



# Badminton Denmark as a global player in Asia

A STUDY ON HOW BADMINTON DENMARK CAN INCREASE ITS POPULARITY IN DENMARK THROUGH ASIAN PARTNERSHIPS WITH A FOCUS ON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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## Executive summary:

This thesis provides an understanding of international relationships within the sports industry and how they can solve or reduce complex issues of a sport federation.

The purpose of the thesis aims to examine the extent to which international relationships can assist in achieving objectives despite the impact of cultural differences. The case used to analyze the objective of this thesis is Badminton Denmark since they are dependent on international relationship with Asia to reduce resource dependence and achieve complex objectives.

Methods of analysis include a qualitative in-depth interview with the CEO of Badminton Denmark to receive internal information of strategic choices and a general understanding of the federation as an organization. Other analysis include a cultural country comparison to illustrate cultural implications of international relationships and how they are affected by them.

The results showed that international relationships are complex and can reduce several issues, however, it is difficult to provide a general understanding of how an organization should implement and use the partnerships since they are particular to each specific situation. Furthermore, cultural differences between the partners impact the functioning of the international relationships, and organizations should, therefore, incorporate cultural understandings as a part of their implementation of international partnerships.

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## 1. Introduction

Due to complexity in the social, economic, technological, political, and environmental spheres, the idea of a closed and isolated conception of the sport organization has changed to a more system integrated and connected view (Hoye and Parent, 2017). Consequently, it has changed the sports industry around the world, and inter-organizational partnerships have become more important and central to the operation and management of sport organizations (ibid.). Many sport organizations use these partnerships to solve complex issues and attain a strategic competitive advantage. That is, effective international relationships enhance performance and they are crucial for achieving success (Samaha et al., 2014). The last 30 years sport sponsorships have escalated and most sport organizations focus on sponsorships, which additionally is identified as strategic partnerships or co-marketing alliances (Morgan et al., 2014). In order to solve issues or differentiates themselves from their competitors, sport properties and sponsors have a sponsorship strategy where long-term partnerships play a significant role.

Badminton Denmark has the past few years concentrated on sponsorships and has changed its sponsor strategy. Due to limited subvention from the Danish Sports Federation and Team Denmark, Badminton Denmark searches for commercial partners that can provide income in order to achieve the organization's several objectives to assert Denmark internationally as a country who foster world-class badminton players, badminton in Denmark is a popular sport, and that the sport provides happiness and experiences for everyone interested (Badminton Danmark – Mission, vision, og værdier). Even though badminton in Denmark still experiences an increasing number of members, the sport cannot be compared to the popularity of football (Holdsport – Største sportsgrene i Danmark). The same picture appears in Europe where badminton competes with other great sports such as handball, golf, and tennis, etc. Therefore, Badminton Denmark must turn to Asia in order to incur in partnerships. That is, in Asia, the market for badminton is huge with a fanbase of approximately 450 million people where the sport is one of the most popular sports (DataSpring). Consequently, the most attractive market for Badminton Denmark regarding partnerships and sponsorships is Asia. However, there can be limitations and costs to what the partnerships can provide Badminton Denmark, and many factors play a role in successful relationships. Especially, the cultural differences between Denmark and Asia are noticeable and

they can be critical for international relationships (Samaha et al., 2014). Therefore, this thesis will examine the relationship between Badminton Denmark and its Asian sponsors and how they can assist the organization to achieve its objectives. Additionally, the thesis will work against an understanding of how cultural differences will impact the effectiveness of international partnerships.

## 2. Problem statement

Considering badminton as the dominant sport in Asia, to which extent can Badminton Denmark increase its popularity in Denmark through Asian partnerships with a focus on cultural differences and their impact on the international relationships?

## 3. Account of method

The following will outline the theoretical, methodological, and empirical considerations. Additionally, this chapter withholds a description of the selected research design of the thesis. Several choices and delimitations have been taken prior and during when conducting the theoretical and empirical research of Badminton Denmark and their potential relationship marketing and sponsorship with Asia. These choices will affect the understanding and conclusion of the thesis.

### 3.1 Motivation for selecting the case

This section clarifies the focus and motivation behind this thesis. Since I have played badminton for 15 years, I have developed a great interest in the sport and I am a proponent of the sport's success worldwide. Internationally, Danish badminton acquits itself well and it is one of the top-performing nations in World Championships only beaten by China and Indonesia (Worldatlas). Badminton is very popular in Asian countries such as China, Malaysia, and Indonesia, and even though the interest in the sport in Denmark is increasing, several other sports are still more popular in Denmark. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is how Badminton Denmark can benefit from the sport's popularity in Asian countries and build a relationship with the given countries to progress the sport in Denmark since it is my pre-understanding that Asian countries invest more in the sport than

Denmark does. For that reason, I believe that Danish badminton can profit from a collaboration with Asian countries (or companies or federations).

### 3.2 Geographical concentration (Asia)

Since the Asian continent consists of a large number of countries, I find it relevant to determine, which countries that are referred to as Asia in this thesis. In general, Asia is a great business opportunity in many contexts for Denmark, however, since the focus in this thesis is the sport badminton, the determination of the countries is based on the top-performing nations in badminton and the popularity of the sport in the countries. According to the top-performing nations in World Badminton Championship (reference), China, Indonesia, and South Korea are alongside Denmark the highest-ranked nations on the list. China is certainly the most performing nation compared to others, therefore, China is one of the chosen countries to this thesis when mentioning Asia. Additionally, Indonesia is one of the most performing nations, and, especially in men's, women's and mixed doubles Indonesia ranks within the top 10 on the currently BWF World Ranking (reference). Based on the BWF World Ranking and the interview with the CEO of Badminton Denmark Bo Jensen, another country that currently performs satisfactorily is Japan. Additionally, Bo Jensen mentions Malaysia as one of the greatest badminton nations (appendix 4). In order to work probingly with the significant cultural differences that can or will affect Badminton Denmark's relationship with sponsors and business partners, I have only chosen three nations to examine culturally – China, Indonesia, and Japan. Even though badminton is popular in other Asian countries as well such as Malaysia, South Korea, India, etc., it is of great importance to select a fewer number of countries to examine the cultural differences thoroughly. The cultural differences between Denmark and the chosen countries will be analyzed subsequently.

### 3.3 Methodological considerations

This section aims to explain and discuss the methodological considerations that have been made prior and in the preparation for the thesis.

The main objective of this exploratory thesis is to understand how Badminton Denmark can increase its popularity in Denmark through international partnerships taking cultural differences into account

and how they may affect the relationships. Therefore, the philosophy of this thesis is pragmatism since a problem is initially stated that intends to provide practical solutions to Badminton Denmark. That is, by understanding how the federation can use the international relationships with Asia, practical issues can be solved in the form of increasing the number of members and the interest within the sport in Denmark.

In order to answer the problem statement and solve the practical problem, qualitative data will be applied in the form of an in-depth semi-structured interview. The in-depth interview will provide a deeper understanding of Badminton Denmark, its strategies and thoughts behind their choices from a personal point of view. Additionally, secondary data such as websites and articles will be used to gather empirical data and theoretical contributions relevant to answer the problem statement.

Since the thesis examines a topic within a real-life setting for a specific organization, the research strategy is a case study. By selecting a specific organization with a predisposed problem from the “real” world makes it available to approach a practical problem within an organization and possibly assist the organization with useful knowledge and solutions.

### 3.3 Theoretical considerations

This part of the thesis will present the considerations behind the theoretical background. To answer the problem statement, the following theories have been selected:

- *Inter-organizational Relationships in Sports: From Theory to Practice*
- *Sport sponsorship alliances: relationship management for shared value*
- *Collaborative communication in sponsor relations*
- *Culture definitions*
  - o *Robert Ibsen's International Business Negotiation*
- *Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede-Insights.com)*
- *The Role of Culture in International Relationship Marketing*
- *Language, culture, and communication*
  - o *Edward Hall's high context vs. low context*



The first part of the analysis will seek to work towards an understanding of how Badminton Denmark develops and handles partnerships with Asian nations to improve Danish badminton. In order to this, the chapter *Interorganizational Relationships in Sports* will be accounted for concerning Badminton Denmark's strategic choice to enter into a partnership with Asian nations, and, in that way, understand why and which issues the relationship will solve. Subsequently, *Collaborative communication in sponsor relations* provides the *sponsorship relationship model* that contributes an understanding of how Badminton Denmark perceives the partnerships, and the model represents the development of commitment and trust within the relationships. Sport Sponsorship alliances: relationship management for shared value will, additionally, be explained to define the relationship between Badminton Denmark and the Asian sponsors as well as the parties shared value, and how Badminton Denmark will be able to establish a longevity sponsorship.

The second part of the analysis will endeavor to examine the cultural differences between Denmark and the selected Asian nations and, additionally, understand which affect it will have on international partnerships. Therefore, several theories related to culture, cultural differences, and their role in international relationships have been selected. First of all, to analyze the cultural differences, it is significant to define what is meant by culture regarding this thesis based on the chosen theorists' *definition of culture*. Thereafter, I have decided to apply Geert Hofstede's *cultural dimensions* conducive to compare Denmark's national culture with the certain Asian cultures since the theory provides a tool to understand each country's preferences based on a huge study. In that way, by comparing the cultures up against one another, I can illustrate the cultural differences in each dimension that is based on the behaviors, norms, rituals, and values of the culture. Afterward, the *Role of Culture in International Relationship Marketing* will be accounted for to analyze how culture affects an international relationship, and in that way combine the theory of sponsorships and culture. The theory provides an understanding of how people interpret and respond to relationship marketing activities based on their culture, and therefore, Samaha et al. (2014) apply Hofstede's four primary dimensions to explain the cultural impact on the partnerships. Finally, to supplement the cultural theory, I will refer to Unsier and Lee (2014) *Language, culture and communication* to illustrate how differences in verbal communication can shape people's world view, behavior, and action – in other words how language can express cultural differences as well.

As an example, Edward Hall's (1998) theory of *high context vs. low context* will be presented to understand how information is handled in different ways based on which context the messages are sent and received.

The abovementioned theories make it possible to analyze the collected empirical data to answer the problem statement.

### 3.3.1 Qualitative Directed Content Analysis

This section of the methodological considerations describes the analytical method Qualitative Directed Content Analysis, which will be applied in the analysis to analyze the unstructured interview with the CEO of Badminton Denmark Bo Jensen and collected articles and websites found online.

Content analysis is a research method that analyzes text data, which focus on *the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text* (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, pp. 1278). Directed content analysis is one of the approaches to content analysis, and it aims to validate or extend a theory, for instance, to benefit with a further description or implications (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Therefore, the analysis takes its point of departure in a theory considered relevant as guidance for initial codes that are determined by key concepts illustrated in the theory (*ibid.*). Since the data primarily are collected through an unstructured interview, open-ended questions will be used during the interview followed by focused questions about the predetermined categories (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, pp. 1281). After the interview, all the answers will be read through and categorized based on predetermined codes according to the theory. The answers that cannot be categorized when using the initial codes will be analyzed later to determine if they fit a new category or subcategory (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, pp. 1282). The selected theory will be used to discuss the findings of the collected data to support the existing theory.

The directed approach has, however, some challenges since the *researcher might be more likely to find evidence that is supportive rather than non-supportive of a theory* (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005,

pp. 1283). Moreover, there is a chance that the participant will intercept cues within the probe questions and, therefore, agree with the researcher's questions (ibid.). Furthermore, the researcher might be too focused on the concepts of the theories and, hence, blind the researcher contextual characteristics of the phenomenon (ibid.). Consequently, these limitations will be considered when analyzing the collected data.

### 3.4 Empirical considerations

In the following, I will outline the selected empirical data, which will attempt to clarify the meanings relevant to the thesis and provide a background for the analysis to answer the problem statement.

The main empirical data of this thesis consists of primary material in the form of a semi-structured life-world interview with the CEO of Badminton Denmark, Bo Jensen. The interview will give an idea of Badminton Denmark's potential objectives and strategies related to relationship marketing and sponsorship with Asia. Therefore, the interview is structured based on the chosen theories to make sure that the questions are serving the purposes by the theories and to be able to answer the problem statement. The objective of interviewing Bo Jensen is to get an insight of from his point of view how Badminton Denmark can benefit from as well as take advantage of a corporation with Asia as current CEO of Badminton Denmark. Hence, I will first inquire into Bo Jensen's history in Badminton Denmark and how he anticipates Badminton Denmark's future and strategy. Hereinafter, I will ask questions about Badminton Denmark, however, based on the selected theory of this thesis.

Furthermore, I have collected some secondary material such as articles about Badminton Denmark and their website to understand Badminton Denmark as an organization and their vision. In addition, I will use articles from the internet to inquire additional information about Bo Jensen and Badminton Denmark. Moreover, I will assess existing empirical data on the culture in Asia and Denmark from Hofstede Insights concerning the cultural differences that may affect the relationship between the nations. Since it is not possible to gather primary empirical data about the Asian and Danish culture within the time limit, I have decided to collect empirical data of the cultures based on Hofstede's dimensions to get an understanding of the national cultures, their differences, and

how they may impact the international relationships. Hofstede Insights can provide valid data about each of the chosen cultures that is not possible to subjectively assemble.

#### 3.4.1 Structure and design of the unstructured interview

The interview will be structured and designed as a semi-structured interview. “A *semi-structured life-world interview attempts to understand themes of the daily world from the subjects’ own perspectives.*” (Kvale, 2008, pp. 10). The purpose of the qualitative research method is to capture the experiences and lived meanings of the subject’s everyday world (Kvale, 2008). Therefore, the aim of the semi-structured interview with the CEO of Badminton Denmark, Bo Jensen, is to obtain descriptions of his lived world in the context of Badminton Denmark. Owing to Bo Jensen’s status as CEO of Badminton Denmark, it gives an understanding of Badminton Denmark and its sponsor strategy from his perspective and in his own words.

To assist and clarify the process of collecting the data, the seven stages of Kvale (2008) will be applied and followed; *thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting.* Before the interview I will thematize and design the interview regarding the purpose and plan of the thesis. Consequently, the interview guide will be structured based on the research question and the theoretical considerations that design the themes of the interview (appendix 4). However, the collected theoretical themes function as an instruction to the interview, therefore, the questions will be asked as I see fit. For instance, it does not make sense to ask a question regarding a theme the subject already has answered during the interview. As an interviewer, it is important to lead the subject towards the themes with open questions to the subject to describe his experiences and actions in his own words (Kvale, 2008, pp. 12).

When doing the interview, I will first set the stage by briefing the interviewee including telling about the purpose of the interview, the use of a tape recorder, and ask if he has any questions before starting the interview (Kvale, 2011, pp. 6). After the interview, I will round off by thanking the subject and ask if he has anything further to add or comment on. Besides asking questions relating to the themes, the interviewee’s bodily gestures and facial expressions will be analyzed to accompany the statements and therefore, give more meaning to the answers (Kvale, 2011).

As it is the CEO of Badminton Denmark I will be interviewing, the questions will, of course, be simple and brief, however, the language will be somewhat professional like an everyday language of the employees within the organization. Furthermore, in the beginning, I will ask an introductory question that will make the subject open up and provide experiences on his own. Thereinafter, I will ask follow-up questions and listen for him to elaborate and provide as much information as possible. Finally, the interview will be in Danish because the interviewee, Bo Jensen, is from Denmark plus he is currently the CEO of Badminton Denmark, which is the subject and focus of this thesis.

### 3.5 Delimitation

Since the extent of the thesis and the research field is complex, a delimitation is necessary to form a framework for a thesis and to ensure a deep understanding of the research field. Therefore, the delimitation is considered a prerequisite to secure an in-depth understanding of the field of research. First, it was essential to determine which Asian nations this thesis would examine to restrict the geographical area since Asia is the world's biggest continent and covers a lot of countries. Therefore, three Asian nations were chosen to include the nations with a great badminton history. Concerning the gathered empirical data, numbers and/or information of the chosen nations' cultures would be impossible to gather independently as it would be an extensive investigation. Consequently, the empirical information of national cultures will be assembled from *Hofstede Insights* to get an understanding of the cultural characteristics of each national culture. However, not all of the Hofstede's cultural dimensions will be applied in this thesis since they were not considered relevant to answer the problem statement. Additionally, it could have been interesting to examine how Badminton Denmark should handle the cultural differences in a specific negotiation situation with potential sponsors relative to the *international business negotiation* theory. Another deselected theory that could have been relevant to this field of research is the effect the Asian partnerships would have on the talent development within Danish badminton and, therefore, *talent development* theory could have supplemented this thesis. Moreover, this thesis focus on the national cultural differences as well as verbal communication and its description of the culture. However, due to limited space and the extensiveness of the empirical investigation, the *non-verbal part of culture* has been neglected.

## 4. Account of theory

The following section will present selected relevant theories to analyze the empirical data and answer the problem statement.

### 4.1 Interorganizational Relationships in Sports

Hoye and Parent (2017) define the relationship between two sport organizations as inter-organizational relationships and mention that they have become central to the operation and management of sport organizations. The inter-organizational relationships are described as transactions and/or a long-term planned strategic action that occurs between an organization and one or more organizations within its environment serving mutually beneficial purposes in a problem domain (Hoye and Parent, 2017, pp. 274). Therefore, a relationship between one sport organization and another is an active strategic choice that the organizations make to solve complex issues and consequently, benefit from the partnership. According to Hoye and Parent (2017), the benefits of inter-organizational relationships are excessive and include increasing efficiencies and accessing knowledge, information, expertise, and material resources. In other words, the partnerships offer a strategic competitive advantage.

#### 4.1.1 Theoretical perspectives

To theoretically conceptualize inter-organizational partnerships, Hoye and Parent (2017) compose an overview of different theories such as stakeholder theory, transaction cost theory, resource dependence theory, institutional theory, and strategic management. In reference to this thesis, the theory of *resource dependence theory* and *strategic management* will be explained extendedly. *Resource dependence theory* explores how power and dependence on key resources drive organizational responses (partnerships and collaborations e.g.) to reduce uncertainty such as economic turbulence and change (Hoye and Parent, 2017). A significant part of resource dependence theory is understanding the sources of power and dependence between the organizations and how they will determine and devise strategies to manage that dependence (ibid.). For instance, an organization may seek to obtain control over resources, which is not owned by the

organization or to survive the organization depends on resources it can mobilize if necessary (ibid.). An organization may need valuable tangible and intangible resources such as capital/funding or information and knowledge, and, therefore, strategically exchanges with other organizations that possess these resources (ibid.). *Strategic management* implies that organizational decisions to collaborate with others are made to maximize the effectiveness in the environment and to reach a common goal. The theory can explain how organizational decision-makers evaluate and select among different alternatives (ibid.). The inter-organizational relationships are formed because they either lack valuable resources, competencies, expertise, and knowledge (ibid.). The goals of the collaborations are, therefore, to obtain resources, market share, a unique market position, market power, etc. through these longer-term partnerships or strategic alliances (ibid.). There are many motives for collaboration. For instance, some organizations' decision to seek partnerships could be grounded in resource dependency, however, it may as well be a strategic choice (ibid.). If the partnership is a strategic choice, it is a planned, deliberate, and intentional activity that is made to utilize the business opportunities or increasing the market share (ibid.). Therefore, a strategic choice is a free choice for owners, executives, and/or board members. Whereas resource dependency limits this freedom of choice (ibid.). Consequently, the strategic management theory focuses on the organizations choice of entering into a partnership based on either a strategic choice or dependence of resources.

