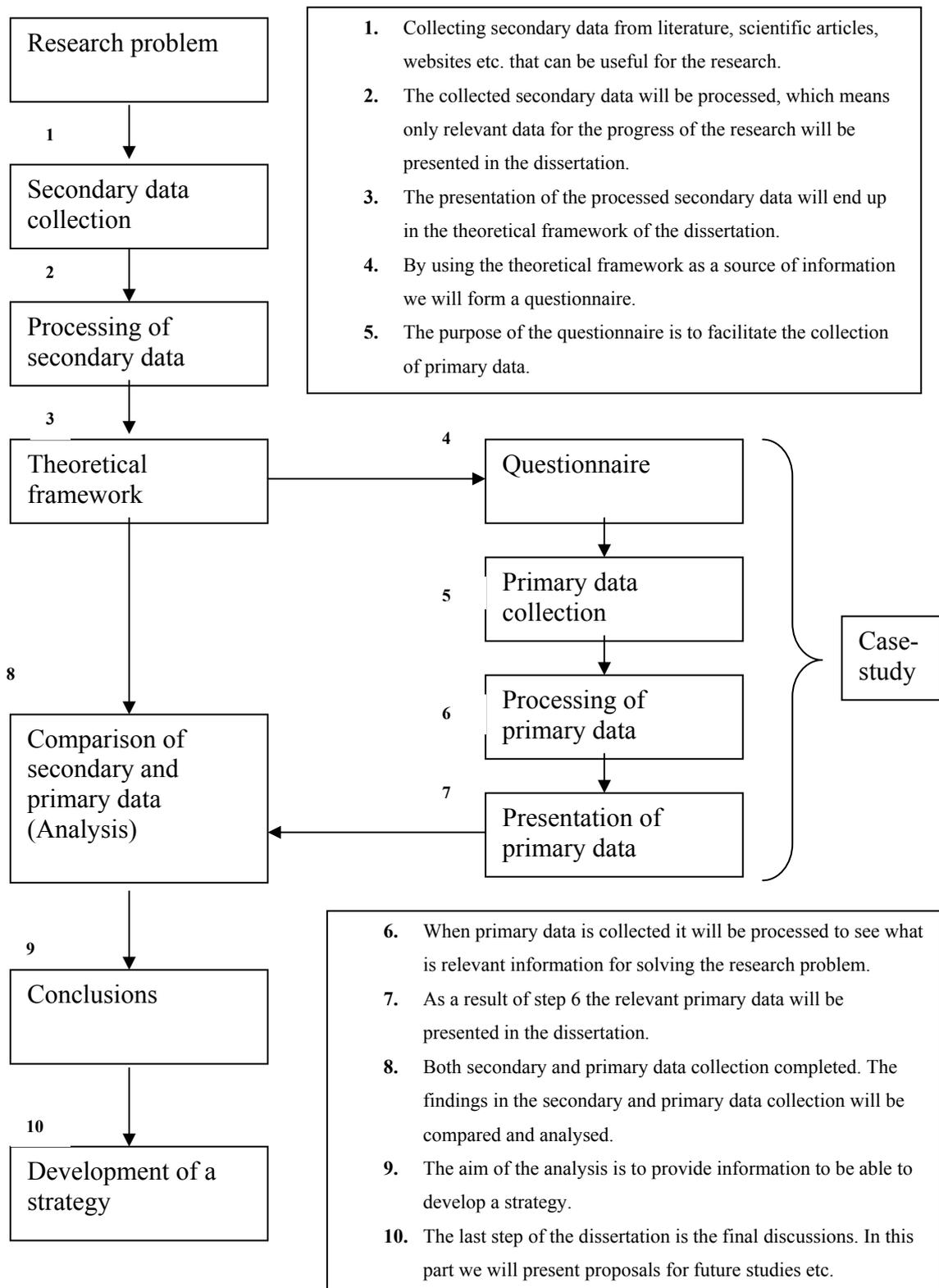
Chapter 4, **Empirical Study**: *In this chapter the collected primary data will be presented. Each part of the questionnaire will be presented separately with the help of charts followed by explanatory texts. We will only present the results of our respondents and no comments of our own will be made.*

Chapter 5, **Analysis**: *In this chapter a comparison of secondary and primary data will be presented. The most important cultural differences of business will be described and discussed.*

Chapter 6, **Conclusions**: *In this chapter we will present what we believe is the best way of handling the cultural differences arising from a Swedish and Polish relationship. We also discuss which failures can be found in the results of the dissertation. Further, suggestions for future research will be presented and the practical and theoretical contribution of the dissertation. Finally the credibility of the dissertation will be discussed.*

1.6 Research Strategy

In this section we will present the course of action of the dissertation, from the very beginning to the end. The first step in writing the dissertation is to decide upon the research problem. When this is completed, the procedure will be as follows:



2. Method

In this chapter the research philosophy, research approach and the data collection process will be presented. Furthermore the case study will be presented.

2.1 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is concerned with the dilemmas on how knowledge is developed and perceived which will affect the way the research topic is perceived. The secondary data states three different views on the development of knowledge; one of the philosophies is called positivism. The person approaching the research in a positivistic way has the role of an objective analyst, who works with an observable social reality where the aim of the research is to establish law-like generalisations much like the laws established in natural science (Saunders, Lewis. & Thornhill., 2003).

Interpretivism presents a different view and criticises the positivistic view for having wrong assumptions about the world of business and management. Contrary to positivism, the interpretivistic approach states that the business arena is too complex. It also states that the business environment is constantly changing and all the organisations are of a unique character, which makes it very difficult to establish general rules applicable in all situations (Saunders *et. al.*, 2003). Our course of action when developing data was to study a small amount of companies, working in a world characterised by continuous changes and the aim of the end product was not necessarily to establish law-like generalisations. Thus, our choice of research philosophy was the interpretivistic view. Further on, the interpretivistic research approach is not as well structured as the positivistic approach, which focuses on quantifiable observations to facilitate replication. This, and the fact that the findings and established

strategies were mostly based on qualitative data, was the reason why the interpretivistic approach was more suitable in our dissertation.

Another choice would have been to choose the realistic approach, which is said to be based on the belief that an existing reality is independent of human thoughts and beliefs. It states that a reality exists but also that you should be able to understand the large scale of social forces affecting people's perception of e.g. culture. Realism shares some of the same aspects as positivism, e.g. the view of an external objective nature but in a social context. This approach is considered to be in-between the two others and presents the researcher with the possibility to repeat his or her study but not to get exactly the same result (Saunders *et. al.*, 2003, cited by Ekelund, 2005). The reason for us not choosing the realistic approach was that we did not consider the reality to be independent of the human thoughts and beliefs, which is the case if you approach the research with a realistic view.

2.2 Research Approach

Our goal was to clarify the differences between the Swedish and Polish business cultures and to establish a strategy explaining the proper conduct for Swedish business people if they wish to succeed in their cooperation with Polish business people. Both primary and secondary data have been collected in order to build a strategy, which was our main objective.

This study started with an explanatory study i.e. a study of already existing literature. We believed this to be crucial in order to grasp the full width and complexity of the different dimensions and angles of the business cultural clashes occurring between Polish and Swedish business people. After revising and working through secondary data, our intention was to continue with a case study in order to describe and highlight the cultural differences between the Polish and Swedish business culture. The explanatory approach developed our knowledge and gave us the insight to start the dissertation with a deductive

approach where already existing theories were tested. Further on in the dissertation an inductive approach was the most appropriate since it enabled us to build a theory based on the data found.

In the inductive approach the researcher is not concerned with generalising since the goal is to get a deeper understanding of the research problem and the researcher is considered to be a part of the research process. This approach implies that a theory is built from our findings, i.e. theory will follow from data. The inductive approach is also usually connected with the interpretivistic research philosophy which was also the case in our study (Saunders *et. al.*, 2003).

2.3 Data Collection

The data collection process has been mostly concerned with the project of collecting secondary and primary data. Secondary data is defined as previously collected and compiled information used in another context than for this specific dissertation (Saunders *et. al.*, 2003). The secondary data of this dissertation has been collected through a search in different databases, printed articles and literature. We chose to build our theories with a starting point in already established and well-known theories by the recognised researchers Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner. Secondary data is very important in the beginning of a case study in order to receive thorough understanding and knowledge of the problem to be investigated. It also makes it easier to encircle and delimit specific problems.

The problem with secondary data is that it might not suit our research questions. The most common problem with secondary data is that many of the sources of information might be out of date or unreliable (Saunders *et. al.*, 2003). Much of the material that we have processed is written several years ago which implies that much of the information or comments are out of date because of the every day influences on business culture. It is also important to critically review all sources taken from the Internet since these sources might be unreliable.

Primary data is collected through interviews with the relevant business people, suitable for solving our specific purpose. The major advantage with this information is that it is up to date and adjusted to suit the specific problem we would like to solve. The problem with primary data is that there might be “interviewing effects” resulting from the personal interviews conducted. This means that the questioner might affect the outcome of the questions by, in some way, affecting the respondent. These effects might be leading the conversation in a certain direction to suit the purpose or simply that the respondent feels uncomfortable in the situation and therefore gives incorrect answers (Saunders *et. al.*, 2003).

Further on, our study was of a cross-sectional character because we chose to study a particular phenomenon (the cultural dilemmas when Swedish and Polish business people are involved in business negotiations) at a particular time. An alternative would have been to use longitudinal studies; this approach was, however, not applicable in our study since longitudinal studies are normally related to studies over a longer period of time (Saunders *et. al.*, 2003).

2.4 Literature Review

The research will be limited to dealing with the most known and accepted theories developed by the recognised researches Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner. These three researchers have all contributed to a better understanding of business culture. Many other authors have developed and simplified already established theories by these three researchers which is why they have also been referred to in the dissertation. We chose to work with the following dimensions we considered relevant in order to define business culture:

- Individualism and Collectivism
- Uncertainty avoidance/Universalism and Particularism

- Language and Communication
- Power distance/Achievement and Ascription
- Time
- Masculinity and Femininity

The reason for us choosing these particular dimensions are that they are the most frequently mentioned in the literature and also the most developed. When reviewing the literature it became clear that some dimensions were not needed to reach the purpose of our dissertation, which was also confirmed through our pilot study. Through the use of the mentioned dimensions we were able to identify the cultural differences of business between Swedish and Polish business people. To further clarify the different aspects of business culture, material from other researchers such as Lewis and Usunier have also been used.

