



HAAGA-HELIA
University of Applied Sciences

Finnish-Swedish Business Environment

Course: Researching target markets



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<p>Finnish-Swedish Business Climate study is a cooperation between Hanasaari Cultural Center and Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. This survey was targeted to small and medium-sized companies in Finland and Sweden.</p> <p>The objective was to study the current and overall business climate between Sweden and Finland. The investigative questions were as follows: 1) What are the general perspectives of Finnish and Swedish personnel on business relations between the two countries? 2) What are the similarities and differences in culture, communication style, and individual attitudes? 3) What is the typical business environment like in Swedish and Finnish companies? This survey was for the most parts based on the Norwegian-Finnish Business Climate survey which was prepared for Norwegian–Finnish Trade Association (NOFI), 2015.</p> <p>The online survey was sent to members of Finnish-Swedish Chamber of Commerce. The data was collected during 1.4.-30.4.16. Three reminders were sent during the data collection period. The total of 189 respondents returned the survey.</p> <p>The results compare the Finnish and Swedish respondents’ perspectives. Finnish percieve Swedish to be more hesitant to take risks whereas Swedish considered the Finnish to more conservative in their communication. Differences in language competences were not considered to negatively affect the relationships between colleagues. However, Finnish respondents strongly viewed Swedish proficiency to benefit their careers. Language was not also considered be cause of discrimination at work.</p> <p>From the Swedish perspective, the most important trade barrier is national protectionism. From the Finnish perspective is the different currency. Both sides consider the other’s market of similar attractiveness.</p> <p>To conclude there are cultural similarities which make business networking between Swedish and Finnish easy. Interestingly respondents did not perceive language to be a real barrier in business relations. Both respondent groups acknowledged differences in leadership and communication styles and both groups agreed that similar traits make good leaders. It is quite alarming conclusion however that numerous respondents in both groups indicated gender and age descrimination to occur.</p>	

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Den Finsk-Svenska affärsklimats undersökningen är ett samarbete mellan Hanaholmens kulturcentrum och Haaga-Helia yrkeshögskola. Denna undersökning var riktad mot små och medelstora företag i Finland och Sverige.

Syftet var att studera det nuvarande och övergripande företagsklimatet mellan Sverige och Finland. Utredningsfrågorna var följande: 1) Allmänt sett, vad tycker finsk och svensk personal om affärsrelationer mellan Finland och Sverige? 2) Vilka är likheterna och skillnaderna i kultur, kommunikationsstil, och individuella attityder? 3) Hurudan är den typiska affärsmiljön i svenska och finska företag? Denna enkät baserade sig i huvudsak på enkäten "Norwegian-Finnish Business Climate" som beställdes av Norsk-Finska Handelsföreningen r.f. (NOFI) år 2015.

Online-undersökningen skickades till respondenterna via Hanaholmens kulturcentrum. Datainsamlingen gjordes under 1.4.-30.4.2016. Tre påminnelser sändes under datainsamlingsperioden. Totalt svarade 189 personer på undersökningen.

Resultaten jämför de finska och svenska deltagarnas perspektiv. Finländare uppfattade svenskar som mer tveksamma till att ta risker, medan svenskar ansåg att finländare är mer konservativa i sin kommunikation. Skillnaderna i språkkunskaper ansågs inte inverka negativt på relationerna mellan kollegor. Emellertid, hade finska respondenter en stark åsikt om att kunskaper i svenska gynnar deras karriär. Språket ansågs inte vara orsaken till diskriminering i arbetslivet.

Sett ur svenskt perspektiv är det viktigaste handelshindret nationell protektionism. Sett ur finskt perspektiv, är det viktigaste handelshindret olika valutan. Båda parterna anser att den andra marknaden har en likadan attraktionsnivå.

Avslutningsvis, kan man säga att det finns kulturella likheter som underlättar affärsnätverk mellan svenskar och finländare. Intressant är också att respondenterna inte uppfattar språket som ett verkligt hinder i affärsrelationer. Båda svenskar och finnar erkänner skillnader i ledarskaps- och kommunikationsstilar och båda grupperna var överens om hurdana egenskaper gör en bra ledare. Emellertid, är det ganska oroväckande att många respondenter i båda grupperna indikerade att diskriminering av kön och ålder inträffar.

Nyckelord: Affärsklimat, Sverige, Finland, Undersökning

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1 Introduction

The Hanasaari Swedish-Finnish Cultural Center is a center which promotes cooperation between Sweden and Finland in many areas of society interest. Solid business cooperation between the two countries is of utmost interest for both nations and Hanasaari Center aims to get a deeper insight to the factors that influence this cooperation. With conclusions reached by carefully examining the research data, Hanasaari is able to further enhance its actions in promoting a healthy business collaboration between the two countries of interest.

1.1 Research objective and research questions

This research aims to get an understanding of the factors that shape the business cooperation between Sweden and Finland. The objective of getting a deep understanding of these factors consists of questions relating to: understanding the perceptions that the two cultures have about each other and their effect on daily activities, highlighting the similarities and differences in the respective business cultures, as well as gaining a deeper general insight in the business relationship between the two countries. This data would then be used as a statistical basis for the creation and/or development of future projects aiming to impact the most influential factors. The three investigative questions of the research are:

- What are the general perspectives of Finnish and Swedish personnel on business relations between the two countries?
- What are the similarities and differences in culture, communication style, and individual attitudes?
- What is the typical business environment like in Swedish and Finnish companies?

1.2 Scope and structure of the report

The report is focused on business communication between business people involved in the Finnish-Swedish business environment. It deals with the challenges that these people face in cooperating with each other, be those cultural, lingual, or professional. It

is important to note that the project involves the two sides of view and is therefore all-engaging.

2 Research method

The research method used in this research project is the quantitative method. Furthermore, we chose survey as the option in which we could apply quantitative research. The reason for choosing survey is that it enables a bigger collection of data, which helps in the statistical analysis of the responses.

2.1 Questionnaire design and testing process

The questionnaire design started from group members' brain storming key words that are relevant to the subject. After brain storming we created a mind map (Appendix 1) that gathers all the information in different categories. General question content was created based on our own experiences, information online and the information we got from the Norwegian-Finnish Business Climate Survey, which was prepared for Norwegian-Finnish Trade Association (NOFI), 2015. The questionnaire design followed the structure set on the mind map by following the big clusters.

Based on the mind map we created three main investigative questions, which we considered to be the most relevant for the research. In order to answer them, we created a set of measurement questions to be asked from the respondents. The overlay matrix shows which measurement questions answered by respondents connect to each of the three investigative questions. (Table 1)

Table 1. Overlay Matrix

Investigative Questions	Measurement Questions
1. What are the general perspectives of Finnish and Swedish personnel on business relations between the two countries?	22-28; 43-45; 48-50
2. What are the similarities and differences in culture, communication style, and individual attitudes?	15-21; 25; 36-42; 46
3. What is the typical business environment like in Swedish and Finnish companies?	8-14; 26; 29-35; 47

In each general question we gave the respondents multiple options where to choose the answer from to get the most reliable information. The questions were carefully worded so that they would be clear, concise, and understandable. The questionnaire had a few forms, depending on the side that the respondent was representing, Finnish or Swedish. The questions for the two groups were made according to specific cultural details and were of similar arrangement.

The questionnaire was tested by other students and Hanasaari group. Other students commented what could be changed and what they liked. This way we assured that the questionnaire was clear and the questions were interpreted in the right way. After the testing part within the school we sent our version to Hanasaari for their approval.

2.2 Data collection process

The data collection process started shortly after the testing process, in order to gather the large amount of data needed for the later stages of the research process. The final version of the questionnaire was sent to Hanasaari. They then distributed the questionnaire to the 400 companies of the Finnish Swedish Chamber of Commerce with the latter factor's help. The respondents were initially selected by the Hanasaari Center.

There were 189 respondents when the group decided to stop the data collection. The questionnaire collection started on 1.4.2016 and ran until 30.4.2016. There was a weekly reminder sent during the collection phase.

3 Results

The questionnaire achieved its goal in terms of having a satisfactory number of responses (189) which, especially in the quantitative research, is needed in order to produce reliable results. Furthermore, the respondent variety in different areas serves as a facilitator in the reliability of the whole research work. The end results of the survey have enabled the group to reach conclusions and make recommendations based primarily on the correlation of the different factors which were found when statistically analyzing the data.

3.1 Respondent profiles

In order to divide the respondents into different groups so that we could later analyze the influence of group representation in different answer rates, we primarily used demographic factor, such as age and gender. Nevertheless, the objective of the research required us to group people in groups such as their personal representation in terms of business culture as well as the industries their companies were operating in.

3.1.1 Gender, age, and mother tongue

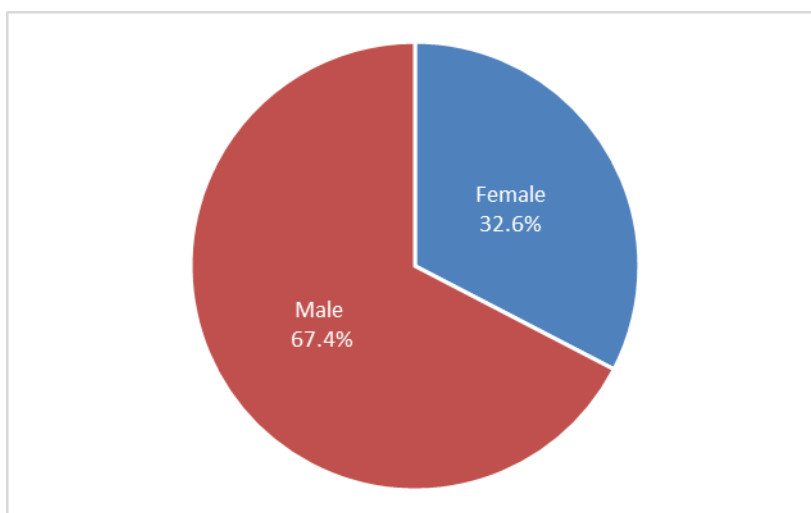


Figure 2. Proportion of male and female respondents.

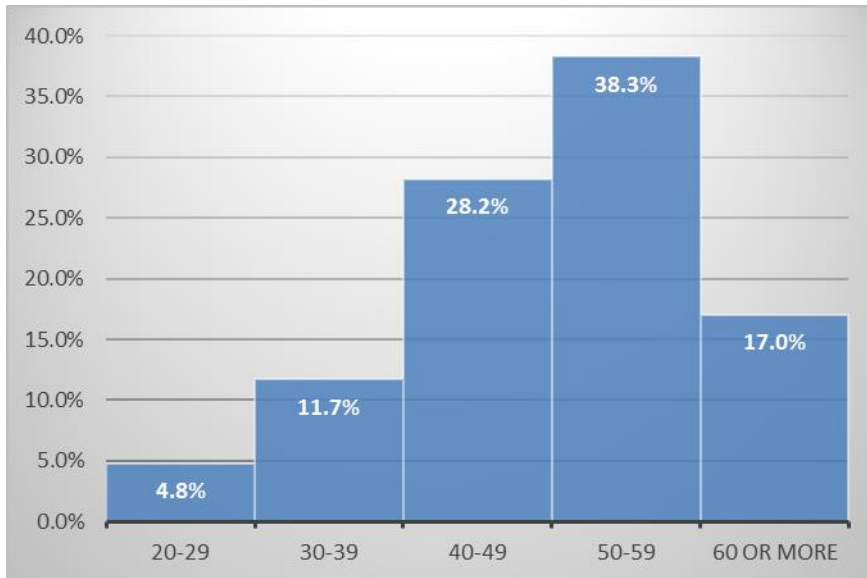


Figure 3. Group age distribution among the respondent list.