#### 4.1.2 Potential array of partners and forms and structure

Sport organizations can develop inter-organizational relationships with a number of different stakeholders such as public, private, and/or non-profit stakeholders that are served, supported, or affected by sport organizations (Hoye and Parent, 2017). The types of inter-organizational relationships can be categorized by their objectives of the partnerships (ibid.). Moreover, any kind of stakeholder can become a partner in inter-organizational relationships, however, they are distinguished among other stakeholders based on their power they have on the sport organizations and their interest in the sport organizations (ibid.).

There are a variety of forms and structures of inter-organizational relationships, which are dyadic relationships (two interacting entities), transactional exchanges, cross-sector collaborations (public-

private partnerships), etc. (ibid.). Furthermore, several elements substantiate the engagements between organizations and determines the structure and form of the relationships such as issues of trust, the strength, and length of the interaction, the governance, and the whether the relationship is voluntary or forced (ibid.). Conclusively, inter-organizational relationships arise between two sport organizations that serve mutually beneficial purposes. There are several reasons to which organizations incur in these relationships, for instance, a dependency for resources or a strategic move, and the partnerships can be formed and structured in varies ways depending on different elements. Partnerships can be formed with any public, private, and non-profit stakeholders that are served, supported or affected by sport organizations.

#### 4.2 Collaborative communication in sponsor relations

Farrelly et. al. (2003) examine the alliances between sponsors and sponsored properties from a relationship marketing perspective since it can clarify how the sport organizations perceive the relationship as well as the development and evaluation of commitment and trust. Furthermore, Farrelly et. al. (2003) present a sponsor relationship model that illustrates sponsorship practice (appendix 1). The first component of the model *sponsor market orientation*, which include a list of activities all with the focus of the needs of the customers. The list comprises activities such as an active implementation of market research, the consequent design of market-sensitive strategies, the optimal distribution of resources, the offer of relevant products and services, and the design of communication programs to suit the needs of customers (Farrelly et al., 2003). Strong market orientation is associated with a greater commitment to the relationship and, therefore, has a positive impact on business performance (ibid.). Market orientation is an antecedent to the second component of the model *collaborative communication* in B2B relationships. Collaborative communication includes a combination of specific relationship-building communication attributes that impact the development of cooperative attitudes and the creation of mutual support and respect between the sponsor and sponsor property (ibid.). Collaborative communication likewise affects *commitment* and *trust* within the sponsor relationship. Commitment is the sponsor's and sponsor property's willingness to make ongoing short-term investments to accomplish long-term benefits from the partnership, and therefore achieve shared value and effectiveness. According to Farrelly et. al. (2003), trust can be defined as a psychological orientation where vulnerability is



accepted based on positive expectations of the behavior of the other party of the sponsor relationship. In conclusion, strong market orientation is positively related with commitment and trust of the relationship since it provides the sponsor or the sponsored property an understanding of the dynamics of a consumer market that is different to its core business, and together with communication attributes translate the market orientation (ibid.). Consequently, examining the sponsorships from a relationship marketing perspective may enlighten sponsorship association and its success factors (ibid.).

#### 4.3 Sport sponsorship alliances: relationship management for shared value

Morgan et. al. (2014) study the inter-organizational relationship between a sport property and its corporate sponsors to examine sport sponsorships as alliances between the two parties. In this context, what is meant by alliance is a strategic relationship between two or more organizations that are formed to satisfy individual and common objectives (ibid.). According to Morgan et. al. (2014), sponsorships can be described as co-marketing alliances or strategic partnerships. These alliances should enhance business performance by supplying complementary capabilities which normally surpass the capacities of one firm alone (ibid.). Therefore, an alliance between a sponsor and a sport property has advantages. Sport sponsorships provide organizations with opportunities for international marketing and brand leverage since sport can reach across borders and connect directly with diverse markets (ibid.). Moreover, for sponsors, sponsorships give an opportunity to stand out from traditional advertising, communicate directly with stakeholders, and differentiate their brand (ibid.). For sponsored sport property, sponsorships provide advantages in the form of market exposure and brand-related benefits (ibid.). In general, corporations invest sponsorship capital and resources to seek and obtain business objectives, marketing and competitive strategies (ibid.). It is important to establishing and maintaining cooperative arrangements for the sake of a long-term partnership (ibid.). Therefore, the strength of the inter-organizational relationship between the sport property and the corporate sponsor is crucial for partner satisfaction as well as the lastingness of the partnership. According to Morgan et. al. (2014), there exists a wide range of sponsor and sponsee compositions. For instance, a sponsor can be a corporate business, government agency, and non-profit organization (ibid.). A sport property can vary from an individual

athlete, a local, regional or national sport organization, an international sport federation, a sport event, etc. (ibid.).

Morgan et al. (2014) study provide insight from both sides of the alliance and the relational dynamics within the sponsorship alliances. Both the sponsor and the sponsee must understand each other's expectations and objectives to maintain relations and, therefore, they must be clear about their motivations and intentions for the partnership such as communication and transparency (ibid.). Several factors are vital in strong sponsorship relationships, which is trust, effectiveness and relational value. According to Morgan et al. (2014), value is generated by the balance of formal and informal governance mechanisms. In conclusion, it is crucial for improved sponsorship performance that the two parties understand the variables that generate value and maintain alliance stability (ibid.).

#### 4.4 Culture defined

The following subsections provide several definitions of what culture is to determine this thesis' understanding of culture, and what is analyzed concerning the Danish culture and Asian culture.

##### 4.4.1 Culture according to Hall

Culture according to Hall (1998) operates to its own written and unwritten internal dynamics, principles, and laws. For instance, even time and space are unique to each culture though they share some of the same basic roots (ibid.). Primarily, culture is a system for creating, sending, storing and processing information, and communication causes everything (ibid.). According to Hall (1998), there are two types of information when it comes to culture: type A – *manifest culture*, which is learned from words and numbers, and type B – *tracit-acquired culture*, which is non-verbal but situational information that operates according to rules and it not learned as such, however, acquired during the process of growing up (ibid.). In other words, you can say that tracit-acquired culture is a natural part of life and it is the majority of experiences of everyday life. Hall (1998) explains that this is the way of gathering valid cultural data on the out-of-awareness, virtually automatic, tracit-acquired side of life.

#### 4.4.2 Culture according to Hofstede Insights

Since some of the empirical data is collected from Hofstede Insights, it is relevant to describe their definition of culture. Conforming to Hofstede Insights (...), culture can have several meanings. Professor Geert Hofstede's definition of culture: *"The programming of the human mind by which one group of people distinguishes itself from another group"* (Hofstede Insights – Culture). Additionally, culture is shared within a group and it is something you learn from your environment (ibid.). In order to illustrate what culture consists of, Hofstede Insights compare the elements of a culture with an onion (ibid.). The outer layer of the onion represents the symbols of a culture, which is foods, flags, logos or colors which have emotions attached to them. The second layer embodies the heroes, which includes public figures that have set an example that showcases the national spirit (ibid.). The next layer consists of rituals, which is *"recurring events which shape our unconscious minds"* (ibid.). The core of the onion and the culture is values. Values represent the preferences for certain standpoints, and they are transmitted by our surroundings in which we grow up (ibid.). Hofstede Insights view a culture based on behaviors and actions from groups of people and not one single person as one person does not represent a whole culture (ibid.). Therefore, culture includes the four layers of the onion performed by groups of people.

#### 4.4.3 Culture according to R. Ibsen

According to Ibsen (2014), culture can be defined as *"the way we do things around here"*. The sentence highlights three crucial aspects of culture: culture is shared (*we*), geographically rooted (*around here*) and practices (*do things*) (ibid.). Furthermore, he describes culture as a set of values – what members of the culture like and dislike, and norms – what is normal or abnormal (Ibsen, 2014 pp. 111). Culture is the total sum of a country's values, norms, rituals and behaviors, certain figures and objects (ibid.). It is our surroundings that learn us these characteristics and, therefore, culture is something we learn and it is not inherited through our genes (Ibsen, 2014 pp. 112). Moreover, Ibsen (2014) states that cultural differences tend to be relative. In other words, there tend to be a greater knowledge of a culture when the geographical distance is smaller, and, therefore, distance matters when it comes to understanding and knowing a specific culture (ibid.).

#### 4.5 Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Geert Hofstede's theory with six cultural dimensions based on a comprehensive study can facilitate an understanding of cultural differences and comparison. *"Professor Geert Hofstede conducted one of the most comprehensive studies of how values in the workplace are influenced by culture"* (Hofstede Insights – National Culture). Based on the study, he constructed six dimensions of national culture, and they are used worldwide in both academic and professional management settings. The cultural dimensions exhibit independent preferences for circumstance over another that differentiate countries from each other (ibid.). According to Hofstede Insights, the scores of the countries on the dimensions are relative since we are all human and unique. Therefore, culture can only be used meaningfully by comparison. The cultural dimensions consist of Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance Index, Long Term Orientation vs. Short Term Normative Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restraint. The following will elaborately describe the dimensions relevant to this thesis.

##### **Power Distance:**

Power Distance describes the extent to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede Insight – National Culture). This includes distances from top to bottom in society in general, in companies, in families, in politics, in the education system, etc. (Ibsen, 2014, pp. 118). In societies with a large degree of power distance, people accept a hierarchical order, organizations have a steep hierarchy, there is a high degree of formality, and the decision-making power is decentralized. Societies with low power distance aim to equalize the distribution of power, have a low degree of formality, and a flat hierarchy where the power is centralized.

##### **Individualism vs. Collectivism:**

This dimension expresses the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members (Hofstede Insights – Country Comparison). The high side of the dimension, individualism, describes the preference for a loosely-knit social framework given the expectation of taking care of oneself and one's immediate family only (Hofstede Insights – National Culture). Oppositely, collectivism

illustrates a preference for a tightly-knit social framework where it is expected that one's relatives or in-group members take care of you in exchange for absolute loyalty (ibid.).

### **Masculinity vs. Femininity:**

A high score (Masculine) on this dimension represents a preference for achievement, heroism, competition, and success, which is a value system that starts in school and continues throughout organizational life (Hofstede Insights – Country Comparison). The contrary feminine side of this dimension portrays a preference for cooperation, caring for the weak, and quality of life (Hofstede Insights – National Culture).

### **Uncertainty Avoidance Index:**

The uncertainty avoidance dimension articulates the extent to which members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty, changes, and unknown situations (ibid.). Therefore, the dimension deals with the fact that the future can never be known and, consequently, how the given country handle it – should try to control the future or just let it happen (ibid.)? In other words, countries that do not like changes have a strong uncertainty avoidance, and, therefore, maintain codes of belief and behavior to avoid such changes (ibid.). Contrary to countries with low uncertainty avoidance keep a more casual approach towards ambiguity.

The study of employee value scores was collected within IBM between 1967 and 1973 by Professor Geert Hofstede. The data covered more than 70 countries (Hofstede Insights – National Culture).

## **4.6 The Role of Culture in International Relationship Marketing**

According to Samaha et al. (2014), relationship marketing enhances performance and relationships are crucial for achieving success. However, international relationships can be critical due to cultural differences. Therefore, relationship marketing strategies should be adapted in different countries according to Samaha et al. (2014). Samaha et al. (2014) apply Hofstede's primary four dimensions of culture (individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity vs. femininity) to understand how people interpret and respond to relationship marketing activities based on their culture. Culture shapes people's perceptions, dispositions, behaviors as well as their

norms, values, and beliefs based on the environment within the culture (ibid.). Considering relationship marketing interactions are social exchanges, culture affects the norms, rules, roles, and expectations of the relationships. In other words, people are shaped by their culture and the environment and, consequently, relationships across cultures can affect international partnerships. For instance, due to differences in each country's value systems, social information is encoded and exploited individually, which likewise influences the success of relationship marketing (ibid.). Thus, companies and managers must be aware of the cultural difficulties of international relationship marketing.

Samaha et al. (2014) illustrate their conceptual model, which is a framework of international relationship marketing (appendix 2). The model has five relational antecedents and two outcomes (see appendix 2). The relational antecedents are relationship investments, communication, dependence on seller, seller expertise, and relationship duration (Samaha et al. 2014). These factors function as elements that conclude a partnership between two parties. Furthermore, Samaha et al. (2014) illustrate two outcomes of an international relationship: Word of Mouth (WOM) and performance. WOM is the possibility of a customer recommending the company to another potential customer. Performance relates to improvements in outcomes, in other words, positive changes to the business (ibid.). The outcomes can be enhanced by the relational mediators, which are trust and commitment. That is, they create a desire for the customer to promote preferred companies over competitors as well as the customers want to reward relational partners by continuing doing business with the companies.

Samaha et al. (2014) then focus on how Hofstede's four primary dimensions moderate these main effects of relationship marketing. The dimension *individualism vs. collectivism* illustrates the extent to which people are self-reliant and distant from others in contrast to being mutually dependent and closely tied to others (ibid.). According to Samaha et al. (2014), compared to the individualist cultures, the collectivist cultures may respond more positively to relationship marketing since collectivists base relationships on mutual interdependence and, furthermore, they are more concerned with the well-being of their group and rely on each other when working in order to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Moreover, collectivists are more inclined to social bonding

and value long-term relationships (ibid.). Therefore, collectivists are more likely to have long-term relationships due to their emphasis on social bonding, dependence, and personal relationships. On the other hand, individualists mostly have relationships for self-serving reasons since they value individual goals over group goals, and mostly only maintain relationships that are beneficial to their individual goal achievement (ibid.). Consequently, Samaha et al. (2014) anticipate that collectivists find it easier to form long-term relationships and therefore, relationship marketing and outcomes cultivate stronger in such cultures and weaker in individualistic cultures.

The cultural dimension *power distance* refers to the extent to which people accept inequality between more and less powerful members of society (ibid.). Therefore, cultures with high power distance tend to have hierarchy also within the organizations, which, for instance, is emphasized by prestige symbols. Consequently, people accept and desire these privileges to make them seen powerful (ibid.). However, in cultures with low power distance such privileges, status and hierarchy are frowned upon and avoided (ibid.). Samaha et al. (2014) predict that people from cultures with high power distance will be more accepting of relationship marketing strategies due to the acceptance of status and expertise.

The third cultural dimension *uncertainty avoidance* captures the extent to which people feel threatened by unfamiliar situations and changes (ibid.). Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance value predictability and those with low uncertainty avoidance accept uncertainty and take more risks and appreciate flexibility over formal rules and guidelines (ibid.). According to Samaha et al. (2014), relationship marketing is more effective within cultures with high uncertainty avoidance due to activities such as risk management that reduce uncertainty and, therefore, they will be more willing to build relationships that decrease uncertainty.

Finally, the fourth cultural dimension *masculinity vs. femininity* is the extent to which masculine values dominates over feminine values in a culture (ibid.). Masculine values are assertiveness, competitiveness, and aggressiveness, whereas feminine values are reciprocity, mutuality, and compassion (ibid.). Since the values of a feminine culture align more with the relational processes such as mutuality, it is anticipated that the effect of relationship marketing within a masculine

culture is weaker compared to a feminine culture (ibid.). The four cultural dimensions affect the effectiveness of relationship marketing strategies, however, each of the dimensions affects the relationships in different ways. In other words, specific antecedents are more influenced by some cultural dimensions than others.

As Samaha et al. also suggest, their findings are not directly applicable for managers since the relationship marketing strategies will be implemented by country, and given that the effects of culture on relationship marketing are multidimensional and some cultural dimensions have countervailing effects makes the total effect unclear (ibid.).

#### 4.7 Language, culture and communication

Unsier and Lee (2013) give examples of how a linguistic/cultural group express a definite world view through words or language structure, and in that way, we can get an understanding of how language can shape our world view, our behavior towards others, and our manner of acting. Especially, in international business, language is a major component of culture (ibid.). That is, some of the cultural messages get lost in the translation process. Moreover, language is important under the implementation phase of international business since the implementation is based on communicating with others such as buyers, employees, etc. (ibid.). Therefore, language and communication have an impact on international business. One thing, especially prioritized in this thesis, is verbal communication and linguistic differences as it is one of the main causes of international communication misunderstandings. For instance, the differences in the coding and decoding process of a message are often ignored by the communicators (ibid.). One example is a question of whether the messages sent by the speaker are explicit, which refers to whether a message can be taken literally rather than understood "in context". A message is in context when what is being said has to be reinterpreted using several cues taken from the cultural context of the speaker (ibid.). Therefore, in other words, a message sent is not always the same received. According to Unsier and Lee (2013), since a verbal message is accompanied by the non-verbal part of the message such as the gestures and gesticulations. Consequently, the issue is to understand to which extent does the non-verbal/implicit messages mix with the verbal/explicit messages (ibid.). Moreover, communication is often dependent on its context, and, therefore, context can deceive



what actually seems to be said literally (ibid.). The term context derives from Edward Hall. Hall does not exactly define context, however, Unsier and Lee (2013) mention some components that they presume what context is composed of: location, people involved, and the context of the conversation.

#### 4.7.1 High context vs. low context

Hall (1998) illustrates that context is how information is handled. He contrasts *high context* vs. *low context* communication/messages. High context communication is where most of the information is already in the person while very little is in the coded explicit transmitted part of the message (ibid.). Whereas the low context messages are opposite and the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code (ibid.). Moreover, Hall (1998) acknowledges that high context messages are more on the intimate side contrary to low context messages that are less personal.

In certain cultures, communication is based on *low context* and explicit messages, and among those are the Germanic cultures (Germany, Switzerland, and Austria), North American cultures, and the Scandinavians (Unsier and Lee, 2013). These cultures have a great deal of precision in the verbal aspect of communication, and, therefore, it implies precision with respect to time commitment and, for instance, a seller's message to a potential buyer (ibid.). Contextuality of communication is slightly connected to whether the language itself expresses ideas and facts more or less explicitly (ibid.). For instance, the English language, which is a precise and fairly context-free language contrary to the Japanese language, which is less precise and words can have different meanings.

Unsier and Lee (2013) appoint the distinction between low context versus high context cultures as specific and diffuse since people from low context cultures focus on specific issues. Whereas people from *high context* cultures address broader issues. High context cultures consist of Latin America, the Middle East and Japanese cultures (ibid.). In Japan, context plays a significant role due to their rules of politeness, and that a word can have several meanings (ibid.). Generally, people from high context cultures have a difficult time communicating effectively unless they have a rather good understanding of their counterpart (ibid.). Consequently, high context people are more socially oriented, less confrontational and more satisfied about life.