2.5 Pilot Study

Before we conducted our case study we wanted to assure ourselves that we had the most essential and important aspects covered in our questionnaire. To do so we contacted Mr. Bert Karlsson, who has several years of experience of working with Polish business people. He gave an extensive interview which gave us a deeper insight in the subject and he also commented on the first draft of our questionnaire. This enabled us to develop it even further and include aspects not already taken into consideration such as the importance of dress code and religion in Poland.

2.6 Case Study

Based on the differences found, a case study was conducted, which enabled us to test the relevance of the differences found in the secondary data. We planned to test the relevance of the theoretical framework to see if it fits the business arena of today. After gathering secondary and primary data we wished to establish a strategy which demonstrates the main cultural differences of business between our two cultures. The created strategy will minimise the risk

for cultural clashes and make Swedish business people more aware of the existing cultural differences. This will make the cooperation more effective and lean, i.e. a strategy of how Swedish business people can cope with the differences and achieve a successful business relationship.

A case study approach is adequate when: the research questions are based on “how” and “why” questions, the researcher has little effect on the events studied and when the focus is connected to contemporary rather than historical events (Yin, 1987).

There are some aspects of the case study approach that made it more suitable for our study than other approaches. Above all, this approach enhances a deeper understanding of specific situations, which was exactly the aim of this dissertation. We searched for a deeper understanding of the problems arising from cultural differences of business between Swedes and Poles to create a strategy explaining how to establish a successful relationship by avoiding the pitfalls occurring from these differences.

However, there are general criticisms of using the case study research. The first, and maybe the greatest concern deals with the dilemma, to what extent the researcher excludes non-suitable data that might affect the findings in a negative way. A second problem that is discussed is if the study provides a base for scientific generalisations. “*How can you generalise from one single case?*” (Yin, 1987, p. 21). A third problem is that the case study is too time consuming and result in massive, unreadable documents. (Yin, 1987)

2.6.1 Case Study Design

There are two different dimensions affecting the case study design. One of the dimensions concerns the single-case and multiple-case design. Expressed differently these dimensions clarify if the research is based on one single case (e.g. one company) or multiple cases (more than one company). The second dimension of the case study design deals with whether the research is embedded or holistic. An embedded design concerns the analysis of multiple units and the relation between these, while the holistic design is used to analyse single units (Yin, 1987).

We have chosen to adopt the multiple-case study in order to make the analysis more solid and thereby enhance the possibility for scientific generalisations. Further on we wished to provide an understanding of the problems Swedish business people might face when doing business with Poles. The problems we intended to highlight in this dissertation were strictly constrained to cultural differences of business. The analysis of one single unit, cultural differences of business, indicates the use of the holistic design.

	Single-Case	Multiple-Case
Holistic	Single-Case Holistic design	Multiple-Case Holistic design
Embedded	Single-Case Embedded design	Multiple-Case Embedded design

Figure 2.1 Case study design (Yin, 1987, p.41).

2.6.2 How the Respondents were Chosen

After deciding to use the Multiple-Case design the next task was to decide which individuals from which companies should be used in the study. As mentioned in the previous chapter, we looked at the cultural differences from a Swedish business perspective. As a consequence our respondents were Swedish business people. However this group was not distinguished enough. To be able to find suitable respondents we looked for Swedish business people that have been in contact with Poles. For this purpose, we received information from The Swedish Trade Council and The Polish Business club. After having studied the information received we chose to contact manufacturing companies that exported their products to Polish companies. We contacted 25 possible respondents by e-mail where we presented ourselves and our subject¹. We carried out six interviews in six different manufacturing companies.

To simplify the collaboration with our respondents we translated the different dimensions found in the literature to “every day language”. This was done in order to reduce misunderstandings that could have affected our results. To get a deeper understanding we conducted most of our interviews in person and the rest over the phone. This enabled us to get as much information as we possibly could from the answers of the respondents.

¹ Appendix 3-4

3. Business culture

Defining business culture has been a constant problem and many different researchers have developed alternative definitions of business culture.

Business culture is considered to be a diffuse term, which is why it has so many broad definitions. The following section will give you our detailed definition of business culture based on theories of researchers in the area concerned. This section is setting the scene for the rest of the dissertation.

3.1 Definition

The most frequently used definition of business culture found in literature is; *"the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another"* (Hofstede, 2001, p.9). The definition is not enough in this context since the different components are neither defined nor explained. As mentioned above, here follows a section that will broaden the spectrum of business culture to embrace people's values, beliefs and social behaviour. The foundation of the cultural strategy will be based on the findings of the recognised researchers, Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner. We chose only to describe the dimensions we found relevant for the purpose of this dissertation.

Hofstede's findings are collected within subsidiaries, located in 53 countries, of one large multinational firm (IBM) and have contributed to a better understanding of the cultural differences between countries. The result of Hofstede's study is categorised in five dimensions on which country cultures differ.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, on the other hand, classified cultures along a mix of behavioural and value patterns. Their research focuses on the cultural dimensions of business culture. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner identify seven dimensions of which some can be regarded as nearly identical to Hofstede's (<http://stephan.dahl.at/intercultural/Trompenaars.html>)

3.2 Individualism and Collectivism

Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner have established thorough research based on the theories of individualism versus collectivism. The results from the three researchers have not always been in accordance with each other. The difference between these two theories is a consequence of the fact that there does not exist one way of defining individualism and collectivism and therefore this will always result in contradictive results. Therefore the two theories are presented separately in the following section.

Hofstede has based his dimensions on what his respondents believed to be important to them in an ideal work situation. The dimension of individualism states that it is the following variables that are seen as important; *“freedom within your profession, a position where you feel that you really contribute and that your work presents you with sufficient time over for your private and family life”*(Hofstede, 2001, cited by Mårtensson R, 1998, p.134). It is also said that in individualistic cultures; there is a straight forward and honest communication, the need of communication is strong and silence not generally accepted or liked. *“Individuals in these societies may tend to form a larger number of looser relationships, whereas societies with a low ranking of individualism (collectivistic) have much closer ties between individuals”* (www.geert-hofstede.com).

The collectivistic dimension in Hofstede's studies is characterised by the importance of the group and results are seen as a product of the group, not of

single individuals. In the decision process “consensus” is strived for, which is why the actual process is seen as more complicated than the one in individualistic countries. Although, due to the common goal for consensus the actual implementation process floats more smoothly in collectivistic cultures, since all parties involved have been well informed and integrated throughout the decision making process.

According to *Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner*, the religion tends to influence individualism and collectivism, and they believe that individualism has its lowest ratio in Catholic and the highest in Protestant countries (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2003, cited by Mårtensson, 1998).

Within individualistic groups “*the norm is to treat all the same, but within the collectivistic dimension there is a clear separation between “we” and “them”*” (Trompenaars & Hampden–Turner, 2003, cited by Mårtensson, 1998, p.135). “We” means the people within our group and “they” refers to those outside. The in-group versus the out-group aspect clarifies the importance of building up strong relationships with the collectivists before initiating any business negotiations. In individualistic countries you are seen as doing business with the people within the company not with the company itself; “*the individuals mainly consider themselves to be members of a group or a representative of a group*” (Brodin & Fant, 1995, p.52). Within the collectivistic dimension the link between attitudes and actions are much weaker than in individualistic countries. For collectivists the actions of the individual matter; that he or she acts in accordance with good manners to the prevailing situation and less consideration is taken to what he or she says.

In individualistic cultures the organisation can be seen as an instrument for profit maximisation and decisions are made by individuals rather than members of a group. The individuals take responsibility for failure as well as success. This can be seen in contrast to collectivistic cultures where companies are more concerned with what they have done for their customers and responsibility is

shared among all the members of the group (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2000).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner have defined the two dimensions as follows;

<i>Individualism</i>	<i>Collectivism</i>
Competition	Cooperation
Self-reliance	Social concern
Self-interest	Altruism
Personal growth and fulfilment	Public service and societal legacy

Figure 3.1 (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner. (2000), p. 68).

The conclusion that the two dimensions differ, is quite obvious. The remaining problem is then how to work around the existing differences and how to decide from which dimension it is preferential to work. As an example, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner discuss the dilemma of bonuses, which simplifies the process to fully understand the aspects and complexity of the dimensions. The dilemma is whether bonuses should be paid to individuals as a result of hard work, personal achievements etc. or to the group that together created the desired and successful results. Furthermore they also wish to warn the business environment of stereotyping the two dimensions into categories in which they may not fit. It is necessary to be careful when categorising the two variables in this dimension, so that no generalisation will be made. For example in collectivistic cultures, the general belief is that success (e.g. capital income) is reached through common means such as communal values and established knowledge. The corner stones in individualistic societies are based on the belief that the voluntary commitment and individualistic choices result in favour of the society, e.g. charity and social improvement (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2000).

Sweden is described as an individualistic culture. For Swedes it is important with variation and freedom in the working situation; each individual protects him- or herself at the same time as there is a great respect for each individual performance. As in other individualistic cultures, there is no loyalty towards the employer other than there being a tight bond between the leader and the subordinate.

Although Swedish business people are mostly considered to be individualistic they might be considered somewhat collectivistic as well. Swedes are not supposed to stand out in any crowd and they are not supposed to think better of themselves than of anybody else since uppity is not accepted nor liked. This aspect has clear parallels to the collectivistic society (Lewis, 2001). Polish business people are also considered to be individualistic although not to same extent as the Swedes (www.geert-hofstede.com)²

3.3 How Cultures Relate to Each Other

The dimension of uncertainty avoidance by Hofstede is said, to some extent, to be equivalent to the dimension of universalism versus particularism established by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner.

3.3.1 Uncertainty Avoidance

Hofstede's dimension of uncertainty avoidance is based on; "*the extent by which people within the culture get nervous and unstructured in unclear situations and therefore try to avoid such situations with strict rules for how to act*" (Hofstede., 2003, cited by Mårtensson, 1998, p.78). Hofstede defines uncertainty avoidance as; "*the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations.*"

(http://stephan.dahl.at/intercultural/Hofstede_dimensions.html). Individuals in cultures characterised by a high ratio of uncertainty avoidance, like Poland³,

² Appendix 1, page 63

³ Appendix 1, page 63

seek situations, organisations and environments with a high level of structure and security, which makes situations and events easy to interpret and predict.