The majority (67.4%) of the respondents were male and a minority (32.6%) were female. This means that there is an approximate ratio of male to female 2:1. (Figure 2). Also age distribution among different age groups varies. The respondents have an average age of 50, with the youngest being 22, and the oldest 77 (Attachment 1). The age group with the largest share of declared respondents is 50-59 years old and the youngest group has the lowest share of respondents, 38.3% and 4.8% respectively (Figure 3).

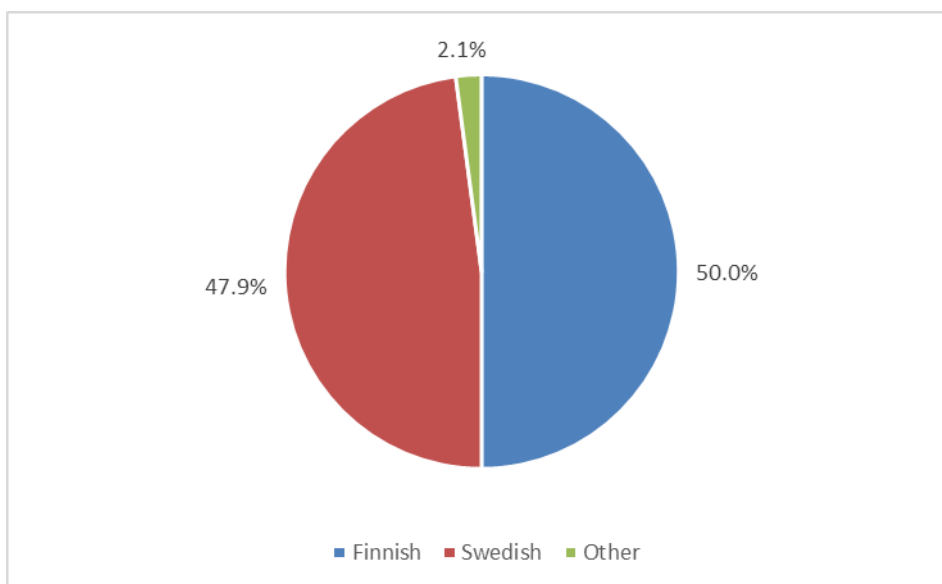


Figure 4. Proportion of the respondents' mother tongue as part of the whole number of respondents.

The respondents, as expected, spoke either Finnish or Swedish as their mother tongue. Exactly half of the respondents spoke Finnish as their own language, with the other half being split among those who speak Swedish as their mother tongue (47.9%) and those with other mother tongue as both (2.1%). It is important to note that the Swedish as mother language is partially represented by the Swedish-speaking Finns, as we will see next on the report on the personal representation share. (Figure 4)

3.1.2 Personal perspective and regional affiliation

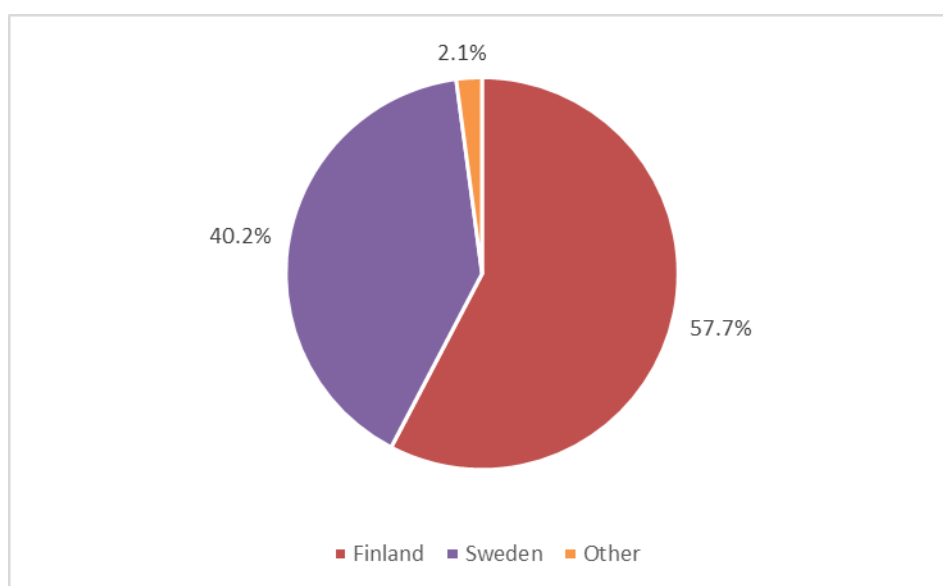


Figure 5. The respondents' opinions on the perspective they represent.

With more than half of the respondents feeling that they represent the Finnish perspective, a part of other respondents (40.2%) feeling that they represent the Swedish perspective, and the rest (2.1%) feeling that they represent some other perspective, we have a somewhat equal distribution of the two different perspectives. (Figure 5). Comparing Figure 5 and Figure 4 we can make a safe assumption that people representing the Finnish perspective are both, from Finnish and Swedish speaking families.

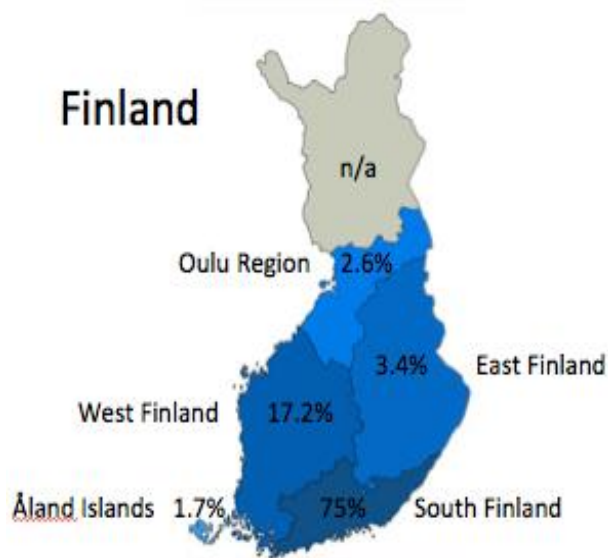


Figure 6. Regional Affiliation of the respondents living in Finland.

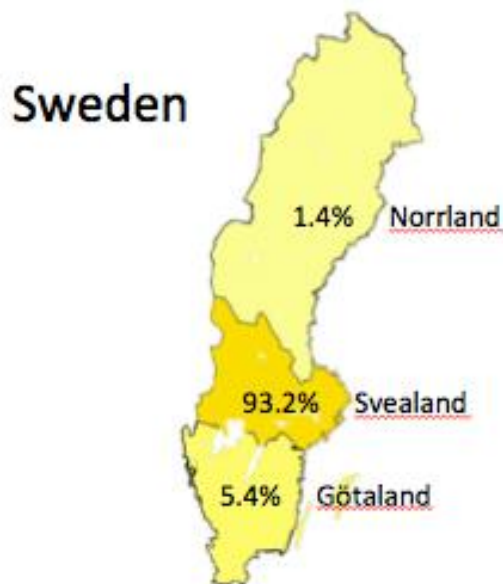


Figure 7. Regional affiliation of the respondents living in Sweden.

From the regional affiliation of respondents living in Finland and Sweden, there were clear majority regional affiliation in both countries. The majority of the Finnish respondents affiliate with South Finland (75%), while the second region with most respondent affiliation is West Finland (17.2%) (Figure 6). Meanwhile in Sweden, Svealand has a majority (93.2%) of respondent answers, followed by Gotaland (5.4%) (Figure 7).

3.1.3 Company industry and company turnover

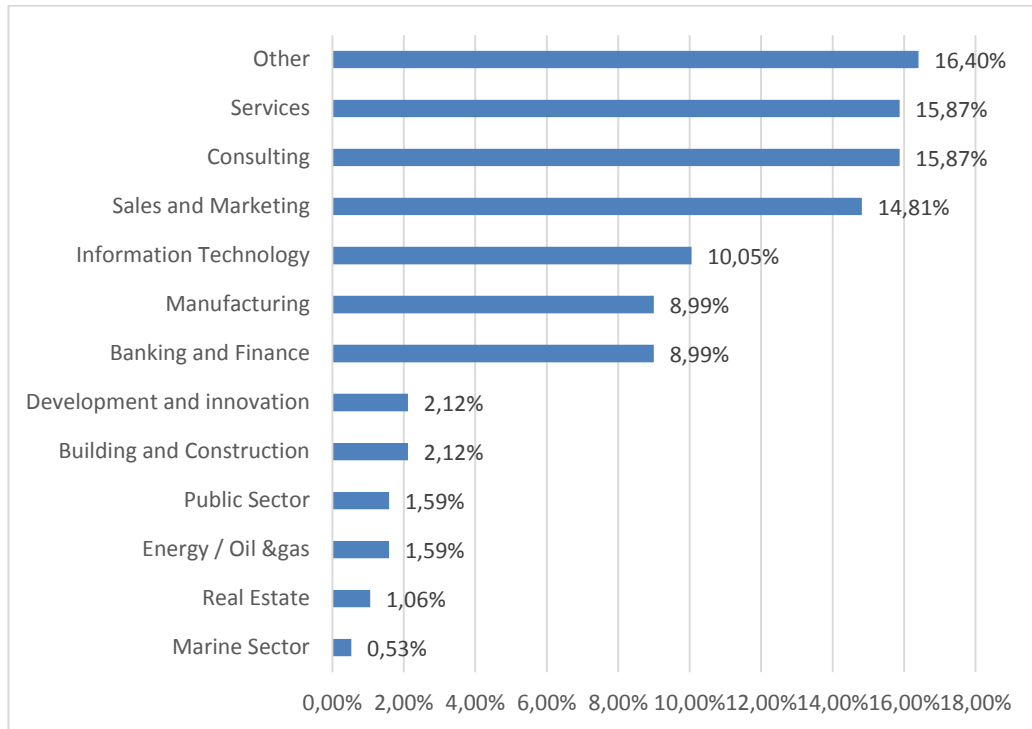


Figure 8. The industries, which the respondents' companies operate in.