Misunderstandings between high context and low context cultures can arise in relation to their idea of what is important. In high context cultures, people would like to small talk about life and chit chat to know the counterpart well before doing business (ibid.). On the other hand, people from low context cultures prefer to get straight to business and avoid wasting time on chitchatting (ibid.). Additionally, according to Hall (1998), shifts from high context to low context signal the cooling of a relationship. Whereas a move up from low to high signals increased familiarity and usually warming (ibid.). In that way, one can tell how strong a relationship is.

## 5. Empirical data

In this section, the collected empirical data will be introduced. Both primary and secondary data will be used to answer the research question.

### 5.1 Badminton Denmark

Badminton Denmark was established in 1930 under the name Danish Badminton Union. However, later that year, it changed its name to the Danish Badminton Federation and was connected with Denmark's Sports Federation (Velkommen til Badminton Danmark). Badminton Denmark is a specified federation, which organizes and attends to the interests of the competitive part of Danish badminton on the highest level (ibid.). Additionally, Badminton Denmark's obligations include the interests of the sport on every level and age group in partnership with DGI Badminton (ibid.). According to their website (Badminton Denmark), Badminton Denmark's mission includes the following:

- Denmark creates an image for themselves internationally as a country that produces badminton players ranking among the best in the world.
- Badminton in Denmark is a popular sport.
- Denmark provides badminton experiences on every level beneficial for everyone with interest in the sport.

The federation's vision is that the sport will be known by all Danes and practiced by a large number of people to continuously be a popular sport (ibid.). Moreover, the Danish players must continue to win medals at international championships (ibid.). And finally, the sport should be developed in line

with the community and the practitioners' needs (ibid.). These visions for Danish badminton are all based on the values of Badminton Denmark, which is happiness, development, experience, and community (ibid.).

Therefore, to successfully achieve Badminton Denmark's visions, they focus on several different areas. For instance, there is a huge focus on the number of badminton members to maintain badminton as a popular sport in Denmark. Since 1931, the number of the federation's members has increased from 723 members to 92,307 members distributed on 662 clubs, and the number continues growing (Badminton Denmark medlemstal). Even though the number is increasing, some member areas require attention from Badminton Denmark, for example, the members in the age of 25-59 (ibid.). Therefore, in collaboration with DGI, Badminton Denmark has developed several concepts to attract more members within that age group (ibid.). Not only will the increased number of members make the sport more popular in Denmark but it will also be easier to develop new talents and, therefore, in the long run, complement the best international players to be successful at international championships. Another focus area and value Badminton Denmark concentrate on is experience and community. The biggest Danish badminton event of the year Danisa Denmark Open, a Super Series Premier tournament, welcomes some of the best badminton players of the world. It is a week-long tournament that delivers world-class badminton and gathers all Danish badminton fans as well as international fans from the whole world.

In conclusion, Badminton Denmark is a specified federation that manages both the interests of the professional players including badminton players on every level and age in collaboration with DGI Badminton. Additionally, their goals and obligations undertake the various member groups based on their preferred values.

## 5.2 The CEO of Badminton Denmark Bo Jensen

In 2015 Badminton Denmark acquired a new CEO – Bo Jensen (Interview: Badminton Danmarks nye direktør kender udfordringerne). According to Bo (appendix 4), he has been involved with badminton since he was 6-7 years old in many contexts. For instance, Bo Jensen has been chairman for the youth committee in Lillerød Badminton including the club's chairman of the board of

directors in six years. Furthermore, Bo has 25 years of experience in the private international business world in executive positions and has worked with sales, marketing, leadership, etc. (appendix 4).

Badminton Denmark's board of directors employed Bo Jensen to execute several tasks. For instance, one of the major problems back in 2015 was the decreasing number of members Badminton Denmark experienced back then. However, according to Bo Jensen (appendix 4), the focus of increasing the number of members is still the agenda undeterred by the number is growing already. Moreover, World Championship and Olympic Games medals and the collaboration with DGI are additionally some of the assignments the CEO undertakes (Interview: Badminton Danmarks nye direktør kender udfordringerne). During the interview, Bo Jensen states that he was employed to carry out a very evident task, which was to create a more commercial orientated and professional operated federation (appendix 4). The goal of the task is to establish a stronger financial base to secure the future by not being as dependent on government grants from DIF (The Danish Sports Federation) and Team Denmark (ibid.). According to Bo Jensen, to execute a stronger foundation commercial incomes are more important such as sponsors and relation marketing (ibid.). Therefore, Bo Jensen's background within the international business world should make Badminton Denmark's objectives possible.

### 5.3 Interview with Bo Jensen

The following section provides the assembled information about Bo Jensen, Badminton Denmark's sponsor strategy and focus, and the Asian market vs. the Danish market based on the semi-structured interview with Bo Jensen CEO of Badminton Denmark.

#### 5.3.1 Bo Jensen

As implied in the interview guide (appendix 4), I intended to make additional notes relevant to the case and investigation when interviewing Bo Jensen. Therefore, I observed Bo, his office, and his bodily gestures to understand him as a representative for Badminton Denmark's and his motivation for participating in the interview. I arrived at the House of Sports in Brøndby where Badminton Denmark's organization is located and was welcomed by the head of training division Ulrik Jansen

whom I arranged the meeting with. He accompanied me to Bo Jensen's office, which was decorated with a big desk, a small round table with two chairs, and big posters on the walls of the medalists at the Olympic Games. Behind Bo's desk was the biggest poster of Viktor Axelsen when he won the Olympic Games bronze match in 2016 against Lin Dan. The office emanated of badminton, and it was clear that Bo appreciates the sport and aspires to demonstrate Denmark's successful results. *Bo greeted me and asked me to sit by the round table while he made sure I had something to drink.* He then sat down on the other side of the round table, crossed his legs and hands and smiled. I mentioned my appreciation of the posters and he answered: *"Thank you, it is a few of the many great moments in recent years"*.

The whole interview with Bo exuded professionalism as it was apparent that he has experienced many interviews over the years. Firstly, Bo had prepared some answered beforehand based on the interview guide sent ahead of the meeting (appendix 3). He answered my questions satisfactory and thoroughly and mentioned specific numbers and situations, which indicated that he has great knowledge about the topic. Moreover, he used theoretical terms related to sponsorship theory such as *"shared value"* and *"brand value"* and in general used a more professional terminology (appendix 4). Additionally, he answered several of the prepared questions when answering another question since he covered the themes elaborately, therefore, Bo talked most of the interview. Consequently, I found it difficult to come up with new questions and keeping an overview of the prepared themes and questions.

Generally, it was easy to make an appointment with Bo Jensen. First, I contacted an acquaintance that has worked for Badminton Denmark, who instructed me to write to the head of training division Ulrik Jansen. Through Ulrik Jansen, I made an appointment with Bo Jensen after informing Ulrik what the meeting would be concerned with. Due to the ease of making an appointment with Bo, I think he is very enthusiastic about the sport, spreading the message of Badminton Denmark, and generally, being helpful to people interested in Danish badminton.

During the interview, I intended to notice Bo Jensen's bodily gestures. The main focus was to capture his answers to achieve the best result. However, I noticed several bodily gestures that

indicated Bo's usual activity with interviews. As already mentioned, Bo elaborated his answers very thoroughly. When he talked, he moved his hands similar to ordinary conversations, and frequently touched the paper in front of him, which was his written answers to the interview guide sent previous the interview. Moreover, most of the interview, Bo had eye contact with me, however, sometimes, especially when he thought of what to say, he looked down. All in all, Bo was very relaxed and informal during the interview, however, he still seemed engaged and committed to giving the best answers possible.

### 5.3.2 Badminton Denmark's sponsor strategy and focus

The following section will provide the main points of the interview in relation to Badminton Denmark's sponsor strategy and focus.

According to Bo, his most important assignment was to establish a more commercial and professional-oriented federation to construct a stronger financial foundation (appendix 4). Currently, Badminton Denmark is dependent on subsidies from Denmark's Sports Federation and Team Denmark, and these contributions are very limited compared to Badminton Denmark's intentions to continuously develop the sport within the country. It was, therefore, central to Bo and the organization to secure the future based on commercial income. Consequently, Bo reconstructed Badminton Denmark's sponsor strategy (appendix 4, pp. 75). Since the Asian market is much bigger compared to the Danish and the European market, Badminton Denmark decided to focus on the Asian market and neglect the Danish and European market in the first instance (appendix 4, pp. 76). Most of the interview, Bo emphasized the advantages of partnerships with Asian federations and organizations. According to Bo, the reasons to incur a sponsorship deal are added brand value in the sense that a commercial partner should find it meaningful to establish a partnership with Badminton Denmark in proportion to exposure of its brand, strengthening its brand, and brand awareness – reaching potential customers (appendix 4, pp. 75). In reference to brand awareness, considering the size of the fanbase and the market's interest in the sport is significant. Therefore, he mentions that the Danish and European market is underdeveloped compared to the great Asian nations such as China, Indonesia, and Malaysia concerning badminton (ibid.). Bo believes it is essential that the sponsorship partner can use the partnership actively to generate loyalty with its

customers. To do so, an organization should be able to provide unique experiences with partners and for their customers, and in that way differentiates itself from other organizations within the same segment (appendix 4). For instance, Badminton Denmark arranges an annual event in Odense namely Denmark Open together with their business partners, and invites partners and customers from all over the world to be a part of the event (appendix 4, pp. 78). Badminton Denmark organizes a program where their business partners and customers can be a part of the event's VIP hospitalities as well as a day of sightseeing and meeting the Danish players. In that way, Badminton Denmark's business partners can offer their customers a unique experience.

Additionally, Bo refers to a requested shared value between Badminton Denmark and its sponsorship partners. Especially, a strategic coherence should be visible between Badminton Denmark and potential partners in the shape of shared values and stories since companies should be persuaded to invest their money in Badminton Denmark instead of other great sports (appendix 4). Therefore, Badminton Denmark must stand for something exceptional. For instance, Bo refers to several parameters such as innovation, Danish quality and culture, and community that differentiates Badminton Denmark from others (appendix 4, pp. 77). Furthermore, the unique figure in Denmark that continuously can develop elite players that can compete with nations like China and Indonesia despite its rather limited potential. In other words, Badminton Denmark needs to separate itself from others on several unique factors that all in all construct a story that makes the business partners interesting concerning the Asian consumer.

According to Bo, there exist some cultural and linguistic challenges when building relationships with Asian countries. He acknowledges the complications of communicating with for instance China given most of them do not speak English, and it is necessary to be accompanied by an interpreter (appendix 4, pp. 79). However, the language is improving since the Chinese are aware of the necessity to learn English, and it is preferable to learn some polite phrases in Denmark as well (ibid.). In reality, learning some polite phrases address cultural complications more than linguistics. That is, it shows respect and recognition to facilitate building relationships on a personal level. Especially, meeting partners at eye level and develop a personal relationship is important regarding include partnerships that continue for many years, and in that way, the relationship becomes slightly

emotional (ibid.). Previously, due to a lack of understanding of the cultural differences, the relationship between the federation and the Chinese badminton federation and other Asian support organizations has been disastrous (appendix 4, pp. 80). Consequently, the partnership has been unsuccessful. However, that is something Bo and Badminton Denmark currently prioritize and attempt to rebuild the relationship and reestablish a great partnership (appendix 4, pp. 81).

In conclusion, Badminton Denmark presently concentrates on the Asian market regarding sponsorships and building commercial partnerships to receive additional financial support in addition to the public subsidies. These international relations is necessary to secure Danish badminton in the future. Without the relationships and the financial income Badminton Denmark would not have been able to invest in development projects and talent development i.e. both on a professional level and club level in Denmark (appendix, pp. 83). All in all, international partnerships will make badminton in Denmark more interesting, attract more members conducive increasing the chances of developing talents and improving the quality of Danish badminton.

### 5.3.3 The Danish and Asian market based on the interview

During the interview, Bo Jensen contributed with a lot of detailed information about the Asian market versus the European and Danish market, which has been difficult to discover on my own on the Internet. Therefore, the following will illustrate the market-based information from the in-depth interview with Bo Jensen.

Badminton in Denmark is quite popular and the fanbase is rather large. The Danish market constitutes approximately 5.7 million potential people. When taking Europe into account, the potential people compose roughly 25 million that Badminton Denmark can reach (appendix, pp. 75). Considering this from an international commercial partner's point of view, it is a relatively narrow market. Furthermore, badminton is not as popular compared to other sports such as football, handball, tennis, and golf in the European market. Therefore, in Europe badminton is mostly an attractive sport in Denmark. However, according to Bo, the Asian market is something else compared to the European market. For instance, the great Asian nations being China, Indonesia, and Malaysia favor badminton in preference to other sports, and, furthermore, they consider



badminton as their national sport or it ranks as number two or three in relation to popularity (ibid.). These major nations have population density, and, subsequently, they have a huge fanbase. As an example, the fanbase exclusively in China constitutes approximately 200 million people (appendix, pp. 76). The fanbase in the entire Asian market composes roughly 450 million people (ibid.). In comparison with the European market, Badminton Denmark can approach a far greater number of people in the Asian market.

#### 5.3.4 How Denmark took on Asia at Badminton

According to The Local (2018), it is remarkable that such a small country as Denmark can compete with great nations being China. Observing the world rankings of badminton, it is noticeable how few European countries are apparent and how much the Asian nations are domineering (BWF). Denmark's record in badminton is noteworthy having their population in mind – less than six million people (The Local). Compared to China with a population of 1.4 billion, it is interesting how Denmark is punching way above its weight (ibid.). This is for two reasons. First of all, Denmark has an unusual club structure due to many local badminton clubs all over Denmark, which makes it easy for kids to play. Moreover, Denmark has managed to establish a national training center in Copenhagen where the best Danish players meet for daily training (ibid.). In that way, the best players from all over the country can meet, spar with each other, and therefore can develop and challenge one another. Consequently, the badminton culture in Denmark makes it possible for a small country to compete with much greater Asian nations.

#### 5.4 Badminton Denmark's focus on sponsors

During the process of writing this thesis, Badminton improved its website. On the frontpage, Badminton Denmark has classified the different topics in headlines (Badminton Danmark). One of the headlines says "Collaborate with us". Badminton Denmark, therefore, makes it clear that they are seeking sponsors and collaborators actively. When clicking on the headline, sub-subjects such as sponsor, collaborators, Business club, and become host city emerge. In that way, Badminton Denmark makes it possible for potential sponsors to read more about a potential partnership. As a sponsor, one can sponsor the several Danish national teams, Denmark Open, or the Badminton league (Badminton Danmark – Samarbejd med os). As a collaborator, one can become a partner

with Badminton Denmark, Denmark Open, National Team partner, and VIP event partner (ibid.). Every sub-subject illustrates the advantages of sponsoring Danish badminton from the sponsors' point of view. Especially, benefits such as brand exposure, unique activations of the sponsorship and exclusive events are repeated along with the specifics of the sponsorship (Badminton Denmark Partner). Moreover, it is noticeable that the sub-subject "collaborate with us" is written in English, which indicates that Badminton Denmark appeals to international partners. On the website, the Danish badminton federation clarifies that they offer different and flexible methods to a successful partnership where both entities fulfill mutually objectives that can be adjusted to the individual sponsor's needs and desires (Badminton Danmark – Sponsor – Ungdom).

## 5.5 Cultural differences between Asia and Denmark

There are several cultural differences between Asia and Denmark. Initially, the cultural differences mentioned by Bo Jensen in the in-depth interview will be outlined. Thereafter, a country comparison between Denmark and the previously selected Asian countries will be presented.

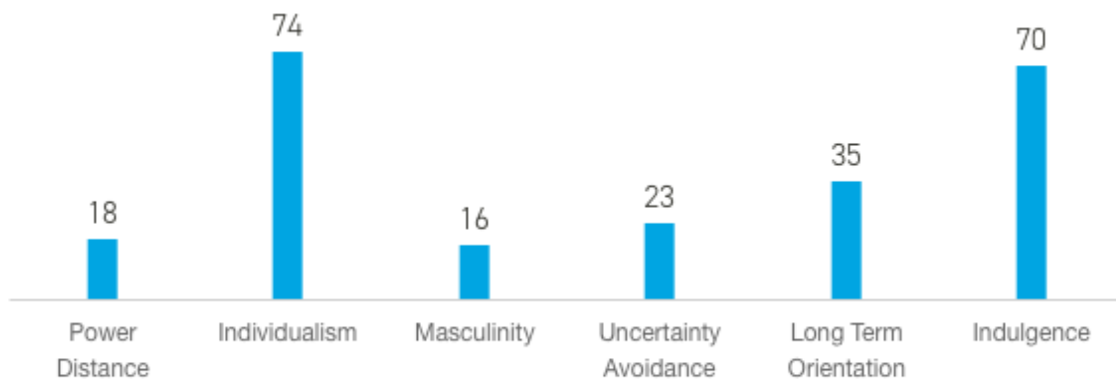
### 5.5.1 Cultural differences based on the interview

As already established in paragraph 5.3.2, Bo mentions some linguistic and cultural differences between Denmark and the Asian market that can cause some challenges when building relationships. Especially one particular factor plays a role when building a partnership with Asian nations – emotional relations (appendix, pp. 79). According to Bo, relations weighs more than the business. Consequently, if you do not succeed in building a relationship on a personal level, there is an increased risk of a short term partnership (ibid.).

### 5.5.2 Country comparison – Hofstede Insights

To understand and explain the cultural differences between Denmark and the previously chosen Asian countries China, Indonesia, and Japan, Hofstede Insights tool "Country Comparison" will be applied. Country Comparison is a tool available on the website Hofstede Insights, which allows comparing selected countries culture based on Hofstede's six dimensions (Country Comparison – Hofstede Insights). However, not all dimensions will be explained if they are of minor relevance in relation to this thesis.

### 5.5.2.1 Denmark's cultural dimensions



#### Denmark

Reference: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/denmark/>

To compare the culture of Asian nations with Denmark's, it is essential to explore the Danish culture through the lens of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. In that way, it is possible to get an overview of the Danish culture relative to the Asian culture.

Viewing the first dimension *Power Distance*, it is apparent that Denmark scores low of this dimension. That is, Danes have a very democratic mindset because they believe in independence, equal rights, accessible managers, and that management facilitate and empowers (Hofstede Insights). In other words, power is decentralized in organizations, which discharges an informal atmosphere since the communication is direct and everyone works on a first name basis. Furthermore, respect among the Danes in workplaces is earned by proving your hands-on expertise regardless of what status you have. Conclusively, Danish managers do not lead, they coach others and, therefore, employee autonomy is required in Danish organizations (ibid.).