As discussed in secondary data there is a clear paradox showing that individuals with a high level of uncertainty avoidance are often positive to engage in situations today that are characterised by high uncertainty in order to reduce future uncertainties (Mårtensson, 1998). A society with a high level of uncertainty avoidance indicates that a country has a low threshold considering ambiguity and uncertainty. This phenomenon results in a highly structured society with well defined laws, regulations and rules so that the amount of uncertainty can be reduced. A society with low uncertainty avoidance, like Sweden⁴, tends to care less about reducing uncertainty and ambiguity, which normally results in a higher acceptance of multiple options. As a result such countries have a socio-structure showing a greater acceptance regarding risks and change. The low uncertainty avoidance is also visualised in the less rule oriented society (www.cyborlink.com).

It is also stated through Hofstede's research that countries with a high ratio of uncertainty avoidance tend to keep within the given frames and tend to lean back on already established knowledge and theories. Countries with a low uncertainty avoidance ratio on the other hand, seek more actively new information and knowledge.

Business cultures with a higher ratio of uncertainty avoidance tend to have a greater need to communicate both by using gestures and raising their voices; it is also accepted to reveal emotions and feelings. On the other hand, in cultures with low uncertainty avoidance there is no general acceptability for revealing emotions and people in these cultures tend to be less expressive, which will have as a result that stress may be internalised.

⁴ Appendix 1, page 63

To launch an innovation in a country with high uncertainty avoidance can at times involve some difficulties. These cultures often have a great understanding of disruptive ideas and are keen to adopt new innovations, but they are also very definite when it comes to details and punctuality (Hofstede., 2001, cited by Mårtensson, 1998)

3.3.2 Universalism and Particularism

This dimension is established by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner and concerns people's relationships to one another. Societies and countries that are eager to follow rules, codes, laws and generalisations are recognised as universalistic while as in particularistic societies exceptions for specific circumstances are accepted and personal relations are more important than obeying the rules.

Sweden is considered to be a universalistic country whereas Poland tends to be particularistic. In Sweden the same policies and practices apply to all, in contrast to the particularistic countries where policies and practices vary according to relations. Swedish business people put great value in written contracts; the acceptance of the contract reflects that the counterpart is credible and when agreed upon the contract there is no turning back. A deal is deal, and there is nothing that can change this. Even possible future failures due to external circumstances are regulated in the contract (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner., 2003). In Poland it is important to be specific when writing a contract. Verbal agreements tend not to be followed or accepted but when the written contract has been signed it is respected and followed (Forslund., 1998).

3.4 Language and Communication

Language and communication are often mentioned as the "mirrors of culture". All interaction between two human beings, both verbal and non-verbal, is seen as communicating a message of some kind. Communication has also been mentioned as a "social reality" constantly changing with time. With language

people are able to communicate over cultures and express their values and beliefs. According to the researcher Dodd (Starosta & Chen., 1997) intercultural communication is based on three factors:

- *Positive feelings* e.g. safety, trust and self-esteem
- *Beliefs* e.g. expectations, stereotypes and misunderstandings
- *Action of skills* e.g. verbal and non-verbal communication

People get these social perceptions from their individual cultural heritage and have a tendency to always refer to their own framework.

3.4.1 Verbal Communication

Verbal communication implies speaking with words through conversations but it can also mean the tone of voice, the involvement in the conversation or the speed of speech. This is the principal way to communicate in Western societies. Language can be seen as the determinant of culture since the language both shapes and reflects people's thinking, attitudes and beliefs. It is true that the understandings of a language are dependant on the cultural experience in people's minds (Starosta & Chen., 1997).

In certain business cultures, as for example in Sweden, communication is based on messages conceived as explicit and low context, i.e. these business cultures have a precision in the spoken issue and always mean what they say. This can be seen in contrast to high-context cultures which generally address broader issues and what is said might not be what is meant. This of course requires the conversation partners to have a good knowledge and understanding of each other.

Swedes do not generally speak unless they have something important to say and they are often considered to be formal and slow; they prefer to wait for an answer instead of rushing it. They also lack the ability to "small talk" for a longer time and therefore prefer to go directly to the point. Both Swedish and Polish business people are perceived as good listeners, courteous and sympatric.

Poles tend to openly criticise each other whereas Swedes have a fear of confrontation and try to avoid conflicts (Lewis., 2001).

3.4.2 Non-Verbal Communication

Contrary to verbal communication, non-verbal communication implies “speaking” with symbols, gestures, body language etc. instead of using actual words. Both ways of communicating must be viewed as a whole and as equally important in different situations. The difference between the two might be when speaking to a person from another culture or with a language not understood. Many non-verbal gestures can be easy to recognise e.g. a laughter, fear or tone of voice. This way of communicating can also be about the way you move your hands while speaking, blinking with your eyes, blushing when embarrassed and many more. The difficulty lies in knowing what different gestures mean in different cultures; such an easy thing as greeting your business associate can confuse many. Every person delivers a culturally unique message that gets decoded by the listener using his or her own cultural endowment.

Some of the non-verbal communication, as mentioned, differs a lot between cultures. As an example people from collectivistic cultures are not very welcoming to body contact which is something quite normal in our western societies. Swedes are, however, not living in a “touching” culture and it is therefore important to keep a certain distance. Another example might be that people react very differently to emotions; the tone of voice or a smile can be both a sign of agreement, satisfaction or, in some cases, embarrassment. Body language is not very common in Sweden and for Swedes facial expressions during business meetings are unusual. The Poles on the other hand are very sensitive to body language and it is especially important to maintain a direct eye contact during meetings (Usunier., 2000; Lewis., 2001).

A way of coping with the difficulties of language is to start by identifying that there do exist differences between business associates. Be aware of what is explicitly said might not mean what you think it does, try to learn something about the culture with whom you interact, appreciate it and try not to have any

preconceived notions about it. Linguistic ethnocentrism is inevitable since, as mentioned before, everyone has their own cultural heritage but we must strive to achieve polycentrism to some extent. Being non-ethnocentric might not necessarily mean that you have to learn many different languages but might instead mean that you learn what is unique in the specific foreign language and also learn some words (Usunier., 2000).

Swedes and Poles might look the same on the outside, however differences in language and the meaning of words might easily occur, thus communication is not easy. As an example it is not always that we have the same perception of words such as contract, truth, and common sense. Another thing worth to be mentioned is silence. Some cultures see silence during a conversation as embarrassing and have a hard time coping with it, while others see it as necessary and important in order to show respect for the speaker. In Sweden silence is not necessarily a bad thing since Swedes like to take a moment to reflect on their answers; even the Poles sometimes have moments of silence during business meetings (Usunier., 2000; Lewis., 2001).

3.5 Hierarchical Levels in Society

When it comes to the hierarchical levels in organisations and the society as a whole, the dimensions from Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner differ in some aspects and will therefore be presented separately.

3.5.1 Power Distance

Power distance is Hofstede's definition concerning human inequality as a cultural difference between countries. Over the years this has been an issue capturing many philosophers' minds. Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes; "*The fundamental treaty substitutes moral and legal equality for any physical inequality between men which nature may have caused; and while they may be unequal in force or intelligence, they become all equal by agreement and by law*" (Hofstede., 2001, p.80)

Even if legal equality is the case in most countries today, there are other areas of society where human inequalities exist, for example in organisations where the expression power distance comes in mind. Hofstede defines this dimension as; *“The power distance between a boss B and a subordinate S in a hierarchy is the difference between the extent to which B can determine the behaviour of S and the extent to which S can determine the behaviour of B”* (Hofstede., 2001, p.83). Having this in mind one might come to the conclusion that different power distances in countries, organisations and hierarchies can be a source of categorising business cultures.

In countries with low power distance, like Sweden⁵, organisations are characterised by decentralised decision structures where hierarchy indicates an inequality of roles. In countries with significant power distance, like Poland⁶, hierarchy reflects the existential inequalities between managers and subordinates. Expressed differently, in organisations with high power distance managers consider subordinates to be of a different kind and vice versa. Further on, Hofstede’s research points out that subordinates working in organisations situated in countries scoring low on the power distance index prefer consultative managers. In countries scoring high on the power distance index, the common manager is an autocrat and the subordinates expect to be told what to do instead of being consulted, which is generally the case in both Sweden and Poland. What is worth noticing is that Hofstede’s research shows that in organisations with large power distances, subordinates prefer dominating bosses and the other way around in organisations with low power distance (Hofstede., 2001; www.geert-hofstede.com).

3.5.2 Achievement and Ascription

Achievement and Ascription is the definition Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner use on the issue concerning status and hierarchy in a society. Achievement cultures show respect for their superiors depending on their knowledge and achievements; titles are neither important nor frequently used. In

⁵ Appendix 1, page 63

⁶ Appendix 1, page 63

ascription cultures, titles and status are of major importance and to show respect for your superiors is to show respect for the whole organisation. Both Poland and Sweden are said to be achievement cultures which is why the risk of offending someone by neglecting to use titles decreases (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner., 2003). In Poland there is no general rule on how to address each other; the best way is to follow your hosts' example (www.executiveplanet.com).

3.6 Time

Different people and cultures have different ways on how they perceive time. The most common appellations are sequential (monochronic) and synchronic (polychronic) time cultures. The sequential culture sees time as very important and they believe it is crucial with timing, planning and keeping time. In these cultures everything has its own time and place and things are done one thing at a time. It is very important to follow schedules, arrive on time to an appointment and to stand in line and wait for your turn; otherwise the whole system will be unbalanced. As said by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2003, p. 123); "*they rather do things right than do the right thing*", Sequential cultures are mostly found in East Asia but also in North America and in North-Western Europe.

The synchronic cultures, on the other hand, see time as something flexible; many things can be done at the same time and punctuality is not highly valued. In these cultures relationships are more important than schedules. Synchronic cultures are often found in the South of Europe and in Latin countries.

Conflicts between the two time-cultures might occur since the synchronic cultures are often seen as ignorant and frustration can easily occur when people show up late for business appointments, are kept waiting, ignore deadlines or give slow responses (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner., 2000).