The overview of the industries in which respondents' companies operate is indicated in the above figure. It is noticeable that the biggest percentage belongs to other industries (listed in Appendix 3), followed by Services and Consulting, both of which account for 15.87% of the number of answers equally. By contrast, chosen by less than 1.5% of respondents, Real Estate and Marine Sector are the least popular industries among respondents' companies. (Figure 8)

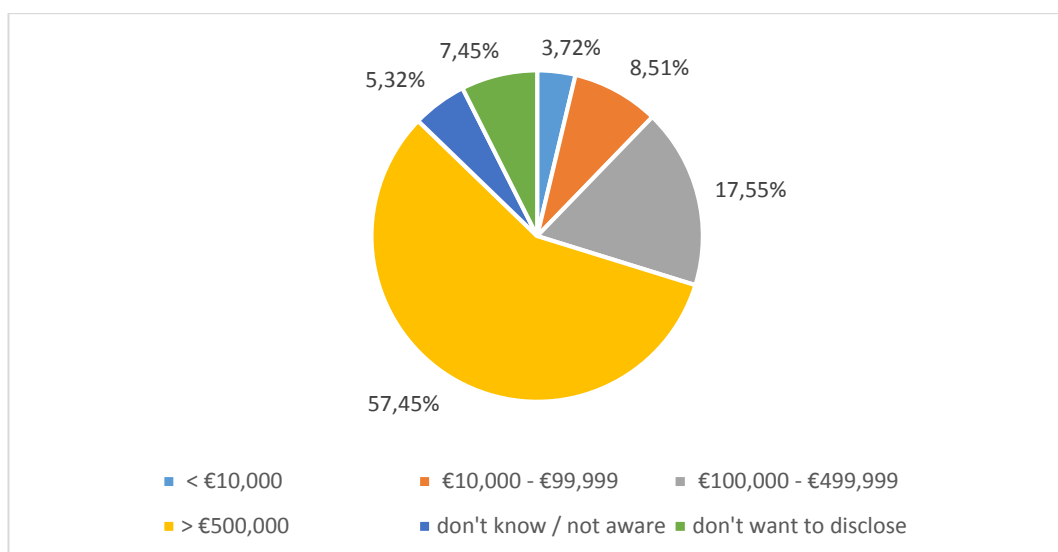


Figure 9. The total turnover of the respondents' companies in the previous year.

The respondents of the questionnaire come from companies with solid figures in turn-overs. A majority of 57.45% of the respondents declared that their companies made a turnover of more than EUR 500 000, being followed up by an approximate 30% of companies that made less than that amount. The rest of the respondents either did not know or did not want to disclose such information. (Figure 9)

3.1.4 Company Origin

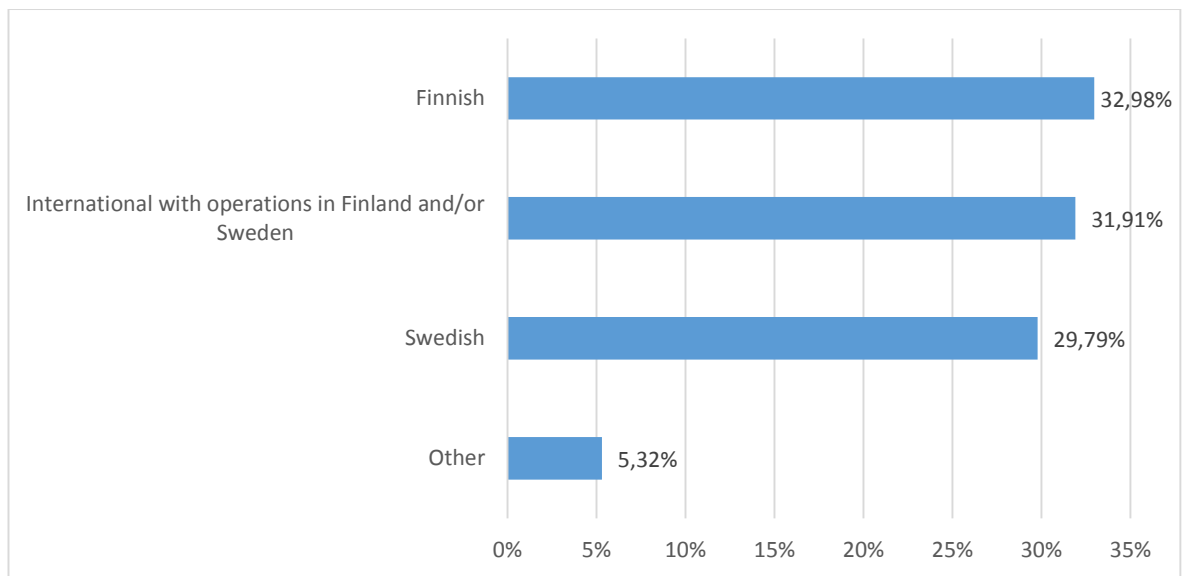


Figure 10. The respondents' company origin as a share of total percentage.

The respondents were asked about the origin of the company which they work for. The share of the respondent was satisfactory in terms of good representation from all sides. An average of about 30% of the companies of the respondents were Finnish, Swedish or had operations in either one or both countries. Only a small percentage (5.32%) answered that their companies had other origin. Out of those, the majority are of other Nordic origin. (Figure 10)

3.1.5 Function in the company

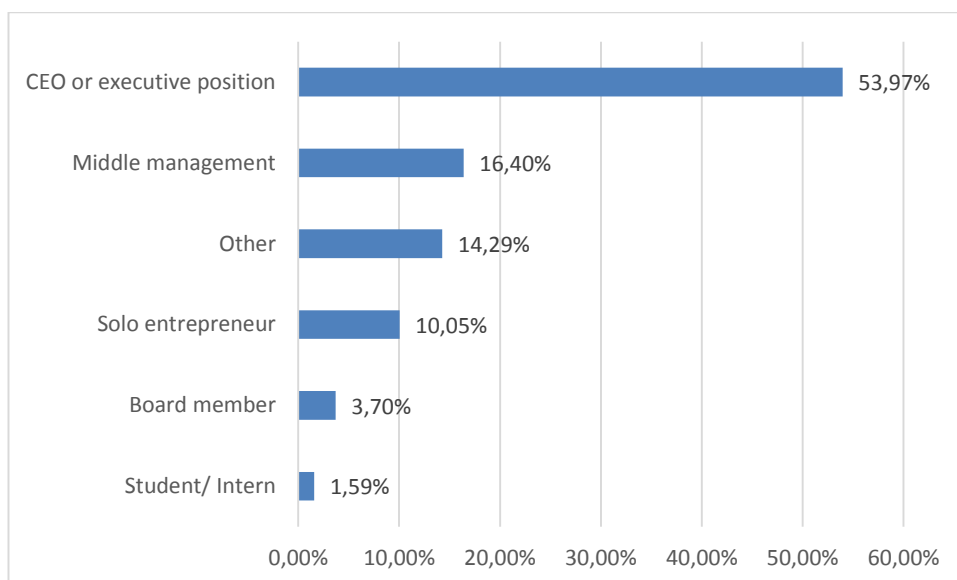


Figure 11. The respondents' job positions in their respective companies. N=189

In an optional question, the respondents were given a few options regarding their position in the company. More than half of the respondents were either CEO or in other executive positions. In addition, the second biggest part (16.4%) of the respondents were in middle management positions. An opposite picture is witnessed in “board member” and “student/ intern” which were the choice of less than 4% of respondents. (Figure 11)

3.2 Individual opinions

To be able to understand respondents' personal perceptions of each other, and the differences and similarities of styles of doing business, we wanted to analyze their opinions about language and communication, values and organizational behavior. The objective of the research required us to compare the different answers between the Swedish and Finnish respondents and analyze the differences between the individual opinions of these two respondent groups.

3.2.1 Effective ways to network

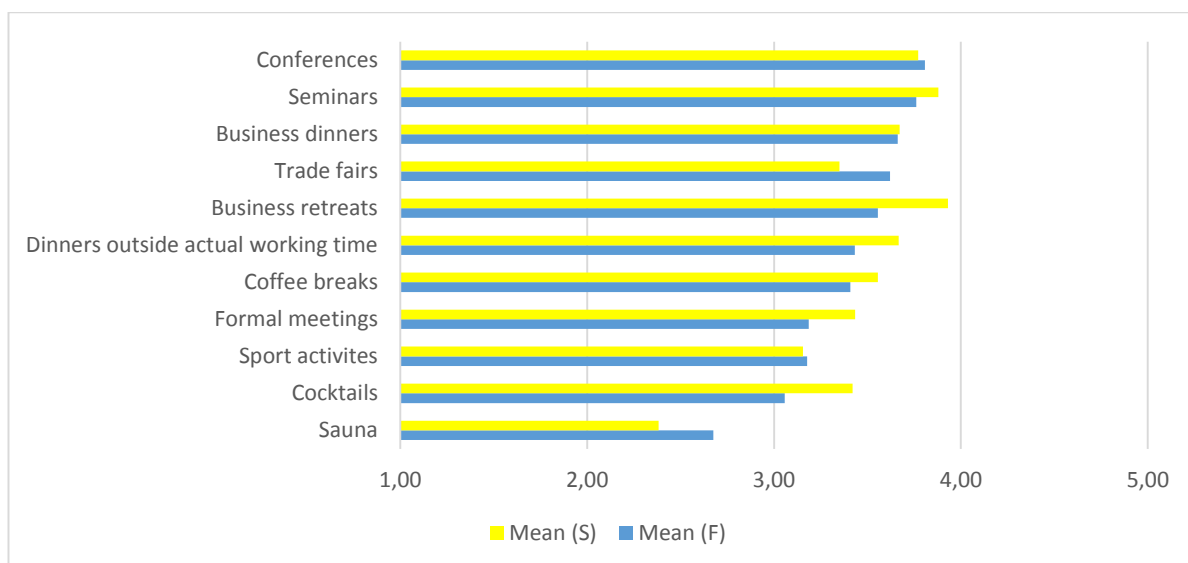


Figure 12. The most effective ways to network according to Swedish and Finnish views.

There were no big differences to opinions regarding effective ways to network between the Finnish and Swedish respondents. None of the options has a strict difference in opinion, which would result in different interpretations. The most effective way to network in the opinion of the Finnish respondents is through conferences, seminars and business dinners. Meanwhile seminars list as the second most effective in the list for Swedes and conferences the third, business retreats were seen the most effective. While Finnish people are very proud of their sauna culture, it shows as the least favorite among both groups in the most effective way to network. (Figure 12)

3.2.2 Communication styles

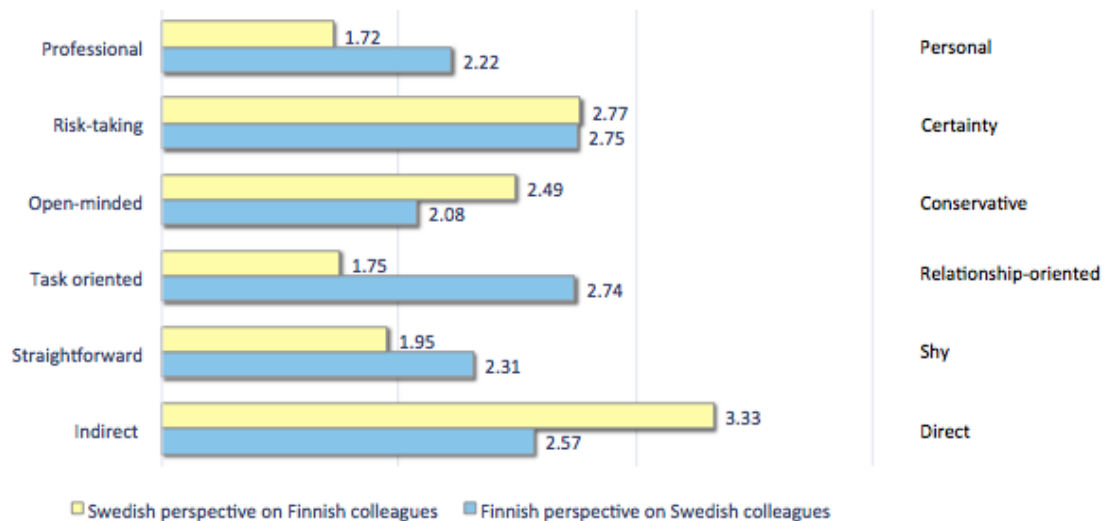


Figure 13. How Finnish and Swedish perceive their business partners communication

Based on their personal experience in communicating with the opposite nationality, respondents chose between the scales of 1-4, how they perceive each other's communication between the two opposites. The biggest difference in how Finnish and Swedish respondents perceived each other's communication styles was in indirect versus direct scale and task-oriented versus relationship-oriented scale. There was also a big difference in how the two respondent groups perceived each other in professional versus personal scale when communicating with each other. (Figure 13)

The strongest opinions of the Swedish respondents regarding Finnish partners are in professional vs personal and indirect vs direct scales. Swedish respondents perceive Finnish partners to be professional rather than personal, which is an expected feature of the Finnish workforce. They also perceive Finns to be more direct than indirect. Finnish respondents have stronger opinions regarding Swedes being more relationship oriented and certainty seekers rather than risk-takers. (Figure 13)

Finnish and Swedish respondents do, however, have almost equal opinions in some areas. For example, they both think that their counterparts are certainty seekers rather than risk-takers. (Figure 13)

One of the respondents representing Swedish perspective separately brought up in the survey his personal experience with a comment, that Finnish usually have direct communication style while the Swedish want to get more wrapped and around the topic, discussing it longer and back and forth.