Especially employee autonomy could also result from another dimension where Denmark scores high – *individualism*. Denmark is a very individualistic society, which means that individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate family only, and work independently

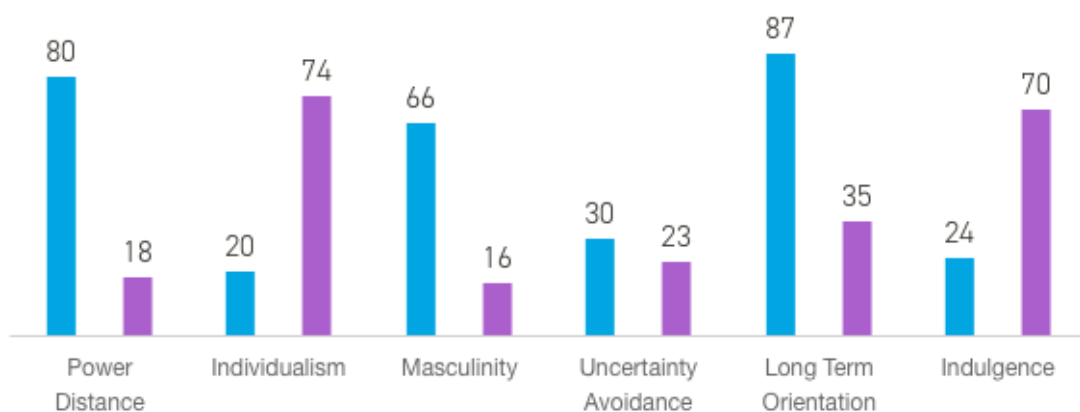
(ibid.). Due to the individualistic culture, it is relatively easy to start doing business with Danes and, therefore, one does not have to create relationships first.

Moreover, Denmark is considered a *Feminine* society, and, therefore, Danes prioritize a balance between work and spare time, and, therefore, people prefer free time and flexible work hours and place (ibid.). For instance, Danes solve conflicts and problems at work by compromising and negotiating. Additionally, managers support their employees and involve them in decision making. This results in equality, solidarity, and quality in workplaces, which Danes value (ibid.).

In Denmark, structure and predictability are not required in the Danes work life, which explains the low score of *uncertainty avoidance* (ibid.). Consequently, Danes accept the fact that plans change overnight, which is a natural part of their work life. It is also acceptable not to know everything and simply just say “*I do not know*” (ibid.).

In conclusion, Denmark is an individualistic and feminine society, which values equality, independency, and balance between free time and work, and focuses on the present and do not fear changes.

### 5.5.2.2 China vs. Denmark



Reference: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/china,denmark/>

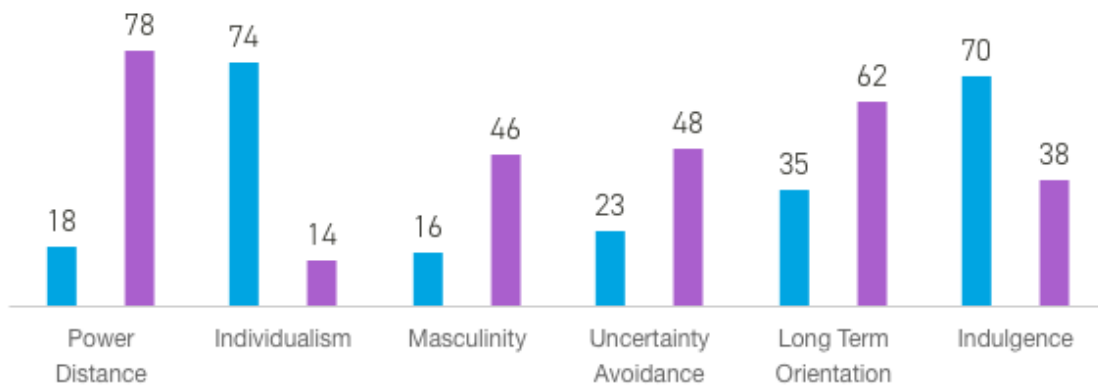
China power distance is the very opposite of Denmark's. China ranks high on the *power distance* dimension, which indicates that the nation accepts inequality amongst people (Hofstede Insights – China). This results in a hierarchy and formal atmosphere in organizations, and there is no defense against power abuse by managers (ibid.).

Furthermore, as the chart illustrates, China is a highly *collectivistic* culture in which people belong to in groups and therefore act in the interests of the group (ibid.). Wherefore, the Chinese culture is a “we-culture”, and people put the needs of the group before their own. This affects hiring and promotion situations given people from the in-groups are favored and preferred contrary to people from the out-groups. According to Hofstede Insights, personal relationships are prioritized over task and company, and they are unfriendly and cold towards strangers (out-groups).

China is a *masculine* society that is focused on success (ibid.). Therefore, the Chinese are willing to sacrifice family and leisure to ensure success at work. An example of the masculine society is in the form of Chinese students and their focus on their exam scores and ranking since this is the main criteria to achieve success or not (ibid.).

China scores low on uncertainty avoidance. Therefore, the Chinese are comfortable with ambiguity, which is visible in their language since it is full of ambiguous meanings that are difficult for Western people to understand (ibid.). Furthermore, Chinese are adaptable and entrepreneurial, which results in a lot of small to medium-sized and family-owned businesses (ibid.).

### 5.5.2.3 Indonesia vs. Denmark



Reference: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/denmark,indonesia/>

Similar to China, Indonesia scores high on the *power distance* dimension, which indicates that they are dependent on hierarchy, inequality is accepted, and the power within organizations are centralized (Hofstede Insights – Indonesia). Therefore, managers control their employees and they expect to be directed by their managers. Furthermore, it is socially accepted by Indonesians that there is a wide and unequal difference between rich and poor (ibid.).

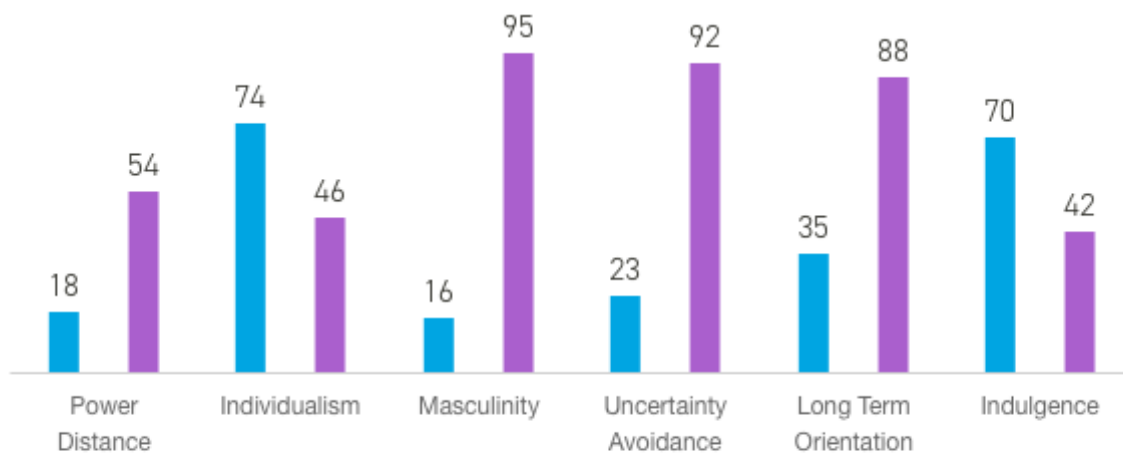
Indonesia is, additionally, a *collectivist* society, which concludes in a social framework where individuals have to fit into the society and the in-groups to which they belong (ibid.). Individuals have to live up to the ideals of their group, and especially commitment and respect towards one's family is of great importance. For instance, Indonesian children are committed to their parents and vice versa. Consequently, the children wish to make their parents' life easier, take care of them and support them as they get older (ibid.).

Indonesia is considered a low *masculine* society. Indonesia is not as masculine as other Asian countries such as China and Japan, however, it is not as feminine as most North European countries, for example, Denmark (Hofstede Insights – Indonesia). Especially status and visible symbols of success are of great significance, however, it is not always material gain that brings motivation

owing to the Indonesian concept “gengsi” (outwards appearances) since it is important to appear strong and express status (ibid.). Low masculine cultures, which is not low enough to be termed feminine, expose characteristics of the masculine societies, however, in a minor degree (ibid.).

Due to the score on 48 on this dimension, Indonesia has a low preference for *avoiding uncertainty*. That is, Indonesia prefers the Javanese culture of separation of internal self from external self (ibid.). For instance, when a person is upset, it is normal not to show negative emotion or anger externally and, therefore, they will keep up appearances, smile and be polite (ibid.). This is also present at workplaces and in relationships where the Indonesian will maintain a good atmosphere and not spread negativity. In conflict situations and direct communication is used as a solution, the Indonesian will feel uncomfortable and consider it as a threat. However, a successful method of conflict diffusion is to use a third-party mediator that will secure no loss of face and disharmony (ibid.).

#### 5.5.2.4 Japan vs. Denmark



Denmark

Japan

Reference: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/denmark,japan/>

According to Hofstede Insights (Japan), Japan is a borderline hierarchical society in the sense that the Japanese are aware of their hierarchical position in any social setting and act subsequently.

Nevertheless, compared to other Asian cultures, the Japanese culture is not as hierarchical even though all decision making must be confirmed by each hierarchical layer of the organization. Contradictory, this also means that not one single top manager can make the decision, which is possible in more hierarchical cultures (ibid.). Additionally, according to the Japanese education system, everyone is born equal and can achieve anything if one works hard enough (ibid.).

Japan scores 46 on the *individualism dimension*. In some ways, Japan has characteristics of a collectivistic society given that the harmony of the group is important and they have a strong sense of shame for losing face (ibid.). However, according to Hofstede Insights (Japan), the Japanese in-group is situational since they are more loyal and committed towards their companies contrary to their families, and loyalty towards their companies is an individualistic choice. Western nations experience Japan as a collectivistic society, whereas Asian nations view Japan as an individualistic culture. One way to explain could be the fact that Western nations notice the Japanese's loyalty towards their organizations, however, in reality, more collectivistic cultures are more loyal to their inner group by birth such as their extended family and their local community (ibid.).

It is worth noticing that Japan is one of the most *masculine* societies in the world with a score of 95 (Hofstede Insights – Japan). Nonetheless, due to their mild collectivism, competitive behaviors do not occur, which normally is associated with masculine cultures (ibid.). Although, there is a competition between groups. For instance, from a very young age, children learn to compete on sports day for their own groups, and, additionally, as grown-ups, Japanese are most motivated when competing in a winning team against their competitors at their workplaces (ibid.). Moreover, according to Hofstede Insights (Japan), masculinity is visible in the drive for excellence and perfection in relation to material production, services, and presentation in every aspect of life.

As opposed to Denmark, Japan is one of the most *uncertainty avoiding* countries in the world. That is mostly due to a constant threat of natural disasters from earthquakes etc.. Therefore, the Japanese have learned to prepare themselves for any given circumstance (ibid.). Consequently, organizations spend a lot of time on risk management and feasibility studies before a project can



begin (ibid.). Due to the high need for uncertainty avoidance, it is very difficult for the Japanese to handle changes.

## 6. Analysis

This analysis is divided into two parts. The first part of the analysis focuses on Badminton Denmark's partnerships with Asian federations and commercial partners. The second part of the analysis will examine the cultural differences between Denmark and the selected Asian nations and how they affect the international relationships.

### 6.1 Qualitative Directed Content Analysis

Prior to the analysis, a categorization will be made of Bo Jensen's points and statements during the in-depth interview using *qualitative directed content analysis*. Therefore, the following will describe the process of categorizing some of the most relevant statements from the interview to the different parts of the analysis. To begin with, the whole interview was printed out to get a general view of the statements. Then the statements were divided into categories based on relevance and the initial codes that are determined by the key concepts illustrated in theory related to the parts of the analysis. The categories that emerged were the *potential within the Asian market*, *Badminton Denmark's strategic choice*, the *advantages of international partnerships* with Asian nations, the *business and maintenance of the relationships*, and to some degree the *cultural challenges*. Since the primary empirical data is an unstructured in-depth interview where the interviewer sets the scene and formulates the themes of the interview, the categories are somewhat predetermined. Therefore, by controlling the interview, it is accessible to collect data that match the predetermined theory and, consequently, the categories. Moreover, to support the selected theory, I have searched for answers of the interviewee that makes sense in relation to the theory. For this reason, most of the statements have been found relevant and been categorized.

## 6.2 Part 1: Badminton Denmark's development and management of Asian partnerships

The first part of the analysis will address how Badminton Denmark develops and manages partnerships with the Asian nations to improve Danish Badminton. Therefore, the first part focus on the first part of the theory that accounts for the sponsorships and inter-organizational relationships.

### 6.2.1 The Asian potential

At the beginning of preparing for this thesis, I was not aware of Badminton Denmark's focus on Asia. Off course the organization must have had some focus on such an attractive market, however, the degree of the attention at Asia was not visible. Therefore, when conducting the in-depth interview with Badminton Denmark's CEO Bo Jensen, it was clear that Badminton Denmark focuses on Asia in relation to their sponsor strategy. This part of the analysis will determine the potential of Asia as an attractive commercial/sponsorship partner. According to Bo Jensen (appendix 3), Badminton Denmark's biggest and considerable sponsors and commercial partners are all Chinese or Asian organizations or Danish companies that have a great focus on China or Asia:

*"[...] vores største sponsorer/kommercielle partnere er alle kinesiske/asiatiske virksomheder eller danske virksomheder med stærkt fokus på Kina/Asien".*

*(Appendix 3)*

There is no doubt that Badminton Denmark is concentrating on the Asian market instead of the European/Danish market. As mentioned in paragraph 5.3.3, the Danish and European market are relatively narrow markets with a potential fanbase of 25 million people. Moreover, badminton does not stand out from other sports such as football, handball, tennis, and golf (appendix 4). Therefore, as a sport, badminton does not have a big market share within Europe and no wonder Badminton Denmark chooses to focus on Asia and neglects the Danish and European market, to begin with. There are several reasons to which Badminton Denmark should focus on Asia when it comes to sponsorships. As Bo Jensen emphasizes, the distribution of the sport is much bigger in Asia:

*"Grundet badminton sportens store udbredelse i Asien med en fanbase på min.*

*450 millioner mennesker, er Asien et attraktivt marked at søge samarbejdspartnere for Badminton Danmark".*

*(Appendix 3)*

Compared to the European market that potentially reaches 25 million people, the Asian market consists of approximately 450 million potential fans and, consequently, can reach a much bigger share of the people (appendix 4). Since badminton, additionally, is often the national sport or the second or third most popular sport, the interest for badminton in Asia is significantly greater compared to the European market where badminton competes with lots of other sports. Consequently, the percentage of Asia fans is more extensive than the percentage in Europe, and it is easier for Badminton Denmark to attain fans in Asia contrary to European fans. In other words, you can say that there is more money in badminton as a sport in Asia in comparison with Europe due to the majority of fans and their interest within the sport. Therefore, Asian sponsors are more interested in investing in Badminton Denmark than Danish sponsors:

*“[...] det er langt mere interessant for en virksomhed i Shanghai at investere i dansk badminton end det er for et stort dansk pengeinstitut. [...] der er bare så mange flere penge i badminton sporten generelt set i Asien sammenlignet med Europa”. (Appendix 4, pp. 79)*

Asian organizations and federations have more interest in sponsoring a Danish badminton union than some Danish organizations because of their own interest in the sport, however, a huge share of their customers are badminton fans as well. In that way, Asian companies can make themselves attractive for their customers by sponsoring a badminton federation that stands for and facilitates their passion for the sport. In conclusion, compared to the European and Danish market, the Asian market has much more potential in relation to approach fans and penetrate a greater market share for Badminton Denmark. That is, due to a larger fanbase that potentially reaches far more people, and the interest in the sport in Asia is bigger. Therefore, on the Asian market, the possibility of brand exposure and brand awareness is significant.

### 6.2.2 Strategic choice

Knowing that the Asian market has great potential for Danish badminton, Bo Jensen was determined to change Badminton Denmark's sponsor strategy when he became CEO. The reason to the remaking of the organization's sponsor strategy was to create a more commercial and professional based federation with a strong financial foundation not dependent on government grants from DIF and Team Denmark (appendix 4).

*“[...] skabe et fundament, hvor kommercielle indtægter fik en større betydning og dermed gav os [...] sikkerhed ift. fremtiden”.*

(Appendix 4, pp. 74)

These financial incomes from commercial partners should be able to secure Badminton Denmark's and Danish badminton's future since the subsidies from DIF and Team Denmark are relatively limited and cannot satisfy Badminton Denmark's goals and visions. Therefore, Badminton Denmark has made an active strategic decision to solve this financial issue. According to Hoye and Parent (2017), an inter-organizational relationship is an active strategic choice that the organizations make to solve complex issues and benefit from the partnership. Whether or not a financial problem is a complex issue, can be discussed. As mentioned before, the government grants that Badminton Denmark receives are relatively limited and Badminton Denmark do not expect that the number will increase any time soon and if it does, the size will be marginal (appendix 4, pp. 46). Moreover, the interest in badminton in Denmark is rather inadequate compared to other sports as well. The financial issue is quite complex to solve, and, therefore, Badminton Denmark makes a strategic choice to be involved in inter-organizational relationships with Asian partners. In that way, Badminton Denmark can be more effective when it comes to investing in talent development to continue generating world-class elite players (appendix 4, pp. 51). Moreover, Badminton Denmark can benefit from the relationships in relation to accessing expertise (Hoye and Parent, 2017). For instance, Bo Jensen states an example of the partnership with the Chinese badminton federation, which is inviting the Chinese youth players to be a part of the Danish youth national team's practice in connection with a nearby tournament (appendix 4, pp. 49). In that way, the Danish players can benefit from the Chinese players' talent and expertise by playing with and against them, and, maybe, develop new relationships themselves. International relationships between Badminton Denmark and Asian commercial partners and federations improve Badminton Denmark's economic situation and their financial future and offer resistance in relation to training and development. Furthermore, Badminton Denmark intends that the sponsorships should be long-termed and functions as a collaborative partner that has joined objectives:

*“[...] vi søger ikke bare en sponsor, men en samarbejdspartner, med hvem vi kan udvikle vores samarbejde og fælles målsætninger over en længere årrække.”*

*(Appendix 3).*

Another characteristic of an inter-organizational relationship is the intention to cooperate to solve a mutual problem over a long period (Hoye and Parent, 2017). According to Bo Jensen (appendix 4), it is important for Badminton Denmark that the present and potential partnerships have a long-term plan since it is easier to sell more to an existing customer rather than a new one and it is simple to develop the relationship to a higher level (appendix 4, pp. 50). Consequently, Badminton Denmark will use fewer resources on long-termed partnerships/or inter-organizational relationships compared to short-termed relationships.