The two cultures can also be measured by looking at the perception and emphasis of *past*, *present* and *future*. The sequential cultures see time as several events passing by in turn, while the synchronic cultures see the events as related to and influenced by each other. Countries might differ somehow in this aspect even if they usually have the same perception of time. As an example many Europeans are past oriented which imply they explain the present by describing the past. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner., 2003)

Both Swedish and Polish business cultures are considered to be sequential time-cultures, however there are several differences. Swedes are said to be extremely sequential and they are by many considered to be inflexible. They are obsessed with time, in business life as well as in social life and always stick to their schedules and agendas, often referred to as inefficiency. In contrast to Swedes, Polish business people tend to incline towards the synchronic time culture since they are more relaxed with time and tend to arrive a bit late for business appointments; although when it comes to important situations they are very punctual. The more flexible Poles are said to have complained about Swedes always being in a hurry to return home instead of staying late and finishing the meeting (Lewis., 2001).

3.7 Masculinity and Femininity

The dimension explaining cultural diversity is known as, masculinity and femininity. Masculine societies are characterised by the clear distinction of the social gender roles. Men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success; women are supposed to have tender roles like taking care of the home and children and everything else concerned with quality of life. What is distinguishing for feminine societies is that the social gender roles overlap, that is; both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life. (Hofstede., 2001)

The result in Hofstede's study showed that Sweden is the least masculine country, or differently expressed the most feminine. There are significant differences between these two extremes; in countries like Sweden⁷ it is considered important to cooperate at work and to have a good relationship with the manager, while in masculine countries, like Poland⁸, it is important with challenges and recognition in the working situation. The values of women and men differ very much in masculine societies and the belief in individual decisions is predominant. In contrast to masculine societies, the values of women and men are the same in feminine societies and the belief in group-decision making is huge. Besides, there is a great difference in the perception of individuals (Hofstede., 2001; www.geert-hofstede.com).

3.8 Key Aspects of Chapter 3

The following aspects of Swedish and Polish business culture are found in the secondary data above:

- Swedes are more individualistic than Poles
- Poles have a higher uncertainty avoidance ratio than Swedes
- Written contracts are respected and followed in both Poland and Sweden
- Poles use body language more frequently than Swedes
- Swedes lack the ability to “small talk” because they are formal and slow
- Polish organisations show a higher power distance than Swedish
- Titles and status are not important in neither Poland nor Sweden
- Poles are more flexible with time than Swedes and keeping time is not as important in Poland as in Sweden
- Polish business culture is more masculine than Swedish

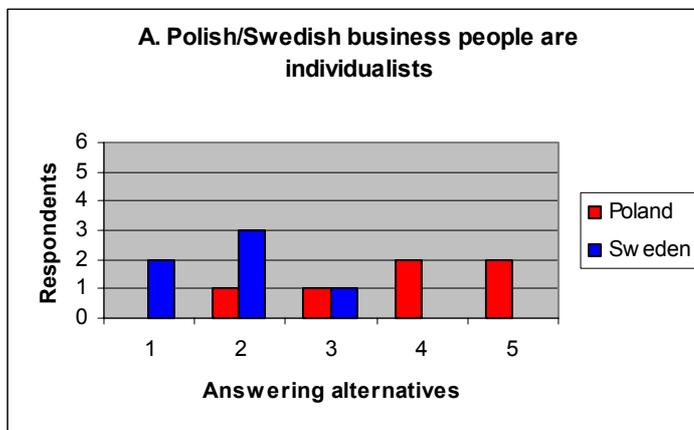
⁷Appendix 1, page 63

⁸Appendix 1, page 63

4. Empirical Study

In this section the collected primary data will be presented. Each part of the questionnaire will be presented separately with the help of charts followed by explanatory texts. We will only present the results of our respondents and no comments of our own will be made.

4.1 Individualism and Collectivism



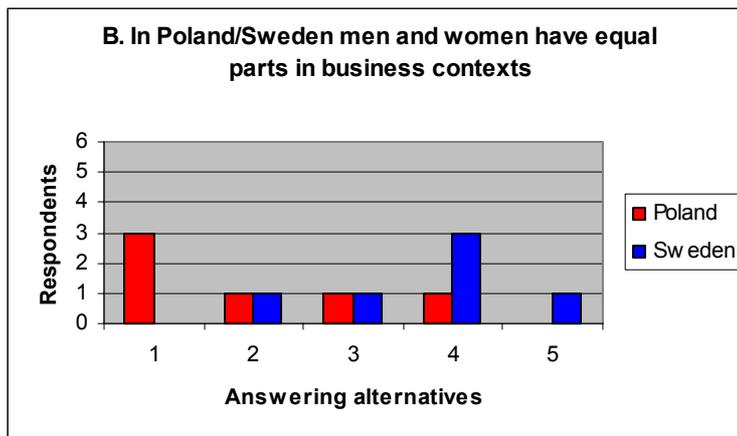
(Answering alt. 1 = Disagree, Answering alt. 5 = Agree)

According to our respondents, Polish business people are more individualistic than collectivistic since they consider their own well-being more important than the company's. These thoughts were born during the Communist era where many believed that in order to survive everyone needed to look after themselves. It is important for Polish business people to show their skills to reach individual success and as a consequence the Polish business people tend to change jobs often and are thus less concerned with the well-being of the company.

On the other hand, most of our respondents believe that Swedish business people are more collectivistic than individualistic and tend to strive for consensus in all decisions concerning the daily work. When consensus is

reached, it provides the social security of a group membership, which is often more important for the Swedes than individual success. In Sweden, a high individual profiling is not considered to be beneficial since this will disrupt the balance within the group. Since the social security is, as said, important for the Swedes it is more important to stay in the same job for several years.

4.2 Masculinity and Femininity

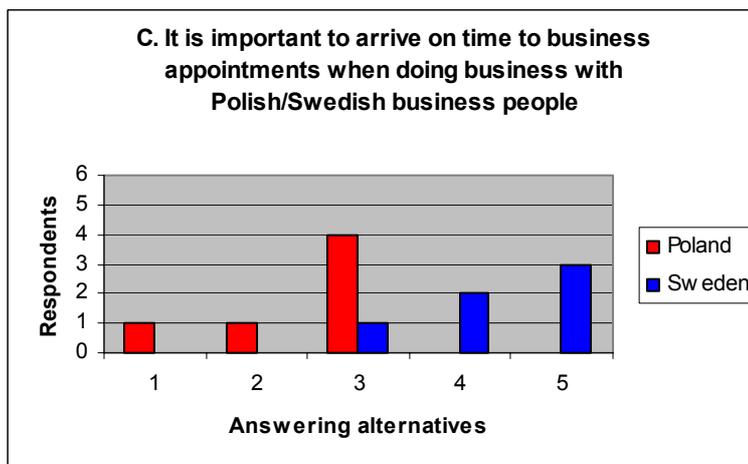


(Answering alt. 1 = Disagree, Answering alt. 5 = Agree)

According to the chart above the majority of our respondents do not consider Polish businessmen and women to have equal roles. A common thought among the respondents is that business women have a longer way to the top than men have. As a result of this there is a minority of women in top positions in Polish organisations. Another aspect of this is that the saying “*equal pay for equal work*” is seldom true in Poland; women are often less paid than their male colleagues. Another aspect of the diversity in roles is the way women are conceived. It is rare to find a woman working as a salesperson because she is likely to fail, not because of her lack of knowledge but because many buyers want to buy from men. However, one of the respondents considers Polish business people to have equal roles no matter gender. His experience is that in some organisations there are more women than men in top positions. The reason for this is that women perform better in school than men.

When it comes to Sweden we see that the thoughts of our respondents is somewhere in between the two extremes. The majority of the respondents agree on the fact that there is an unbalance between men and women in certain industries but do not always find the reason behind this to be discrimination. Differences in wages between men and women can be found, but not to the same extent as in Polish organisations.

4.3 Time



(Answering alt. 1 = Disagree, Answering alt. 5 = Agree)

According to the majority of our respondents it is of little concern for Polish business people to arrive on time for appointments. It is not considered irresponsible to arrive a few minutes late for a meeting. Because of this, Polish business people showing up late do not apologise for the delay. However there are some situations where it is important to arrive on time. For example, it is of major importance if meeting with the president of a company while it is less important for a sales person meeting with customers. Another difference that was pointed out during the interviews was that it is more accepted to be late in large cities than in small ones.

Swedish business people consider it to be of major importance to arrive on time. One of the respondents said that this has its roots in how Swedish children are raised. Schedules and respect for time are integrated from the very beginning.

Although it is important to arrive on time, a first delay is often accepted by Swedish business people. If a person arrives late several times he or she is considered non-professional and lack the ability to plan. If, a person arrives late for a meeting with Swedish business people, this person is expected to call the counterpart and inform about the delay.

4.4 Uncertainty Avoidance



(Answering alt. 1 = Disagree, Answering alt. 5 = Agree)

The majority of our respondents considered Polish business people willing to take risks. This has its origin in the former Communist era where people felt insecure with the future and thereby learned to take higher risks. According to some of the respondents this is shown through the Polish business people's eagerness to come to an agreement. They are new capitalists, on the way up, eager to negotiate and come to fast agreements. Some of the respondents said that Polish business people are a bit lazy and because of this do not go through the details in an agreement and thereby they take a higher risk.

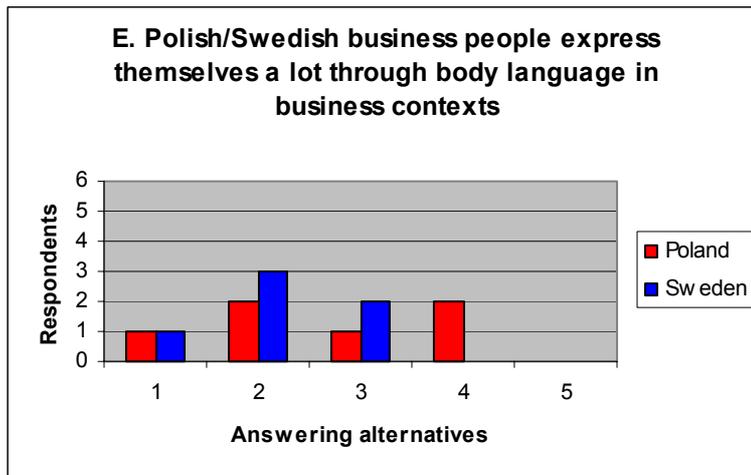
Polish business people can also take risks by exaggerating good qualities that can work in their favour. If it succeeds, the Polish business person might stand out as a very important person for his employer. On the other hand, if he or she would fail it is not unusual to blame someone or something else for the mistake. One of the respondent's comments on this question differs from the others. He

says that Poles do not take any risks what so ever. This is because Polish business people, above all managers, are personally responsible for all their actions and as to managers they can be found guilty of their employees' breaches.