3.2.3 Effects of language gaps and importance of opposite language

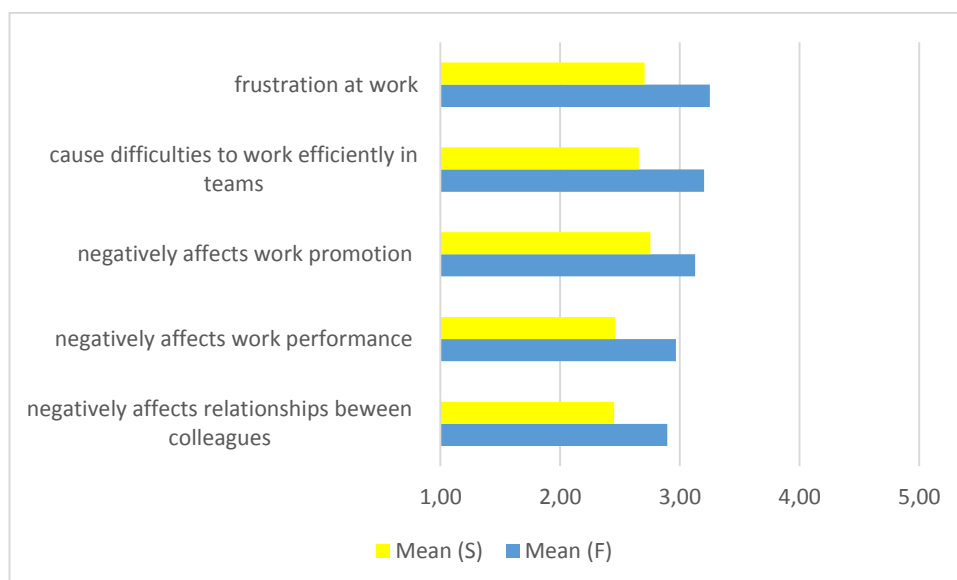


Figure 14. How gaps in language competence causes problems in the work environment, perceived by Finns and Swedes.

In the question how much gaps in language competences tend to cause various problems, the scale of answers was from 1 to 5, or strongly disagree to strongly agree respectively. Finnish respondent were generally neutral in opinion regarding this question. They tend to agree that such gaps cause frustration at work, but did not agree that they negatively affect relationships between colleagues. Finnish respondents did see more issues if there are differences in the language competences that the Swedish respondents, however, the means are not very high. (Figure 14)

In the same question, Swedish people generally disagreed to all the listed options, but not strongly. They had a more neutral opinion regarding the statement that gaps in language competence negatively affect promotion. Same as Finnish respondents, they disagreed that such gaps negatively affect relationships between colleagues. (Figure 14)

3.2.4 Shared values

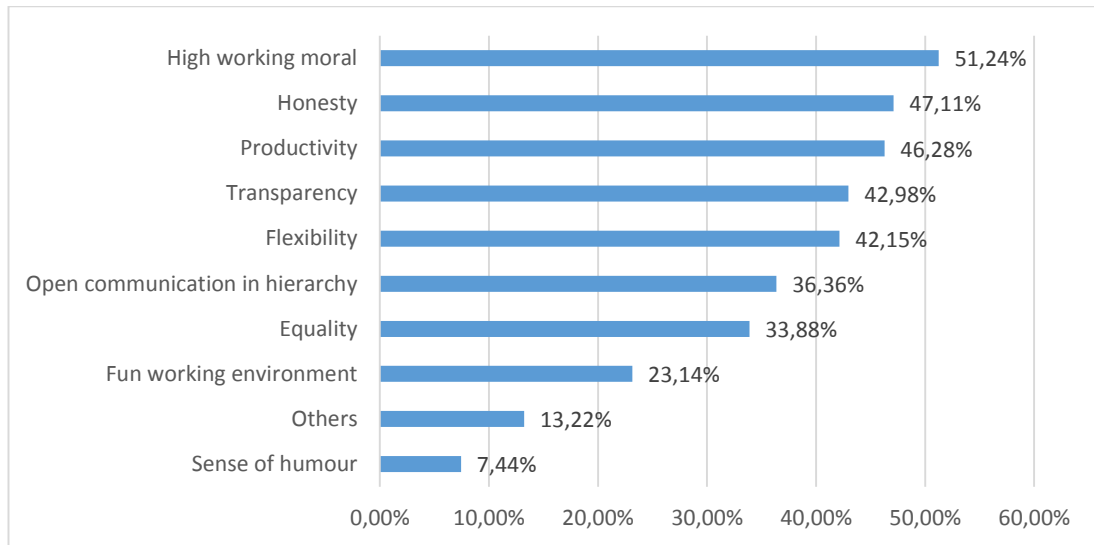


Figure 15. Finnish respondents' perspective of the most important shared values in the company.

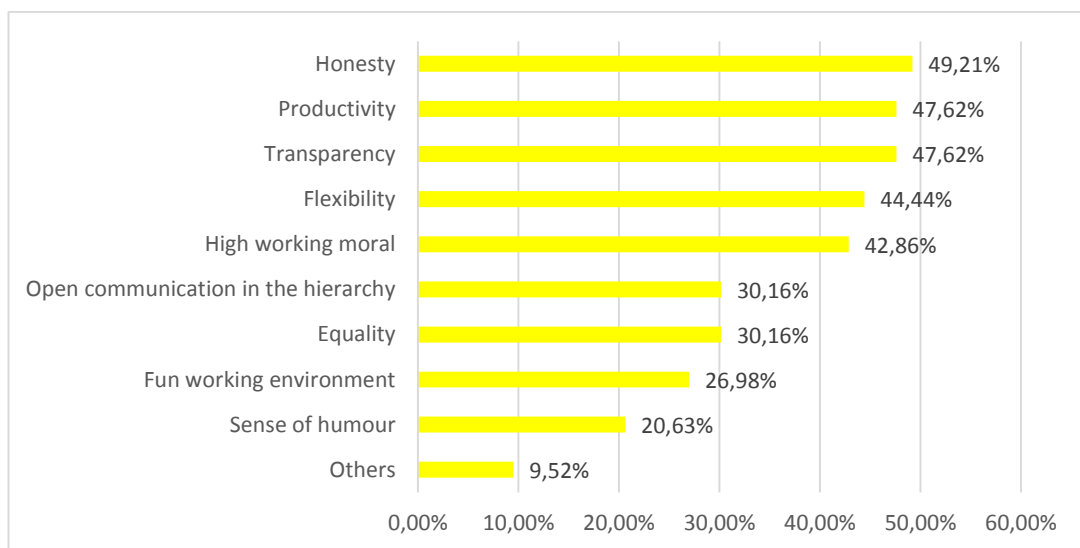


Figure 16. Swedish respondents' perspective of the most important shared values in the company.

In a multiple-choice question, we asked the respondents what they perceived to be the most important shared values in their companies. High working moral was ranked as the most shared value by Finnish respondents with 51%, and honesty was ranked as most shared value by Swedish respondents with 49%. Other values such as productivity, transparency and flexibility took were chosen by more than 40% of the respondents in both groups. However, fun working environment and sense of humor were

least chosen by both of the Finnish and Swedish as shared valued in their companies. (Figure 15 & 16)

Besides the given options respondents felt that competence, revenue, helpfulness, courage and quality are important shared values in their companies.

3.2.5 Perceived commonalities

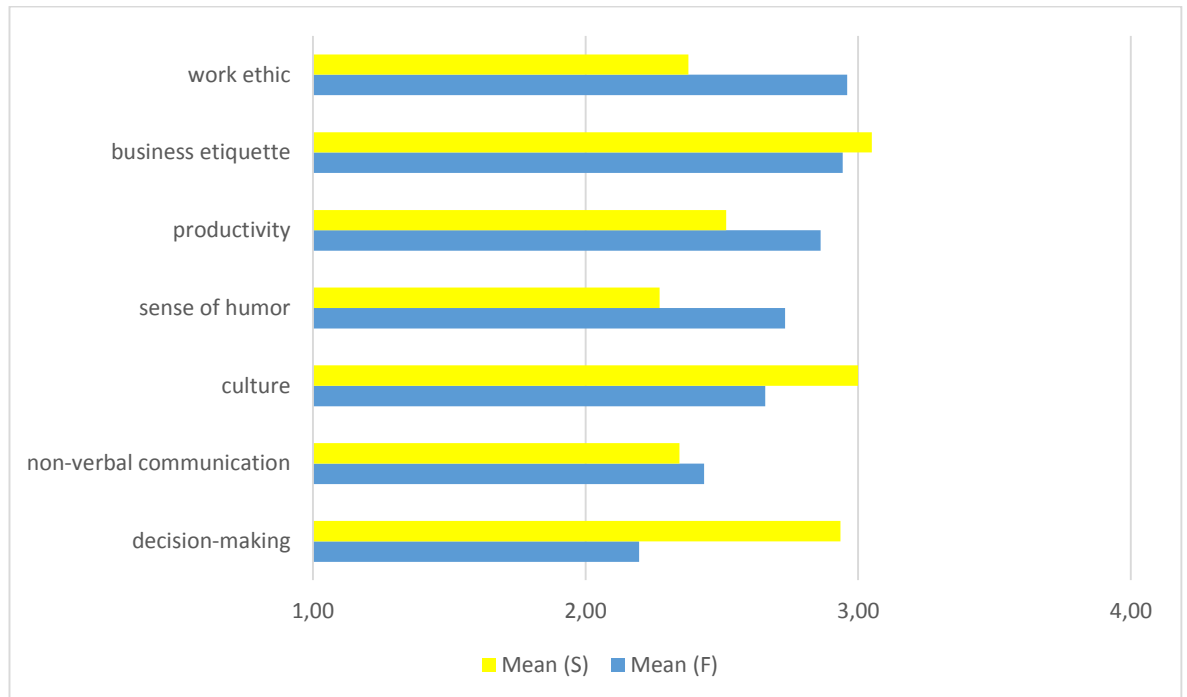


Figure 17. How Finnish and Swedish perceive what they have in common, regarding business.