#### 6.2.2.1 Resource dependence theory and strategic management

To some extent, it is arguable that Badminton Denmark's collaborations with commercial partners and Asian federation are both a question of depending on resources as well as strategic management. Resource dependence theory describes how power and dependence on key resources drive organizational partnerships to reduce uncertainty. As already established, Badminton Denmark lacks financial resources to invest in the development of the sport such as talent development and the resources available at big tournaments (appendix 4). Therefore, Badminton Denmark is dependent on sponsorships to successfully fulfill these objectives. Especially, Badminton Denmark's commercial partners in the form of private Asian organizations that provide the union with financial incomes have, consequently, great power over Badminton Denmark. However, how does Badminton Denmark manage their dependency? They provide their partners something unique:

*“Det som er vigtigt for os, det er, at vi står for noget unikt [...] for innovation, dansk kvalitet, dansk kultur [...], fællesskab”. (Appendix 4)*

According to Bo Jensen (ibid.), Badminton Denmark can offer their partners something unique in the form of innovation, Danish quality and culture, community, and unique experiences, for instance, events. Moreover, Danish badminton has a history of being a small country that continuously develops elite players that can compete with great nations such as China and Indonesia

(ibid.). In that way, Badminton Denmark can offer uniqueness and history that the partners can bring upon themselves. Therefore, the power of the collaborators will be minimized since Badminton Denmark can give something back to the partners and make themselves interesting and attractive. Nonetheless, the public collaborations with Asian federations do not have as much power over Badminton Denmark as the private partners since they cover more intangible resources such as information, knowledge and expertise and not revenues. And in consideration of the necessity of revenues to reduce Badminton Denmark's uncertainty of lacking the income to invest in Danish badminton, the Danish union is more dependent on the finances. However, as the Chinese federation is one of the biggest in the world along with China's history, the Chinese federation can provide Denmark with knowledge and expertise, which can be an advantage in relation to training and tournaments.

The partnerships can likewise be seen from a strategic management point of view. Strategic management is the decision to incur in collaborations to maximize the effectiveness in the environment to reach a common goal (Hoye and Parent, 2017). Just as resource dependence theory, the organization makes collaborations since they lack valuable resources, competencies, expertise, and knowledge, and the objectives are for instance to obtain resources, market share, or a unique market position through longer-termed relationships (ibid.). As already illustrated, Badminton Denmark incurs in international relationships due to limited resources. However, this theory focuses on the organizations' evaluation and selection of different alternatives and the fact that it is the owners free and strategic choice (ibid.). Badminton Denmark actively chooses its partners in relation to a strategic match and shared value.

*"[...] vi er jo bevidst gået efter virksomheder, som også værdimæssigt, hvad skal man sige, ligger tæt op ad det vi også gerne vil. Så der er det her shared value"*  
(Appendix 4).

According to Bo Jensen (ibid.), it is important that there are shared values between the two entities or else it is difficult to create added value regarding the sponsor's expectations to the collaboration. Consequently, Badminton Denmark has made an active strategic choice to enter into inter-organizational relationships to receive revenues in exchange for a great badminton history and model and shared values.

### 6.2.3 The inter-organizational relationship defined

To understand and examine the partnerships between Badminton Denmark and their commercial and federation partners, the inter-organizational relationship will be defined. According to Bo Jensen, Badminton Denmark's biggest sponsor/commercial partners are Chinese or Asian companies or Danish organizations that focus on China and Asia (appendix 3). Moreover, Bo Jensen mentions a partnership with the Danish consulate general in Shanghai as well as a close collaboration with the leading Asian federations:

*"[...] vi indgår i dag i tætte samarbejder med nogle af de førende asiatiske forbund, blandt andet det kinesiske, og vi har i da gen række sponsoraftaler med enten kinesiske eller asiatiske virksomheder".*

(Appendix 4)

Consequently, there exist several different inter-organizational relationships between Badminton Denmark and its collaborative partners. In accordance with Morgan et al. (2014) a sport property can vary from an individual athlete, a local, regional or national sport organization, an international sport federation, a sport event, etc. However, in this case, the sport property Badminton Denmark is Denmark's badminton federation, which covers most of the mentioned categories. As established in paragraph 5.1, Badminton Denmark organizes and attends to the interests of the competitive part of Danish badminton on the highest level (Velkommen til Badminton Danmark). That obligation covers the individual athletes that play with the national team and on the national training. Furthermore, Badminton Denmark includes the interests of the sport on every level and age group in collaboration with DGI Badminton (ibid.), which involves the categories local and regional organizations such as the local badminton clubs and the Danish badminton districts. Finally, Badminton Denmark arranges the biggest Danish badminton event every year – Denmark Open, and, therefore, Badminton Denmark is also a sport event in relation to sport property. Conclusively, Badminton Denmark covers a wide range of sport property definitions since it is a national federation with lots of obligations towards the sport in Denmark. On the other hand, the sponsor categorization can be defined in two ways. Badminton Denmark's commercial partners in the form of Asian and Danish organizations can be described as corporate businesses. The other collaborative

partners in the form of Asian federations and consulate generals belong to the category government agency. Therefore, a clear definition of the inter-organizational relationships is almost unattainable due to the many different components Badminton Denmark represents and their diversity of sponsors.

Grounded on Hoye and Parent's (2017) definition of potential partners and structure and form of the relationships, the inter-organizational relationships between Badminton Denmark and its collaborators can be described otherwise. Since it has not been possible to interview some of Badminton Denmark's sponsors, the analysis of the inter-organizational relationships is based on Badminton Denmark's point of view based on the in-depth interview with Bo Jensen combined with the theory of structure and form of these partnerships. As previously stated, Badminton Denmark collaborates with public and private stakeholders in the form of respectively Asian federations and consulate generals and Asian and Danish companies. In order to define the relationship between Badminton Denmark and its sponsors, we need to establish the goal of the relationships (Hoye and Parent, 2017). The main goal for Badminton Denmark is to create a more commercial federation in the form of incomes from sponsors to secure the future of Danish badminton (appendix 4). Additionally, another goal is to have collaborators that can benefit the Danish players when it comes to tournaments or training partners to help or develop the players based on the partners' expertise. Therefore, Badminton Denmark has distinctive objectives in relation to the inter-organizational relationship, which represents the two different groups of stakeholders/partners: private Asian companies and public Asian federations.

In order to examine the sponsors' objectives for the sponsorships, we must assume the sponsors view the partnerships as Bo Jensen states in the interview. According to Bo Jensen (appendix 4), the sponsors should incur in a partnership if it can provide added brand value consisting of strengthening their brand and increasing brand awareness. In other words, the sponsors must think: *"how can I use this sponsorship actively?"*. If Badminton Denmark's sponsors view the sponsorships in that fashion, the international relationships can be defined as dyadic relationships, transactional exchanges, and cross-sector collaborations. That is, the private collaborations can be dyadic relationships as it involves two interacting entities that both are positively and actively committed



to this partnership to achieve certain objectives. Additionally, the private partnerships can be transactional exchanges since sport property and sponsor exchange some of their tangible and/or intangible resources. Finally, the partnerships between Badminton Denmark and the public federations can be defined as cross-sector collaborations. However, several elements affect the determination of the partnerships such as issues as trust, the strength, and length of the interaction, the governance, and whether the relationship is voluntary or forced. As previously stated, it has not been possible to attain specific information about Badminton Denmark's partnerships. Nonetheless, the sponsorship is not forced in this situation due to the active strategic choice of sponsorships. Furthermore, the length and strength of the partnerships are closely related to trust – the longer the collaboration, the stronger the collaboration and trust is often accompanied.

#### 6.2.4 Sponsor relationship model

To examine the alliances between the sport organization and its sponsors, a sponsor relationship model will be applied and thereby explore how Badminton Denmark perceives the partnership with its sponsors and how trust and commitment are developed through the first two components of the model (Farrelly et al., 2003). As the model consists of three components: sponsor market orientation, sponsor collaborative communication, and sponsor commitment and trust, the following will provide an analysis of Badminton Denmark and its sponsorships in relation to each component.

##### **Sponsor market orientation**

Even though Badminton Denmark has several personal reasons to which the organization builds these partnerships, it is important that Badminton Denmark performs several sponsor market orientation activities to cover their customers' needs since the sponsors also should benefit of the relationship in order for it to be successful. For instance, Badminton Denmark can offer its partners relevant products and services that, additionally, are beneficial to the partners' customers as well.

*"[...] sikre, at samarbejdspartnerne får værdi ud af samarbejdet, at de oplever, at de kan give deres eksisterende og potentielle kunder og samarbejdspartnerne adgang til unikke oplevelser, hvor de får mulighed for at dyrke og udvikle de personlige relationer til kunden/partneren". (Appendix 3)*

As Bo states in this quotation, Badminton Denmark's partners and sponsors should perceive that they can provide value and unique experiences to their partners and customers in order to develop their personal relationships (ibid.). Especially unique experiences are an element that Bo Jensen mentions often during the interview. The unique experiences could be events in the form of tournaments such as Denmark Open. However, on Badminton Denmark's website, the experiences could be VIP events being VIP Champagne Sunday Brunch, Company day, and VIP lounge (Badminton Danmark – magasiner). By arranging these events, the partners feel special since they can experience something others may not. Badminton Denmark concentrates on sponsorships as a part of their strategy and objectives, which, additionally, is indicated on their webpage. On the website, Badminton Denmark makes it clear that a sponsorship or collaboration can be adjusted to each sponsor's own needs and desires (Badminton Danmark – Samarbejd med os). However, the main beneficial advantages Badminton Denmark can offer their sponsors are brand exposure, unique activations of the sponsorships, and exclusive events (ibid.). Depending on each sponsorship, the sponsors can be endorsed in several ways: logo/brand exposure, on Badminton Denmark's websites, on their Danish and Chinese social media, in their Badminton Magazin and Event programs, on education and printed material, on live streaming from national events, TV broadcasting from both national and international events, and naming rights to all national events inclusive extensive exposure (ibid.). Therefore, Badminton Denmark can offer specific brand exposure to their customers, and the more they can offer and cover of the customers' needs the better a partnership it will become.

### **Sponsor collaborative communication**

Collaborative communication is a combination of specific relation-building communication attributes that will result in mutual support and respect between the entities (Farrelly et al., 2003). These communication attributes can be a variety of features. Therefore, in relation to this case, they will be considered active communicative initiatives from Badminton Denmark to build and develop their partnerships. First of all, Badminton Denmark seeks to develop personal relations to their collaborators. An approach to do that, the CEO of Badminton Denmark Bo Jensen has learned some Chinese polite phrases to meet their Chinese partners with respect:

*“Det at jeg kan møde en potentiel kinesisk samarbejdspartner og kan sådan de mest almindelige høflighedsfraser [...] det skaber en anerkendelse og respekt og det gør, at det bliver nemmere for os at opbygge en relation, ikke kun som organisation og virksomhed I mellem, men også på det personlige plan”.*

*(Appendix 4).*

With the assistance of Chinese communicative phrases, Bo Jensen can create a personal relationship with the sponsor since it illustrates engagement, commitment, and respect for the partner. To a degree, this activity is a move towards eliminating the barriers and differences between the two entities to engage more in the relationship. Moreover, Badminton Denmark can build personal relationship demonstratively by visiting or inviting their partners to meet in person. By using time, energy and resources to visit or invite a partner shows sincere commitment. It is easier to communicate and build relationships in person and potential misunderstandings can be minimized face to face instead of written communication. An example is that Badminton Denmark likewise intended to meet up with the Chinese badminton federation in May to rebuild the otherwise poorly partnership (appendix 4). Showing up in person gives the Chinese an impression of engagement to their partnership, and the fact that Badminton Denmark attempts to make amends.

### **Sponsor commitment and trust**

Both a strong market orientation and collaborate communication affect commitment and trust within the relationships. Farrelly et al. (2003) describe commitment as ongoing short term investments to accomplish long term benefits from the partnership (ibid.). The point of investing time and resources on sponsorships is to benefit from them in the long term. Badminton Denmark, additionally, prefers long-term sponsorships:

*“Så hvis vi kan opdyrke langvarige samarbejder, så viser al erfaring, så kan vi også udvikle samarbejdet”. (Appendix 4)*

If Badminton Denmark can have committed partners that continuously invest resources etc., the partnership will develop, and in that way, Badminton Denmark can save resources instead of building new relationships with others. Moreover, Farrelly et al. (2003) define trust as a psychological orientation where vulnerability is accepted due to their previous behavior and

positive expectations. Therefore, for a sponsor to trust in their partner, the relationship must be strong and long-termed, and their partner's behavior should previously have been near flawless. That is, even though Badminton Denmark experiences misfortune and become exposed to a crisis, for instance, it will not affect the partnership with their partners who trust in them because the partners have not had a bad experience with Badminton Denmark before, and/or they have such a strong personal relationship that they trust them blindly.

In conclusion, Badminton Denmark prioritizes a strong market orientation by providing activities or services that are beneficial to their potential partners. Furthermore, the organization attempts to collaborative communicate with their sponsors by learning Chinese phrases and visits them to rebuild the relationships and show commitment. If the partners are committed to the relationship, it can continue for a long time and bring long-term benefits with is such as trust. Therefore, by applying this model, it is clear that Badminton Denmark concentrates on their sponsor and partnerships in practice by incorporating activities withhold long-term relationships to accomplish their objectives.

#### 6.2.5 Sub-conclusion of part one

Compared to the European market, Asia is a highly attractive market for Badminton Denmark due to its huge fanbase and interest in the sport. Therefore, Badminton Denmark changes its sponsor strategy and seeks to develop inter-organizational relationships with Asian companies and federations to become a more commercial and professional federation by having a strong financial base and secure the future of Danish badminton. Badminton Denmark is dependent on these resources, and in exchange Badminton Denmark offers values, history, and a long-termed relationship to solve mutually complex issues. The inter-organizational relationships can be defined in various ways since Badminton Denmark represents the total of Danish badminton such as the national teams, the individual professional players, local clubs, etc. The potential sponsors and partners are both private companies and public federations. The length, strength and mediators commitment and trust affect the partnerships additionally. By offering a strong market orientation that is beneficial to potential collaborators and actively communicate and execute collaboration,

the partners will generate trust and commitment towards Badminton Denmark, which will result in a successful long-term relationship.

### 6.3 Part 2: Cultural differences and their impact on the international partnerships

The second part of the analysis will examine the cultural differences and their impact on the international relationships between Badminton Denmark and the selected Asian nations. Consequently, this part of the analysis will be based on the cultural theory accounted for in the theoretical part of this thesis.

#### 6.3.1 Cultural comparison

This sub-section of part two of the analysis will analyze the cultural difference between Denmark and each of the selected Asian countries based on the theory of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the collected empirical data of each national culture.

##### 6.3.1.1 Denmark and China:

China is the top-performing country in the world in the Badminton Championships (Worldatlas). Generally, China is one of the most top-performing countries of all time in reference to badminton. Moreover, China is the country with the biggest population in the world (Globalis). Badminton is one of the preferable sports in China, therefore, it is anticipated that the fanbase in China is huge. According to Bo Jensen (appendix 4), the Chinese fanbase is calculated to 200 million people. Consequently, China is a satisfactory collaborator for Badminton Denmark. The Danish badminton federation already co-operates with the Chinese badminton association, which is one of the leading Asian federations (appendix 4). However, Badminton Denmark has formerly experienced a poorly relation to the Chinese federation due to misunderstandings (ibid.). Badminton Denmark, therefore, attempts to rebuild and repair the partnership with China again to utilize the many advantages of a partnership with one of the leading Asian badminton federations. As stated in the interview, Bo Jensen mentions that Chinese sponsors should be interested in acquiring Badminton Denmark's values and history when establishing a partnership (ibid.). For instance, Denmark stands for producing quality within the food sector/industry and since China has experienced a number of food scandals, China turns to Europe instead of Chinese produced food (ibid.). In that way, Denmark can

profit from the high standards of quality within the country and China, therefore, consider Denmark as a potential collaborator. Consequently, China can undertake Danish values such as quality when sponsoring a Danish organization.

*“[...] det kan de bruge i deres markedsføring og deres historiefortælling overfor deres kunder og det hjælper dem til at positionere og [...] differentiere sig i forhold til andre virksomheder inden for samme segment” (Appendix 4)*

China can make use of the partnership with Badminton Denmark in a way that they can use the Danish storytelling and marketing towards their customers and differentiate from competitors within the same segment. One way China can differentiate themselves through this partnership is to arrange events when Badminton Denmark and the professional Danish players are in China and invite their customers to be a part of the event (appendix 4). At the event, the Chinese customers can meet the players and the Danish union and, therefore, they offer their customers something they normally do not have the opportunity for.

### **Cultural differences:**

The following will illustrate the cultural differences between China and Denmark based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

The first dimension, *power distance*, demonstrates that the countries are dissimilar in relation to the acceptance of inequality within each of their societies. Denmark has a very low power distance and believes in equal rights, which results in an informal atmosphere and direct communication within organizations where the power is decentralized (Hofstede Insights). However, China has a high ranking at 80 of the power distance dimension, which indicates that China accepts inequality among people (ibid.). Contrary to Denmark, the atmosphere is formal and a hierarchy is visible within organizations (ibid.). Conclusively, this score shows great cultural differences between the two countries.

Denmark is a very *individualistic* society whereas the Chinese society is very *collectivistic*. Therefore, the two countries are far apart on this dimension as well. That is, in Denmark, people take care of themselves and their immediate family only, which is also called a me-culture since one only

prioritizes oneself. Contrary to Denmark, in China, people belong to groups and, additionally, put the need of the group before its own (Hofstede insights). Chinese people tend to be cold towards people from the out-groups – people that are not their family and friends. Therefore, personal relationships are preferred and prioritized when doing business.

*“[...] der (Asien) betyder relationer utrolig meget. Næsten mere end det forretningsmæssige. Så hvis ikke man lykkes med at opbygge en relation på det personlige plan, så er der stor risiko for at samarbejdet, det ret hurtigt stopper igen”. (Appendix 4)*

Bo Jensen additionally states that building a personal relationship with Asian people is of great significance to maintain the partnership continuously. Oppositely, it is easy to do business with Danes as a personal relationship is not required from due to their individualistic culture. As previously mentioned, Badminton Denmark and the Chinese badminton federation have had their challenges in relations to their partnership due to misunderstandings. It is anticipated that Denmark did not prioritize to build a personal relationship with China, and China, therefore, did not consider the partnership as significant due to the lack of involvement from them. That could be why Bo Jensen attempts to reestablish the relationship by visiting the Chinese Badminton Federation and build a personal relationship (appendix 4).

Another dimension where Denmark and China differentiate from one another is the dimension of *masculinity vs. femininity*. Denmark is a feministic society in a way that Danes prioritize that there is a balance between work life and free time (Hofstede Insights). Whereas China has a masculine culture where work comes before family and leisure time in order to achieve success (ibid.).

However, both Denmark and China score low on *uncertainty avoidance*. Chinese people do not mind ambiguity, which is noticeable in their language (ibid.). Moreover, a large percentage of the Chinese people is entrepreneurs and has their own business, which can cost some economic uncertainty (ibid.). Similar to China, Denmark accepts uncertainty and the fact that plans can change overnight. Therefore, there is no cultural difference in relation to this dimension.

#### 6.3.1.2 Denmark and Indonesia

Indonesia is the second top-performing country in the World Badminton Championships (Worldatlas). Currently, Indonesia has two male single players within top ten of the world ranking and the country is well represented in men's double as well since the two best men's doubles are Indonesian (BWF – World Ranking).

#### **Cultural differences**

In many ways, the Indonesian culture is similar to the Chinese culture. However, the Indonesian culture differentiates itself from the Chinese culture on the masculine/femininity dimension and uncertainty avoidance.