The general view is that Swedish business people take fewer risks than Poles. Swedes take more time when negotiating; every aspect is gone through in detail several times before coming to an agreement. Furthermore, Swedish business people look for consensus, that is, before signing the papers the agreement has been discussed with several colleagues. This can make Swedes seem slow in the eyes of Polish business people. Swedish business people do not take risks that can be costly for the company. One of the respondents expresses this as *“Swedish business people are more driven by the fear to fail than by the joy to succeed“*

One of the respondents does not share the view with the others when saying that Swedish business people are not much of risk takers. His opinion is that Swedes are in fact much of risk takers today. He bases this on the fact that it is not considered fatal to go bankrupt in Sweden today.

4.5 Language and Communication

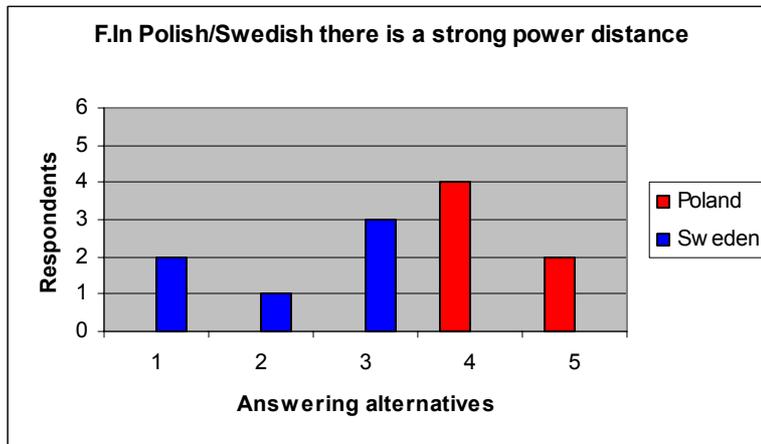


(Answering alt. 1 = Disagree, Answering alt. 5 = Agree)

Polish business people's use of body language i.e. gestures and facial expressions seem to vary, according to our respondents' experiences. Some of the respondents believe that especially hand and facial expressions are used as a way of expressing and demonstrating security and authority. On the other hand, other respondents did not see any special frequency in the use of any type of body language in Poland since body language is generally used in all business cultures.

When it comes to Swedish business people's use of body language our respondents believe that, in most cases, body language is not common in any form. The Swedish business people are considered to be both stiff and restrained in their way of acting.

4.6 Power Distance/Achievement and Ascription

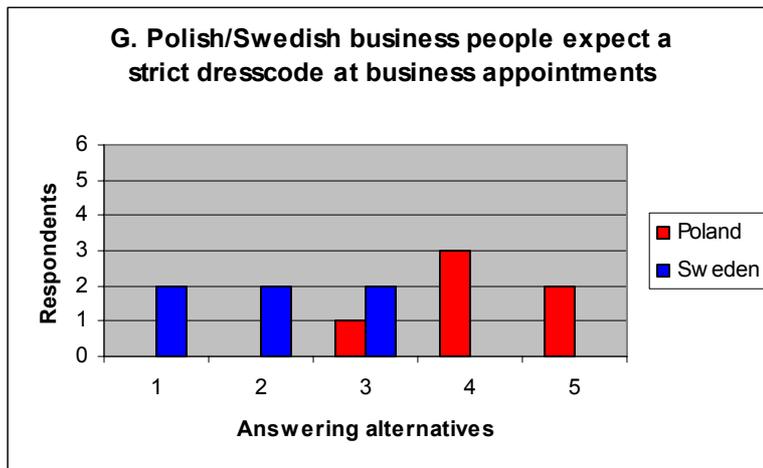


(Answering alt. 1 = Disagree, Answering alt. 5 = Agree)

After having analysed the respondents' answers, there seem to be a very distinct and clear division of power in the Polish business culture. The power hierarchy is visible and expressed through a variety of aspects e.g. the president of the company is considered to be the most important person. No one questions what he or she says. If an employee makes a mistake the boss, in many cases, openly criticises that person. This behaviour is rooted in most Polish organisations and is not considered to be an act violating the individual. The importance of titles and status is another example clarifying the hierarchical structure existing within most Polish organisations. In some cases it does not matter what a person has actually accomplished since he or she will be treated and accepted in a way reflected by the title.

According to the majority of our respondents the power hierarchy in Sweden is considered low or even none existing. Although power hierarchy is not as apparent in the Swedish business environment as in the Polish it is always clear who decides what. The Swedish business climate also gives each individual freedom to act and grow professionally. Titles and status is not of any importance but the belonging to a group or team is. Swedes find the group belonging superior to personal acknowledgements which our respondents believe reflects the Swedish need for security.

4.7 Dress Code

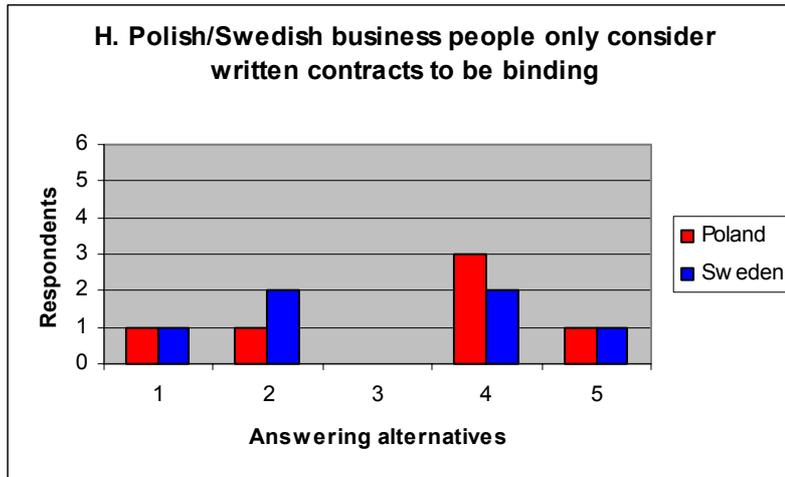


(Answering alt. 1 = Disagree, Answering alt. 5 = Agree)

According to the majority of our respondents, when business is conducted in Poland, it often involves a strict dress code. Suit and tie are expected during a business meeting but in social events the dress code is more free and relaxed. The strict dress code might, according to one of our respondents, be a way of declaring a person's position in the company but it is also a heritage following the time of Communism in Poland. During that period, business people always wore suit and tie no matter the occasion.

Swedish business people's dress code is, on the other hand, more relaxed. A strict dress code is not expected, unless it is a very important customer with whom he or she does not have an established relation with. In general Swedes can dress freely in the office and at meetings with established customers and there are no requirements to dress in suit and tie. Some of our respondents make the remark that a strict dress code is extremely important only in some sectors, e.g. within banking and finance.

4.8 Universalism and Particularism

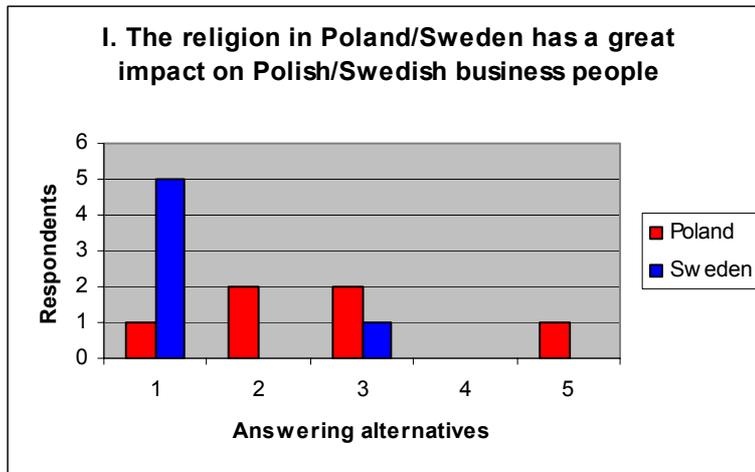


(Answering alt. 1 = Disagree, Answering alt. 5 = Agree)

The majority of our respondents believe that written contracts are the only valid contracts when doing business with Polish business people, although the written contracts have flaws. It is important to consider as many details as possible in the contract since Poles are likely to try to find their way out. It is also true that an elaborate contract opens up for a more simple and relaxed relation. Especially when it comes to smaller companies it is easy to get fooled. It can be very difficult to run a law-suit in Poland when a contract has been violated. To avoid such problems it is necessary to build up trust between business associates before doing business with a Polish company.

In Sweden a verbal contract is as lawfully binding as a written contract but Swedish business people still prefer to use written contracts. Especially when it concerns important matters, it is necessary to have all agreements on paper. This might have to do with Swedes being both thorough and long-term thinking. The respondents also believe that it is easier to claim one's rights when presenting a written contract.

4.9 Religion

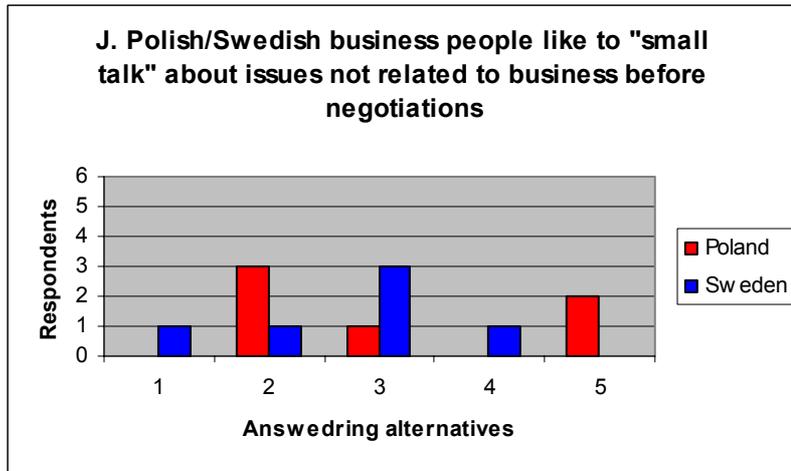


(Answering alt. 1 = Disagree, Answering alt. 5 = Agree)

Our respondents have diversified views on the religious impact on Polish business. However, they all agree that Poles like to talk about their history and religion and that Poland is a religious country. Poles are, as said, religious but its impact on business is unclear. One of our respondents considers religion to be nothing more than an act.