In a scaled question from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4), the respondents were asked about what they perceive to have in common with their counterparts. There were no strong opinions about any of the listed opinions by any of the two sides, but they tended to vary between disagreement and agreement. (Figure 17)

Finns and Swedes perceived that the most common factor that they have is business etiquette. The highest differences in opinions about the commonalities were in decision-making and work ethic. Swedish respondents also tended to disagree that sense of humor is a value they have in common with the Finnish. The Finnish respondents, on the other side, did generally find the decision-making to be least in common. Both

Swedish and Finnish respondent found the non-verbal communication to be as a similar trait. (Figure 17)

What the two sides of business professionals perceive as commonalities are somewhat different. These opinions are shaped by different factors, such as the experience they have in working with each other or the presumptions they have about each other.

3.2.6 Perception of similar business culture

Table 2. Perception of similar business culture in various countries by Finnish and Swedish

Ranking	By Swedish	By Finnish
1	Finland	Sweden
2	Norway	Norway
3	Denmark	Germany
4	Germany	Denmark

When asked which countries have the most similar business culture, Finnish and Swedish respondents had almost mutual understanding about the countries who have the most similar business culture with their own. Finnish respondents felt Sweden has the most similar business culture with Finland, and Swedish respondents felt Finland is the closest to their business culture, which shows a positive consensus of opinions regarding business culture. (Table 2)

Norway was equally felt to have the second most similar business culture with Sweden and Finland. Denmark and Germany were the third and fourth, Swedish respondents feeling Denmark has the third and Germany the fourth most similar business culture and Finnish respondents feeling Germany the third and Denmark the fourth. (Table 2)

3.3 Doing Business

Finland and Sweden do have a well-maintained business relationship in country level. While they both are part of the European Union, their relationship has evolved even

more because of the free-trade agreements under this union, as well as the other characteristics that this union has in setting good terms between its members. The countries are interdependent in terms of trade, with both of them being integral factors in each-other's export. The total imports from Finland to Sweden were 5% and ranked 6th in 2015, when the imports from Sweden into Finland was 12.4% ranked at 2nd. Their geographical proximity has long been a beneficial factor to this relationship and it has shaped the opinions of those primarily involved in country-level cooperation. This part of the survey results best serves to make those opinions clear. (Global Edge 2015)

3.3.1 The use of language in formal/informal communication

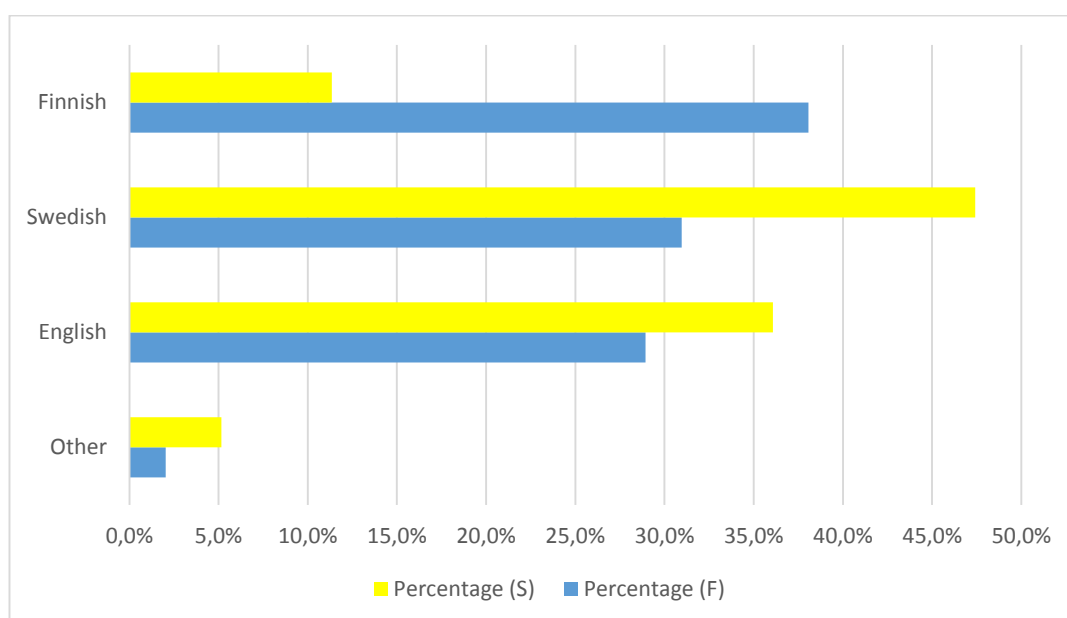


Figure 18. Official language in Formal meetings

The most common official language used inside organizations formal meetings follows the expected pattern, with most of the Swedish respondents feeling it is Swedish and most of the Finnish respondents feeling it is Finnish. Although, almost half of the Swedish respondents felt that inside their own organization Swedish is the most spoken language in formal meetings, when only 38% of the Finnish respondents felt that Finnish is the most used language in formal meetings. One third of the Finnish respondents felt that Swedish is the most spoken language in formal meetings, when only in 12% of the Swedish respondents felt that Finnish is the most spoken language in formal meetings. English was more commonly used language in formal meetings in

Swedish respondents organizations being the second spoken language in formal meetings, while in Finnish organizations Swedish was the second and English the third. Only 2% of the Finnish respondents felt the official language in formal meetings is a language other than Finnish or Swedish, when 5% of the Swedish respondents felt it is something else than Swedish or Finnish. (Figure 18)

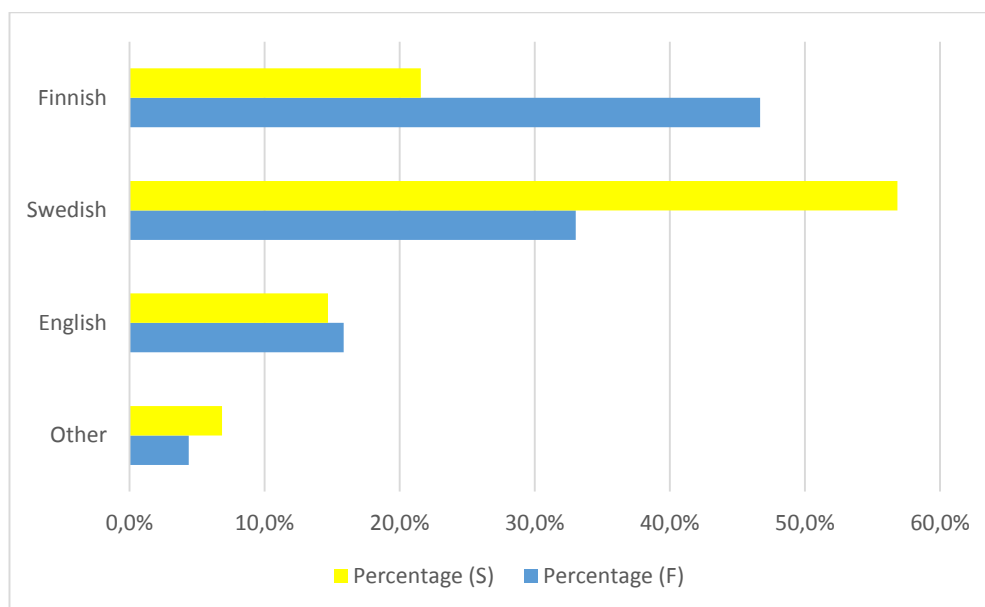


Figure 19. Mostly used language in informal verbal communication with colleagues

Like the official language used in formal meetings, Swedish is also the most used language in informal verbal communication with colleagues between most of the Swedish respondents, while most of the Finnish respondents also felt that Finnish is the language in informal communication. (Figure 18 & 19)

When comparing the language use of informal meetings, in informal communication settings English is being used a lot less. Only 14.7% of Swedish respondents and 15.9% of Finnish respondents stated that they are using English in informal communications. Swedish respondents felt stronger about Swedish being the mostly used language, than Finnish respondents felt about Finnish. Swedish respondents also felt that in informal verbal communication Finnish is being more used than in formal meetings. (Figure 18 & 19)

3.3.2 Importance of opposite language

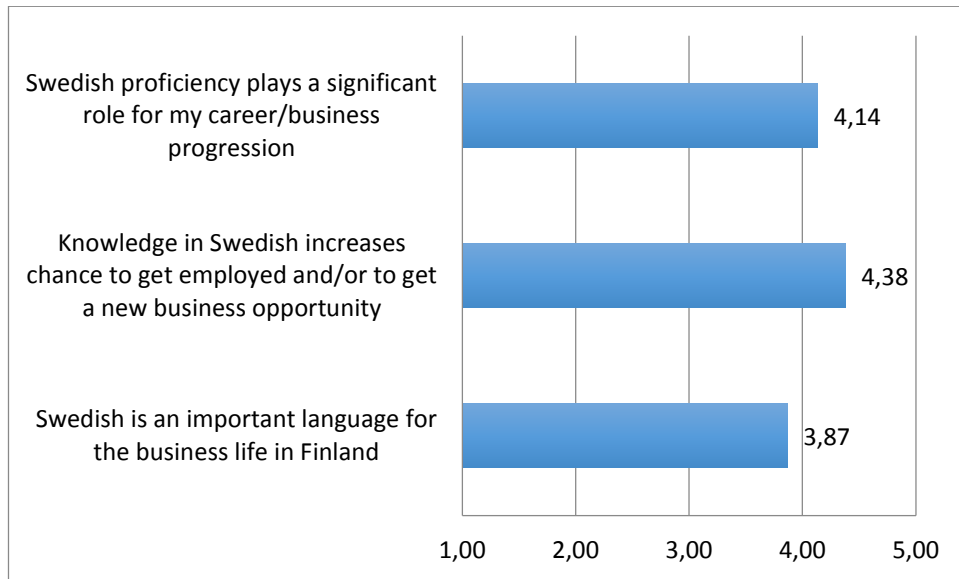


Figure 20. Finnish perception of the importance of Swedish language

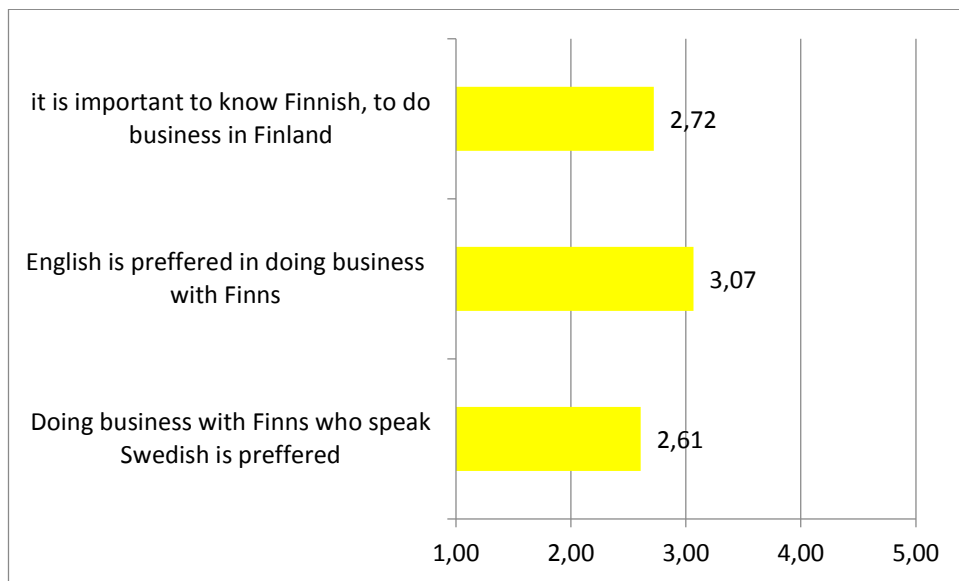


Figure 21. Swedish perception of the importance of Finnish language.