Indonesia is a low *masculine* society compared to other Asian countries such as China and Japan, and it has the same characteristics as a masculine culture, however, in a lower degree. Therefore, symbols and status are still important since it is significant to appear strong and express status. Even though the Indonesian society is a low masculine, it is not as feminine as Denmark's society.

Indonesia has a low preference for *uncertainty avoidance*, which is higher than Denmark's and China's. Indonesians do not express negative emotions externally and do not want to lose face (Hofstede Insights). In conflict situations, too direct communication can feel like a threat to the Indonesians and they see a conflict situation like a risk of losing face.

#### 6.3.1.3 Denmark and Japan

Japan has a great badminton history similar to the other Asian countries and is performing successfully in the world currently. The world's number one men's single player and number one women's single player are both Japanese (BWF – rankings). Japan is already strongly represented in women's double where the three top double pairs are Japanese (ibid.). There is a reason for that. According to Bo Jensen (appendix 4), Japan has invested massively in badminton the past 5, 6, 8 years up until the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2020. This means that Japan has a whole set up at international tournaments consisting of five coaches, five physiotherapists, three dieticians, and two mental coaches (ibid.). Denmark cannot compete with that, and in order to do so, Badminton



Denmark should multiply their investment by three or four. This major investment has left its stamp on the Japanese international results.

**Cultural differences:**

On some dimensions, Japan diverges from the other two mentioned Asian nations and Denmark. One example is the power distance dimension. As previously stated, Japan is a borderline hierarchical society in which people are aware of their status in any social setting (Hofstede Insights). Moreover, decision making has to be confirmed by each layer of the organization, however, one single person does not own the exclusive right to make a decision, which usually is seen in societies with high power distance (ibid.). Therefore, Japan has power distance, however, not in the same degree as China and Indonesia.

Additionally, Japan differs from China and Indonesia in relation to collectivism. That is, the Japanese culture has characteristics of a collectivistic society in the form of the importance of maintaining the harmony in the group. To Denmark, Japan is a collectivistic society due to their loyalty towards their company. Nonetheless, the Japanese are loyal towards their company but not their family, which is an individualistic choice, and therefore, Japan exudes different signals in relation to this dimension.

Regarding the dimension of masculinity vs. femininity, Japan scores very high compared to China and Indonesia as well. Since Denmark scores very low and is a feminine society, Japan and Denmark are opposites. Due to the mild collectivism, competitive behavior does not appear in Japan (Hofstede Insights). However, this cultural dimension is portrayed in reference to the Japanese's drive for excellence and perfection when it comes to material production, services, and presentation (ibid.).

Another dimension where Japan differentiates from Denmark is uncertainty avoidance. That is, Japan is one of the most uncertainty avoiding countries in the world due to a case of natural disasters. Unlike Danes, Japanese find change very difficult and they, therefore, have a need for risk management before any project can begin.

All in all, the three Asian nations differ from Denmark. The Asian nations, additionally, diverge themselves from one another to some degree. Since cultures shape peoples' behavior and perceptions, Badminton Denmark and the Asian nations will view and approach sponsorships in different ways. Therefore, the cultural differences will moderate the entities' perception of the partnership and their way of handling them.

### 6.3.2 Impact on the international partnerships

The theory of Samaha et al. (2014) conceptualizes how people interpret and respond to relationship marketing activities based on their culture. Moreover, the theory suggests that relationship marketing interactions are considered social exchanges, which culture affects (ibid). Therefore, culture impact the way organizations view and manage international partnerships. The relationship marketing activities should be perceived as elements that conclude a partnership between two entities (ibid.). In this thesis, the activities are considered as relationship investments, communication, expertise, and relationship duration between the two parties, which has been accounted for as market orientation in the first part of the analysis. Furthermore, Samaha et al. (2014) state that the two outcomes of an international relationship are Word Of Mouth (WOM) and performance, which can be enhanced by trust and commitment from the partner's position. In this thesis, Badminton Denmark's preferable outcome would be performance in the sense that they want to be more commercially driven federation in order to enhance Danish badminton. However, cultural differences can moderate these effects of their international relationships and, therefore, the success of the partnerships. Thus, the following will examine how the previously examined cultural differences between Badminton Denmark and the three Asian nations will impact the success of the international partnerships.

#### 6.3.2.1 *Collectivist vs. individualism*

Samaha et al. (2014) anticipate that people within a collectivistic society may respond more positively towards relationship marketing. The reasons are that collectivist people base relationships on mutual interdependence, and they focus on the well-being of their in-group, can rely on each other in order to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Throughout most of the interview, Bo Jensen emphasized the benefits for Badminton Denmark of engaging in international

relationships with Asia. However, he, additionally, mentioned the advantages from the partners' point of view such as brand awareness and added brand value (appendix 4). Denmark is an individual society and primarily focus on their own goals instead of others' (Samaha et al., 2014). Since the conducted in-depth interview with Bo Jensen was his and Badminton Denmark's approach to and thoughts behind these international partnerships, the answers illustrate the Danish Badminton Federation's individual objectives to why they are building relationships. Consequently, the interview portrays Badminton Denmark as a typical Danish organization from an individualistic society that preferably focuses on their own goals instead of their partners. However, several times Bo Jensen mentions the importance of a strategic match between Badminton Denmark and its sponsors and how the partners can acquire the values and history Badminton Denmark stands for, and in that way, add brand value and brand awareness through a partnership with them (appendix 4).

*“Vi skal jo hele tiden tænke på, at hver gang en sponsor eller en kommerciel partner sidder og overvejer at bruge nogle penge eller investere på vores idræt, hvad kunne de få for de same penge, hvis de investerede dem andre steder”.*

*(Appendix 4)*

However, Badminton Denmark main concern is how they, as an organization, make themselves attractive to potential partners. They concentrate on the sponsors' possible objectives in order to position themselves. Therefore, concerning their partners' goals in these international relationships may be more a strategically market orientation. Samaha et al. (2014) imply that collectivistic cultures value long-term relationships due to their tendency of social bonding, dependence, and personal relationships. According to Bo Jensen (appendix 4), Badminton Denmark values and pursue long-term relationships despite their individualistic culture.

*“For vi søger ikke bare en sponsor, men en samarbejdspartner, med hvem vi kan udvikle vores samarbejde og fælles målsætninger over en længere årrække”.*

*(Appendix 3)*

Therefore, Badminton Denmark acquires long-term partnerships in order to achieve shared objectives. The main reason to why Badminton Denmark builds international relationships is to become a more commercial funded federation in order to invest more in Danish badminton.

Consequently, Badminton Denmark's motive can be interpreted as self-serving beneficial to their own goal achievement. That is, since they are aware of the subsidies will not increase within the near future, Badminton Denmark has to build long-term relationships to continuously receive revenues and secure the future of Danish badminton. In conclusion, Badminton Denmark's primarily motive for entering partnerships is based on individual goal achievement, and that the collectivistic Asian nations find it easier to form long-term relationship due to their culture.

### **Complications:**

Some challenges can arise between Badminton Denmark and their Asian partners due to cultural differences between individual and collectivistic cultures. The Asian nations would want to build a personal relation to Badminton Denmark before establishing a partnership and doing business. In collectivistic societies, there is a tendency to be cold towards people that not are a part of their in-group (Hofstede Insights). Therefore, Badminton Denmark has to become a part of their in-group to establish a partnership with the Asian nations. Contrarily, Badminton Denmark with an individualistic culture is easy to start doing business with since a personal relation does not have to be built before doing business. Consequently, Badminton Denmark could be impatient with the Asian nations considering all the none-work related activities the Asians want to do to create a personal relationship. If Badminton Denmark does not have an understanding of this cultural difference, misunderstandings can occur and possibly affect the potential partnership with the Asian nations.

#### *6.3.2.2 Power distance – high vs. low*

According to Samaha et al. (2014), societies with high power distance are more accepting towards relationship marketing strategies due to their acceptance of status and expertise that a potential partner would bring to the partnership. Since the Asian nations have high power distance within their societies they would accept and expect hierarchy within the partnership with Badminton Denmark. However, the culture to which Badminton Denmark belongs inequality is not acceptable and frowned upon. If the Asian partners would expect and demand hierarchy within the collaboration, it can cost complications in relation to the harmony of the partnership.

**Complications:**

Hierarchy is often expressed through the level of formality. Therefore, the Asian nations have a high level of formality since high power distance is emphasized through prestige symbols and status. Whereas Badminton Denmark low power distance results in a low level of formality. Consequently, cultural clashes and challenges can arise between Badminton Denmark and its Asian partners since one can easily seem too informal or too formal from the counterpart's point of view. China, Indonesia, and Japan can, therefore, find Badminton Denmark's informality rude. Badminton Denmark should, therefore, be aware of the level of formality within these partnerships.

*6.3.2.3 Uncertainty avoidance – high vs. low*

Samaha et al. (2014), additionally, assume that relationship marketing strategies will be more effective in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance since it can reduce the level of uncertainty. Especially, Japan has a high level of uncertainty avoidance, which indicates that value predictability. Whereas Danes accept uncertainty, take risks, and appreciates flexibility. However, in this case, Badminton Denmark wishes to establish partnerships due to economic uncertainty. Therefore, in some ways, Danes do appreciate uncertainty if it is at the expense of the organizations future.

Moreover, entering into a partnership can cost uncertainty additionally. In other words, forming comprehensive partnerships can change the way of managing within an organization, and, therefore, since international collaborations can involve uncertainty, relationship marketing strategies may not be most effective within a high uncertainty avoidance culture.

**Complications:**

Nonetheless, differences in whether or not uncertainty is accepted within a culture can cause conflicts and misunderstandings. When Badminton Denmark enters a partnership with a culture of high uncertainty avoidance, they should pay attention to the long decision making due to a highly focused risk management. Countries such as Japan use considerable time examining all the risks that could arise when entering a partnership, and, therefore, decision making can take long. Moreover, Badminton Denmark cannot change decision or meaning in a heartbeat without making the high uncertainty avoidant partner insecure and unsafe in the situation. Therefore, Badminton

Denmark should thoughtfully consider their decision before reaching a final decision as it can affect the partnership negatively if they suddenly change their decision.

#### *6.3.2.4 Masculinity vs. femininity*

The theory suggests that the effect of relationship marketing strategies is weaker within a masculine culture than in a feminine culture (Samaha et al., 2014). That is, the masculine culture values competitiveness and aggressiveness as opposed to the feminine culture that prefers cooperation and quality of life. Therefore, feminine cultures withhold more characteristics that align with relationships and would be more likely to enter into partnerships. Since the selected Asian nations are masculine societies, they may tend to be a lot more competitive compared to Badminton Denmark, which has a feminine culture. In comparison with the other cultural dimensions, this is the first dimension that suggests that Badminton Denmark would be more predisposed to establish an international relationship based on Samaha et al. (2014) theory.

#### **Complications**

However, the cultural differences in this dimension, additionally impact the international relationships between Badminton Denmark and its Asian partners. The competitive characteristic can affect a relationship in such the participants or members of the partnerships become competitors rather than team players, which is the whole basis of building collaborations – achieving mutual objectives as alliances. In Japan, the masculinity comes across in relation to perfection and excellence. Therefore, everything has to be perfect and you have to work hard in order to make it perfect. In contrast, Badminton Denmark would prioritize differently. They would do their job as good as possible, however, still manage to have free time.

Some of the dimensions are more affected by culture than others in relation to the impact on international partnerships. As indicated, the cultural dimension of individualism contra collectivism highly affects collaborations in this case. That is, the effectiveness of the international relationships cannot be successful if the perception of the partnership is significantly different and if one part is too individually focused on achieving own goals and not cooperating. Additionally, as Samaha et al. (2014) indicate that the effects of culture on relational marketing are multidimensional, have

countervailing effects, and is unclear. Therefore, situational context plays a huge part in understanding how culture impacts the international partnerships.

### 6.3.3 Sub-conclusion of part two

On almost every cultural dimension Denmark and Asia are complete contrasts, however, some dimensions diverge slightly from each other. Therefore, the cultural background behind the international relationships is quite different. Cultural differences impact international partnerships between Badminton Denmark and Asian companies and federations in the way that they, contrarily, perceive collaborations and, furthermore, they can discharge complications and challenges. Based on culture theory and the empirical data from Hofstede Insights, Asia would be more likely to collaborate with others since relationship marketing strategies will be more effective in a collectivistic and uncertainty avoidant society with high power distance. Nonetheless, a great cultural diversity between the two entities of an international relationship can create misunderstandings. If the cultural differences are ignored or overlooked, it may affect the outcome of the relationship negatively. Whereas, if Badminton Denmark examines and understands the dissimilarities between them and Asia, they can have a successful long-term relationship without misunderstandings.

## 7. Discussion

The following section will provide a discussion of how and if the international partnerships with Asia can positively impact Danish badminton in general in order to the increase number of members and the sport's popularity within the country.

According to Bo Jensen (appendix 4), the objective of engaging in international relationships with Asian companies and federations is to financially secure Danish badminton in the future. By securing Danish badminton financially, Badminton Denmark can invest in talent development and in that way foster world-class elite players that secure the success of Danish badminton internationally. At first, Bo Jensen does not believe that Danish badminton, in general, will be affected by the partnerships:

*“[...] direkte har det ikke den store betydning, hverken i forhold til vores holdturnering, liga eller klubber”. (Appendix 4)*

The international relationships will not directly benefit Danish badminton in general, which means that the ordinary Danish badminton players will not notice concrete benefits of the partnerships. However, in a sense, Danish badminton will benefit from the substantial stronger economy according to Bo Jensen. That is, Badminton Denmark allocates funds and measures to development projects that are targeted at clubs, associations, and members (appendix 4). For instance, Badminton Denmark has increased its investment in development initiatives that enhance Danish badminton more in general (ibid.). In order to do so, the organization has implemented a new strategy that distributes talent development more regionally incorporation with a number of clubs that prioritize talent development (ibid.). Another initiative has been to invest a lot of funds in a visionary collaboration with DGI called “Bevæg dig for livet” (move for life). The initiative is targeted at the adult exerciser segment that supports the clubs in relation to concepts and initiatives that should provide the clubs with tools that can break the habitual thinking in order to attract more adult exercisers and maintaining the youth (ibid.). Therefore, Badminton Denmark can support the development of Danish badminton by providing initiatives that concentrate on talent development and give innovative tools to attract more adult exercisers and uphold the young people. According to Bo Jensen (appendix 4), these initiatives give Badminton Denmark the possibility to support the development in Danish badminton in general.

Badminton Denmark believes that these investments and initiatives can increase the number of members, which already appears to be true:

*“Badminton Danmark for tredje år i træk kan vise medlemsfremgang”.*

*(Appendix 4)*

The increased number of members illustrates a growing interest in playing badminton in Denmark. Additionally, Badminton Denmark is convinced that if they maintain this positive interest within the sport and simultaneously improve the talent development in the local clubs, Danish badminton will be future-proofed by continuously fostering world-class elite players.



*“Uden det internationale samarbejde så var vi slet ikke i stand til at gøre de investeringer, som vi har gjort de sidste tre år”. (Appendix 4)*

Without the international commercial partnerships, Badminton Denmark could not have invested in Danish badminton the last three years.

As Bo Jensen also mentions, Danish badminton, in general, will not be impacted by the international partnerships with Asia despite a number of initiatives Badminton Denmark can provide Danish badminton with due to the increased economy. These initiatives are focused at talent development and the adult exerciser segment. In relation to talent development, Badminton Denmark invests a lot of money by implementing a new regional strategy in corporation with local clubs that has talent development as a key action area. In this case, Bo Jensen actually mentions the investment of the acquired sponsor money within a project to benefit Danish badminton. Regarding the adult exerciser initiative, the CEO states that they provide concepts, support, new tools, and investment within the activities that target the segment. Immediately, I notice that Bo Jensen does not exactly mention an investment of money similar to the talent development initiative. Therefore, it gives the impression of Badminton Denmark “only” provide good ideas and tools the local clubs can use in order to attract more members. Viewing “Bevæg dig for livet”'s homepage, both DIF and DGI have invested a lot of money in the project, which Badminton Denmark collaborates with (Bevæg dig for livet – Om). Therefore, we must assume that Badminton Denmark actually invests money in that initiatives as well regardless of the formulation of the answer.

Nonetheless, that is the two initiatives Bo Jensen mentions. What about the rest of the Danish badminton? The ordinary players that are too old to join the talent development and too young to participate in the adult segment – the senior player. Besides the collaboration with DGI, the new initiatives focus on producing new professional players that can perform internationally and not the width of Danish badminton. During the interview, Bo Jensen mentions Japan's investment in the sport and points out the difference in the resources between Japan and Denmark.

*“Så hvis vi skal nå bare en smule af det som Japan kan, så er vi nødt til at finde nogle andre indtægter og det er blandt andet ved at samarbejde med kommercielle samarbejdspartnere, finde sponsorer osv.”. (Appendix 4).*

Consequently, this statement indicates that Badminton Denmark is aware of the big difference in resource capacity between them and Japan and that Japan, therefore, has greater opportunities to perform internationally and receive results. Since it is Badminton Denmark's mission to make a mark internationally with world-class players that continuously keep winning medals at international championships, a significant share of the commercial income from the Asian partnerships could be invested mainly there. Consequently, based on Bo Jensen answers, Badminton Denmark does not prioritize the width of Danish badminton, however, they focus on the top players and young talents in relation to the profit of the international relationships. Nonetheless, if Danish players do well and perform at international championships and tournaments, the spreading of the sport would be increased, and maybe affect the interest in the sport.

In conclusion, the international relationships with Asia will to some extent affect Danish players in relation to a number of members and the popularity of the sport since Badminton Denmark invest in initiatives that should increase the interest in the sport and the development of talents. The fact that the number of members continue to increase is an indicator of Badminton Denmark must be doing something correctly.

## 8. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to examine to which extent Badminton Denmark can increase its popularity in Denmark by establishing international relationships with Asia considering the cultural differences and their impact on the relationships. In order to answer the problem statement, the analysis based on the collected empirical data and selected theories was divided into two parts.

The first part of the analysis examined how and why Badminton Denmark develops and manage inter-organizational relationships with Asian partners. Badminton Denmark, first of all, focus on the Asian market due to the fanbase of 450 million people, which compared to the Danish and European market is significantly bigger. Therefore, the Danish Badminton Federation aims to establish long-termed international relationships with Asian organizations, which is developed through strong market orientation, collaborative communication, and trust and commitment. Through these partnerships, Badminton Denmark attempts to become a more commercially driven federation to

secure the future of Danish badminton. However, it was difficult to define and analyze the relationships not knowing the sponsors and their objectives. The first part of the analysis, consequently, examined the relationships from Badminton Denmark's point of view based on the interview with Bo Jensen and their website. Badminton Denmark actively incorporates strategies and initiatives to attract potential partners and establish these long-term relationships to receive as many benefits as possible.