When it comes to Swedish religion, our respondents are unanimous; Sweden is not a religious country and religion has no impact on business. Sweden might even be considered one of the least religious countries in the world.

4.10 Language and Communication



(Answering alt. 1 = Disagree, Answering alt. 5 = Agree)

According to two of our respondents, Polish business people like to “small talk” for hours before a business meeting in order to build relationships and to find out how people react in different situations. Polish business people also like to be flattered and to hear that they perform well. The rest of our respondents believe that “small talk” is important in all countries and common sense when doing business, although it might be more important in Poland than anywhere else.

In Sweden, “small talk” is considered as common sense but nothing more. Swedish business people generally like to get started right away since they simply do not consider themselves to have the time to talk about matters not related to business. Swedish business people believe that “time is money” and that they have more important things to do than to “small talk” with colleagues about irrelevant matters.

4.11 Other Aspects of Culture

In this section we will present different business cultural aspects given to us by our respondents during the interviews. The reason for this question was to highlight important cultural aspects of business, which were not presented in the questionnaire. Below we will list and explain the most frequent aspects stated by our respondents.

- Criticism is more direct in Poland than in Sweden. Polish business people tend to take offence when having done something wrong, since they take great pride in their work.
- Dinners in the evening are a big part of Polish business; these are considered essential in order to establish a successful relationship with the Polish counterpart. Poles also appreciate ceremonies and acknowledgements of their accomplishments.
- Polish business people tend to have a short-term orientation when it comes to business relations. This is because they want to get the most of each contract and do not plan for building long-lasting relationships with potential future customers or suppliers.
- The price of goods is practically the only mean of competition in Poland. The Polish business people are very price concerned which is why they often buy something cheaper of lower quality than something more expensive of higher quality. It is therefore crucial for a company to explain why it charges a certain price.
- Bribery is a common problem when doing business in Poland, especially when dealing with small companies. On the other hand, larger firms do not tend to expect any bribes since they are more concerned with their international reputation.

- The Chamber of Commerce and the Swedish Trade council can be helpful when searching for relevant information before establishing oneself in Poland. Another way to receive relevant information is to use already established and successful companies due to their experience within the area.
- The use of exhibitions and intermediaries are considered to be preferable ways to establish new relationships with Polish counterparts. Exhibitions are a popular and common way of establishing personal contacts in Poland and the intermediaries often have profound experience and contacts in the market concerned.
- During the interviews it occurred that it is difficult to solve a breach of contract in Poland. Our respondents mentioned that it could therefore be preferable to use credit institutions in order to ensure payments.

5. Analysis

Below a comparison of secondary and primary data will be presented. The most important cultural differences of business will be described and discussed.

5.1 Individualism and Collectivism

According to the secondary data Polish business people are considered to be individualistic but not to the same extent as the Swedes. Our primary data showed that Polish business people are in fact highly individualistic and much more so than the Swedes. This is expressed through e.g. the orientation towards oneself instead of the company.

The secondary data also describes the Swedish business people as, above all, individualistic since there is a focus on each individual's work tasks, which should be both stimulating and with possibilities to express opinions of their own. On the other hand, the majority of our respondents consider the Swedes to be more collectivistic since they prefer to work in teams and consensus in decisions is important.

Secondary data

Swedes more individualistic
individualistic than Poles



Primary data

Poles more
than Swedes

5.2 Uncertainty Avoidance/Universalism and Particularism

Polish business people are according to the secondary data characterised by a high level of uncertainty avoidance i.e. they want to be in surroundings with low risks and with a high level of structure. They favour situations that are easy to forecast and interpret. Our primary data proved to question the statements above. Our respondents consider the Poles to be prepared to take high risks in business contexts. They believe the Polish business people to be eager to strike a deal quickly and did not always analyse all the possible risks associated. The new capitalisation wave could, according to our respondents, be an effect of the former Communistic values in Poland. Also the importance of personal recognition in case of a successful deal is a factor categorising Polish business people as a low uncertainty avoidance group.

Another dimension is the categorisation of the Poles as particularistic, which means that exceptions for following the established rules and laws are more common and depending on relations. The secondary data points out the importance of written contracts for Polish business people; after signing a contract it is always accepted and followed. The experiences of our respondents on the other hand, believe that written contracts in Poland are neither respected nor followed.

Swedish business people are described in the secondary data as a group with a low ratio of uncertainty avoidance. This is characterised by an acceptance regarding risks, change and a variety of options. Our respondents do not agree with the established thoughts and conclusions. They believe that Swedish business people make well grounded decisions after analysing all risks thoroughly; all risks need to be well calculated. Measures in order to reduce present and future risks are normally well established and integrated in the Swedish business culture. A quote from one of our respondents states well the Swedish business people's attitude toward risks; "*Swedish business people are more driven by the fear to fail, than of the joy to succeed*".

As an addition the Swedes are considered to be a universalistic country, which indicates that the same policies and practices apply to all. Written contracts are considered to be of great importance. When considering contracts our respondents agree with the established thoughts. All our respondents' point out that the Swedes need to have written contracts with specified agreements concerning all terms and aspects.

Secondary data

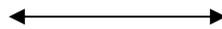
Poles have a higher uncertainty avoidance ratio than Swedes



Primary data

Poles have a lower uncertainty avoidance ratio than Swedes

Written contracts are respected and followed in both Poland and Sweden



Written contracts are not respected and followed in Poland as they are in Sweden

5.3 Language and Communication

Polish business people are, according to the secondary data, sensitive to body language and tend to openly criticise each other. The experiences of our respondents in this matter vary. Some believe that the Poles are in fact frequent users of body language while some believe this is common in all business cultures and not particularly in Poland. Our respondents also mentioned that Polish business people like to “small talk” for hours before a business meeting in order to build strong relationships and to find out how different people react in different situations.

According to the secondary data, Sweden is a low-context culture which implies that Swedish business people are very straight forward when they speak.

However, Swedes lack the ability to “small talk” about issues not related to business since they are both formal and slow. Our respondents agree that Swedish business people, contrary to Polish business people, dislike “small talk” but not because they are formal or slow but simply because they do not have the time for it. When it comes to body language, the respondents believe that Swedish business people are formal and restrained in their way of acting which suits well the information from the secondary data.

Secondary data

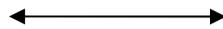
Poles use body language more frequently than Swedes.



Primary data

Poles use body language more frequently than Swedes.

Swedes lack the ability to “small talk” because they are too formal and slow.



Swedes lack the ability to “small talk” because they do not have the time for it. Poles like to “small talk” for hours.

5.4 Power Distance/Achievement and Ascription

According to the secondary data, Poland is a country where the hierarchy of an organisation reflects the existential inequalities between managers and subordinates. This means that managers consider subordinates to be of a different kind and vice versa.

Further on, in a different part of the secondary data concerning hierarchy, we find that Poland is an achievement business culture. This means that subordinates show respect for superiors depending on their knowledge and achievements. The secondary data also indicates that titles and status are of little

importance in Poland. Because of the two contradictions in the secondary data we could not find a united picture of the hierarchal system in Poland.

Our respondents have the same opinion as the secondary data saying that the hierarchy of an organisation reflects the existential inequalities between managers and subordinates. They also say that titles and status are of major importance in Polish organisations.

When it comes to Sweden there is no doubt, according to the secondary data, that Swedish organisations are decentralised and hierarchy indicates different responsibilities in the working situation. This means that there is no use of titles and status, which indicates an achievement culture. The majority of our respondents share this belief when saying that the power distance in Sweden is considered low or even none existent and titles are generally not of any importance. The respondents also say that Swedish organisations give each individual freedom to act and grow professionally.

Secondary Data

Polish organisations show a higher Power distance than Swedish organisations.

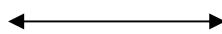
Titles and status are not important in either Poland or Sweden



Primary Data

Polish organisations show a higher Power distance than Swedish organisations.

Titles and status are important in Poland but not in Sweden



5.5 Time

According to secondary data, Polish business culture is considered to be mainly a sequential time culture which implies that time is important. However Polish business people are to some extent synchronic since arriving on time to business appointments is of little concern. Although, at certain important occasions it is crucial to be on time when meeting with Poles. Our respondents agree with the fact that the Poles are synchronic and say it is even so that the Poles do not apologise for the delay since they do not consider it to be rude.

Swedish business culture, on the other hand, is considered to be an extremely sequential time culture which implies that people are inflexible when concerning time. It is of major importance to arrive on time to all business appointments. The secondary data confirms the real-life experiences of our respondents. They all agree that it is of major importance to arrive on time when meeting with Swedes and to keep schedules at all times.

Secondary data

Poles are more flexible with time than Swedes and keeping time is not as important in Poland as in Sweden



Primary data

Poles are more flexible with time than Swedes and keeping time is not as important in Poland as in Sweden

5.6 Masculinity and Femininity

The findings from the secondary data show that Polish business culture is masculine. This means that the gender roles differ much. Another typical aspect of masculine cultures is the belief in individual decision-making. The majority of our respondents share the opinion of Polish business culture being masculine.

According to the secondary data, the Swedish business culture is, in contrast to the Polish, feminine. This means that the social gender roles overlap; both men and women share the same values. Another typical aspect of feminine business cultures is the belief in group-decisions. Most of our respondents share the same opinions on this question and therefore we can say they believe Swedish business culture to be feminine.

Secondary Data

Polish business culture is more masculine than Swedish business culture.



Primary Data

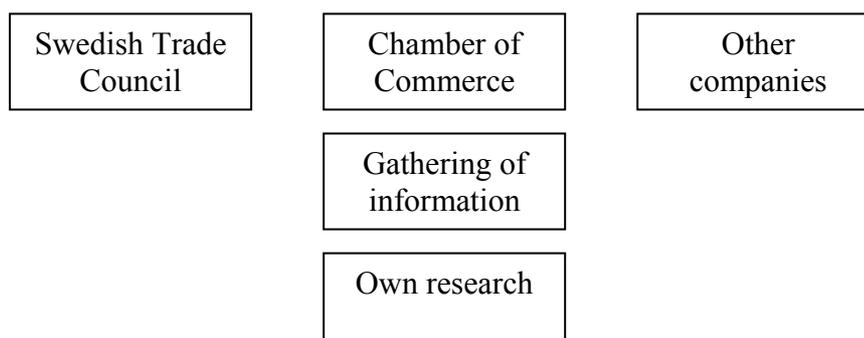
Polish business culture is more masculine than Swedish business culture.