The importance of the opposite language was perceived very differently between the Finnish and Swedish respondents. Finnish respondents felt very strongly that Swedish proficiency plays a significant role in their career progression. Finnish respondents also felt very strongly that knowledge in Swedish language increases their chance to get employed, gain business opportunities, and that Swedish is an important language for the business life in Finland. This could be explained due to the fact that Finland is a bilingual country and Swedish is an official language of Finland. (Figure 20 & 21)

Swedish respondents on the other hand did not see a significant importance in knowledge of Finnish language, not even when doing business in Finland, but still saw it important in some sense. It was mostly agreed with the respondents that English is preferred as the used language when doing business with Finnish business associates. It was also commonly felt that doing business with Finnish business colleagues who speak Swedish is preferred, but not strongly. (Figure 21)

3.3.3 Currency

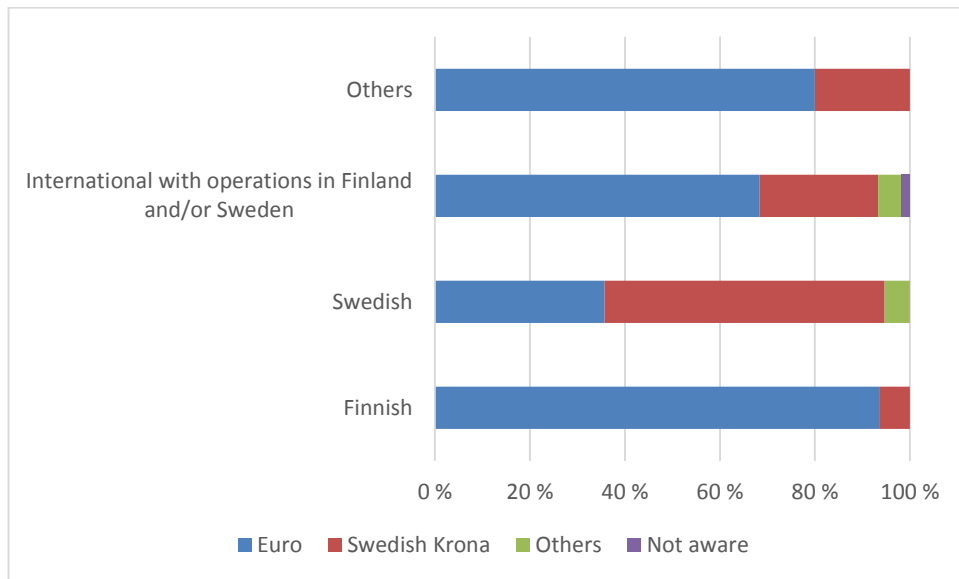


Figure 22. Mostly used currency in business transactions.

The most common currency used during business transactions in Finnish and Swedish companies is the Euro. The general picture is that the Euro is clearly dominant in all of the categories, except for Swedish companies, where naturally Swedish Krona is used the most. By contrary, only a small part of respondents from Swedish companies and international companies with operations in Finland and/or Sweden answered that they use other currencies. (Figure 22)

3.3.4 Desired leadership traits

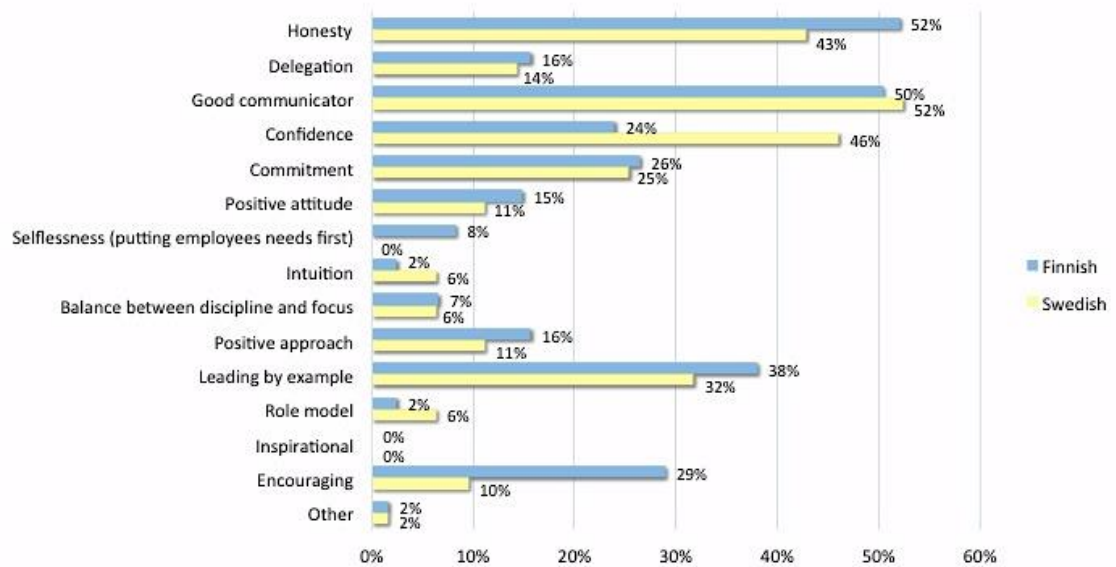


Figure 23. Desired leadership traits.

Both of the respondent groups agreed on that good communicator and honesty are considered as important traits that make a good leader. Also leading by example was found similarly desired leadership trait. (Figure 23)

The biggest differences can be seen in how the two parties perceived confidence and encouraging as the desired leadership traits, Swedish respondents feeling that managers don't have to be that encouraging but confident, when Finnish respondents felt it is more important to be encouraging and less confident than their Swedish counterparts. (Figure 23)

None of the Swedish respondents answered that selflessness would be one of the most desired leadership traits, while some of Finnish respondents felt it is important. While the least desired leadership traits by both parties were being inspirational and intuition. (Figure 23)

3.3.5 Perceived trade barriers

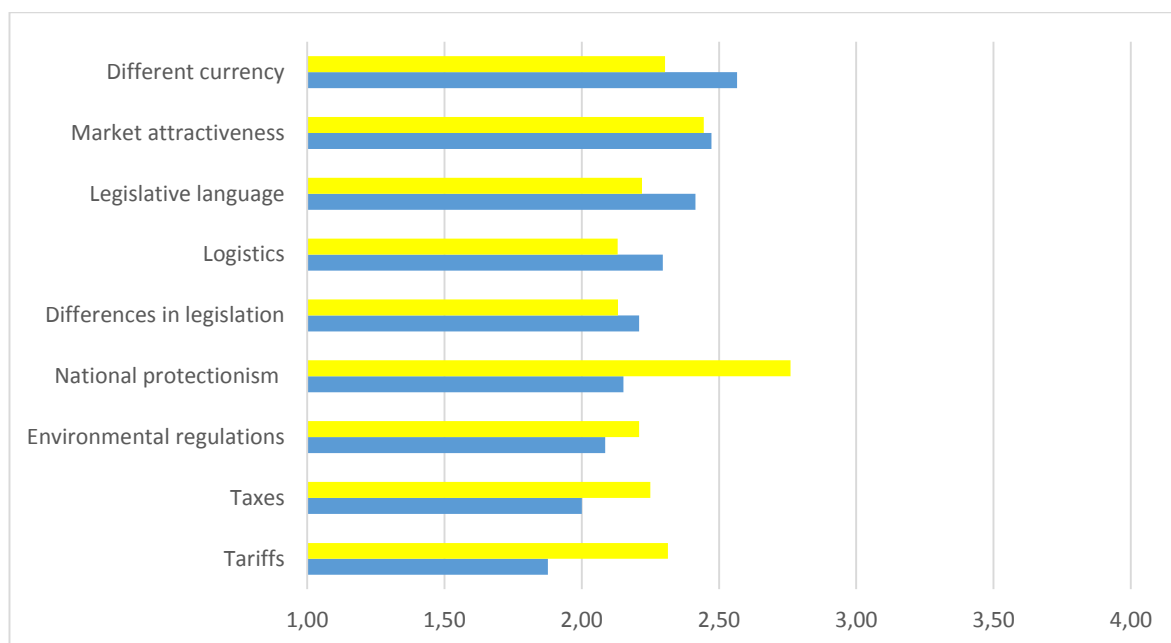


Figure 24. Trade barriers discouraging business cooperation.

There are various trade barriers and they vary in importance according to the two perspectives represented. The perception of the attractiveness of each other's market could be improved for both Swedish and Finnish respondents. Trade barriers caused by taxes and tariffs are also seen as quite low, but more stronger perceived by Swedish respondents, this being a result of the lift of trade barriers between EU countries.

(Figure 24)

Different currency ranks higher than most in the Finnish side. Finnish respondents have a general tendency to answer that different currencies might hinder cooperation. The highest points on an average scale go to the Swedish respondents answering that national protectionism is the strongest factor to discourage cooperation between the two countries. (Figure 24)

Overall the trade barriers has been perceived equally problematic from the Finnish perspective, when again the Swedish respondents answered with more variety of opinions regarding the discouraging trade barrier factors. (Figure 24)