The second part of the analysis first compared the Danish and Asian cultures to illustrate the differences and complications of international relationships. Based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, the analysis illustrated that the Danish and Asian cultures are widely separated, which, additionally, can create misunderstandings within the partnership. The cultural differences will impact the international relationship since the behaviors, norms, values, etc. are diverse. However, if Badminton Denmark is aware of the differences and attempts to limit them, the impact would not be as significant.

In conclusion, the international relationships between Badminton Denmark and Asian partners do to some degree impact the popularity of badminton in Denmark. Even though Badminton Denmark do not allocate their profits from the partnerships directly to all the members of Badminton Denmark, the collaborations increase the popularity or interest for the sport in Denmark. Particularly, Badminton Denmark prefers to invest their incomes in talent development and the improvement of the internal performance to secure the future of Danish badminton. By continuing to develop world-class players that make results internationally, the interest within Denmark will increase since the international performances will be exposed more intensively.

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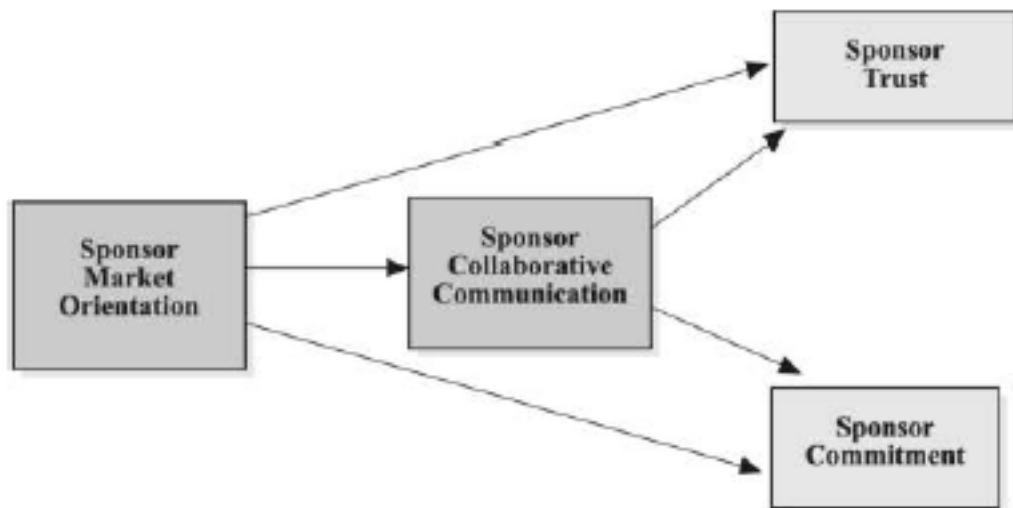
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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Sponsor Relationship Model

Farrelly et al. 2003: Sponsor relationship model

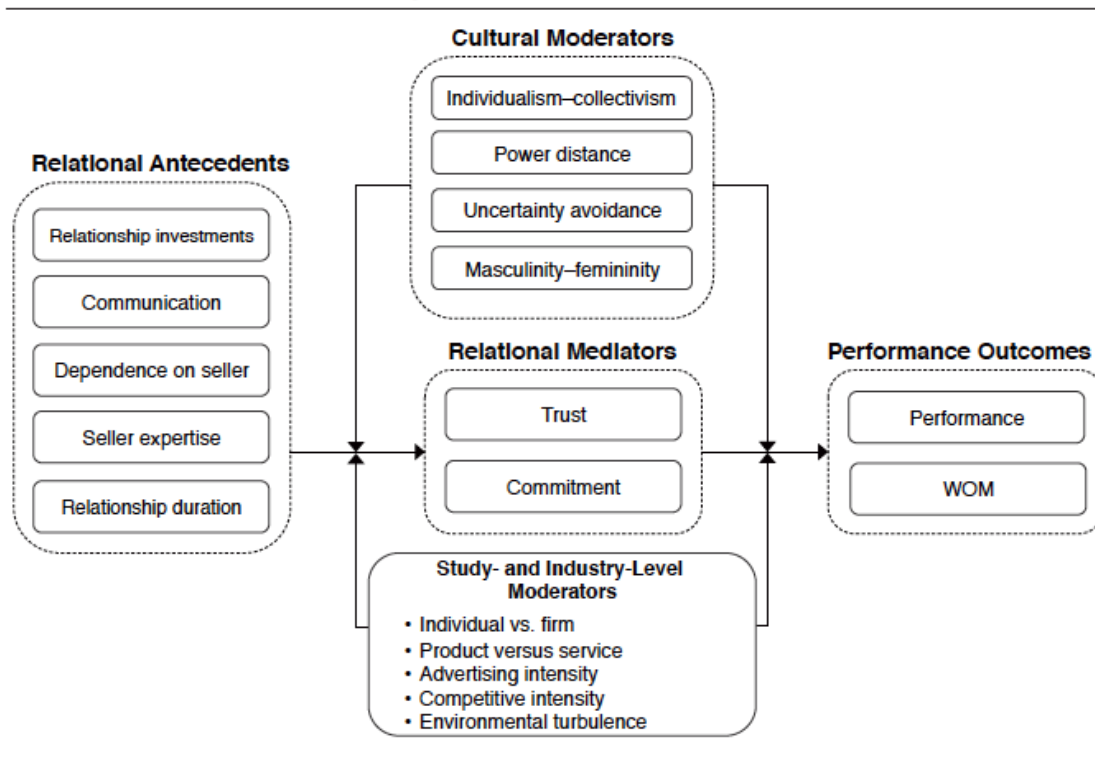
**Figure 1 Sponsor relationship model**



## Appendix 2: International RM framework

Samaha et al. 2014: International relationship marketing framework

**FIGURE 1**  
**Study 1: International RM Framework**



## Appendix 3: Interview guide

### Interview guide:

#### Introducer respondenten for indholdet af undersøgelsen:

”Mange tak fordi du tager dig tid til dette interview. Formålet med undersøgelsen er, at undersøge om Badminton Danmark har eller er motiveret til at indgå nogle sponsoraftaler med asiatiske organisationer og det asiatiske badminton forbund, de eventuelle sponsorforhold og kulturelle forskelle, der kan skabe problemer i samarbejdet. Jeg har identificeret en række emner, som jeg gerne vil diskutere med dig. Du må meget gerne uddybe så meget, som du føler for. Jeg stiller måske nogle opfølgende spørgsmål til emnet afhængig af, hvordan du forholder dig til spørgsmålene. Ligeledes vil jeg høre om, det er i orden at optage interviewet på båndoptager/mobil telefon, således optagelsen kan støtte min hukommelse samt indgå i mit specialearbejde? [...] Inden vi går i gang, vil jeg høre om du har nogen spørgsmål?”



**Formålet med det ustrukturerede interview er:**

- Interview med administrerende direktør for Badminton Danmark skal undersøge motiver for at indgå en eventuel sponsoraftale med asiatiske virksomheder eller det asiatiske badminton forbund og påvirkningen af kulturelle forskelle

**De teoretisk identificerede interviewtemaer er som følger:**

Interview med administrerende direktør af Badminton Danmark Bo Jensen:

- I hvilken grad Badminton Danmark indgår sponsoraftaler med Asien
- I hvilken grad Badminton Danmark kan se fordelene ved et samarbejde med Asien
- Vigtigheden af et strategisk match mellem Badminton Danmark og sponsor
- I hvilken grad Badminton Danmark opfatter vigtigheden af et langvarigt samarbejde med sponsorer (fra Asien)
- I hvilken grad Badminton Danmark anser forpligtelse/engagement og tillid som en vigtig parameter i et samarbejde
- Hvordan Badminton Danmark kan gøre sig attraktiv og skabe værdi for asiatiske sponsorer
- I hvor høj grad de kulturelle forskelle har af betydning for et samarbejde

Alle interviewemnerne fremstår som et spørgsmål. Alt efter svaret, stil dybdegående spørgsmål ind til svaret dækker spørgsmålet i en vis grad.

**Supplerende noter**

- Hvordan interviewpersonen fremstår for mig
- Den opfattede motivation og disposition for interviewpersonens deltagelse
- Bestemte gestus såsom øjenkontakt, kropssprog, og håndbevægelser
- Eventuelle vanskeligheder i løbet af interviewet
- De hovedpunkter interviewpersonen fremstiller

**Appendix 4: Bo's written answers**

Bo's answers previous to the interview based on the questions outlined in the interview guide.

**De teoretisk identificerede interviewtemaer er som følger:**

Interview med administrerende direktør af Badminton Danmark Bo Jensen:

- I hvilken grad Badminton Danmark indgår sponsoraftaler med Asien
  - o I meget stor grad, vores største sponsorer/kommercielle partnere er alle kinesiske/asiatiske virksomheder eller danske virksomheder med stærkt fokus på Kina/Asien. Vi samarbejder derfor også med det danske generalkonsulat i Shanghai i vores screening af potentielle partnere.
- I hvilken grad Badminton Danmark kan se fordelene ved et samarbejde med Asien
  - o Grundet badminton sportens store udbredelse i Asien med en fanbase på min. 450 millioner mennesker, er Asien et attraktivt marked at søge samarbejdspartnere for Badminton Danmark. Fordelene for vores samarbejdspartnere ved at fokusere på de asiatiske markeder er bare mange gange større end i Danmark eller Europa.
- Vigtigheden af et strategisk match mellem Badminton Danmark og sponsor
  - o Er utrolig stor. For vi søger ikke bare en sponsor, men en samarbejdspartner, med hvem vi kan udvikle vores samarbejde og fælles målsætninger over en længere årrække.
- I hvilken grad Badminton Danmark opfatter vigtigheden af et langvarigt samarbejde med sponsorer (fra Asien)
  - o Se forrige spørgsmål.
- I hvilken grad Badminton Danmark anser forpligtelse/engagement og tillid som en vigtig parameter i et samarbejde
  - o Er bestemt også vigtige parametre, men vigtigst er dog 1) de personlige relationer mellem beslutningstagerene i Badminton Danmark og samarbejdspartnere (sikre effektiv og værdiskabende aktivering af samarbejdet og sponsoreret) 2) det strategiske match, hvor vi både deler værdigrundlag og strategiske udviklingsmål.
- Hvordan Badminton Danmark kan gøre sig attraktiv og skabe værdi for asiatiske sponsorer
  - o Ved at sikre, at samarbejdspartnerne får værdi ud af samarbejdet, at de oplever, at de kan give deres eksisterende og potentielle kunder og samarbejdspartnerne adgang til unikke oplevelser, hvor de får mulighed for at dyrke og udvikle de personlige relationer til kunden/partneren.

- I hvor høj grad de kulturelle forskelle har af betydning for et samarbejde
  - o Vi oplever det ikke som et problem, men det er klart noget man skal være meget opmærksom på, så man undgår misforståelser og uheldige situationer, der kan skade samarbejdet og partnerskabet.

## Appendix 5: Transcription of the in-depth interview

### Transcription of the interview with Bo Jensen CEO of Badminton Denmark

**Interviewer:** Charlotte Carlsen (CC)

**Respondent:** Bo Jensen

**CC 1:** Jamen, tak fordi du ville være med til det her interview. Så lige først, formålet med undersøgelsen er, at undersøge om Badminton Danmark eventuelt har eller allerede har et samarbejde med eller gerne er motiveret til at indgå nogen sponsoraftaler med, øh, asiatiske badminton forbund eller organisationer, eventuelt om der allerede er nogen sponsorforhold, og de kulturelle forskelle det kan skabe i et samarbejde. Jeg har identificeret en række emner, som jeg meget gerne vil diskutere med dig, øhm. Og du må meget gerne uddybe så meget som muligt, så meget som du føler for, øh. Og så stiller jeg måske nogle opfølgende spørgsmål alt efter, hvordan du forholder dig til spørgsmålet. Så ja, inden vi går i gang, så ville jeg høre, om du har nogle spørgsmål til det?

**Bo:** Det er fint.

**CC:** Super.

**CC 2:** Jamen først ville jeg høre om du fortælle mig lidt om din historie hos Badminton Danmark, du startede jo i 2015, er det ikke korrekt?

**Bo:** Det er korrekt. Ja, jo men øhm (pause). Jeg kom jo til Badminton Danmark med en meget klar opgave og, øh, det var sådan set flere opgaver. Men én af opgaverne var og skabe et mere kommercielt orienteret, professionelt drevet forbund, hvor at øh, vi fik skabt en stærkere, hvad skal man sige, finansiel base. Så vi, øh (host), ikke er så afhængige alene af offentlige tilskud fra DIF, Team Danmark, men at vi kunne forsøge og skabe et fundament, hvor kommercielle indtægter fik en større betydning og dermed gav os en større, hvad skal man sige, sikkerhed ift. fremtiden.

**CC:** Ja.

**Bo:** Det var sådan en helt klar opgave og grunden til, at jeg ligesom blev valgt til at varetage den opgave, er, at jeg har siddet, udover at jeg har haft med badminton at gøre siden jeg selv var 6-7 år i mange sammenhænge, så har jeg siddet i det private erhvervsliv, i internationalt erhvervsliv i 25 år på ledende poster og har arbejdet meget med salg, marketing, ledelse osv. Så derfor mente folkene i bestyrelsen, at jeg havde en profil, som gjorde at jeg kunne måske løse denne her opgave med at skabe en, et stærkere, også kommercielt set, forbund.

**CC:** Ja.

**Bo:** Så det er en af de opgaver, jeg har haft beskæftiget mig med siden jeg startede herude i efteråret 2015.

**CC:** Ja.

**Bo:** Og noget af det første jeg faktisk gjorde var at lave hele vores, hvad skal man sige, sponsorstrategi om (host). Badminton er fortsat en ret populær idræt i Danmark og øh, vi har en rimelig stor fanbase i Danmark. Men alt andet lige, så udgør det danske marked stadigvæk potentielt kun 5,7 millioner mennesker. Hvis vi regner Norden og Nordeuropa med, så har vi måske 25 millioner mennesker potentielt, vi kan nå ud til. For en potentiel kommercielpartner er det alt andet lige, hvis man er en global spiller, et relativt lille marked.

**CC:** Ja.

**Bo:** Kommer vi uden for Danmarks grænser, så er badminton ikke, i hvert fald i en europæisk kontekst ligeså populært som fodbold, håndbold, tennis, andre af de store, golf. Øhm, og noget af det som jo for en kommerciel partner, har betydning, når man vurderer på om man skal indgå samarbejde eller ej med en idræt som vores, det er jo ikke kun og få noget eksponering på en trøje eller et logo på et brevpapir. Det er jo lige så meget, hvor meget added brand value kan jeg opnå via det her samarbejde – hvordan kan jeg styrke mit brand, hvordan kan jeg nå ud til min potentielle kunder, kan jeg bruge, øh, sponsoratet til at aktivere eksempelvis, øh, loyalitetsskabende ting ift. til min primære kunder eller potentiel nye kunder. Hvordan kan jeg ligesom bruge sponsoratet aktivt? Og der spiller TV selvfølgelig en hvis rolle ift. at nå ud til så mange som muligt, men det handler jo også om, hvor stor er fanbasen, hvor stor er interessen for idrætten på det marked, jeg gerne vil styrke mit brand – altså brand awareness. Øhm, og der spiller alle de andre ting netop ind også, som det som aktivering og hvordan kan jeg sammen med den idræt, jeg nu sponsorerer skabe de her eksempelvis unikke oplevelser for mine kunder. Øh, og der må vi så i den kontekst bare konstatere,

at alt andet lige at der er det europæiske marked ift. badminton stadigvæk ret underudviklet. Hvorimod hvis vi kigger mod Asien, de store asiatiske nationer som Kina, Indonesien, Malaysia, hvor badminton er, hvis ikke den er nationalsporten, så er den måske nummer to eller i hvert fald nummer tre i popularitet.

**CC:** Ja.

**Bo:** Øh, det er store befolknings tætte nationer, der er en kæmpe fan base. Øh, alene i Kina opgør man fanbasen til plus 200 millioner. Hvis vi ser på hele det asiatiske marked, snakker vi om en fan base på ca. 450 millioner mennesker. Så holdt op i mod Europa og et nærmærket på måske 25 millioner, så, hvoraf det jo kun er en procentdel, der er decideret badmintonfans. Så har vi her en fanbase i Asien på i hvert fald 450 millioner mennesker plus at vi når ud til langt langt flere mennesker i form af TV og anden form for, hvad skal man sige, mediekommunikation. Så derfor var det jo oplagt for os og sige vi retter fokus mod Asien. Og så glemmer vi lidt i første omgang det danske og det europæiske marked.

**CC:** Mm.

**Bo:** Så siden 2015 har vi arbejdet målrettet på og profilere og styrke vores brand altså Badminton Danmarks brand på de asiatiske markeder og øh, vi indgår i dag i tætte samarbejder med nogle af de førende asiatiske forbund, blandt andet det kinesiske. Og øhm, vi har i dag en række sponsoraftaler med enten kinesiske eller asiatiske virksomheder.

**CC:** Ja.

**Bo:** Eller danske virksomheder som har etableret sig med selskaber på flere af de større asiatiske markeder og som har et klart eksport fokus, øh, rettet i mod flere af disse lande. Så svaret er i høj grad, at ja i meget stor grad, så har vi fokus på Asien.

**CC 3:** Ja. Nu nævner du selv, det her med, at I allerede har indgået samarbejde og du nævner også, at det er nogle asiatiske virksomheder blandt andet. Øhm, mener du, at det er vigtigt, der er den her strategiske sammenhæng med badminton for en sponsoraftale med de her virksomheder, eller skal de generelt bare have en interesse?

**Bo:** Nej, altså vi er jo bevidst gået efter virksomheder, som også værdimæssigt, hvad skal man sige, ligger tæt op ad det vi også gerne vil. Så der er det her shared value.

**CC:** Mm

**Bo:** [Øhm], hvis der ikke er det her værdifællesskab også rent strategisk, så bliver det svært at skabe den added value i forhold til sponsorens forventninger. Vi skal jo hele tiden tænke på, at hver gang en sponsor eller en kommerciel partner sidder og overvejer at bruge nogle penge eller investere på vores idræt, hvad kunne de få for de samme penge, hvis de investerede dem andre steder. Og der er jo masser af muligheder for en kommerciel virksomhed i form af at købe ind på samarbejder, der kan give både eksponering og added brand value og unikke oplevelser for kunderne. Altså formel 1, golf, fodbold det er jo også store idrætter over hele verden. Man jo også sige, hvis det ikke er sport du vil købe ind på, men så kunne det være andre former for eksponering eller markedsføring, som gavner dit brand.

**CC:** Ja

**Bo:** Det som er vigtigt for os, det er, at vi står for noget unikt. Altså vi står for innovation, dansk kvalitet, dansk kultur. Vi står for noget med fællesskab. Vi har skabt en unik model i dansk badminton, som gør, at vi som en meget lille nation med et meget lille potentiale rent faktisk kan kontinuerligt udvikle spillere til den absolut verdenselite og konkurrere med nationer som Kina og Indonesien, som bruger langt flere ressourcer og har et langt større potentiale. Det er en historie som vækker eller får folk til at spærre øjnene op i den store verden. Og hvis vi kan få overbevist virksomheder om, at disse værdier er noget de kan købe ind på og ved at ligesom lave et samarbejde med udgangspunkt i de værdier og de kan linke op på de her værdier, så har de også en historie, som de kan fortælle, som er interessant i forhold til den asiatiske forbruger.