6. Conclusions

In this chapter we will present what we believe is the best way of handling the cultural differences arising from a Swedish and Polish relationship. We also discuss which failures can be found in the results of the dissertation. Further, suggestions for future research will be presented and the practical and theoretical contribution of the dissertation. Finally the credibility of the dissertation will be discussed.

6.1 Be Prepared

Before engaging in business with Polish business people and entering the Polish market, it is crucial to analyse both the macro and micro environment e.g. competitors and economic and political climate. To facilitate the gathering of information it is possible to turn to the Swedish Trade Council and/or the Chamber of Commerce for help. These two authorities have extensive insight in the areas concerned and their information can therefore be valuable. A complement to the Swedish Trade Council and the Chamber of Commerce is to contact Swedish companies that already have successfully established themselves on the Polish market. These actors are just there as support in the process of gathering information; it is up to the Swedish company itself to gather all the necessary information. To enter a foreign market like the Polish, it is important to be financially strong in order to meet unexpected costs and circumstances along the way. Entering a foreign market is often more costly than first calculated.



6.2 Establish Relationships

A preferable way for a company to market its products and establish relationships with potential Polish customers is through exhibitions. One of the most visited is the Poznan exhibition. Exhibitions are a popular and common way of establishing personal contacts in Poland. Another possible way to build relationships is through the use of an agent or other intermediaries. The intermediaries often have profound experience and contacts in the market concerned.

Use exhibitions as a way of establishing relationships

Build relationships through the use of agents or other intermediaries

6.3 Business Meetings

When doing business with the Poles it is, as said, important to establish personal relationships. For Polish business people it is crucial to build up trust before engaging in subjects concerning business. In order to engage in a successful relationship it is therefore important for a Swede to be able to “small-talk” on matters that are important to the Polish counterpart. Subjects such as religion, history and sports are popular. During a business meeting, Swedes prefer to go directly to the point while as Poles prefer to “circle around” issues concerning the actual deal. Because of this, business meetings can be time consuming and it is therefore crucial for a Swedish business person to be acceptant and not book several meetings on the same day. Make sure also to plan for evening dinners since these are considered to be a natural part of doing business.

As mentioned in the previous parts of the dissertation, titles and status are important to Poles, for that reason it is preferential for a Swede to bring a business card. The business card shall state the title, which indicates the importance in the company. A “good” title will facilitate the acceptance of the person and the company. Also make sure as a Swedish company to send the

right person since the Poles prefer to negotiate with people on the same level as themselves. For instance, if an appointment is made with a Polish purchase manager, make sure to send the sales manager from the Swedish company and not just an “ordinary” sales person. To have smooth negotiations, Swedes need to be prepared to make fast decisions by themselves without consulting colleagues. A fast decision making process is customary in Poland and Polish business people therefore expect their counterparts to act accordingly. Further it is important for Swedish companies to keep in mind that women are not always accepted in positions such as sales and management since they are usually dominated by men.

Our advice to Swedish business people is to arrive on time to business appointments. Although, one should not expect that the Polish counterpart will arrive as appointed. This does not mean that Polish business people are neglecting the importance of the meeting but instead are more flexible than Swedes. Swedish business people should therefore accept a delay.

Moreover, Swedish business people should not be intimidated by the use of body language in Poland. The use of gestures indicates a strong commitment and should not be misinterpreted for anger.

”Small talk” with Polish business people	Arrive on time to appointments but accept a delay from others	Be prepared to make individual decisions
Bring a business card since titles are important	Do not get intimidated by the use of body language	Establish personal relationships by building trust

6.4 Be Thorough and Careful

In order to minimise possible pitfalls and unpleasant surprises it is crucial to have well formulated contracts, since Polish business people have a tendency to find loop holes. Using interpreters or Polish speaking personnel is one way to diminish the risk to get fooled. When using external interpreters there is however a risk that valuable information will be lost before reaching the final recipient. We recommend Swedish companies to use credit institutions to ensure payments. This is preferential in unstable markets and when dealing with smaller companies. The process of writing contracts is of great concern since it is hard to claim ones rights in case of a breach of contract; the Polish legal system is both insufficient and lengthy.

A Swede must be prepared that Poles sometimes can mislead and exaggerate circumstances that can work in their favour. Therefore, it is crucial to do a background check on the matters concerned e.g. financial status.

Do a background check and/or use a credit institution before negotiating

Make sure to have well formulated contracts.

Use polish speaking persons when writing the contract.

6.5 Accept Differences

Common sense is to adapt to the Polish business culture when doing business in Poland, however, without neglecting the personal origin. One of the most important things when doing business abroad is to know your strengths, weaknesses and reactions in different situations. Swedish business people need to realise that they are foreigners in Poland and need to adjust accordingly i.e. adjust to Polish customs and not assume that the Swedish way of doing things is better.

Adapt to Polish business culture without neglecting the personal origin.

Realise that the Swedish way is not always the best.

7. Further Aspects

7.1 Criticism

In our dissertation we have only used Swedish respondents in our questionnaire, while Hofstede and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner asked natives to answer their questions. By using only Swedish respondents we might receive subjective answers that do not always reflect the reality. The scale in question 3 and 4 in our questionnaire is another possible flaw since we discovered that it had different meanings to the different respondents. In our dissertation all our respondents were men, which may have limited the diversity of the answers. In the secondary data, the Polish business culture is not discussed to the same extent as the Swedish; this can therefore lead to misleading results.

7.2 Future Research

Due to the time restraint we could only test our questionnaire on six respondents. Therefore we believe that testing the questionnaire on a larger group of respondents would be one interesting suggestion for future research. In our dissertation we had only male respondents and therefore it would be interesting for future researchers to include female respondents, in order to see if the results would differ. Finally we believe it would be interesting to test our strategy in practice, to see whether it is applicable in reality.

7.3 Practical and Theoretical Contribution

The aim of the established strategy in the dissertation is to help Swedish business people to establish and maintain relationships on the Polish market. By acting in accordance with the strategy, Swedish business people will be able to properly cope with the differences of business culture and thereby eliminate possible clashes that can be both costly and time consuming.

In our dissertation we gave a broader definition of the term culture by combining the dimensions established by Hofstede and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner.

7.4 Credibility

An important part of the research method is to clarify the credibility of the research from an academic perspective. This is done by discussing the reliability and validity.

7.4.1 Reliability

The reliability of the research clarifies to what extent the research can be reproduced by others in the future and still end up in the same results. The reliability of a qualitative study like the one in this dissertation is difficult to state because it is problematic, if not to say impossible, to reproduce an interview based mainly on open discussions and not on structured surveys (Saunders *et. al.*, 2003). By explaining how we conducted our research in chapter 1, we increased our validity because it enables other researchers to redo our research and hopefully come to the same conclusions. To reduce this risk of low reliability we used the same, semi-structured questionnaires, on all interview occasions.

7.4.2 Validity

Validity deals with the problem, on how well the findings of the research reflect what really is intended to be measured. Validity also demonstrates if there is any causal link between the variables in the study (Saunders *et. al.*, 2003). We believe that the validity in this dissertation is high since we had mainly open questions in our interviews which reduced the risk of any “interviewing effects”. It is also our belief that we had a high external validity in this dissertation since this refers to the extent in which our findings are generalisable, that is, whether our findings may be equally applicable in other studies as well.

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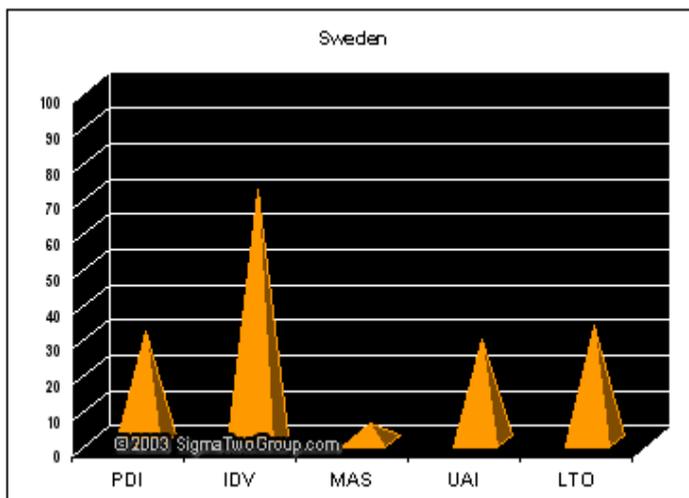
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Appendix

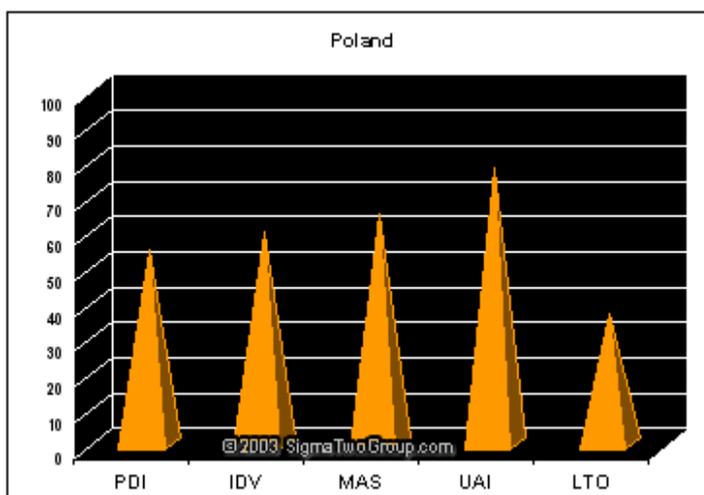
Appendix 1. – Chart, Hofstede’s dimensions

www.geert-hofstede.com

This chart shows the percentage divided on each dimension based on the research from Professor Geert Hofstede, made 1967-1973 with additions until 2001. The dimension concerning the long-term orientation has been excluded in this dissertation.



PDI – Power Distance Index
IDV – Individualism
MAS – Masculinity
UAI – Uncertainty Avoidance Index
LTO – Long-Term Orientation



PDI – Power Distance Index
IDV – Individualism
MAS – Masculinity
UAI – Uncertainty Avoidance Index
LTO – Long-Term Orientation

Appendix 2. – Interviews

In the section below, the persons on whose companies we conducted our interview will be presented shortly. In respect of our respondents we do not mention either the individuals or the companies by name.