3.3.6 Witnessed discrimination

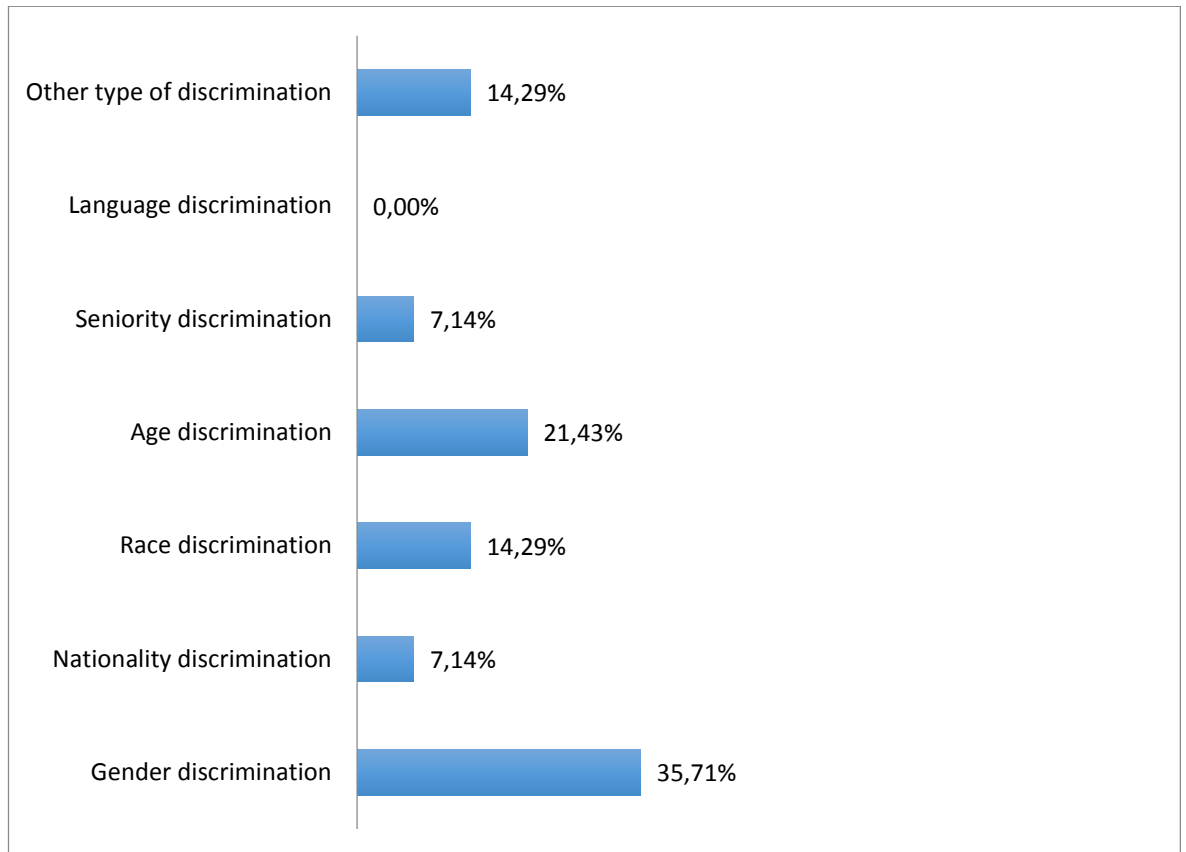


Figure 25. Types of discrimination witnessed by Finnish respondents.

Respondents were asked, if they have witnessed any kind of discrimination at their current workplace. From the seven options given, gender discrimination was the most witnessed discrimination of the Finnish respondents and the second most witnessed type of discrimination being age discrimination. From all the options given, language discrimination was the only one that none of the Finnish respondents had witnessed in their organization, with seniority and nationality discrimination having very low percentages. (Figure 25)

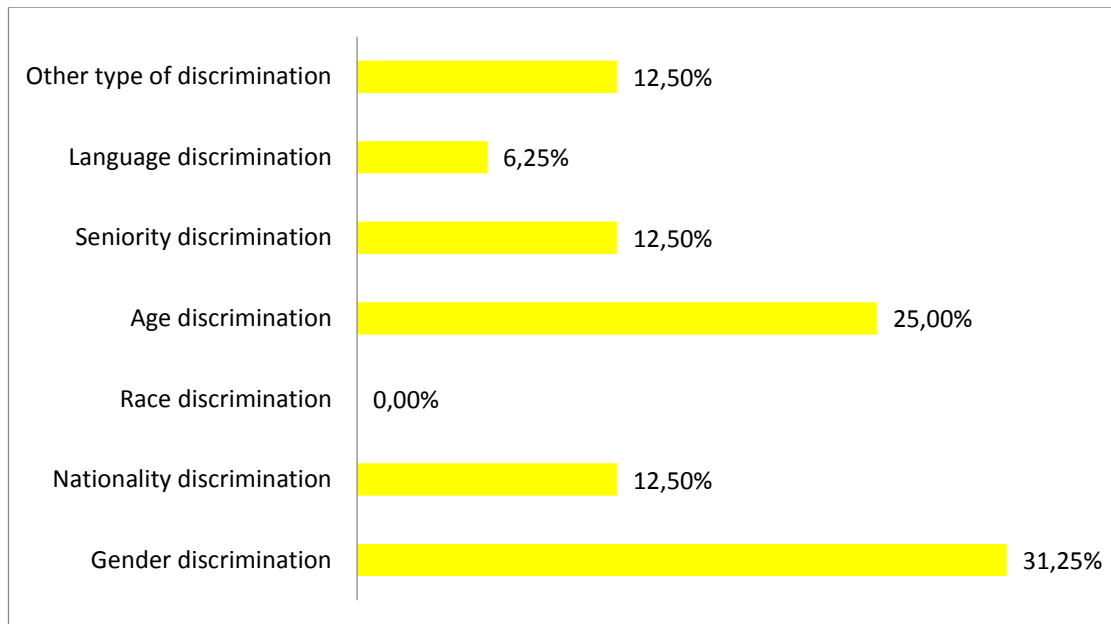


Figure 26. Types of discrimination witnessed by Swedish respondents.

Among the Swedish respondents, gender discrimination was also the most witnessed discrimination in the organizations, almost as much witnessed as between the Finnish respondents. Age discrimination was also the second most witnessed discrimination, slightly more witnessed than between the Finnish respondents. Race discrimination was the only discrimination none of the respondents had witnessed, but language discrimination which was not witnessed between Finnish respondents, was seen by Swedish respondents. (Figure 25 & 26)

4 Discussion

The aim of research was to gain overall insight of the business environment between Finland and Sweden. The results compare the Finnish and Swedish respondents' perspectives in organizational behaviour.

All in all, 189 respondents took a part in the research and filled the questionnaire, 67,4% being male and 32,6% being female. More than half of the respondents felt that they represent the Finnish perspective, rather than Swedish perspective. Many people representing the Finnish perspective are both, from Finnish and Swedish speaking families. The industries given as options on the questionnaire proved to be almost 85%

of the choices of the respondents. The two most popular industries among the respondents' companies were focused on Sales, Marketing, and Consulting.

Regarding the validity of the research, it could be concluded that even though the respondents represented a broad base of industries and job functions, ages and experience, the sample size was fairly small and skewed towards male responders. Had there been a more equal gender and or Finnish/Swedish split between respondents, the answers may have differed slightly.

When it comes to business, Sweden and Finland need each other and have a well-maintained business relationship. The imports from Sweden into Finland is ranked 2nd at 12,4%, whilst the imports from Finland into Sweden is ranked 6th at 5%. Solid business cooperation between the two countries is of utmost interest for both nations. (Globaledge 2015)

Similarities in the culture makes networking easier between the Swedish and Finnish, showing similar ideals in terms of best ways to network with each other through conferences, seminars, and business dinners. Finnish and Swedish respondents felt that their business cultures are the most similar with each other compared to other countries.

Differences exist in leadership and communication styles, but both parties seem to have similar thoughts on what makes a good leader. Finnish perceive the Swedish to be more hesitant to take risks whereas Swedish considered the Finnish to more conservative in their communication. Differences in language competencies was not considered to negatively affect the relationships between colleagues or considered as a barrier in business relations, but can generally be viewed as an inconvenience. However, Finnish respondents viewed strongly that Swedish proficiency benefits their careers and increases chances in business life, while Swedish respondents didn't see significant importance in knowledge of Finnish language. Gaps in language competencies can also generate frustration at work in small scale, but language was not considered to be cause of discrimination at work.

From the Swedish perspective, the most important trade barrier is national protectionism, while from the Finnish perspective is the different currency. The attractiveness of each other's market ranks quite low, and that calls for improvement in the future.

To conclude, there are cultural similarities which make business networking between Swedish and Finnish easy. Interestingly respondents did not perceive language to be a real barrier in business relations. Both respondent groups acknowledged differences in leadership and communication styles and both groups agreed that similar traits make good leaders. It is quite an alarming conclusion however that numerous respondents in both groups indicated gender and age discrimination a prevalent issue in business.

Both parties should perform more activities to improve networking between the two countries, such as organizing events to get familiar with each others business requirements and culture. Also organizing informative events regarding both countries' national legislation, this increases more awareness in general, as well as predictability and an understanding about expectations for doing business in the countries. Guidance should be provided to companies in order to make business expansion and cooperation easier. One should also analyze the weaknesses and strengths of both parties and take advantage of them. This means recognising the participating companies strengths and weaknesses, so they can use the strengths in their favor and work towards developing their weaker areas of business.

Persuading employees to report instances of discrimination is also important. This will help to control the work efficiency, as well as the work satisfaction within the company. One should also remember to pass on positive perceptions about the other country from positive experiences, rather than passing on negative perceptions and creating a certain image of the cooperating company. These factors helps to get rid of the competitive attitude that the nations long history has created and ensure more cooperation between the nations.

References

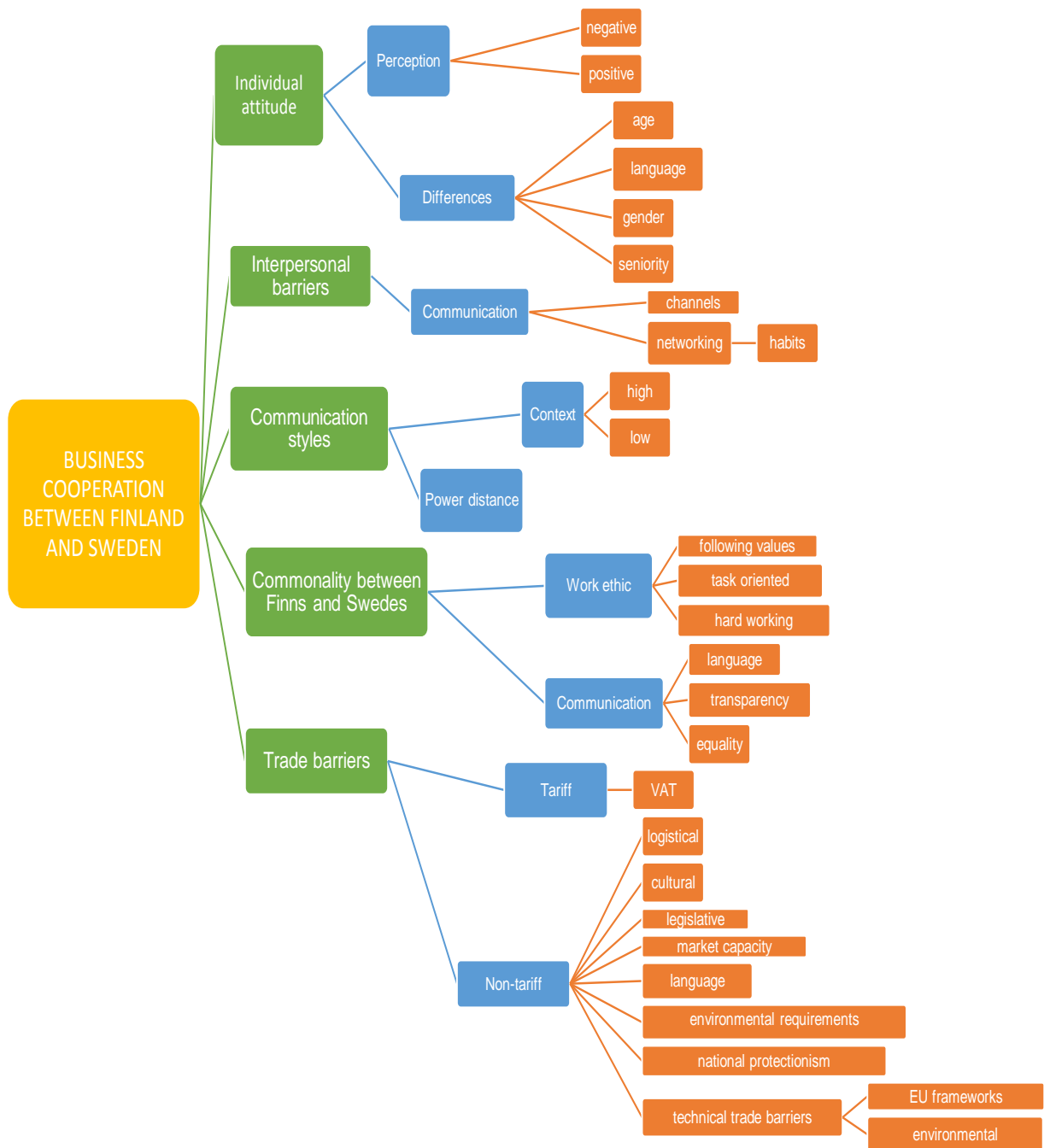
Global Edge 2015, Read 6th May, Accessed: <http://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/sweden/tradestats> ’