**CC:** Ja

**Bo:** Altså eksempelvis i Kina går forbrugerne meget op i kvalitet, når det handler om fødevarer. Alle anerkender Danmark som værende et land, der producerer kvalitet især inden for fødevarerektoren med fødevarer, mælk, øl osv. Arla, Carlsberg er store virksomheder eksempelvis i Kina. [Øh], der har været en række fødevareskandaler i Kina, hvor kinesisk produceret fødevarer har været sundhedsskadelige og det har fået den kinesiske forbruger til at vende sig væk fra kinesiske producerede fødevarer og kigger mod vesten, mod Europa. Og der står Danmark for noget specielt med vores høje kvalitetsstandard.

**CC:** Ja

**Bo:** Derfor har vi også et par kinesisk baserede virksomheder, som netop arbejder inden for fødevarerektoren. Så ved at indgå et samarbejde med Badminton Danmark netop køber ind på den

her, det her fælles værdisæt om høj kvalitet og innovation, dansk tradition for netop at være noget unikt. Og det kan de bruge i deres markedsføring og deres historiefortælling overfor deres kunder og det hjælper dem til at positionere sig og, hvad skal man sige, differentiere sig i forhold til andre virksomheder inden for samme segment.

**CC 4:** Ja, fordi de kan tilbyde noget...

**Bo:** De tilbyder noget unikt. De tilbyder en anden historiefortælling, og så giver de jo muligheden for, når vi er i Kina og lave events i Kina, at invitere deres kunder ind og blive en del af et arrangement, hvor at de kommer til at møde danske badmintonspillere, møde det danske badminton forbund. Og får tilgang til en helt unik oplevelse, som disse mennesker ellers aldrig ville få lejlighed til.

**CC 5:** Ja. Er det så [øhm], nu nævner du selv, de her event over i Asien for eksempel. Er det en turnering eller?

**Bo:** Ja, det kunne det sagtens være.

**CC 6:** Er der andre tiltag for at måske hive dem til Danmark?

**Bo:** Jamen [øh], vi har en stor årlig event i Odense i efterårsferien.

**CC:** Ja

**Bo:** Og der har vi sammen med flere af vores samarbejdspartnere arrangerer vi simpelthen, at de kan invitere kunder fra hele verden til Odense og blive en del af denne her unikke oplevelse. Så vi laver jo et helt specielt program for dem, som inkluderer både noget sightseeing og virksomhedsbesøg og deltagelse i vores VIP hospitalities og de kommer ind og ser turneringen og kommer ind og møder spillerne. Prøver måske at endda, det har vi også gjort i nogle tilfælde, lavet sådan et program søndag morgen, hvor de så kommer ned og spiller nede i træningshallen og spiller mod nogle af verdensstjerne.

**CC:** Ja.

**Bo:** Så det gør vi også.

**CC 7:** Ja. Så det er helt klart Denmark Open, der er en spiller for at trække dem hertil?

**Bo:** Bestemt.

**CC 8:** Den turnering har jo også vokset meget her de senere år. Er det så også på grund af I har indgået de aftaler her?

**Bo:** Ja, det er det.

**CC 9:** Ja, altså helt konkret hvilke, nu nævner du selv en række fordele ved at gå til Asien og få dem hertil. Hvilke generelle udfordringer, som Badminton Danmark har, tror du, at det vil gå ind og dække?

**Bo:** Altså man kan sige [øhm]. Det der er udfordringen i dagens idrætsverden er, at hvert fald når vi taler ud fra en dansk kontekst, det er, at det der hedder offentlig finansiering, det er en relativ begrænset størrelse. Så vi kan ikke forvente, at der kommer flere penge fra hverken Team Danmark eller DIF end vi allerede får. Og skulle der komme flere, er det marginalt. Det er slet ikke noget, der kan løfte, hvad skal man sige, os i forhold til de ønsker vi har til fremadrettet blive ved med at udvikle vores idræt. Bare for at give et enkelt eksempel, når vi sender vi sender et hold spillere til de store turneringer i udlandet eksempelvis i Asien, så har vi jo selvfølgelig nogle trænere og en fysioterapeut, måske en massør med til at supportere og servicere spillerne under turneringen. Hvis vi sammenligner med Japan, som har investeret massivt i badminton sporten i de seneste 5, 6, 8 år fremmod OL næste år i Tokyo, så har de jo ikke kun en, eller to trænere med, de har måske fem trænere, fem fysioterapeuter og de har tre diætister og to mentalcoaches. De har et helt setup, som de sender med ud og det kan vi jo slet ikke konkurrere med. Og hvis vi skulle op på at konkurrere med det, så skulle vi jo tre eller firdoble investeringen i dansk badminton.

**CC:** Ja

**Bo:** Og det kommer aldrig til at ske alene med støtte fra kontingenter og offentlige midler. Så hvis vi skal nå bare en lille smule af det som Japan kan, så er vi nødt til at finde nogle andre indtægter og det er blandt andet ved at samarbejde med kommercielle samarbejdspartnere, finde sponsorer osv. Som kan se en værdi i at investere i vores brand, fordi det giver noget tilbage til dem.

**CC:** Ja.

**Bo:** Og så må man bare indrømme, at det er langt mere interessant for en virksomhed i Shanghai at investere i dansk badminton end det er for et stort dansk pengeinstitut. Og der er bare så mange flere penge i badminton sporten generelt set i Asien sammenlignet med Europa.



**CC:** Ja.

**Bo:** Det er sådan tingene engang er.

**CC 10:** Ja. Hvis du skulle eventuelt tænke dig til nogle ulemper ved et samarbejde, hvad ville du så umiddelbart mene det kunne være?

**Bo:** Der er jo selvfølgelig, når vi taler Asien og Danmark, der er jo nogle sproglige og kulturelle forskelle udover der er en tidszoneforskel. Men man kan sige tidszoneforskellen er nok den mindste af de udfordringer, der er. Fordi i dag kommunikerer vi jo digitalt på Whatsapp og mail og Skype osv. døgnet rundt. Men der jo selvfølgelig nogle kulturelle og nogle sproglige udfordringer. Det er ikke alle steder i Kina man stadig ikke taler engelsk. Det vil sige, at så bliver kommunikationen jo selvfølgelig lidt besværliggjort af, at vi hele tiden skal have tolke med ind over. [Øhm] Men sprogligt vil jeg sige, at det går efterhånden bedre. Altså kineserne eller asiaterne bliver hele tiden bedre til engelsk og får en forståelse for, at det også for deres vedkommende er nødvendigt med et fremmedsprog, og selvom der er 1,4 milliarder kinesere, jamen så er det stadig ikke alle steder i verden man taler kinesisk. Jeg er begyndt at lære lidt kinesisk af samme årsag. Ikke fordi jeg skal forhandle på kinesisk, men der er vi sådan inde på det mere kulturelle. Det at jeg kan møde en potentiel kinesisk samarbejdspartner og kan sådan de mest almindelige høflighedsfraser og kan ligesom introducere mig selv og den organisation jeg kommer fra på kinesisk. Det skaber en anerkendelse og respekt og det gør, at det bliver nemmere for os og opbygge en relation, ikke kun os som organisation og virksomhed i mellem, men også på det personlige plan. Og det er nu en engang bare sådan, at [Øhm] de samarbejder der bygger på personlige relationer, det er de samarbejder som har størst chance for også at, hvad skal man sige, bestå i en længere årrække.

**CC:** Mm.

**Bo:** Hvorimod hvis det bliver i rent forretningsbaseret, så bliver det også meget hurtigt [Øh] i forhold til om det er et godt eller et skidt samarbejde, eller om man har lyst at fortsætte samarbejdet eller ej. Så bliver det meget hurtigt sådan en, hvad skal man sige, en nøktern økonomisk vurdering, hvor her bliver den måske også en smule emotionel, i og med at du får skabt en direkte personlig relation.

**CC 11:** Og det ville du mene var, er noget helt specielt, der for eksempel med de asiatiske lande?

**Bo:** Ja. Der betyder relationer utrolig meget. Næsten mere end det forretningsmæssige. Så hvis ikke man lykkes med at opbygge en relation på det personlige plan, så er der stor risiko for at samarbejdet, det ret hurtigt stopper igen.

**CC 12:** Ja. Altså det er jo vigtigt som du selv siger, at I for lavet de her unikke oplevelser, som igen kan skabe noget, at det er det, du mener, det skaber noget relation?

**Bo:** Ja, fordi [øhm] netop fordi relationer betyder så meget, så er det jo også vigtigt at vores kunder, vores samarbejdspartnere kan bruge, hvad skal man sige, os som platform til netop og opdyrke, og vedligeholde, og opbygge de relationer de her, og gerne vil etablere til deres kunder. Og det jo blandt andet ved at give dem adgang til noget helt unikt [øhm]. Og så hjælper det, og så er det jo en fordel at badminton i forvejen er en kæmpe sport og der er en kæmpe fanbase i Kina eller i Indonesien eller Malaysia, fordi det betyder jo også at mange af vores partners kunder i forvejen interesserer sig for badminton. Hvis vi prøvede at lave det samme i Nordamerika, så tvivler jeg på vi ville have den samme succes, fordi der er badminton relativt ukendt. Og derfor ser vi jo også eksempelvis danske virksomheder, som har en stor international profil, som eksempelvis Grunfos, at når det handler om eksempelvis det europæiske eller nordamerikanske marked, så er det typisk her de satser på håndbold, hvor de vil profilere sig. Hvorimod går de til Asien, hvor håndbold er en relativt lille idræt globalt set, så er det badminton, de her satser på. Så vi ser jo her denne her differentiering og diversitet i virksomhedernes valg af, hvad skal man sige, eksponeringskanaler alt efter hvilke markeder de siger mod.

**CC 13:** Ja. I forhold til det her med de kulturelle forskelle, er det noget, der førhen har skabt nogle komplikationer altså er der nogle bestemte situationer, som du husker hvor at?

**Bo:** Jeg kender ikke umiddelbart til nogle fortilfælde her, for jeg har jo som sagt kun været her i knapt fire år.

**CC:** Ja.

**Bo:** Men [øh] det er helt klart efter hvad jeg hører og hvad jeg forstår, så netop manglende forståelse for de kulturelle forskelle og vigtigheden af at have de her personlige relationer har da skabt nogle situationer, hvor at samarbejdet forbundet og, hvad skal man sige, søsterorganisationer i Asien har været problematiske.

**CC:** Mm

**Bo:** Så det er, jeg kender ikke de konkrete tilfælde. Men hvad jeg kan høre på mine medarbejder, så har der eksempelvis historisk set i forhold til de kinesiske badminton forbund eksisteret rigtig dårlige relationer og dermed også, hvad skal man sige, været rigtig dårligt samarbejde. Det er noget af det, jeg er ved at rette op på. Så derfor skal jeg også mødes med det kinesiske forbund her i maj måned, når jeg er i Kina næste gang, netop for at se om vi ikke kan genopbygge de her relationer og dermed få genetableret et rigtig godt samarbejde.

**CC:** Det lyder rigtig spændende.

**Bo:** Mm

**CC 14:** [Øhm] Så i forhold til det her samarbejde, er der så noget bestemt I vægter højere? Altså er det helt klart det her, som du siger, langvarige samarbejde der er fokus på?

**Bo:** Ja.

**CC 15:** Eller er det sådan primært bare en, ikke bare, men er det en økonomisk hjælp lige nu og her?

**Bo:** Nej. Altså [Øhm] det handler selvfølgelig om økonomi, men det handler også om alt mulig andet. I forhold til det kinesiske forbund handler det jo eksempelvis om, at vi få etableret et samarbejde, hvor at, bare som et eksempel, altså når det kinesiske ungdomslandshold skal til Europa for at spille en række europæiske turneringer, så vil vi jo gerne invitere dem til at komme nogle dage her i Danmark og være en del af vores træning, som forberedelse til at de eksempelvis skal til Tyskland og spille. De skal bruge et sted, hvor de alligevel kan, hvad skal man sige, forberede sig, træne, akklimatisere sig. Og hvis de kan gøre det her, så kan vi profitere af det. Det kan være en super, super god sparing for vores ungdomslandsholdspillere og samtidig giver det jo også muligheden for at spillerne på det personlige plan kan skabe nogle relationer, noget interaktion. Det er bare en måde, hvad skal man sige, at profitere på et samarbejde. Men i forhold til de mere kommercielle partnere, altså virksomhederne, der handler det jo selvfølgelig om, at de køber ind på et partnerskab her, men vi har også blik for, at det handler ikke bare om at få en check i dag og så må de ellers selv finde ud af resten. Det handler om, at vi gerne vil skabe det her langvarige samarbejde, de her langvarige relationer. For alt andet lige så er det nemmere at sælge mere til den samme kunde end at gå ud og finde en ny kunde. Så hvis vi kan opdyrke langvarige samarbejder, så viser al erfaring, så kan vi også udvikle samarbejdet. Så det der startede som et lille sponsorat, vil over tid udvikle sig til

et større og større engagement eller sponsorat. Og alt andet lige så bruger vi færre ressourcer på det end vi skal ud og finde nogle helt nye at samarbejde med.

**CC 16:** Ja. Så er det jo så, at jeg er lidt interesseret i at høre i forhold til. Nu er der jo meget fokus på hvad I kan gøre her i Badminton Danmark, men er det også meget i forhold til spillerne? Nu ved jeg jo at Viktor jo kan kinesisk og jeg ved også at dengang Christina og Kamilla var i gang, de havde også meget fokus på deres fanbase i Asien. Er det noget hvor I prøver aktivt at bruge spillerne eller er det noget, der kommer helt af sig selv?

**Bo:** Vi prøver jo selvfølgelig sammen med spillerne. Man kan jo sige, når det handler om landsholdaktiviteter, så er spillerne i et eller andet omfang forpligtet, kvag den aftale vi har med spillerene, forpligtet til at deltage i nogle af de her aktiviteter sammen med os og de kommercielle partnere. Men derudover så hjælper vi jo faktisk ret mange af spillerne til at få individuelle aftaler, med de partnere vi indgår aftale med. Det kan der være flere fordele i, man kan sige, at I og med en partner, som bliver sponsor i Badminton Danmark også bliver sponsor for en række individuelle spillere gør, at de får en mere direkte tilgang til den enkelte spiller og kan bruge spilleren direkte i en række andre aktiviteter, hvor vi som forbund er mere begrænset.

**CC:** Mm

**Bo:** Så der er en fordel for alle partere ved at vi kan lave det her samarbejde og hvor vi kan hjælpe spillerne individuelt til at få nogle attraktive sponsoraftaler. Selvfølgelig er der også spillere som blandt andet Viktor, som har så høj en brand værdi, at de kan klare det selv, at de ikke behøver hjælp fra os. Men det er et lille fåtal. Flertallet af dem, som er på det nationale træningscenter. De er afhængige af både den støtte og den hjælp som vi som forbund kan give dem. Også det forhold til blandt andet skabe kontakter til potentielle sponsorer for dem individuelt.

**CC 17:** Ja. Jeg skal lige se om jeg har nogle. Ja, nu siger du jo også i forhold til, at det vil helt klart gavne Badminton Danmark at få nogle sponsoraftaler og samarbejde med Asien. Hvordan tror du sådan generelt, altså badminton generelt i Danmark vil blive påvirket af et samarbejde? Både sådan i Liga og også sådan klubmæssigt – hele bredden. Fordi det har jo primært fokus på det professionelle aspekt i det her.

**Bo:** Ja. Altså, man kan sige, direkte har det ikke den store betydning, hverken i forhold til vores holdturnering, liga eller klubber. Der er ikke den der direkte gavn af det. Men i og med vi som organisation får en markant stærkere økonomi, så får vi også muligheden for at allokere midler til nogle udviklingsprojekter, som er direkte målrettet mod klubber og foreninger og medlemmerne. Og vi jo rent faktisk løftet vores investering i udviklingstiltag, som netop gavner badminton i en mere generel kontekst i forhold til dansk badminton. Blandt andet har vi investeret en hel del penge i talentudvikling, vi er ved at implementere en helt nu strategi for talentudvikling, hvor at vi lægger talentudviklingen ud mere regionalt i samarbejde med en række klubber som har talentudvikling som en prioriteret indsats område. Vi har investeret en hel del midler i det her visions samarbejde med DGI, der hedder "Bevæg dig for livet", hvor vi er en af de første idrætter, som gik med i det samarbejde tilbage i 2014. Og der har vi siden 2014 investeret massivt i de aktiviteter, som netop retter sig mod voksenmotionist segmentet, hvor vi understøtter klubberne med masse koncepter og support og andre initiativer, som skal hjælpe klubberne til at flere medlemmer, for ligesom brudt lidt af vanetænkningen, får nogle nye produkter på hylden, som gør dem attraktive og i forhold til at tiltrække voksenmotionister, og blive bedre til at fastholde unge. Så på den måde giver det jo selvfølgelig noget muligheder for at understøtte udviklingen i dansk badminton generelt.

**CC 18:** Og så selvfølgelig i sidste ende får udviklet nogen flere, der kan

**Bo:** Det er jo det, vi håber på før tid, at de her initiativer kan skabe flere medlemmer og det går rimelig godt med i øjeblikket. Vi har lige i dag fået de officielle medlemstal eller vi har kendt dem i et stykke tid, men de er lige blevet offentliggjort, hvor at Badminton Danmark for tredje år i træk kan vise medlemsfremgang. Så der er en generel positiv interesse for at komme til at spille badminton. Og hvis vi kan fastholde den positive interesse og samtidig udvikle talentudviklingen ude i klubberne, ude nogle regionale centre, så har vi også fremtidssikret dansk badminton i forhold til at kunne blive ved med at udvikle elitespillere i verdensklasse.

**CC 18:** Så du er helt bestemt af den overbevisning at et internationalt samarbejde, det er en vigtig faktor for dansk badminton?

**Bo:** Det er det helt sikkert. Uden det internationale samarbejde så var vi slet ikke i stand til at gøre de investeringer, som vi har gjort de sidste tre år.

**CC:** Ja. Jamen det tror jeg egentlig sådan var det jeg gerne ville høre om Bo.

**Bo:** Det er fint.

**CC 19:** Er det noget du eventuelt selv vil komme med en ekstra kommentar om eller et eller andet?

**Bo:** Nej, det tror jeg faktisk er ganske fint. Du er velkommen til, hvis du efterfølgende kommer i tanke om noget undervejs, som du manglede at spørge mig om, er du velkommen til at skrive eller ringe til mig.

**CC:** Det ville være rigtig dejligt.

**Bo:** Men du kan få det her i forhold til de spørgsmål du sendte.

**CC:** Jo tak. Mange tak fordi du gik med til det

**Bo:** Velbekomme.