Interview 1.

Interview conducted October 19, 2005 with Mr. A, Managing Director at company A. Company A is a company with a long experience in producing fire pumps. All products are produced in Sweden and as much as 50% of the export goes to Poland. The customers are mainly local governments and authorities but also large industries such as nuclear power plants and oil companies. Mr. A has been working with Poles since the late 1980: s and has since then weekly contacts with Polish associates.

Interview 2.

Interview conducted November 1, 2005 with Mr B, Managing Director at company B. Company B is part of an international group specialised in machinery and systems for the business forms and label printing industry. He has had an exchange with Polish business people since 1998 and yearly visits Poland for business purposes.

Interview 3.

The interview was conducted on November 3, 2005, via the phone with Mr. C, Business Area Manager for the company's activities in East, Central Europe and the Nordic countries. Company C sells customer developed safety products, such as alarms, fences and road-blocks. Mr. C has ten years of experience in working with Polish business people.

Interview 4.

On November 4, 2005, the interview with Mr. D was conducted via the phone. Mr. D, the CFO of company D, which has two major business areas: Infologistics and Infoprint. Infologistics is presenting industrial and commercial

customers with e.g. documentation and user information that support the markets needs within printing. Infoprint, on the other hand, produces large information sensitive material to both commercial and industrial companies. Mr. D has seven years of experience of dealing with Polish business people.

Interview 5.

Interview conducted November 4, 2005, with Mr. E, CEO in company E. Company E, is a company specialising in scaffolding systems. It has worked in the industry for more than 50 years which has given it valuable knowledge and experience. Mr. E himself has also worked together with Poles on a daily basis, since he lived in Poland for 6 years.

Interview 6.

The interview with Mr. F, Marketing and Sales representative was conducted on November 8, 2005. Company F, is a mining and smelting company focusing on production of copper, lead, silver and gold. Mr. F himself has worked actively with Polish business people since 1999. The turnover resulting from the export to Poland stands for one fifth of the company's total turnover. This makes Poland an important and large market.

Appendix 3. - Swedish Company Letter

Hej,

Vi är tre studenter som för närvarande håller på att skriva vår kandidatuppsats vid Högskolan i Kristianstad. Vi har valt att undersöka de affärskulturella skillnader som uppstår vid ett svensk/polskt samarbete. Syftet med vår uppsats är att presentera en ”strategi” som kan fungera som vägvisare över hur affärskulturella skillnader bör angripas för att undgå att spilla tid, pengar och relationer som ett resultat av brisfällig kommunikation och förståelse.

Vi skulle vara väldigt tacksamma om Du hade kunnat avsätta en stund för att svara på några av våra frågor som rör den polska och svenska affärskulturen och dela med Dig av Dina erfarenheter och kunskaper.

Vi uppskattar all hjälp vi kan få,

Tack på förhand!

Med vänlig hälsning,

Anna Dahlqvist Jennie Gustavsson och Daniel Nackovski

Vänligen kontakta oss på;

jennie.gustavsson@spray.se

Eller telefon;

Daniel: 0708-75 69 75

Appendix 4. - English Company Letter

Hello,

We are three students that are currently writing our dissertation at University College of Kristianstad. We have chosen to make a research on the cultural differences arising from a Swedish and Polish relationship. The purpose is to present a strategy that can work as a guide for Swedish companies on how to cope with the cultural differences of business in order to avoid spilling time, losing money and wasting relationships.

We would be grateful if You could find time to answer a few of our questions concerning Polish and Swedish business culture and share Your experiences and knowledge.

We appreciate all help we can get.

Thank you!

Sincerely Yours,

Anna Dahlqvist, Jennie Gustavsson and Daniel Nackovski

Please contact us on;

jennie.gustavsson@spray.se

Or by phone:

Daniel: 0708-75 69 75

Appendix 5. - Swedish Questionnaire

1. Vad är Din huvudsakliga arbetsuppgift?

2. Hur länge har Du varit aktivt involverad i affärsförhandlingar med polska affärsmän?

Enligt vår sammanställning hittills har vi funnit flertalet affärskulturella skillnader mellan den svenska och den polska affärskulturen.

3. Nedan följer ett antal begrepp och påståenden som rör polska affärsmän/kvinnor. Var god och lista följande påståenden från 1 till 5 och om möjligt motivera Dina svar, där siffran 1 innebär att Du inte instämmer och 5 att Du instämmer helt

	Instämmer inte			Instämmer	
A) Polska affärsmän/kvinnor är Individualister (inte grupporienterade).	1	2	3	4	5
B) I Polen har män och kvinnor jämlika roller i affärssammanhang.	1	2	3	4	5
C) Det är viktigt att hålla överenskomna tider vid affärer med polska affärsmän/kvinnor.	1	2	3	4	5
D) Polska affärsmän/kvinnor är beredda att ta stora risker	1	2	3	4	5

E) Polska affärsmän/kvinnor uttrycker sig mycket genom sitt kroppsspråk i affärssammanhang.	1	2	3	4	5
F) Inom polska företag råder en stark makthierarki.	1	2	3	4	5
G) Polska affärsmän/kvinnor förutsätter strikt klädsel vid affärsmöten.	1	2	3	4	5
H) Polska affärsmän/kvinnor anser att endast skriftliga avtal är bindande.	1	2	3	4	5
I) Religionen i Polen har stor inverkan på polska affärsmän/kvinnors agerande.	1	2	3	4	5
J) Polacker vill gärna ”kallprata” om saker som inte är relaterat till affärer innan förhandlingar påbörjas.	1	2	3	4	5

2. Nedan följer ett antal begrepp och påståenden som rör svenska affärsmän/kvinnor. Var god och lista följande påståenden från 1 till 5 och om möjligt motivera Dina svar, där siffran 1 innebär att Du inte instämmer och 5 att Du instämmer helt

	Instämmer inte			Instämmer	
	1	2	3	4	5
A) Svenska affärsmän/kvinnor är individualister (inte grupporienterade).	1	2	3	4	5
B) I Sverige har män och kvinnor jämlika roller i affärssammanhang.	1	2	3	4	5
C) Det är viktigt att hålla överenskomna tider vid affärer med svenska affärsmän/kvinnor.	1	2	3	4	5
D) Svenska affärsmän/kvinnor är beredda att ta stora risker.	1	2	3	4	5
E) Svenska affärsmän/kvinnor uttrycker sig mycket genom sitt kroppsspråk i affärssammanhang.	1	2	3	4	5
F) Inom svenska företag råder en stark makthierarki.	1	2	3	4	5
G) Svenska affärsmän/kvinnor förutsätter strikt klädsel vid affärsmöten.	1	2	3	4	5

H) Svenska affärsmän/kvinnor anser att
endast skriftliga avtal är bindande. 1 2 3 4 5

I) Religionen i Sverige har stor inverkan på
svenska affärsmän/kvinnors agerande. 1 2 3 4 5

J) Svenskar vill gärna ”kallprata” om saker
som inte är relaterat till affärer innan
förhandlingar påbörjas. 1 2 3 4 5

5. Är där någon aspekt av det interkulturella utbytet som vi inte har inkluderat i de föregående frågorna, som Du tycker är av avgörande betydelse när man gör affärer med polska affärsmän/kvinnor?
6. Anser Du som svensk affärsman/kvinna att svenskarna som främmande part bör, eller till och med måste anpassa sig till den polska affärskulturen för att etablera en lyckad affärsrelation?
7. Med de tidigare diskuterade (fråga 3 och 4) affärskulturella skillnaderna i åtanke, vilken strategi eller tillvägagångssätt anser Du, om möjligt, vara den bästa för att åstadkomma en lyckad affärsrelation med polacker?

Appendix 6. - English Questionnaire

1. What is your main work task?

2. For how long have you been involved in business negotiations with Polish business people?

According to our findings so far we have found several cultural differences of business between the Swedish and Polish business culture.

3. Below, a number of statements and conceptions concerning Polish business culture have been made. Please list the following statements from 1 to 5 and if possible motivate your answers. The number 1 means that you disagree while 5 means you agree.

	Disagree					Agree				
A) Polish business people are individualists (not group oriented).	1	2	3	4	5					
B) In Poland men and women have equal roles in business contexts.	1	2	3	4	5					
C) It is important to arrive on time to business appointments when doing business with Polish business people.	1	2	3	4	5					
D) Polish business people are prepared to take large risks in business contexts.	1	2	3	4	5					

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| E) Polish business people express themselves a lot through body language in business contexts. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| F) In Polish companies there is a strong power-distance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| G) Polish business people assume a strict dress code at business appointments. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| H) Polish business people only consider written contracts to be binding. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I) The religion in Poland has a great impact on Polish business people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| J) Polish business people like to "small talk" about issues not concerned with business before negotiations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

4. Below, a number of statements and conceptions concerning Polish business culture have been made. Please list the following statements from 1 to 5 and if possible motivate your answers. The number 1 means that you disagree while as 5 means you agree.

	Disagree			Agree	
A) Swedish business people are individualists (not group oriented).	1	2	3	4	5
B) In Sweden men and women have equal roles in business contexts.	1	2	3	4	5
C) It is important to be in time to business appointments when doing business with Swedish business people.	1	2	3	4	5
D) Swedish business people are prepared to take large risks in business contexts.	1	2	3	4	5
E) Swedish business people express themselves a lot through body language in business contexts.	1	2	3	4	5
F) In Swedish companies there is a strong power-distance.	1	2	3	4	5
G) Swedish business people assume a strict dress code at business appointments.	1	2	3	4	5

H) Swedish business people only consider written contracts to be binding. 1 2 3 4 5

I) The religion in Sweden has a great impact on Swedish business people. 1 2 3 4 5

J) Swedish business people like to "small talk" about issues not concerned with business before negotiations. 1 2 3 4 5

5. Is there any aspect of the intercultural exchange that we have not included in the former questions and which you believe to be of major importance when doing business with Poles?

6. Do you as a Swedish business person think that the Swedes as foreigners should, or even have to, adjust to the Polish business culture in order to establish a successful business relation?

7. With the previously discussed (question 3 and 4) cultural differences of business in mind, what strategy or course of action do you, if possible, consider the best in order to achieve a successful business relationship with Poles?