Appendices

Appendix 1

Five number summary	
Minimum	22
Lower quartile	44
Median	51
Upper quartile	57
Maximum	77

Appendix 2. Issue tree/ Mind map



Appendix 3

Company Industry	Number of respondents
Vehicle Sales	1
Design	1
Manufacturing of electronics and safety products	1
Business organisations	1
Financial and e-commerce	1
Publishing	1
Sales of sacks. Parts and beg. Tructs	1
Personnel services	1
Organisation	1
Gym	1
Legal area	1
Logistics	1
Medical technology	1
Fashion and design	1
Travel industry	1
Technology industry	1
Lawyer	1
Attorneys	1
Biomaterial	1
Fire and Safety	1
Education	1
Mining industry	1
Hotel	1
Law	1
Culture arts, classical music, ballet,...	1
Media	1
Training	1
Educational Services	1
Management	2
Total	30

Appendix 4



Finnish-Swedish business environment survey

1. Gender

Female

Male

2. Age

years

3. Citizenship

Finnish

Swedish

Other:

4. Mother tongue

Finnish

Swedish

Other:

5. Country of residence

Finland

Sweden

Other:

6. Region

Finland

Sweden

- South Finland
- West Finland
- East Finland
- Oulu Region
- Lappland
- Åland Islands
- Norrland
- Svealand
- Götaland

7. What perspective do you consider yourself as representing?

- The Finnish perspective
- The Swedish perspective

8. Which of the following best describes the company's origin?

- Finnish
- Swedish
- International with operations in Finland and/or Sweden
- Other:

9. What is the company's primary business sector?

- Banking and Finance
- Building and Construction
- Consulting
- Development and innovation
- Energy / Oil&gas
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Marine Sector
- Public Sector
- Real Estate
- Sales and Marketing
- Services
- Other:

10. How many employees does this company have?

- 1-19

- 20-49
- 50-99
- 100-249
- 250-499
- 500-999
- 1000 or more

11. What was your company's turnover last year?

- < €10,000
- €10,000 - €99,999
- €100,000 - €499,999
- > €500,000
- don't know / not aware
- don't want to disclose

12. Which currency is mostly used in business transactions with your company?

- Euro
- Swedish Krona
- Other
- not aware

13. Which of the following best describes your function in the company?

- CXO or executive position
- Middle management
- Solo entrepreneur
- Board member
- Student / Intern
- Other

14. How long have you been working in the company?

- less than a year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- more than 10 years

15. What are the most important shared values in the company?

- equality
- transparency
- honesty
- sense of humor
- productivity
- high working moral
- fun working environment
- flexibility
- open communication in the hierarchy
- other:

16. What is the official language used within the company for the following? Please choose several if that is the case.

	Finnish	Swedish	English	Other
formal meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
official internal documents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
formal verbal communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
internal emails	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
informal verbal communication with colleagues (lunchtime, breaks, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
informal company event	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

17. Gap in the official company language competences among the employees can _____.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
result in frustration at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
negatively affects relationships between colleagues	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
cause difficulties to work efficiently in teams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
negatively affect work performance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
negatively affect work promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. The most effective way to network, in business, is _____

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

formal meetings	3	3	3	3	3
business dinners	4	4	4	4	4
business retreats	3	3	3	3	3
trade fairs	4	4	4	4	4
conferences	3	3	3	3	3
seminars	4	4	4	4	4
dinners outside actual working time	3	3	3	3	3
coffee breaks	4	4	4	4	4
cocktails	3	3	3	3	3
sports activities	4	4	4	4	4
sauna	3	3	3	3	3

19. I perceive the company communication style as being _____

	1	2	3	4	
informal	3	3	3	3	formal

20. How do you perceive your Swedish colleagues communication styles?

	1	2	3	4	
indirect	3	3	3	3	direct
straightforward	3	3	3	3	shy
task oriented	3	3	3	3	relationship oriented
open minded	3	3	3	3	conservative
risk taking	3	3	3	3	certainty
professional	3	3	3	3	personal

21. I perceive that Finns and Swedes have the following in common.

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
business etiquette	3	3	3	3
culture	4	4	4	4
work ethic	3	3	3	3
non-verbal communication	4	4	4	4
sense of humor	3	3	3	3
productivity	4	4	4	4
decision-making	3	3	3	3

22. The following discourages business cooperation between Finland and Sweden.

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	no experience
Tariffs	↻	↻	↻	↻	↻
Taxes	↻	↻	↻	↻	↻
Different currency	↻	↻	↻	↻	↻
Logistics	↻	↻	↻	↻	↻
Legislative language	↻	↻	↻	↻	↻
Differences in legislation	↻	↻	↻	↻	↻
National protectionism	↻	↻	↻	↻	↻
Environmental regulations	↻	↻	↻	↻	↻
Market attractiveness	↻	↻	↻	↻	↻

23. How important is "sticking to the policies" in:

	not at all important	not that important	important	very important
problem solving	↻	↻	↻	↻
leadership	↻	↻	↻	↻
decision making	↻	↻	↻	↻
reporting	↻	↻	↻	↻
business meetings	↻	↻	↻	↻

24. What kind of essential leadership characteristics do you expect from your manager? Please choose the 3 most important ones.

- honesty
- delegation
- good communicator
- confidence
- commitment
- positive attitude
- selflessness (putting employees needs first)
- intuition
- balance between discipline and focus
- positive approach
- leading by example
- role model
- encouraging

€ other:

25. What do you think about these following statements?

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
"I think Swedish is an important language for the business life in Finland."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Knowledge in Swedish increases my chance to get employed and/or to get a new business opportunity."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
"Swedish proficiency plays a significant role for my career/business progression."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. Rank the following countries, regarding how similar the business culture is compared to Finland (1-most similar, 7-least similar).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sweden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Norway	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Germany	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Russia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Estonia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
UK	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Denmark	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. Have you witnessed discrimination at your workplace?

Yes

No

28. What types of discrimination have you witnessed?

gender

nationality

race

age

seniority

language

other:

29. Which of the following best describes the company's origin?

- Finnish
- Swedish
- International with operations in Finland and/or Sweden
- Other:

30. What is the company's primary business sector?

- Banking and Finance
- Building and Construction
- Consulting
- Development and innovation
- Energy / Oil&gas
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Marine Sector
- Public Sector
- Real Estate
- Sales and Marketing
- Services
- Other:

31. How many employees does this company have?

- 1-19
- 20-49
- 50-99
- 100-249
- 250-499
- 500-999
- 1000 or more

32. What was your company's turnover last year?

- < €10,000
- €10,000 - €99,999
- €100,000 - €499,999

> €500,000

don't know / not aware

don't want to disclose

33. Which currency is mostly used in business transactions with your company?

Euro

Swedish Krona

Other

not aware

34. Which of the following best describes your function in the company?

CXO or executive position

Middle management

Solo entrepreneur

Board member

Student / Intern

Other

35. How long have you been working in the company?

less than a year

1-5 years

6-10 years

more than 10 years

36. What are the most important shared values in the company?

equality

transparency

honesty

sense of humor

productivity

high working moral

fun working environment

flexibility

open communication in the hierarchy

€ other: | _____

37. What is the official language used within the company for the following? Please choose several if that is the case.

	Finnish	Swedish	English	Other
formal meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
official internal documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
formal verbal communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
internal emails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
informal verbal communication with colleagues (lunchtime, breaks, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
informal company event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

38. Gap in the official company language competences among the employees can _____.

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
result in frustration at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
negatively affects relationships between colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
cause difficulties to work efficiently in teams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
negatively affect work performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
negatively affect work promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

39. The most effective way to network, in business, is _____

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
formal meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
business dinners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
business retreats	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
trade fairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
conferences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
seminars	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
dinners outside actual working time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
coffee breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
cocktails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sports activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
sauna	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

40. I perceive the company communication style as being _____

	1	2	3	4	
informal	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	formal

41. How do you perceive your Finnish colleagues communication styles?

	1	2	3	4	
indirect	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	direct
straightforward	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	shy
task oriented	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	relationship oriented
open minded	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	conservative
risk taking	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	certainty
professional	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	personal

42. I perceive that Finns and Swedes have the following in common.

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
business etiquette	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
culture	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
work ethic	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
non-verbal communication	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
sense of humor	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
productivity	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
decision-making	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn

43. The following discourages business cooperation between Finland and Sweden.

	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	no experience
Tariffs	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
Taxes	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
Different currency	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
Logistics	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
Legislative language	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
Differences in legislation	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
National protectionism	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
Environmental regulations	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn
Market attractiveness	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn	Jn

44. How important is "sticking to the policies" in:

	not at all important	not that important	important	very important
problem solving	3	3	3	3
leadership	4	4	4	4
decision making	3	3	3	3
reporting	4	4	4	4
business meetings	3	3	3	3

45. What kind of essential leadership characteristics do you expect from your manager? Please choose the 3 most important ones.

- honesty
- delegation
- good communicator
- confidence
- commitment
- positive attitude
- selflessness (putting employees needs first)
- intuition
- balance between discipline and focus
- positive approach
- inspirational
- leading by example
- role model
- encouraging
- other:

46. What do you think about these following statements?

	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
"I think it is important to know Finnish, to do business in Finland."	3	3	3	3	3
"I prefer to do business with Finns who speak Swedish."	4	4	4	4	4
"I rather use English to do business with Finns."	3	3	3	3	3

47. Rank the following countries, regarding how similar the business culture is compared to

Sweden (1-most similar, 7-least similar).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Finland	Jn	J3	Jn	J3	Jn	J3	Jn
Norway	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk
Germany	Jn	J3	Jn	J3	Jn	J3	Jn
Russia	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk
Estonia	Jn	J3	Jn	J3	Jn	J3	Jn
UK	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk	Jk
Denmark	Jn	J3	Jn	J3	Jn	J3	Jn

48. Have you witnessed discrimination at your workplace?

Yes

No

49. What types of discrimination have you witnessed?

gender

nationality

race

age

seniority

language

other:

50. Any additional thoughts or comments on the Finnish-Swedish business cooperation?